

The World of Abeth

Abeth is a planet orbiting a dying red sun. It is sheathed in ice and the majority of its people live in The Corridor, a sixty mile wide region around the equator walled by ice. An artificial moon keeps the corridor free of ice by focusing the sun's rays into it each night.

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Weather

The corridor lies on the equator, and so has no seasons. It tends to be kind of cold and windy.

The wind is a constant on Abeth and comes in two flavors, the corridor wind and the ice wind.

The corridor wind blows down the length of the corridor. Although it is generally mild, it can be funneled between the ice walls, the wind can reach incredible speeds and often brings rain from the ocean.

The ice wind blows down from the ice sheets. It is incredibly cold. If it goes on long enough it will cover all exposed surfaces in ice. The ice usually melts in the night when the focus moon passes.

The Focus Moon

The focus moon is an artificial satellite that orbits Abeth in a sun synchronous orbit. A huge mirror, it focusses the sun's rays onto the equator to make up for lack of heat from the dying sun. The moon is practically invisible in the sky except when it passes directly overhead and then it glows brighter than the sun. Under the light of the focus moon, the ground steams and it is almost uncomfortably hot. The nightly passing of the focus moon takes about ten minutes.

The slow, eventual failure of the moon is well known.

*She's falling down, she's falling down,
The moon, the moon,
She's falling down, she's falling down,
Soon, soon.*

*The ice will come, the ice will close,
No moon, no moon,
We'll all fall down, we'll all fall down,
Soon, too soon.*

The Empire

The Empire is one of the major realms on Abeth, situated within the sixty mile wide ice-walled corridor. It is ruled by Emperor Crucical of the Lansis family from his palace in the capital, Verity. There was a time when The Empire ruled the entire continent and many places beyond. Now The Empire controls the land from the Sea of Marn in the east to the Skithrowl Mountains in the west, a length of about a thousand miles of corridor between the walls of ice.

The government of The Empire is closely intertwined with the Church of the Ancestor.

Neighboring Nations

Travel along the corridor is dangerous, and information from beyond the borders of the Empire is hard to come by. For practical purposes, The Empire has no relations with any governments other than their immediate neighbors.

Durn

Durn lies across the sea to the west of The Empire. Its people are a loose coalition of tribes and city-states. Merchant ships cross the ocean to Durn frequently. Slightly less frequently, Durnish raiders land on the shores of the Empire to pillage and steal.

Skithrowl

The nation of Skithrowl lies to the east of The Empire. They were the most recent major territory to leave The Empire during its long decline. They share the same language and worship The Ancestor like the people of The Empire. A series of mountain ranges that cross the corridor makes travel to and from Skithrowl impractical.

The Corridor

The sun that Abeth revolves around is dying, and the ice continues a slow advance, despite the warmth of the artificial moon's nightly focus. Now only a sixty mile wide Corridor around the equator separates the northern and the southern ice. The Corridor contains a number of natural geography features such as continents and seas.

History

The Missing

Abeth was originally inhabited by mysterious peoples now referred to as The Missing. Little is known about them, although they seem to have been quite an advanced civilization. They left behind ruins of cities and other complex construction, as well as magical artifacts and entities; Demons and Holothour are said to have been their servants. The Missing became extinct some time before the arrival of the Tribes of Humanity. Ruins can still be found here and there, such as the forest of columns at Sweet Mercy Convent, but most now lie beneath the ice. Some people living near the Ice-Margins, risk exploring tunnels to raid these underground ruins for artifacts.

The Original Tribes

According to the founding myth of the people who now populate Abeth, thousands of years ago, the original tribes of men (humans, elves, dwarves, etc.) came from the stars. There remain a number of artifacts from this journey, such as the three known Arks and a number of Shiphearts. Even further back in the mists of history, the tribes supposedly descended from one god-like being known as the Ancestor.

The Ice

Abeth was a harsh world even before the sun around Abeth began dying. The original tribes had to intermix their bloodlines in order to breed a people capable of living there. The special traits of these tribes are seen only rarely in the current population, and are greatly prized.

With the dying of the sun, the planet began to slowly freeze. In order to forestall catastrophe, an artificial Moon, a giant focusing mirror, was placed in the sky long ago. It keeps the Corridor around the equator free of ice by focusing the sun's rays into it each night; a nightly event known as the Focus Moon. Almost all knowledge of how the Moon works has since been lost.

Today the evidence that the Moon is failing is plain for all to see, as the ice advances with the Corridor now a mere sixty miles from the northern ice to the southern ice. Five hundred years ago, it was over 200 miles wide. The realms of the Corridor exist in a state of perpetual hostility, with their northern and southern borders continually squeezed, and their neighbors providing the only opportunity for expansion.

Important People

Emperor Crucical - Rules from his palace in the center of Verity.

Princess Serzal - Sister to the emperor. Her palace is close to the Scithrowl border to the east.

Princess Velera - Sister to the emperor. Her palace is on the coastal city of Nounan to the west.

High Priest Jacob - Head of the Church of the Ancestor, stationed at the monastery complex within Verity.

Abess Glass - Abbess of the Sweet Mercy convent.

Religion

The Church of the Ancestor

The only sanctioned religion within The Empire is the Church of the Ancestor. The headquarters of the church is in Verity. They consider all other religious traditions to be heresy, but far away from the city the reach of the church is weak.

The Many Small Gods

The worship of the many small gods who have no names is the most common heresy indulged in by citizens of the empire. It's very common among the farmers and peasants in small villages. They like to say, "You can pray to the gods in the rain drops to keep you dry, but by the time they're close enough to hear you, you're already wet."

The Hope

A relatively new religious movement. They build churches with no roofs and they hold their sermons at night so they can see the focus of their worship, a bright white star which appeared recently in the sky. They say the Hope knows about the plight of Abeth and is coming to save humanity from the ice.

Outside the Empire

The Durnish Pantheon

The Durns have a pantheon of about a dozen gods each with their own domains.

The Ice Tribes

The Ice Tribes worship two gods, Sedna the goddess of the sea, and Sila her husband the god of the sky.

Magic

There was a time when magic was the specialty of humans and all humans could use magic, back before the bloods of the tribes were mixed. Now magical ability appears rarely among the people of Abeth. It is not any more common among humans than among those who display traits from the other tribes. It's common for magical abilities to remain dormant for years before manifesting suddenly in a moment of stress.

Many people who have a magical ability are self taught, but formal training is the quickest way to achieve mastery. There are two organizations that offer formal magical training, The Church and the Royal Academy.

The Church

The Church of the Ancestor is the most prestigious educational institution in The Empire. While there are several convents and seminaries throughout the empire where the rich can send their children for a general education, only Saint Olaf's Monastery and The Convent of Sweet Mercy are permitted to teach magical arts. The emperor doesn't trust any institution further from his seat of power to teach such dangerous skills.

The Church is best known for magics dealing with healing, light, shadow, death, and knowledge. Even so, any magical talent can be cultivated by the initiates and novices.

It's mostly nobles and rich merchants who can afford the cost of a religious education, but exceptions are frequently made for children who demonstrate enough potential and occasionally for orphans who have no other recourse.

The Royal Academy

The Academy in Verity studies and teaches elemental magic and magic with military applications. Because tuition at the Academy is more affordable, the halls of the academy are filled with the children of artisans and middle class citizens of the empire. Scholarships are extended to those who don't have the ability to pay, but they must agree to repay the school with a period of indenture equal in duration to their education.

Folk Traditions

Those living outside of cities are frequently apprenticed to a village witch doctor or some other elder who can guide them. These people frequently use spells in ways that surprise mages with a traditional education.

The Church of the Ancestor

In many ways, The Church is a parallel government that operates along side The Empire. While the two systems generally cooperate and support each other, The Church has its own laws, courts, and methods of enforcement. Emperor Crucial is officially the Church, but for practical purposes, the Church is run by High Priest Jacob.

The Clergy

The leadership of the Church is made up of monks and nuns. For the most part, Monks are trained and housed in monasteries and nuns in convents, but there are two abbeys within the empire which house a mixed congregation. When a monk or nun takes their vows, they choose one of four paths depending on their interests and training. The majority of the institutions in the empire are limited to training and confirmation of people to the holy path. Only initiates in the Sweet Mercy Convent and the Saint Olaf Monastery are authorized to train in the three martial paths.

The Holy Path

The most common path in the church, and the only option for many initiates. Holy brothers and holy sisters are recognizable for the black robes and habits and they dedicate themselves to study, prayer, and service of those around them. Many who have completed the training for one of the three martial paths still elect to take their vows in the holy path if they feel it reflects their devotion to the Ancestor.

The Blade Path

Adherents to the blade path typically wear red. They are some of the most highly skilled combatants in the entire empire because they dedicate their entire life to the study and practice of martial arts. Red brothers and red sisters are responsible for the physical security of the Church. They act as guards, escorts, soldiers, and enforcers depending on the needs of the Church. Many red robes or red habits all in the same place almost always means trouble.

The Mystic Path

Respectfully called mystic brothers and sisters (and disrespectfully called holy witches), followers of the mystic path are distinguished by their blue robes or habits. They dedicate their time to the study of magic and the service of the Church through the use of magic. Citizens tend to associate the blue robes with magical healing because that's the only time they encounter mystic clerics, but the majority of those who follow the mystic path don't have any particular talent for healing.

Taking vows to follow the mystic path is only an option for those who demonstrate magical ability, but it's not required that any clerics who can do magic must become a mystic cleric. There are individuals who wield magic on all four paths.

The Shadow Path

These are members of the clergy who have dedicated themselves to clandestine arts. They are the spies and assassins of the Church. Even though they are called grey brothers and grey sisters, they don't really wear grey robes and habits, and so no one really knows how many of them there are. This path is a popular choice among mages who have talents in shadow and illusion magics.

The Inquisition

The inquisition is not a permanent organization of the Church. Instead, when something suspicious happens members of the clergy are appointed to perform an inquisition. It's basically a committee that investigates wrong doing, recommends punishments, and carries them out once the presiding authority gives approval. They are mostly concerned with activities that threaten the stability of the Church, and only really near large population centers. For example, the church of the Hope continues to spread in small communities, but an inquisition is formed anytime it looks like they might be congregating in too large a number. Actively spreading information that disparages the Emperor or that contradicts the Church's doctrine are other common ways to attract the attention of an inquisition.

The inquisition is only used to prosecute heresy among the lay population. Members of the clergy are held to a higher standard and would stand trial before a tribunal of archons.

The Ice

Abeth is almost entirely covered in ice. The surface of the ice is a brutal and deadly place. The air is thin and the wind never stops blowing. The mountains which poke above the ice sheets are rare and welcome landmarks on the featureless expanse.

The Ice Wall

The corridor is bounded by a huge ice wall. It looms a couple hundred feet above the plains of the empire. A steep slope of broken ice boulders and shaped by frequent avalanches. The steady advancement of the wall is just about kept at bay by the nightly melting of the focus moon. It isn't completely impassible. A determined climber could navigate the rough, craggy surface if they are sufficiently lucky.

The ice sheet does not reach so far into the ocean. Ice bergs frequently calve off in chunks the size of cities, leaving a shear wall that is 2 miles high in places. The danger of falling ice keeps ships far away from the edges of the corridor.

The Melting Region

The region where the focus moon falls, but isn't strong enough to melt all the ice away, is a band about 30 miles wide on either side of the corridor. The ice in this region looks smooth and polished from frequent melting and refreezing. Above the continent, this region sees the ice ramp up from the 200 foot wall to the 2 mile thickness of the majority of the ice sheet.

Being caught in the melting region during a focus moon is extremely dangerous. The top layers of the ice melt, run into rivers across the surface and gather in pools several inches deep. If you get wet during the focus moon, you freeze when it passes. The wind returns and everything freezes very quickly.

The Snowing Region

The water which evaporates from the seas of the corridor inevitably falls on the ice. The region where the snow falls is about 3,000 miles wide, and is one of the most hazardous places to be on the surface of the ice. The fierce wind blows the snow into dunes that look like a featureless sea of white. The deep drifts of soft, fluffy snow threaten to swallow up anyone who walks on them and so are piratically impassible in the best of conditions. It's worse when the storms come and the falling snow buries everything.

The Blue Ice

Where it is too cold for the snow to fall, the ice thousands of years old. Time and pressure have left the ice more transparent and slightly blue. The terrain is shaped by the cutting wind and by the shifting of the ice sheets. The surface here is split by ridges and crevices where the ice sheets

grind against each other. For those who can survive the temperatures, this is the most hospitable region of the ice.

Beneath The Ice

There are tunnels in the ice. The dangers of the tunnels are many, and poorly understood. Even so, they are sheltered from the cutting wind, which makes them possibly more survivable than the surface. Scavengers and archaeologists frequently brave the tunnels to search through the wreckage of buried cities for treasures.