The Octagem

A world of tiny worlds. Six crystal spheres the size of countries, connected by perilous tunnels and half-filled with liquid gemstones. A populace who live on their own gem ocean and derive their power from it. Uneasy peace, or blistering war. Welcome to the Octagem.

The Construction

The universe is six crystal spheres. Each is the size of a small country, and is made of entirely unbreakable crystal material. They are arranged in the shape of an octahedron, and are connected by thin crystal tunnels, each sealed with a porous membrane. Every sphere is filled up to halfway with a liquid gemstone; it seems like water, but thicker and more viscous. The people of each sphere live on boats, some free-floating but most connected by bridges and permanent ropes to make a floating country.

Each sphere is connected to others by a thin crystal tunnel. The tunnel is sealed at each end by a membrane which is impenetrable to liquid gemstone but permits people to cross. This prevents the gemsea from flowing through the tunnels, but also prevents invaders from taking stores of their own liquid gem with them to other worlds to boost their own magics. The tunnels are easily traversable by people; the interior is rough and simply climbable.

The Society

Life is on board a ship, although usually a ship which does not and could not move from its position in the vast connected floating flotilla that makes up the majority of living space in each crystal sphere. It is a country afloat, and falling is danger; the liquid gemstone ocean beneath is difficult to swim in, having a consistency like syrup, and every child learns to not fall when they learn to walk and before they learn to read. Treat all liquid gemseas as water except that all ability checks and saving throws when submerged are made at disadvantage, including death saving throws.

Some spheres are expansionist, looking to travel to others for trade or to conquer; some are isolationist, looking to guard their tunnels and prevent intrusion. The ruby and sapphire spheres would like nothing more than to bring others under their control; the diamond sphere would like nothing more than to find a way to close off their tunnels forever and live life alone in peace.

Magic

Arcane energy is strongly affected by whatever mysterious process created the Octagem and the worlds within it. Each world is filled with a different liquid gem, and each gem enhances the effectiveness of a different kind of magic.

The worlds are as follows:

- **Ruby**: enhances fire-based magic
- **Sapphire**: enhances water-based magic
- **Emerald**: enhances nature-based magic
- **Topaz**: enhances mind-based magic
- **Diamond**: enhances illusion-based magic
- **Opal**: enhances death-based magic

A spellcaster who is native to a particular world and is within that world’s crystal sphere makes all dice rolls for spells concerned with their area of magic at advantage, always; any disadvantage on these rolls is ignored. In practice, this means that each world’s spellcasters are considerably more powerful than rivals when on their home territory, and this has led to an uneasy detente between the spheres; each world tends to train its spellcasters in those spells that their own gem makes most effective, and this makes each world’s arcane forces virtually unchallengeable on their home ground.

The liquid gemstone seas are not water, and *water breathing* spells are ineffective if one falls into the liquid. However, there are specific variants of the *water breathing* spell for each type of liquid gemstone. Such spells are considered vital state secrets within each crystal sphere and gives further advantage to the native forces when defending against intrusion, since they will routinely give the defenders the ability to breathe and move within their own gemsea while the attackers are likely to drown.

The Ecology

Free-floating vegetation exists on each of the gemseas, some of which has bound together into almost-solid islands. Fish and other marine animals exist which can move through the gemsea as though it were water. This results in each sphere sustaining a very maritime society, but one which is nonetheless viable.

The natives have also developed processes to harden the liquid gemstone sea into solid gems, which are used as construction material; in particular, the majority of the boats are made from it.

Adventure Ideas

While most of society lives in one huge interconnected floating land, each sphere is the size of a country and there are plenty of iconoclastic types who choose to sail the gemseas. Rumors abound of abandoned ships, floating aimlessly on the ocean and loaded with treasure, free for the taking for those brave enough to set out in search of them.
The tunnels connecting one sphere to another are either at the bottom of the gem ocean or high in the sky. Even reaching them is a serious challenge, and each gem world has evolved its own ways of doing so... or refusing to do so. Preparing for an invasion, or even just moving from world to world, requires considerable preparation and bravery.

There are many legends of immersed cities, situated at the bottom of the gemseas. How did they get there? Can they be explored, if they exist? What secrets may they contain?

The universe outside the Octagem is a matter of myth and rumour to the inhabitants. The crystal spheres and tunnels are as far as anyone knows unbreakable, and most philosophers in the Octagem think that there is nothingness beyond the octahedron. Perhaps they are wrong.