

THE CONVERGENT MULTIVERSE

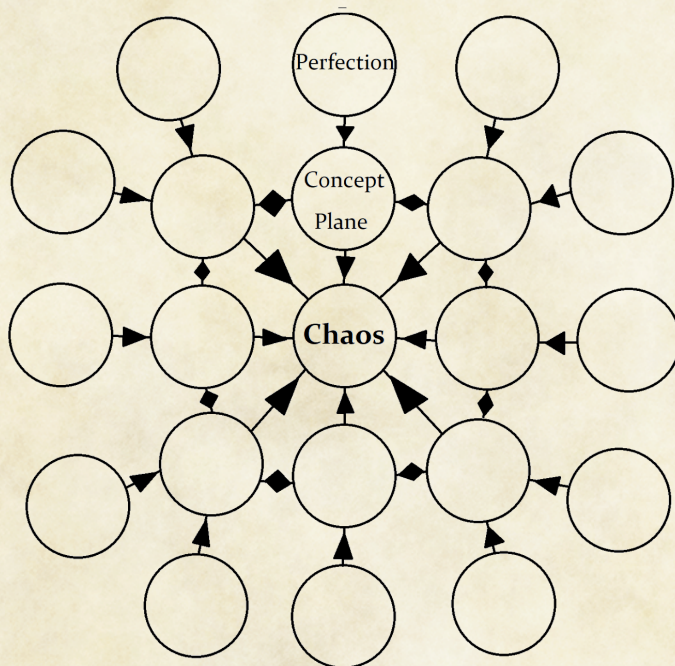
The plane of existence where rests Vallonde is only one in a sea of semi-similar and wildly different universes that exists within the Convergence. A nigh incomprehensible sphere of crowded universes, the convergence encompasses all things that are, ever were, or ever will be; a billion billion bubbles crowded within the confines of conceptual perfection. At the very center of this ever-changing roil of planes lies pure chaos, a plane sometimes called the Chaos Well that acts as rain basin for the energies that travel downward from the conceptually perfect planes that lie at the very edge of the Convergence. This backdrop is the scene for the great game played by the outsiders, a continual sojourn through increasingly chaotic planes to claim the endless power that lies within the central chaos.

CONCEPTUAL PERFECTION

All planes exist on the foundation of the realms of conceptual perfection that form the outer layer of the Convergence. These planes are the purest embodiment of any single concept in existence: The plane of perfect fire. The plane of perfect pain. The plane of the perfect dagger. Whatever a thing may be classified as, the simple fact that it exists means there is a plane where the idea of that thing is realized in its purest, most perfect form. These planes are where the most powerful of outsiders originate, creatures that so fully embody their concept that they could be gods in their own right. Fortunately for the innumerable sentiences across the Convergence, these vastly powerful creatures rarely deign to even acknowledge the existence of lesser creatures, even other, less powerful outsiders, in their quest for ultimate power. Never-ending wars rage between perfect outsiders and their armies within the inner planes as each tries to outmaneuver, outwit, and overpower their rivals to claim control of the Chaos Well.

All planes within the Convergence are comprised of some combination of different, increasingly more diluted concepts as the perfection of those concepts becomes less pronounced with each layer closer to the central chaos. While layers closer to the outer shell may be

dominated by one or only a small number of concepts, most are saturated by hundreds of thousands of competing concepts that create complex, diverse universes that are all inherently unique from one another. Vallonde exists in what could be described as the central ring of the Convergence bubble, where an uncountable number of concepts are present, but all exist in a form stable enough for the minds of mortals to comprehend. As one approaches closer to the central chaos, concepts begin to break down and merge as their original forms become unrecognizable.



Energy and matter can only travel either within their own layer or toward the central chaos, but almost never higher into the outer rings. This ensures that everything that travels the planes eventually finds its way into the undying war between the outsiders as they vie for dominance over their kind and total control of the Convergence.

SHARED CONNECTION

The planes are tenuously connected based on their position in relation to perfection and chaos, as well as through their shared concepts. Two planes that lie on the same layer of the Convergence will always be connected, but may be separated and on opposite sides of the Chaos Well, meaning that travel between planes, even connected planes, can be difficult to achieve in unfavorable circumstances.

As concepts converge planes become more numerous, and the nearer to chaos one approaches the more clustered they become. This can often cause strange universal overlaps where the contents of one plane will spill into another and conceptual bleed events, where incredibly strong foreign conceptual energy corrupts the native plane that it leaks into. Creatures that powerfully embody a concept, such as outsiders and the avatars of Vallonde, can also radiate this concept energy and their mere presence has the power to corrupt and change those around them.

THE GREAT GAME OF THE OUTSIDERS

The often inexplicable motives of the outsiders can generally be tied to their overwhelming desire for power. Mortal creatures busy themselves with personal survival and success, but conquest of all Vallonde would pale compared to the grand designs laid out by greater outsiders. For creatures of such strength, the accumulation of power and conquest of entire planes is the only thing to bring meaning to existence; an overwhelming desire to become the ultimate being and to fulfil the promise of the concept they are born from. This disregard for mortal life has made outsiders who find their way to Vallonde dire threats to the world's inhabitants.

Under rare circumstances, outsiders have been known to refrain from the pursuit that drives their kin to such great lengths. In Vallonde's distant past, scores of dragons inhabited the world, lazily gathering treasure and accumulating followers to serve them despite the fact that they were indeed outsiders. When they left the material plane, the ensuing power vacuum opened the way for other, more malicious outsiders who have driven the world into the state of perpetual bloodshed and depravity that it now exists in.

BEYOND DEATH

Death is not the end for a creature that meets its demise on the material plane. When death claims a victim, the soul that once inhabited the body, now without an anchor, is drawn inexorably to a lower plane. After 1d100 days, the creature's soul leaves the material plane and can no longer be reunited with its body through any means short of a *wish* spell. Once the allotted number of days have passed, the soul is drawn to the plane of shadow, a place of dark melancholy where even the most resolute of spirits will eventually become a hollow shell if its former self.

A pale, apocalyptic reflection of the material plane, the plane of shadow is a gathering ground for souls no longer bound to the material plane. Destroyed remnants of civilization sit silent under a gray sky of raining ash as those souls that still retain agency attempt to crudely emulate the lives they lived before they were lost to death. Downtrodden

but determined souls have built a crude facsimile of a living world with towns, governments, and all the other trappings of Vallondian civilization undeterred by their own inevitable degradation from vibrant soul to grim, uncaring shadow.

These fallen shades haunt the realm of shadow, though the form they take is not always the same. Most commonly, a soul will simply wither away over time, consumed by the melancholy and entropy of the realm and left as a hollow, unresponsive shell that simply waits for the end of time. More rarely, malicious spirits are consumed by anger and grief at their eternal lot and become evil shades that constantly thirst for the life energy that once sustained them. During unique celestial alignment events and in places where the Vallonde intersects with the plane of shadow, these shades can find their way to the material and seek vengeance against the living creatures that they so envy and hate.

While the plane of shadow is the most common destination for lost souls, powerful magic and powerful wills can thwart the natural order of things and prevent a soul from descending to the layer where the plane of shadow rests. These ghosts need not lose what made them who they were in life and can seek to reclaim their physical forms safe from the spiritual degradation that constantly threatens souls that find themselves in the realm of shadow.

