

External history of the setting

Random factoid: very early on, when I was just starting to explore the Pious Aliens concept, long before I merged the idea with my main conworld to create the Lonely Galaxy, I was also interested in octopi, specifically the giant Pacific octopus. I often pictured the aliens as aquatic and octopoid. They had to wear environmental suits to go on land, which consisted of the alien's octopoid form haphazardly flopped on top of a vaguely humanoid robot body (the form chosen to interact with human tools and infrastructure). Of course any humanoid with a whole octopus for a head can't help but look like Cthulhu. So the yinrih could have been based on octopi rather than monkeys and foxes.

As for why I chose monkeys and foxes, the kobolds from the Last Grand Adventure started out as your standard anthropomorphic animals, with subraces based on different dog breeds. Their main quirks were their lack of a tail and their prehensile feet. As for why their feet were prehensile, I often imagine scenarios or little stories that happen within my conworld and build lore around them. One such scenario was a team of adventurers being bound and tossed in a dungeon by a generic bad guy. They're bound by their wrists and anchored to the wall. The kobold in the party quips that they forgot he has two extra hands and proceeds to untie himself and the rest of the party using his feet.

I'm not sure if kobolds had six digits yet, but they did also reproduce via womb nests. No idea where that came from, honestly. Maybe it started out as laying eggs like a monotreme and just evolved from there.

The nudge from generically canine to specifically vulpine was likely influenced by the game Tunic. I played it a month or so after getting Mr. Commonthroat, right at the beginning of this certification misadventure I've been mentioning. As for the monkey connection, I realized I had no good in-universe explanation why a humanoid race would have prehensile feet, so I made them arboreal. Then I wanted to make them more unique, not just another race of beast folk. The train of thought went like this. "Your typical beastfolk race is just an animal head on a human body, right? So what's a human, cladistically speaking? A primate, of course. Kobolds already have prehensile feet, let's go all the way and return them to monke."

This all happened in stages of course, at the same time I was changing genres from fantasy to sci-fi. The genre shift happened after I read some HFY stories on Reddit, which coincided with me mulling over the Fermi paradox. I always wondered why First Contact stories always involve humans stumbling into a vast galaxy-spanning meta-civilization that we somehow haven't discovered yet. The Doylist explanation is easy, so there can be an interesting story, but conworlding runs on different principles than storytelling. The Last Grand Adventure already revolved around the concept of there being only two actual races, humans and kobolds, with

"elves" and "dwarves" along with baseline humans being mutual subspecies able to intermarry. This two-race concept was me playing with the ideas surrounding the relationship between humans and dogs, not in the usual tropey sense of dogs who can talk but still act like dogs, but more along the lines of man's best friend. We're all alone in this world, and dogs are our only companions, etc.

So I'm thinking about the Fermi Paradox, my brain is running on amateur sci-fi, I've got a conworld with just humans and cynoids, and in the background, mostly untouched for the past few years, is the Pious Aliens scenario. The catalyst that birthed the Lonely Galaxy proper was extreme stress. A family member was hospitalized with sepsis, and the only sentence I can ever remember hearing after "He got sepsis" was "and then he died." So I'm mentally grappling with the possible death of a family member (thankfully it didn't turn out that way, but I didn't know that at the time), and at the same time I'm gearing up for a very expensive certification exam. Just the process of signing up is hair-pullingly frustrating if you have a disability. I won't go into the process but suffice it to say It's much more difficult than what an able-bodied student has to endure. And that's on top of normal test anxiety. So in this crucible of mental turmoil, when I couldn't handle the real world, I dissociated from reality and invented my own, one that made sense, at least to me. And the rest is history.

Yeah it's probably maladaptive daydreaming, but eh.

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