

A
BRIGHT
FLAME
IN
WINTER

SEASONS OF ADVENTURE | YEAR ONE
ISSUE 1 | ADVENTURE INTRODUCTION & PLAYER'S GUIDE

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A Bright Flame in Winter

A BRIGHT FLAME IN WINTER

Issue 1: Game Master's Primer & Player's Guide

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The city of Abussos lies high in the crown of the world atop the White Cloud Mountains. Clutched between jagged peaks, the city rarely sees visitors willing to brave the cold, the altitude, and the monsters of the mountains. Those who do visit Abussos find a verdant valley, an emerald of life in the middle of the wilderness.



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THE CHASM AND THE CORD

Abussos is suspended over a deep, deep pit that bores down between the mountains. The Chasm is five miles across at its widest point, and cracks radiate from the chasm into the valleys of the mountains surrounding it. The walls of the Chasm are unnaturally sheer and it is deeper than anyone can see. Smoke and fog form a floor a mile or two down, like gray clouds, and beyond that is only darkness. Spearing upward from the center of the Chasm and vanishing into the clouds above is the Trixion Cord, a mile-thick pillar of woven crystal, like a petrified thread of titanic scale.

The bottom of the Chasm - though no Abusson has ever seen it - is six-hundred miles down, terminating in the core of the world. At the bottom, suspended from the Cord in the middle of semi-molten stone and metal, is the Cage. No mortal knows what the Cage contains, nor who created it. The Cord runs up the center of the entire Chasm, and rises beyond the clouds. At its top, some ten miles above the peaks of the mountains, the Cord simply... vanishes. It fades out so high in the air that its end can rarely be spotted above the clouds. Most people only see it at dusk or dawn, when the valley is pitch-dark but the top of the Cord catches the sunlight and marks a perfectly plumb line of light across the sky.

From the bottom of the pit rises a sustained hot wind, day and night. This continual wind turns the city's windmills, heats the city's homes, and lifts the city's freight and flyers. While the wind has a taste of smoke, iron, and sulfur, the people of Abussos are inured to it and visitors quickly find that they, too, no longer notice it after a few weeks.

ABUSSOS

The city of Abussos is built above the Chasm itself, a network of connected bridges, platforms, and dwellings. Each is anchored to the Cord or the Shore, or both. Long cables of steel and rope are supplemented and strengthened by fibers of pale crystal carved from the Cord above. Some homes have a distance around them, extending from the side of a footbridge or dangling from a cable running Cord-to-Shore. This cobweb of buildings, paths, and town squares thickens closer to the Shore and to the Cord, with layers upon layers of homes stacked above and below ground level and connected by ramps, ladders, and stairs.

Almost the entire city is constructed of wood; brick and stone are both difficult to get and too heavy to build with. Metal and stone are, instead, reserved for the construction of cables, supports, and the like that hold up the rest of the city. Innumerable cords and ropes of hemp and linen run from home to home. Abussos shimmy along these ropes, climb them hand-over-hand, and use them to send messages or hang clothing to dry. Repair, in the city, is a constant: tektons swarm over whole neighborhoods,

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peeling them apart and putting them back together reinforced. Every Abusson spends a night or two each week mending rope, nets, and cloth sails. These chores are often undertaken around a communal stove in a town square, trading news with neighbors or discussing the latest arraces.

Rulership of the city is in the hands of the heads of the clans. A secret council of clan chiefs is called from time to time to decide the highest of the clans. That clan's chief becomes the king of the city. While the king holds a great deal of power, especially in dealing with foreign powers, they mostly mediate conflicts between clans. They must maintain support from the clans to stay in power, but likewise are always aware that their primary political rivals are from those same clans, and allowing any one family to grow too powerful is likely to result in a challenge to their leadership.

Tekton: A builder or construction worker. Able-bodied Abussos are drafted for a year of their choice between 16 and 25 to serve the city as a public tekton. Many continue professionally, joining the Tektotes clan by marriage or adoption.

Arrace: Airborne races between two to twenty flyers. Races are often preceded by displays of aerobatics and rope stunts like trapeze or tightrope-walking. The whole event is considered part of the arrace, though the race itself is, more properly, the arrace.

WINTER

While the mountains are locked in permanent winter, Abussos is instead in permanent summer. The hot wind from the Chasm heats the earth and creates a bubble of warm air, a climate unique to the Summer Valley. Snowmelt from the mountaintops feeds rivers and streams that rush toward the Chasm, ending in misty waterfalls descending into nothing. Natural and artificial dams create lakes in the higher hills of the Shore, and aqueducts stretch along the cables and bridges to the city. Little water is kept, permanently, in the city, as its weight would soon become dangerous. Instead, the water runs to communal fountains from which folk draw their water, and when the fountain is full it overflows down into the Chasm.

The permanent summer of the valley is interrupted unpredictably, no more than once a generation but sometimes for years, by winter. When the hot winds from below the city pause, for reasons unknown, winter is sure to come. After a season the air begins to cool. After a year the earth itself chills, and crops begin to struggle. After two years, or three, the wildlife moves out. No winter has ever lasted more than a decade, but that one long, dark winter nearly killed Abussos.

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At the end of winter there is usually a cataclysm: a burst of flaming particulate carried up the Chasm's shaft. Stones are sometimes thrown up alongside, or bursts of lava. Lightning strikes, and the air often turns toxic. When the first signs of these spring cataclysms appear Abussos often evacuate to the Shore, braving a few days of freezing cold rather than the volcanic disasters in town. Priests and mages sometimes hold the town, addressing fires and collapses with their magic and holding until the tektons can return to shore it up.

The current winter has been going on for a little over a year at the beginning of this campaign. For this whole time arraces have been suspended, the windmills have drifted slowly, and the flying freight has been grounded. Moreso than the eventual threat of cold and hunger, these inconveniences upset the people of Abussos. Without the conveniences of the Chasm's hot wind every task is more difficult and more dangerous, and tektons have even been assigned to shoring up parts of the city normally supported by the constant updraft.

PEOPLE

The city of Abussos is home to twenty-thousand Abussos, and another five-thousand live on the Shore and surrounding Summer Valley. Those in the city, and some of those in the shore, belong to great families, clans that operate Abussos. An Abusson's allegiance, duty, and honor are tied up in their family more than anything else. Social standing grows when more people join the family, and when the family's wealth grows; all else is secondary. Those without clans are outside the social strata, for good and for ill.

Each clan is not only a family, but a kind of guild: one for cutting and treating the lumber of the valley, one for the construction of the flying machines and windmills, one that designs and maintains the aqueducts, and so on. Every clan guards its territory jealously, whether that be trade secrets or natural resources. Joining a clan is typically a matter of adoption or marriage. The head of a family might adopt a promising Abusson to pass on the reins of the clan, or arrange a marriage to win influence or wealth by bringing a skilled or rich new member into the family.

Yoikon: A lineage within a clan, sometimes used interchangeably with 'family.' A yoikon is not usually a nuclear family (mother, father, kids), but an extended family including those who have married into or been adopted into the yoikon and clan. The smallest clans may consist of a single yoikon, while large clans may have forty or fifty yoikos of ten to thirty members each.

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Most Abussos wear brightly-colored woolen jackets linen shirts and skirts. Boots and bags are made of leather from the mountain yaks or bark from the valley's forests. Outsiders might make note of Abussos' shortness and slightness, though they're not outside of human norms. Most natives of the valley have light brown or dark blue eyes, and tan skin with yellow tones. The city's wealth means most Abussos can afford some simple jewelry, often bought at exceptionally high prices from foreign lands: ivory, pearls, silver, and gold - none of these are native to Abusson, or even within a month's travel.

Every clan and yoikon has their own slight variations of folk tales, superstitions, and especially songs. Performing another clan's songs is insulting, though not gravely so, and considered embarrassing for the performer. Joining in a performance of a family's song is a typical part of an adoption or marriage ceremony when someone joins a clan or yoikon. Some of the songs of a clan tell stories of its founding, some communicate parts of its duties and skills, and others are simply entertainment. The instruments vary, family by family, but those common to the valley include four-stringed guitars, panpipes, hand drums, and a kind of bowed string instrument like an erhu called the Abusson fiddle.

Daily life in Abussos is the usual blend of work and play, punctuated by small religious rites. Virtually everyone in Abussos is observant of the local religion, though few are dedicated enough to seek the mysteries and become priests or scholars of the religion. Abussos practice a worship of three gods, each of which has three faces or aspects. The religion also incorporates ancestor worship. Notable ancestors - members of the family, whether or not related by blood - are asked for intercession with the gods, acting as their messengers. Ancestors, depending on their heroics in life, may have strong ties to a god or an aspect of a god, acting as their representative exclusively or primarily. The great spirits of Abussos, the gods, are listed in the player's guide section.

War and warfare on a large scale rarely reach the Crown of the World. Armies cannot make their way through the mountain passes, and Abussos couldn't raise more than a few hundred soldiers to defend the city. As such, many of the traditions of warfare in the lowlands have never made it to Abussos. Plate armor is a matter of story, and most of the armor in Abussos is yak leather, sometimes with mail or splints. Weapons of war - like bastard swords, rapiers, and the like - are rare. Instead, the guards (and criminals) of Abussos favor weapons derived from common tools: hammers, axes, and spears, hunting bows and slings, and staves and clubs of all kinds. There is a strong tradition of hand-to-hand fighting in Abussos, called maksu, which incorporates short spears and one-handed hammers as common weapons.

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RELIGION IN ABUSSOS

The native religion in Abussos is polytheistic, with some ancestor worship. There are three primary gods, called great spirits, called Eu'los, Chro'los, and Pun'theli. Each has three 'secret faces' that are shown to initiates into their mysteries, the priests. Abussos pray to their spirits regularly for small things throughout the day. Three times throughout the day a massive pipe - like that of an organ, powered by windmills - in the center of the city sounds, calling for five minutes of silent worship.

The heroes of the clans are called upon to intercede with the gods on a worshippers behalf, or to guide the worshipper to the correct action, and similar. An Abusson might pray to an ancestor of their own, or an ancient member of their clan, or might simply pray to an Abusson past that was known for qualities the worshipper needs at that moment.

Abussos have a simple afterlife: when death comes, the person's spirit slowly separates from the body over the course of one to ten days, during which the body rests. When the spirit is fully free the body is committed to the Chasm, and the spirit may linger. Those spirits that are done follow the Cord upward to a place above the clouds where they join clans and live a kind of perpetual life, about which little is known or posited. The hearthfires of the dead can be seen in the stars at night, and Abussos have their own constellations assigning each shape of stars to a family and its heroes.

The three great spirits, and their hidden faces, are detailed below.

Eu'los: The great spirit of goodness, both in the sense of prescriptive actions and moral good.

Eumason: The aspect of Eu'los that represents balance. Eumason balances thought and action, happiness and trouble, and everything else. Someone that has lost control of their life, or acts unpredictably, is said to be cursed by Eumason.

Eugeon: Eu'los's facet of morality, Eugeon is the face of the god that teaches and enforces social mores. Helping neighbors, extending courtesy to strangers, proscriptions against vandalism and public fights, these are all Eugeon's domain. Further, Eugeon is the protector of both the Summer Valley and of the families, a shield against enemies and monsters.

Eunomos: Knowledge, in Abusson culture, is separated into eunos, or good knowledge, and maknos, or bad knowledge. Eunomos is the keeper, preserver, and teacher of good knowledge. This category covers technical skills, tradecraft, and religious knowledge that aligns with Eu'los's purviews. Eunomos can be called upon for wisdom and guidance in difficult tasks (while Eugeon would be asked for guidance in tough decisions).

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Abussos

Chro'los: The great spirit of freedom, disorder, and change.

Chromenon: Chro'los's face of chaos, Chromenon is not frequently invoked in Abussos. While disorder and upheaval are necessary parts of life, as Eumason teaches, inviting these things into one's life is scary. Typically Chromenon is asked to either throw a rival's life into disarray, or to shake up things that have become stale and tiresome - such as when one is trapped in a bad job, or with a bad partner, or so on.

Chrotika: Growth and change is the domain of Chrotika. The growth of crops and livestock, the growth of children, the turning of the seasons - these things are sometimes messy and chaotic, but necessary. Priests celebrate major holidays like the turning of the seasons or the opening of the mountain passes under Chrotika's signs.

Chro Misko: The spirit of freedom and discovery, Chro Misko is the patron of youths, of changing clans or families in weddings and similar rites, and the patron of overcoming obstacles. Understandably, Chro Misko is thus one of the most popular faces of the spirits of Abussos, with many small holidays throughout the year.

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Pun'theli: The great spirit of order, duty, death, and leadership.

Puntrakos: Puntrakos is the face of Pun'theli that imposes or finds order. The cycle of the moon and all the other laws of nature are organized according to Puntrakos's instructions. While this spirit doesn't get the kinds of large celebrations that some of the other great spirits enjoy, the small successes of day-to-day life are deeply indebted to its guidance. Further, Puntrakos is the god of duty: just like everything has its place, so too does every person have their duty to their family, their city, and to the spirits themselves.

Punel: The face of death in Abussos is Punel. This spirit is the inevitable, the unavoidable, and often the unpleasant. Thankfully, Punel is also the teacher that shows Abussos how to approach, accept, and grieve the things that they can't change, and is often depicted as such, wearing a scholar's robes.

Punpellit: This spirit is the patron of rulership, through the king and through the leaders of each clan, even through the boss of a job site or similar. Abussos are expected to defer to leaders in areas of their expertise or authority, and in reciprocation leaders have a duty to do right by their people.

THE SHORELANDS

Around the edge of the Chasm is the Shore, and surrounding the Shore is the Summer Valley. The borders of the Summer Valley are the ragged peaks of the White Cloud Mountains. Around the radius of the Chasm, every quarter-mile or so, are gigantic slabs of stone studded with metal that have been sunk deep into the earth well back from the Chasm itself. These slabs are the anchors from which cables run into the city. Each one sports dozens of eyes and hooks, or sometimes has holes bored straight through, which hold the bridges into the city.

Farmland covers half the valley, and thick woods the other half. The farmlands produce flax, barley, potatoes, carrots, and a wide variety of chilies. Orchards of tart little apples and golden pears abut the woodlands. The woods are mostly evergreens, spotted with carefully-raised patches of hardwoods like ash and maple. Out beyond the woods outlanders tend to herds of yak that belong to the city's Herten clan, and small dairies and butchers sit at the edge of the valley.

While the city's borders are clear and its size small - ten square miles, half the total area of the Chasm's mouth - the Summer Valley sprawls. Its edges stretch as far as the warmth of the Chasm's wind, so some valleys wind up to forty miles away from the Trixion Cord. Even those that are closer, only fifteen miles away or so, may take two or three days to traverse due to the forest and the ragged hills. Three main roads extend from the

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Chasm beyond the borders of the valley, each leading through a convenient pass toward Abussos' nearest neighbors.

Owing to the isolation of the Summer Valley incursions and invasions are almost unheard-of. Trade, as well, is sparse. The passes are only open for a month in late summer each year, and so travelers come in to set up temporary villages of trade at the Shore-sides of the bridges. These trade villages have a carnival air, full of entertainment and haggling. As the weather turns the villagers pack up and leave, promising to return the next year. The wealth of Abussos keeps the traders coming back: flecks and strands from the Cord, rare stones spit up from the Chasm after its winters, and natural dyes.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The adventure is designed for a party of four adventurers of level 3, with some suggestions on scaling the difficulty of challenges up or down for more or less powerful groups.

The adventure begins after a year of winter. The Chasm's wind has quieted, and the air grows cold. The clans of Abussos are pushing hard to gather what they can before the weather grows colder, and are all praying to Anap for a brief winter and a harmless spring cataclysm. As clans jockey for position two families come into conflict.

Players are asked to investigate attacks and disasters at the homes and lumberyards of the Lumben clan in the Shorelands. A kidnapping leads the investigators to the Pit, a club in Abussos frequented by the criminal element of the city. Clues gathered from muggers and thieves point to the River clan, the Lumben clan's primary rivals for status. Infiltrating the River clan's county with support from the Brightwind family's guards leads to the capture of a young River family head who was organizing the attacks. Religious scripture tattooed on the family head and their top agents points to their fanatical motivation in these crimes.

The winter deepens and the River clan fights back, vigorously contesting the idea that they were behind the attacks on Lumben groves. As those that uncovered the initial evidence, the player characters are asked by King Brightwind to investigate the River clan's assertion that the Lumbens framed them. The Rivers' books and homes are opened to the player characters, though they are attacked by mysterious strangers throughout their investigation, all marked with the same strange religious script found on the Rivers from the first chapter. After following the evidence back to the Pit, it becomes evident that everyone involved in the River clan's attacks on the Lumben, and in the Lumben clan's framing of the Rivers, is new to each family. By tugging on this thread the player characters find a ritual site where doppelgangers are put together, the source of these false

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family-members. Both clans are cleared of their accusations, though the hand pulling the strings remains hidden.

In absence of hard evidence, King Brightwind closes the case and calls for a hunt for evil mages. Assets from the Rivers and Lumbens are split up and family members severed, reassigned to other clans that support the Brightwinds but could not threaten them. Under the boot of the royal clan the Lumbens and Rivers come together and press the player characters to help them discover who was behind the bloody events of the last few weeks.

The Brightwind guards arrest the player characters, and the Lumbens and Rivers help to break them out, then set them up at a safehouse in the woods of the Shorelands. As the winter drags the conflict between the newly-allied clans and the royals becomes open warfare, with bands of clan warriors meeting in town squares, in alleys, on the bridges. A final push by King Brightwind brings the fight to the Shore, where player characters must defeat the monarch and his religious zealots, under a banner of cult symbols related to those of the earlier chapters.

As the king falls his priests finish a ritual to banish winter and release their patron, Igezot, a powerful spirit of fire. The spring cataclysm is triggered early and fiercely, and flaming debris gouts up the Chasm's shaft. As the town burns the player characters must fight through members of this fiery doomsday cult to their sacred hearth and leap through the portal therein to confront the Red Wind.

Each chapter of this campaign consists of a short adventure that should fill four sessions of play. Between each chapter player characters will level up, gaining four levels over the course of the adventure.

Between these 'seasons' of play side quests fill the time. Players will have the opportunity to explore the city and the Shorelands, uncover treasure, and even execute a heist by gliding from a frozen mountaintop to the highest points of the city. The first session of the campaign is a single-session adventure, and there are four additional side quests that should take up two sessions each.

With side quests and the main campaign together, this series should present enough material for twenty-five sessions... dependent, of course, on your group's play style.

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The rules, challenges, items, monsters, and characters presented in this campaign use Dungeons & Dragons, 5th Edition. If you choose to use a different system you can use the conversion guidelines below.

	Check DC	Attack or Skill Bonus	Hit Points	Damage
Insubstantial	5	+0	5	1
Minor	10	+2	15	1d4
Moderate	15	+5	30	2d6
Major	20	+8	60	3d8
Insurmountable	25	+12	120	5d10



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PLAYER'S GUIDE

Welcome to Abussos! The city is a dense tangle of wooden dwellings and businesses, town squares, and wide roadways suspended over a bottomless pit by thousands of miles of cables, cords, and ropes. Lancing down from the sky through the center of the city and into the chasm is a cord of titanic size woven of light and stone. All of this, a wonder of the world, is guarded from the outside by the impassable crests of the White Cloud Mountains.

The people of Abussos live their lives centered on their clans. Each clan is a unit of family and a business all in one. The clans each have their territory staked out: timber, masonry, farming, aqueducts, scholarship... Any profession with a wealth of knowledge eventually becomes its own clan. These clans are made up of yoikons, individual blood-family units, which from themselves elect a leader. The leaders of the clans then meet in secret to select a king, whose primary responsibility is to keep the clans balanced enough against each other to allow the twenty-thousand-or-so Abussos in the city to live their lives.

Five-thousand more live on the Shore: farmers, woodsmen and trappers, and traders that have their homes close to the fairgrounds that host visitors to the city for the brief time each year that the mountain passes empty of snow and ice. Many of these shore-folk are members of the clans, though their population includes those outcasts and loners that prefer to claim no family or profession.

From the chasm beneath a hot wind blows year-round. This wind is the living breath of the Summer Valley. It warms the air and the earth, allowing Abussos to farm at any time of year and to live wearing light linens rather than heavy wool and furs. The wind pushes the windmills that help the city run. It lifts and carries the paper-winged message tubes that zip from window to window, and it lifts the vast gliding carts that move freight in Abussos. The wind also carries the people of Abussos on flying contraptions called trugae for contests of speed and aerial flair. Without the wind the city grinds to a halt.

Those periods without the summer-hot wind from the Chasm are when winter comes to Abussos: the air cools, and eventually the ground of the Shore does as well. If the winter goes on long enough the crops die, the animals flee the valley, and eventually the city itself must be abandoned. Luckily, no winter in the last three-hundred years has been so difficult, and winters are rare: only once a decade, sometimes as rarely as once a generation. The longer between them, the worse each winter is, and when the winter ends it does so with disaster: fire and smoke pour up from the Chasm, making the city uninhabitable for weeks or months in the worst cases.

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Winter came to Abussos just under a year ago for the first time in twenty years, and citizens are just starting to get nervous about how long it may drag on.

Abussons have started praying to their ancestors for intercession with the gods of Abussos for a quick end to the winter: Eu'los, the god of good action, balance, and good knowledge; Chro'los, the god of change, freedom, and chaos; and Pun'theli, the god of death, order, and duty. While life in Abussos normally pauses at the sounding of the great pipes in the center of town for prayer three times a day, now citizens might pause before each meal, or when they meet with strangers or family, or simply pause in the middle of a crowd to look into the distance and pray a moment. Winter is a time for piety.

ABUSSON CURIOSITIES

The Summer Valley is full of unique wildlife, evolved to take advantage of the bizarre climate and without much contact with the outside world. Similarly, the customs and beliefs of the valley are isolated from the outside world.

Bees: A few hundred years ago, seeing the great values of beeswax and honey, the Koustin clan arranged for the careful transport of a few hives of bees up the mountains and into the Summer Valley. Those bees were charmed to be resilient and productive, and every bee in the valley now carries a bit of that magic with them. The bees are unusually intelligent - no doubt a side effect of the magic - and beekeepers treat them more like pets than insects. Many Koustin households have a beehive or box in the home itself or on the roof.

Candles: In Abussos a burning candle is a common symbol of the passage of time. The flame - time itself - slowly consumes the world. Our experiences are the flames, the smoke is our memory. As a folk superstition Abussons try not to let candles burn themselves out - it's considered bad luck, or inviting misfortune from Chromenon. Candles are also used in many of the prayers and celebrations in Abusson, and in small rituals at home.

Charm Tunes: Just as Abussons use songs and rhymes to pass along knowledge and stories, so too are these little tunes used for blessings and curses. A whistle or a hum acts as a short prayer, and short mocking rhymes often have a rival's name substituted. These tunes are especially common at arraces, where a crowd might chant a rhyme or sing a wordless song to show their support (or disdain).

Personal Space: Outsiders must grow accustomed to Abusson greetings and personal space quickly. The average Abusson is very comfortable speaking with a group gathered within arm's reach - conversation often

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takes place so close one can feel the others' breath. Similarly, greetings are not made by clasped hands at a pace away; when two Abussos meet they press their cheeks or foreheads together momentarily. When joining a crowd an individual might get away with nudging only a few, though at formal events they're expected to approach and greet every other person there.

Ropers: Where footpads sneak down alleyways in other cities, ropers pick their ways along ropes, nets, and cords in Abussos. The gigantic nets hung under the city to catch falling individuals and stuff are a kind of roadway for the criminal element. Roper is the common Abusson term for a burglar, mugger, or the like.

Walk of Cleansing: Abussos is too small to keep jails, and too tight-knit to permit frequent executions. Instead, a criminal might be subject to a walk of cleansing. This ritual is performed over the course of a full day and includes parading the subject up and down every street and along the Shore, chanting their sins and describing them in unfavorable terms. While the criminals don't go to jail, the shame may follow them their entire life.

Wingtails: Most notable among the unique creatures of the Summer Valley are wingtails. These creatures resemble ten-pound flying squirrels, but have become exceptionally comfortable in human settlements. The tamed wingtails are loyal and bright, while the feral ones are scavenging menaces - like flying raccoons. Wingtails are absolutely everywhere in Abussos, perching on eaves and scurrying along wires.

Writing: There is no tradition of writing in Abussos, and a written form of the spoken language has only been adopted in the last hundred years. Thus, there are few books in Abussos, no schools of wizardry, and much of the population is illiterate. Specialized knowledge is passed down by songs and stories and personal instruction. Pens, ink, and paper are all rare and expensive in Abussos, though the Weaven clan are experimenting with linen paper.

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CHARACTERS

The characters here are to help you start your campaign quickly and easily. Each has one or more ties to the city of Abussos, and some will have connections to the events of the campaign.

If you choose to build your own character for this campaign, consider how your background and class might be expressed in Abusson, and use the notes in the Player's Guide section to tie your character to the world. Further rules for creating your own character follow our sample characters.

Sample character sheets are provided in the center of this booklet. Each can be torn out for use or copied onto blank character sheets.

CREATING AN ABUSSON CHARACTER

If you choose to create a character from outside the Summer Valley note that they'll suffer from skysickness on first reaching the city. Visitors rarely stay more than a year - adjusting to life over a gaping pit seems difficult for more outsiders - and so you likely came to Abussos about three weeks ago, the last time the passes were open. There are no specific restrictions for characters that are not from Abussos, but a few things are worth noting:

Horses cannot get to Abussos. The mountain passes are too steep and twisted for pack animals other than goats, burros, and yaks, and none of these submit to being ridden. Mounted characters will have to use magic to summon a steed, or else go without.

Bringing heavy armor to Abussos is virtually impossible, and also useless since war has never made it to Abussos. Full metal suits of plate or mail are difficult to travel in at the best of times, and when hiking up a mountain are a deadly mistake. Similarly, there is no smithy in Abussos that is equipped to create such a suit of armor.

Almost everyone in Abussos is a human. Rare half-elves crop up from time to time as old blood shines through, and there is similarly enough extraplanar blood to manifest in tieflings, genasi, and aasimar, but these are extreme rarities: among the 25,000 inhabitants of the Summer Valley there may be five to ten such people alive at any given time.

Outsiders will be viewed with a certain measure of unfamiliarity. Abussos are not hostile to outsiders - on the contrary, the weeks-long period in late summer when the passes open and visitors arrive in the valley are cause for fairs and celebrations! - but Abussos travel rarely, and are unfamiliar with foreign ways. Confusion breeds disagreements and discomfort, and it's possible to deliver insult without meaning: characters not originally from Abussos should be adaptable to the local customs.

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Skysickness: The White Cloud Mountains are immensely high in altitude, and even though Abussos is guarded from the cold of the mountaintops it has the same thin air. Abussos grow up breathing in a low-oxygen environment, but visitors often succumb to skysickness: they struggle to breathe, grow tired easily, or are nauseated.

A creature that is new to the mountaintops suffers a -5 penalty to attacks and ability checks, and must make a DC 15 Con saving throw after any strenuous activity – such as climbing a mountain, running, or fighting – or suffer a level of exhaustion up to once per hour.

This penalty and DC decrease by 1 each week, and when they reach 0 the creature no longer needs to make such saving throws. Once a creature is past this sickness they do not suffer it again until they spend a year or more at lower altitudes.

Many substances, magical items and equipment, and mundane gear may not be available in Abussos. Characters that expect or need easy access to ball bearings, gems, scrolls, poisons, or the like will be disappointed by their rarity in the high mountains.

When creating an Abusson character, use the following guidelines and restrictions:

Species: Virtually everyone in Abussos is human, so we recommend recontextualizing a species' unique powers as features of that character's ancestry, life, or training. For example, a species that grants natural armor might mean that a character is big-boned, or has earned the blessing of an earth spirit. A character that has some kind of divine power might be close to their ancestors rather than descended from angels.

Regardless of other choices, Abussos are Medium-sized and look human.

Class: Abussos has no Artificers or Wizards. All the other classes are represented and have at least one or two mentors or peers in the city. Certain subclasses, such as the druidic circle of wildfires, may not be thematically appropriate, but could also be outliers or re flavor the subclass. Speak with your GM to determine if a given character class and subclass work.

Backgrounds: The city is large enough to support most walks of life, from thief to scholar to mason. Setting-specific backgrounds are likely inappropriate, as are some like sailor or pirate that rely on access to the sea. In general, any background that assumes access or proximity to areas of high magic, large developed cities, or unusual magic is likely to be inappropriate for an Abusson. One additional exception exists: Abussos does not have a standing army, and so the soldier background is not a good fit.

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Pick your character's name. Names in Abussos have a Himalayan sound, though common words use Greek roots. Given names include: Mido, Nisa, Kalten, Lundar, Gyata, Gaden, Jaden, Deche, Chopke, Aden, Ritze, Sampyo, Tashe, or Yonton.

Finally, think about your relationship to your immediate family, your yoikon, your clan, and your profession. Your immediate family are those to whom you were born: father, mother, siblings. Your yoikon is your extended family, counting marriages and adoptions, and might mix both blood and clan. Your clan, of course, is a larger family social structure that is bound together by marriages and adoptions and has some profession that is unique to them. Some of the clans are listed below, and you can work with your GM to create another clan if none of those below fit.

Agrolon: Farmers and herders belong to the Agrolon clan.

Brightwind: The current ruling clan, the Brightwinds are in charge of the design, construction, and maintenance of the city's wind-powered mechanisms. Windmills, floating freight, and the arraces all fall under their purview.

Koustin: Butchers, bakers, and beekeepers all belong to the Koustin family. While Abussos is not a large enough city to support more than one or two eateries, the Koustin are the clan in control of fermenting tea, mixing up certain sauces and dishes, and any specialized food preparation process in Abussos.

Lamplux: Despite their name, most of the Lamplux clan's business is in candles, tapers, torches, and lanterns. Anything to do with volatile chemicals is also the business of the Lampluxes, who quietly refine and test strange substances in basement laboratories looking for something new.

Lumben: The Lumben clan guard and grow the timber that builds the city. While many of the Lumben live on the Shore, plenty are in the city proper as well.

River: Fishing, fountains, and aqueducts are the secrets of the River clan.

Schola: Storytellers, teachers, and the priesthood typically belong to the Schola clan. While Abusson was late to adopt writing as a widespread practice, the Schola clan has written records of family trees and clan agreements that go back well before the last time the town was abandoned over three-hundred years ago.

Tannet: The slow and steady yaks that provide Abussos' dairy also supply it with hair, hide, and leather, which the Tannet clan turn into tools, hats, boots, and bags.

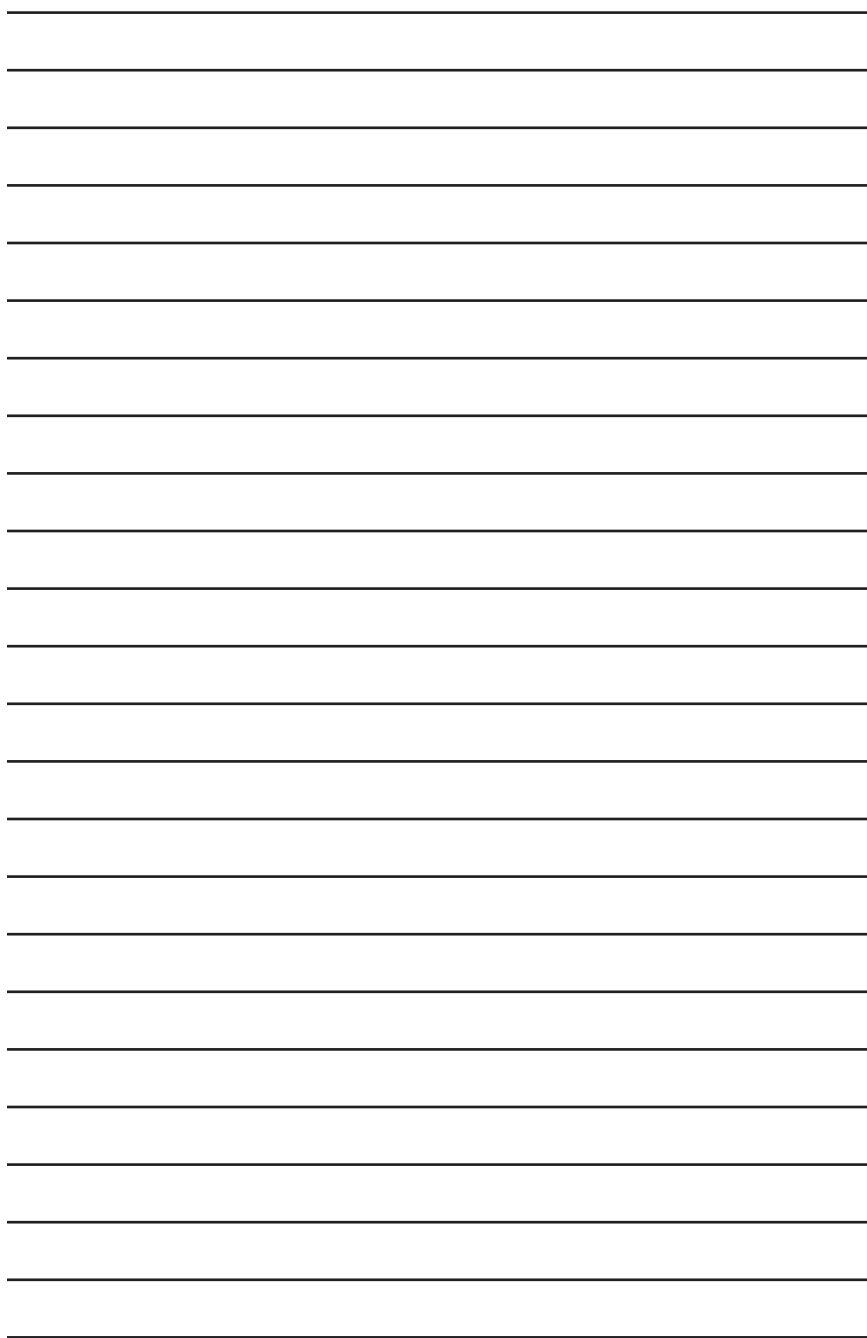
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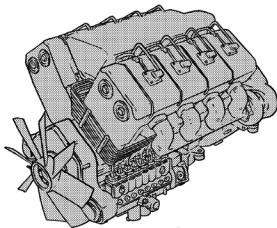
Tektotes: The builders, carpenters, and masons of Abussos belong to the Tektotes clan.

Weaven: Every able-bodied individual in Abussos spends some of their time mending ropes, nets, and clothing, but only the Weaven have the equipment and expertise for certain techniques and fabrics.

To create a character in line with the sample characters in this guide:

- use the point-buy or standard array methods for assigning abilities
- take average hp each level
- take one magical item of uncommon rarity, with your GM's approval (or three potions or spell scrolls, with level 1 spell effects)





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