

The Festival of Unity between the Realms

'The Festival of Unity' is the combined set of various traditional celebrations that occur in three weeks between the Autumn Equinox and the Winter Solstice. These celebrations bring much traffic and excitement to The Mortal Realm, seeing deities, humans, ghosts and nature spirits join the festival while demons and monsters often arrive to threaten them.

The role each being plays in the cycles of life and reincarnation are celebrated, thus the official term *'Festival of Unity between the Realms'*.

Three important elements of the festival include: celebrating various Deities, gathering Family together and helping the Dead pass on.



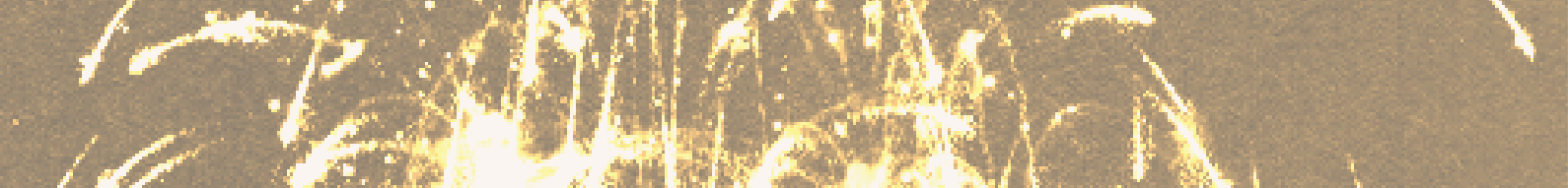
The most exciting of these elements is the *celebration of the Gods*; which originated from the belief that when the gods are on earth, they bless the lands they walk on.

In order to trick the gods into coming down to the mortal realm, humans would don exuberant costumes to look like deities themselves and briefly recreate paradise on earth through grand parties and celebrations. They would dance, sing, play and make merry to such an incredible degree that the Gods would confuse them for fellow deities and join in. These extravagant festivities would ensure blessings and safety throughout the darker and dangerous winters to come and therefore holds an important cultural significance.

Today, the celebrations include many community performances such as:

- *Plays
- *Concerts
- *Dances
- *Reciting the stories of Gods (big and small, old and new)

These are often organised by worshippers, locals and troupes of entertainers (especially in the bigger cities).



Many worshippers of Smaller Deities/Small Deities themselves will use the opportunity to spread lesser known stories and fables, and sell souvenirs and prayer items such as:

- * Paintings
- * Figurines
- * Poetry
- * Symbols
- * Offerings
- * Costumes

This 'market' element allows them a chance to maintain a stream of income for their shrines and temples.

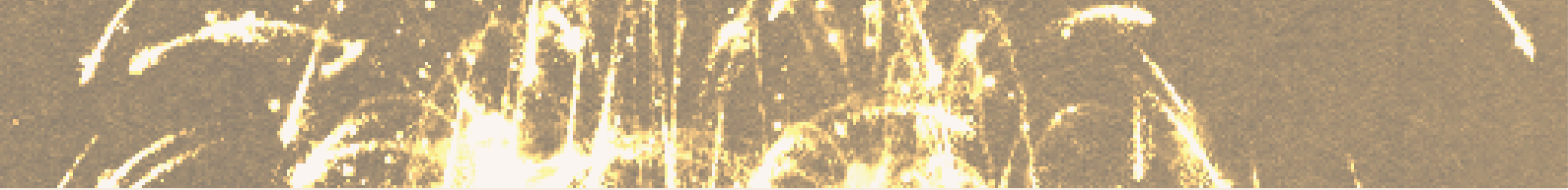
Another old tradition related to luring in the Gods is the practice of lighting up lamps, candles and lanterns to scare away the darkness. In poor weather or in arid climates, decorating homes and public spaces with glowing lights and magic is more popular.

Also, due to the anticipated arrival of the Gods, various competitions and challenges among humans are also set up to win favours or blessings from them.

A newer development has been the focus on emerging human heroes with cult followings who spread their stories and sell merchandise of them as well.

These festival venues are well-lit and are patrolled by local enlightened warriors, friendly nature spirits and sometimes the gods in disguise themselves. It is very safe, family friendly and entertainment is always easy to find!





When you aren't taking your family out for the festivities, you may be gathered together at home to celebrate your ties and the recent harvest season.

This is the second element of the festival, large families often reunite briefly for feasts and festivities before the winter becomes too harsh for regular travel.

Originally this custom was a common way to celebrate good harvest with one's closest relations and to give thanks to the nature spirits who ensured a good yield.

However, today this is only practiced by agricultural families and some food merchants. Most other families now gather together in ancestral homes to celebrate the gods, their lineage, their bonds, their history and their future before they travel back to their homes.

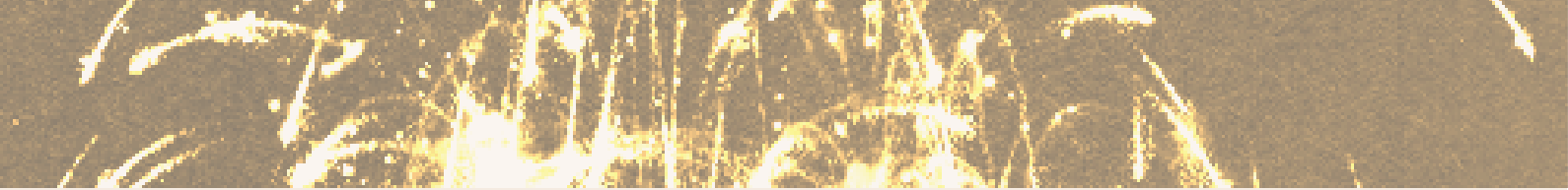
Common activities for this element of the Festival include:

- *Exchanging presents
- *Buying little gifts for the children
- *Sharing stories about the ancestors
- *Inviting in *friendly* family ghosts
- *Doing matchmaking fortunes
- *Praying for the fertility of New Couples
- *Viewing the Full Moon together

A newer tradition that likely branched out of the matchmaking fortunes, is the practice of divining to learn about past lives; past lovers, friends and enemies.

It is now common to seek out seers and various priests to learn more about lives that you have no memory of. There are also games and fortune-telling practices to attempt at home.





The third element of this festival is more austere; it is based on the belief that the veil between the Ghost Realm and the Mortal Realm thins at this time of the year.

Many Ghosts who are unable or unwilling to reincarnate will visit the mortal realm. This time of year attracts a higher degree of danger due to growing darkness and the accessibility of unprotected souls. While it is often sentimental to reunite with a deceased loved one, it is bitter knowledge that demons and monsters hunger for souls; unlike most other beings, a typical ghost does not have much power or a body to protect itself with. For their safety, and for the sake of maintaining the cycle of reincarnation, their debts and wishes are often inherited by their family, friends or by willing strangers.

There is also the danger of getting possessed by malevolent spirits. As the Dead enter the realm of the Living, many people are enlisted to protect their villages and cities so that this sensitive tradition might occur peacefully.

Common traditions for this element of the festival include:

- * Seeking out modes of communication with the Dead
- * Creating charms against Possession
- * Praying to the Gods of the Dead to protect the souls of the restless



* ❄ * ❄ * Extra Notes + Development * ❄ * ❄ *



Figure 1: Concepts and Relations behind the Festival of Unity/Initial Brainstorm

1. Gods Celebration

- a) Biggest festivity
- ❄ b) Flashiest, very costumed and extravagant.
- c) Involves the most people
 - (all ages + all careers)
- d) Profitable for cults + temples + gods
 - Selling wares + merchandise.
- e) Cheerful vibe, playful, exciting

2. Family Celebration

- a) Sharing Harvest with each other
 - A bigger deal for agriculturists + nature spirits
- b) Reunion and safety
 - Celebration bonds in life
- c) Contemplation of the deceased
 - remembrance and piety
- d) Matrimony and Fertility focus
- e) Peaceful vibe, secure, homely

Figure 2: Notes on Gods and Family Celebrations

3. Reincarnation Holiday

- a) Prayers to gods to protect/liberate souls from demons + monsters.
- b) Inheriting the wills of benign/neutral ghosts
- c) Creating protection charms against possession
- d) Celebrating and breaking bonds/ attachments of the dead so they can pass
- e) Austere vibes, bittersweet and dutiful

Figure 3: Notes on Reincarnation and Death Element of Festival

Misc Developments

1. Godly blessings

- competitions to gain the favour of the gods
- treasure hunts ◦ Cooking contests

2. Human cults

- Performances and stories about impressive humans
- Loyal supporters trying to bring them godhood.

3. Light as a symbol of the festival

- Lanterns, lamps, magic fireworks to invite Gods + scare evil into darkness

4. Reincarnation related games + traditions

- Guessing Past Lives ◦ Seeing fortune-tellers
- Finding 'soulmates'

Figure 4: Notes on Miscellaneous Traditions

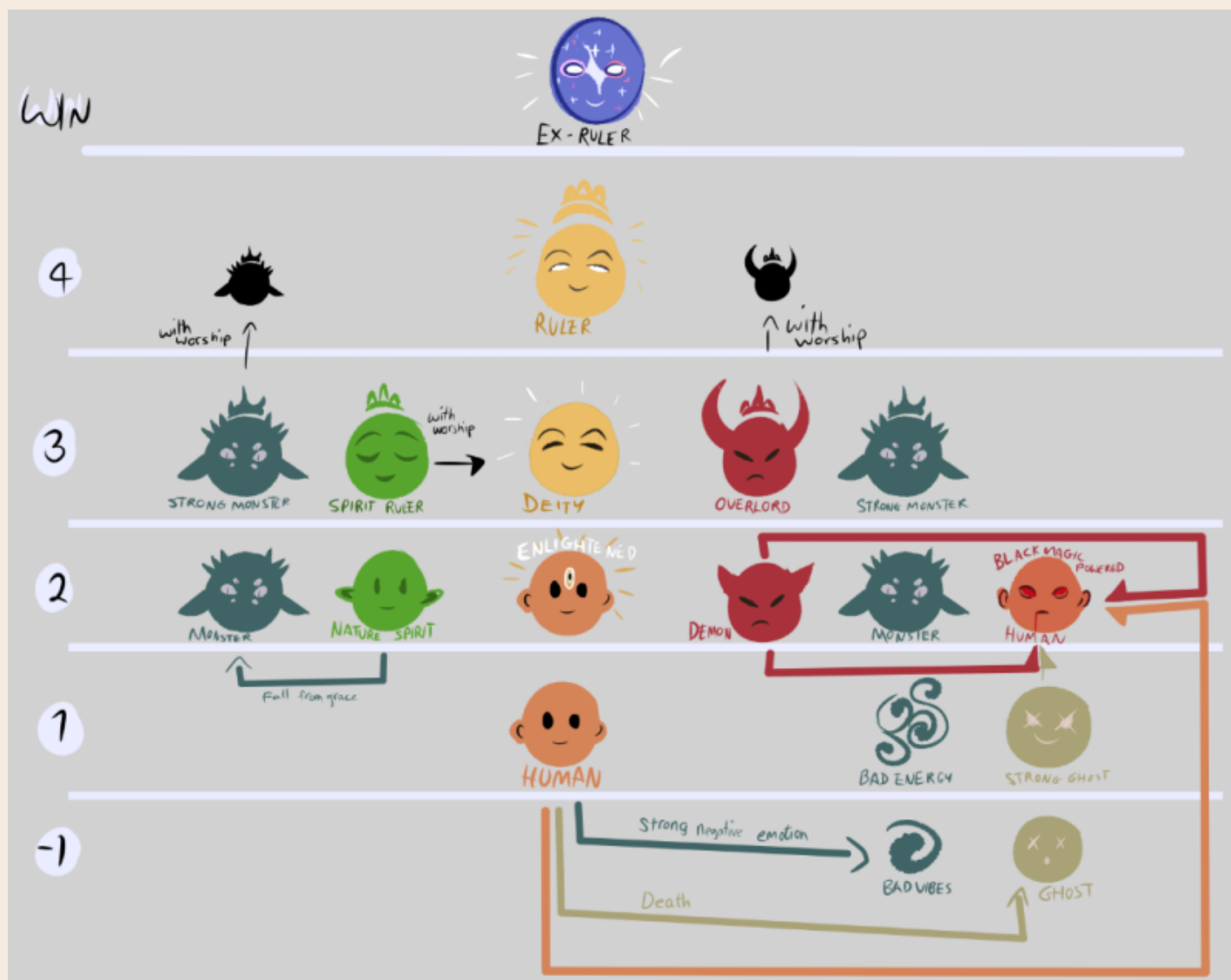


Figure 5: Diagram of Living Beings in the 5 Realms

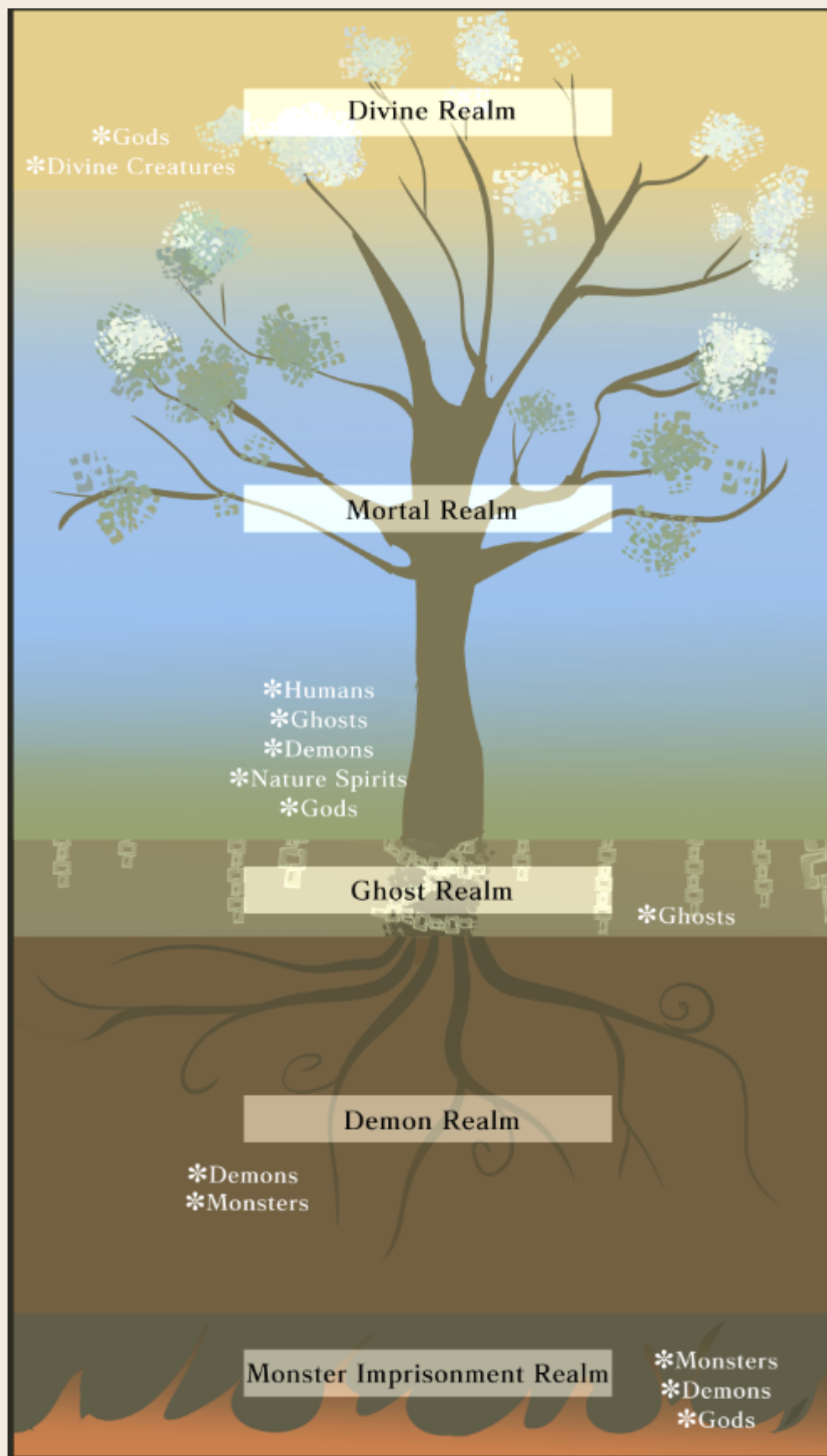


Figure 6: Diagram of the Realms + Their Inhabitants