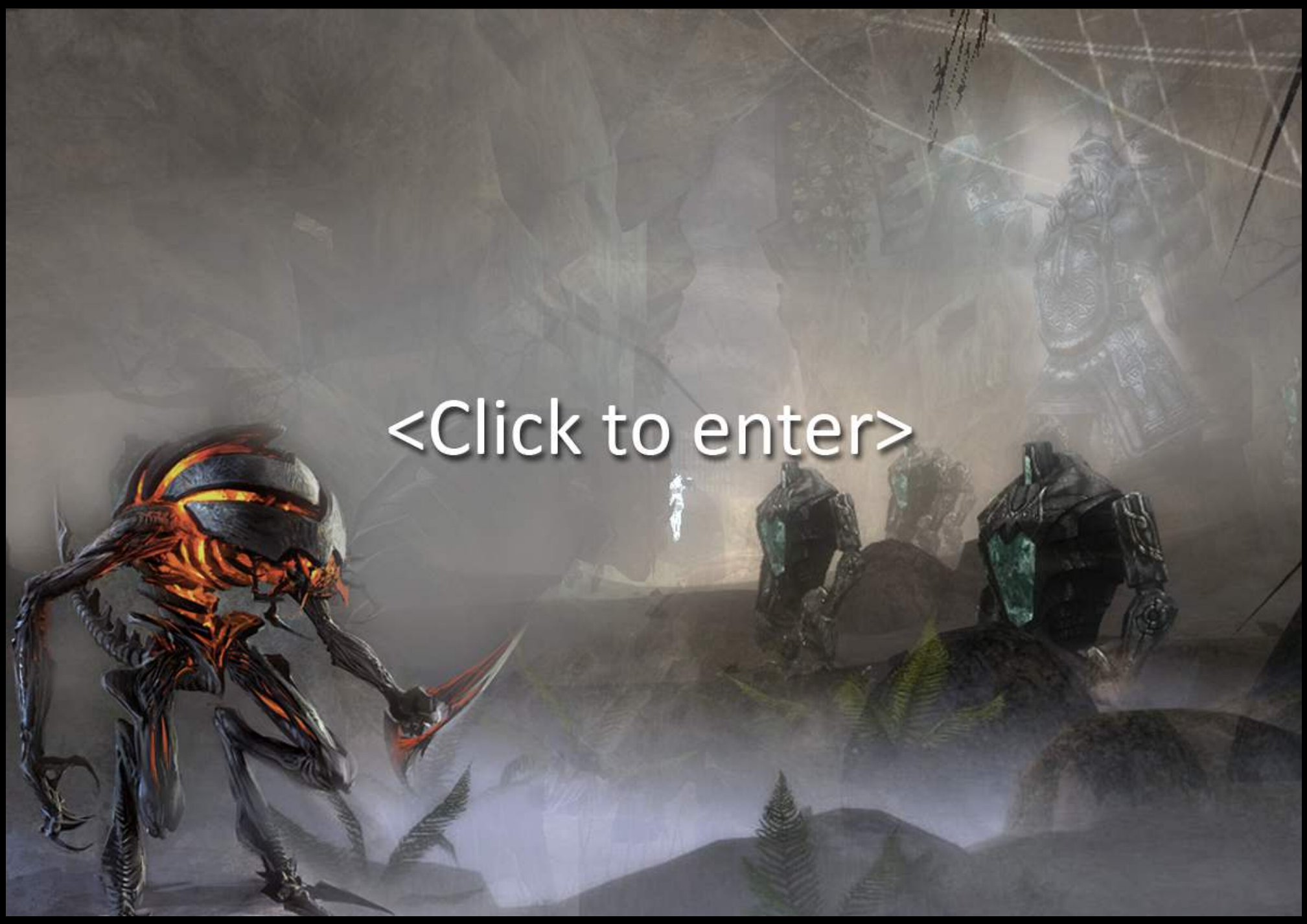
GuildMag

November issue #8: Depths of Tyria



GuildMag

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Enter GuildMag

The past few months were certainly busy, and with five conventions gone by things ought to take a slower pace again; reason enough to give you a new edition of our magazine! Aside of an in-depth summary of all the news we recorded or wrote during or after GamesCom, we present you with exciting lore articles that includes a look at the Depths of Tyria, the destroyers and plenty more. In this issue, there is also a bunch of fan fiction, written by both in-house writers and by other, passionate, fans around the community. Of course we cannot leave out the usual interviews with community people, and we also offer you some exclusive (less-than-real) vacations to three ideal locations! That, and much more can be found inside this new issue. What are you waiting for? Read, enjoy, comment!

Don’t forget: you can always submit your own articles via our website if you want to be featured in the next issue of GuildMag!

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- **The Catacombs**
  Learn more about this mysterious network of passages deep below Ascalon.
- **On The Tube With Daelin Dwin: Music Special**
  Daelin Dwin looks at four amazing covers of the original Guild Wars soundtrack by Jeremy Soul.
- **The Destroyers**
  Learn everything about the beings created out of fire and stone: the destroyers. Their history, present and future!
- **Dutch's Talk with... Rubi (Massively)**
  In Dutch's next community talk we chat it up with Rubi from Massively and Guildcast.
- **Humans of Elona**
  Elona, Land of the Golden Sun, is a region where the sun is brightest and is home to the three human provinces of Istan, Kourna, and Vabbi.
- **The Decaying Diary**
  In 1075AE, Abaddon was not destroyed. Not completely. Shortly after Kormir's ascension, one lone traveler unwillingly finds himself amidst a plot to bring back the God of Secrets; but as he struggles with his own torments, he must make an impossible choice that could break Tyria forever.
- **GamesCom Roundup**
  We went to GamesCom and went home with quite a lot of footage, interviews, screenshots, hands-on impressions and much more!
- **Mercenary Heroes winners!**
  Check out these awesome winners of our mercenary hero contest all with their own unique style. Laughs are guaranteed.
- **Featured Artist: Charlie Dayman**
  He has won multiple prizes in various Guild Wars contests, master of multiple art styles and much more.
- **Dwarven Religion**
  The dwarves may not survive until Guild Wars 2, but that doesn't make them any less interesting. Their religion is a huge story plot for most of the original Guild Wars and the expansion: Eye of the North.
- **Fall of Gods (Chapter 2 & 3)**
  A continuation of Konig Des Todes' fan-fiction from issue 7.
- **Skritt and Asura: Deep Hostility**
  Littleboat takes a deeper look at the relationships between the skritt and the asura.
- **Embark Beach Travels**
  Are you tired of your hometown? Want to go out on a well-deserved vacation? Then check out this action-packed offers from Embark Beach Travels!
- **Community Reaction to the Engineer**
  If there's one profession that stirred up the community, it's definitely the Engineer. With its steampunk-like feel it brought up mixed feelings towards this profession.
- **Dungeons: The Structures and Their Builders**
  Ever wondered the story behind the dungeons which you stumble upon during Eye of the North? In this article you'll find out just what that story is about.
- **Children of Legend**
  Dassk, a human whom no longer had any connections with his homeland, ventured into the Northern Shiverpeaks territory in search of an item which he is tasked to find.
- **Poetry submissions**
  Inspiring poetry about the dream of the sylvari and the difficulties which the charr have to overcome.
- **End of the line**
  The last tidbits.

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GUILDMAG
November issue #8: DEPTHS OF TYRIA

The Catacombs

by Thalador Doomspeaker

The Catacombs in Guild Wars:

The Catacombs is a mysterious underground network of various structures, halls, chambers, and natural caverns below much of central Ascalon. Given the short time our Ascalonian characters could spend in their then beautiful country, we were unable to learn much about the many secrets the Catacombs hold: origins, date of creation, the builders, the purpose of the structures and rooms, the reason why it became neglected and abandoned, etc.

After the Searing, the characters were completely cut off from the Catacombs, thus our small knowledge of the area comes from that one bright day when Ascalon burned.



For many people, possibly the first steps in the Catacombs happened during their primary, or secondary profession training – or they were simply curious, accepted a later quest that took them to the underground complex, wanted to trade in some collectibles for better armor pieces, or had some completely different reason.

So, focusing on the monk training quest and another side-quest given by Mistress Munne, there are a few things that we can discover early on: the corridors closest to Ashford Abbey contained the buried remains of Ascalonian soldiers who had given their lives protecting their nation from Orrian and Krytan guilds, and of course from the charr in the north. The other one is that the Catacombs held (and hopefully still hold) mysterious artefacts – it might be a surprise as the more adventurous (grave) robbers could've easily stolen the more valuable relics by 1072 AE.

From further quests it also turns out that its dark halls offered refuge to unsavoury characters (mostly undead) who either went there hiding (Kasha's formerly living, turned undead students, the Blood Fanatics) or people who liked to be left alone and lived in the shadows, like Oberan the Reviled.

My well educated colleague, Artaxerxes, will speak more of the mysteries of the style the architecture here; however, I would like to introduce some rooms of the Catacombs – it could come in handy sooner or later...

Due to the great number of Grenth statues within the Catacombs it can be said that it was devoted to the God of Death from the very beginning or at least after the Ascalonians had settled down on the high plain after pushing the charr back to their northern homelands. Only one mural of Dwayna was visible to the players, watching over the restless, ghostly warriors I mentioned earlier. And even then, the beautiful winged goddess was sternly watched by the cold eyes of one of Grenth's statues, rising above his mortal subjects in a nearby, dark corner.

This chamber in the northeastern corner of the explorable region of the Catacombs is the most interesting to me. The hall there contained hundreds of coffins, guarded by stone gargoyles perched on the pillars and columns. But the most enigmatic feature was the three stone heads of heroes (two females and one male) looking down upon the characters from the far end of the room, illuminated by the sunlight. Who were these heroes? Do they have any connection to the similarly carved gigantic stone statues buried and crumbling in the crystalline sand of the Crystal Desert? My lorehound self demands answers from Guild Wars 2, and I can only hope he will be satisfied.



Addendum: This paragraph was written before gamescom, when we didn't know about Duke Barradin's soul possessing a very similar statue (this time a bust with arms though, instead of the heads) in his family's vault in the charr tutorial area. At a Lore Q&A panel with Ree Soesbee and John Ryan it turned out the statue the duke takes control of is an ancestral statue of his family - meaning that the other stone sculptures in the area are probably depicting the ancestors of Ascalonian noble families. Still, the questions in the previous paragraphs are still worthy of acquiring answers to them.

Then there was the large pit area in the western, northwestern part of the explorable Catacombs. The room itself was circular with a giant hole in the middle, which was so deep that the bottom of it could not have been seen in the light-poor environment. The pit was also "watched over" by the same gargoyles of legend I spoke of previously, equally divided around the "well." An unwary adventurer could've easily found him or herself in trouble here, as the undead amassed near this pit in great numbers. Oberan the Reviled also lurked in this chamber, claiming that this way "he would be away from the prying eyes of the living." Maybe he was behind the unusual amount of undead in the area after all, no? Unfortunately, we will never know, because he got killed by some Ascalonian younglings after he had gone insane and started harassing farmers with his undead servants.



And last but not least, the ritual chamber. Another dangerous place it was, especially for the victims (like Farmer Pitney’s Prize Moa Bird) of those who were offered as sacrifices to nightmares from beyond. Take a good look at the past look of this place... something tells me it’s not the last time we’ve seen it.

Wait a second! One of the key features was almost forgotten. The first Giganticus Lupicus skeletons the players and their characters ever set their eyes on – which can be easily missed. Remember the old days? When you read the Manuscripts and stumbled upon the first entry in the Timeline: 10,000 BE - Last of the Giganticus Lupicus, the Great Giants, disappear from the Tyrian continent. You thought it was a nice little tidbit about the lore of Tyria, and a bit later you threw yourself into Guild Wars for the first time, busting skales in the beautiful Lakeside County, forgetting this eerie date and the event connected to it. More than 2 years later their name was spoken again, but the context was different… the Elder Dragons, the greatest threat Tyria has ever seen is somehow connected to them. Maybe they were the prey, or just simple nemeses of the great dragons, but those primordial entities have been here around the time when the Giants disappeared from the world. It might not have meant much in 2005, but now that place has a significance... at least for lore-lovers, though I hope I’m not wrong when I say that non-hardcore lore people is be intrigued as well.

Then again, there is another interesting thought that emerged with the release of the Bonus Mission Pack. The mission called the Flight North – that deals with how Gwen escaped from her charr slavers seven years after the Searing – takes place up in the north, where the northern Blazeridge Mountains connect into the Northern Shiverpeaks. These lands had once belonged to Duke Gaban, before the charr started the invasion into human lands. However, the real food for thought here is another underground complex that

holds large murals of a warrior scholar and research of a wise and brave mesmer who devised many spells to hinder the invading charr hordes. The villagers and the townsfolk who the unknown mesmer belonged to made their last stand in this underground complex. His last entry is really touching:

> *"The Charr have come to us. All I can do is try to save my research in the hope that someone can use it to forge a better future for mankind. It was this overwhelming desire to stem the tide that inspired my last spell. I have found a way to use the ether to directly inhibit a foe's mind. The weave is complex, but when properly crafted the spell slows a foe's actions. It is as if he is moving through molasses. If only this could slow the wave of inevitability about to wash over us. Perhaps some might escape..."*

It is entirely possible that this northern entrance is also connected - through some unseen tunnels or passages - to the "main body" in central Ascalon, which puts things into a new perspective regarding origins of the whole complex. On the other hand, it still doesn't mean that the vast majority of the chambers and structures in the Catacombs were not hewn out and into a natural cavern system. Even then, the origins of a cavern that spans an entire basin between two large mountain ridges is still very intriguing. What kind of natural processes created it? Or was it the result of an artificial (read: magical) phenomenon? Say, like a cataclysm similar to the one caused by Abaddon's defeat?

The Catacombs in the Dragon and Ghost-Haunted Days of the Sequel:

Right, I'm not going into the details (see Mr Jeff Grubb's & Mr Matt Forbeck's Ghosts of Ascalon for that), but the gist of the events relating to the current state of the Catacombs (wait... why I'm even writing this? If you didn't know about the next few lines after the parentheses, I must ask you this: where on Tyria have you been in the last couple of months?): King Adelbern went completely nuts, and set off the Foefire: another magical nuke on the day when the charr were about to conquer Ascalon City. However, instead of gigantic purple crystals impacting into the ground, the magical blast incinerated the charr besiegers of the city, but went much further in affecting the humans inside Ascalon's borders. Every man, woman, and child died, then returned as vengeful ghosts trapped in time – reliving the day of the Foefire again and again, strongly believing that the charr are at the gates and they could begin the siege at any moment.



During the epic story of our heroes, we get to visit the Catacombs at level 30. Eir, norness sculptor and co-founder of the legendary Destiny's Edge, wants to recover the weapon that held (and possibly still holds) the power of Foefire. Actually, this sword, Magdaer, originates from Orr, when the human gods walked amongst the mortals of the land, thus it is possible it was crafted or enchanted by one or more members of the Six. The sword's sister is Sohothin, the late Prince Rurik's sword, which is now wielded by Rytlock Brimstone – at least he and his buddy, Logan, claim that it is actually Sohothin, and not just an "ordinary" Fiery Dragon Sword. So, Eir goes on her foolhardy mission right into the Catacombs, but Tribune Brimstone is worried that people could get hurt and wants to stop the norn before the whole Ascalonian spectral army awakens and begins slaughtering everything that Adelbern's hatred compels them to do so. Rytlock sends for reinforcements, and our heroes answer his call. We are greeted with a few disparaging words and a similar introductory speech – that is, of course, more awesome due to Steve Blum's (Rytlock's voice actor) amazing narrative and the gorgeous concept art cinematic that's guaranteed to give you goosebumps. (I actually started jumping on my chair when I first saw the sequence Foefire's blast and curse in the sequence... nerds these days.) And after that we finally take our first steps in the Catacombs after more than 250 years...

Inside we will fight spirits of the now-non-existant monk girls (using the updated Ray of Judgement), elusive mesmers, spectral elementalist nuking the hell out of you if you're not careful, and many-many more ghost warriors and rangers (in the released footage, I haven't seen ordinary ghost necromancers so far). Of course, the bosses can't be missing from such an epic, nostalgic endeavour, so the restless souls of our Ascalonian GW1 trainers are going to try to stop us from reaching their mad king: Necromancer Munne, Ralena Stormbringer & Vassar (the lovers), and Master Ranger Nente. After the heroes have fought their way through the many chambers I detailed in the first section, Adelbern finally appears for a big showdown. If you defeat the last king of Ascalon, you get a token that you can turn in for a Ghastly weapon (see last year's Gamescom demo), and go on your way that will take you to Arah in the end. Well, surely, you'll get there sometime, but don't think that the situation in the Catacombs is stabilized. Far from it...

By weakening the ghosts, an unnatural darkness (the gravelings – I can imagine them to be quite reminiscent to the Behemoth Gravebanes from Elona, just a bit smaller) is trying to take over the area. Add the fact that they feed on ghosts, and you'll see that this doesn't bode well for anyone. So, Durmand Priory sends three people to deal with the problem: a charr, a human, and an asura. Each of them proposes a different method to solve the graveling menace, and each method offers a fundamentally different approach and experience at how you and your group will do the exploration mode.

The main objective is to kill the graveling patriarch. The asura's (Tzark) plan involves essence collectors being set up in the Lover's Crypt (the place where Vassar and Ralena can be together in death) for the obvious reason, in my opinion, to collect enough ghastly essence/residue from the area that even the patriarch (who probably only goes for the truly delicious and powerful spirits) won't be able to resist the temptation of a - seemingly - easy meal. Which will result in his inevitable death, as Tzark will probably stop at nothing to accomplish the task - yes, that may include your life, fellow adventurer, so I strongly suggest keeping an eye on the little guy.

The other plan is about making the proposer and the group look completely ghostly (don't ask me how), and tricking Warmaster Grast's ghost and those of his fellow soldiers into assaulting the patriarch. If I had to bet, I'd say it's the plan of the human "Priorite." Only we can be so sly and deceitful.

Unfortunately, I don't know plan #3, and this will probably be the case until the long-awaited and almost heavenly moment of this unearthly brilliant game's release arrives and passes away - you got to give me a day or two to get to the Catacombs from level 1.

Well, that was my silly summary of the currently known lore of the Catacombs. Since I became sentimental from writing the previous paragraph, all I can say is that I yearn to share more information about this ancient place that tears at our soul as we think back of the good old days when we took our first steps in Pre-Searing Ascalon.



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On The Tube With Daelin Dwin: Music Special



The music composed by Jeremy Soule for all four Guild Wars games is undeniably awesome, so awesome that I chose four videos containing some of my favourite covers of Soule's phat beatz.

#1

"Overture from Eye of the North" | Guild Wars: Eye of the North by BranShew7

This video is no longer available on YouTube.

My personal favourite Bran Shew arrangement of that ever so familiar Eye of the North Overture.

#2

Guild Wars - Temple of Tolerance by Randolf92



An interesting take on a classic Prophecies tune.

#3

Guild Wars - Crystal Oasis by NightShader1



Another classic Prophercies tune recreated via piano playing goodness.

#4

Play! A Video Game Symphony Live! 12 - Guild Wars (Live) by ValiantTerra

This video is no longer available on YouTube.

An orchestrated take on the four Guild Wars game themes.

I hope you enjoyed this month's musical romp. If you think there is a video or channel that should be featured here, feel free to e-mail me at onthetube@guildmag.com or private message me on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/daelindwin.

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The Destroyers

by Free Runner

Before the Storm

In 1072 AE as the Flameseeker Prophecies began to unravel, another battle was taking place deep within the Shiverpeak Mountains: the civil war between the Deldrimor dwarves and the xenophobic Stone Summit. With the battle reaching a climax, both sides fought for power throughout the region, some resorting to different, more destructive ways to win over the other. Amidst this war a group of Stone Summit led by a single hierophant delved into the depths of Sorrow's Furnace in search of one thing – the Tome of the Rubicon.

The tome was said to have been written by the Great Dwarf and within it was the true name of his greatest foe, the Great Destroyer. The Summit planned to use the tome to find and speak its name allowing them to summon the Great Destroyer into the world; however, before they could open the tome, a group of heroes led by the tome's keeper High Priest Alkar of Deldrimor intercepted the Summit, claiming the tome in the process. The priest, believing the tome to be too dangerous to keep around, buried it under the dwarven ruins leaving it to be forgotten forever.

But that was not the end of the tale, for Alkar later lead an excavation group to dig up the tome. Alkar translated the tome, revealing that it not only held accounts of the early days of the dwarves but also details about a specific event – the final conflict between the dwarves and the destroyers.

What Lies Beneath

In the years since the retrieval of the Tome of the Rubicon, the world of Tyria had seen its fair share of dangers. In the far south an ancient evil brought forth a plague that swept throughout Cantha, both plots made by a forgotten god attempting to break out of his eternal prison. Each threat had been met by heroes and Tyria enjoyed moments of peace… that was until the earth began to move. It was in 1078 AE that Tyrians, Canthans, and Elonians alike were awoken to find their cities damaged with the ground rumbling beneath their feet.

Heroes once again came to the rescue, investigating the sudden swarm of terrified creatures attempting to escape the earthquakes through underground passages that had been opened by the aftershocks. Upon investigation the humans found themselves amidst a battle between the dwarves and an enemy unknown to them – an enemy the dwarves referred to as the destroyers.

The Destroyers



Destroyers are unlike any other creature found above or below Tyria; though made of fire and stone like elementals, they are well organized and fare more powerful. Swarming up from the ground, they hold no concepts of pity, mercy, or sorrow and simply rip through any living thing they find. Destroyers exist purely to destroy, to purge Tyria of all life and make way for their master, the Great Destroyer. Moving through the depths they are able to overwhelm entire races, forcing them to flee in terror or die in flames before moving on to seek out more life.

When the earthquakes ripped through Tyria many believed them to be natural occurrences, but those who understood what the destroyers are began to prepare for their arrival. At first the destroyers simply attacked anything living in the depths, causing races like the asura to flee to the surface; however, soon they began to spill out of exposed caverns, attacking anything they could see above ground.

One large lava-filled chamber deep below Tyria was the source of the destroyers and each moment a new one would be brought into the world to serve its master's purpose. Nearby was the Central Transfer Chamber, a central hub for the many asura gates throughout Tyria that became the destroyers' way of traveling the depths. Any area with an active gate became open to the destroyers, causing the asura to shut down any gate they could find in hopes of stopping the threat. But as more and more destroyers burnt through the depths, the races of Tyria were faced with no choice but to take the fight to them and their master that the dwarves feared so much. They took the fight to the Great Destroyer.

The Great Destroyer

Dwarven legend described the Great Destroyer as an evil, malicious monster that no mortal has ever set eyes on. In their legends the Great Destroyer is the exact opposite of the Great Dwarf and the two were destined to meet for a final conflict that would leave the dwarves changed forever. As the destroyers began appearing, the dwarves sprang into action, attempting to warn other races of the oncoming threat, to unite them in hopes of fighting the Great Destroyer.

Norn, asura, and humans banded with the dwarves, who had undergone the Rite of the Great Dwarf to become beings of stone, and fought their way through scores of destroyers eventually taking back control of the Central Transfer Chamber. From there a small group broke through the destroyers' lines and came face to face with the Great Destroyer, confronting and defeating it under a large dragon statue that the Great Destroyer almost seemed to be guarding.

With the destruction of the Great Destroyer, the truth of its minions became apparent – the destroyers were linked to the Great Destroyer's mind and without that control they would begin to lose their coordination, causing them to fall easily as the stone

dwarves advanced. The day was won and the destroyers were defeated for good… or at least for now. Celebrations began as the mysterious dragon statue remained in the Great Destroyer's chamber, waiting harmlessly for its time.



A Greater Destroyer Rises

Destroyers were not seen in Tyria for many years, simply becoming another story to add to Tyria's long history of mad gods and liches. Beating the Great Destroyer had caused the loss of the dwarves who were said to still be roaming the depths in search of the destroyers. Nevertheless Tyrians would never again have to lay eyes upon the mindless creatures of fire and stone; not until the dragons awoke at least.

Primordus was the first of the Elder Dragons to awaken and with him returned beasts of fire and stone - for the statue in the chamber was an Elder Dragon waiting for his general to wake him. His eruption into the depths brought forth a new army of destroyers and this time the dwarves were not enough to stop them. And to this day the destroyers roam the depths, occasionally appearing on the surface of Tyria.

Tyria fights on all fronts, the races stand back to back against the forces of the Elder Dragons. But deep below creatures of stone and fire march – they are the destroyers.

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Dutch's Talk with... Rubi (Massively)

by Dutch Sunshine

Here we are again, a new issue also means a new look at someone that attributes to the *Guild Wars* Community. This time I ended up talking with Rubi from Massively, whom is arguably one of the more known *Guild Wars* fans around and has contributed quite a few interesting articles, like her regular series 'Flameseeker Chronicles.' Next to her work over at Massively, she is also the co-host on Guildcast, a *Guild Wars* & *Guild Wars* 2 podcast. Let's get started!

Dutch Sunshine: Hey Rubi, how are you today?

Rubi: Pretty well. I'm technically "off work" as of right now, so I'm ready to relax for a bit!

Dutch: Oh, so I'm actually interfering with your free time then! Hope you don't mind if I continue though... tell us a bit about yourself if you want!

Rubi: Haha! Nope, you're all good. Well, I'm a wife, mom, gamer, writer and community manager. Usually sort of all at the same time. *Guild Wars* is what introduced me to gaming, but I've branched out quite a bit since then—although I've kept my strong penchant for fantasy titles. I've been at Massively for going on two years now.

Dutch: That's a handfull of tasks you got there, how do you combine them all together?

Rubi: I'm fortunate in that my job allows me to work remotely, which means my "office" isn't so much an office as it is "small corner of my bedroom." There's a lot of juggling multiple tasks at once and running back and forth to handle things as they come up.

Dutch: Oh okay, that seems like a nice job you got there. Could you perhaps tell us some more about your job at Massively?

Rubi: Well, let's see. My tasks have changed a lot over the past year or so, but currently it's pretty varied. I of course write Flameseeker Chronicles, the weekly *Guild Wars* / *Guild Wars* 2 column, and handle most of the related news. Aside from that my Community Manager duties include arranging and setting up all of our contests and giveaways, maintaining our forums, interacting with the community, and making the best use of our social media outlets.

I also write One Shots—a daily reader-submitted screenshot feature, Betawatch—a weekly roundup of games in beta, Global Chat—a weekly roundup of exceptional reader comments, and MV Guide—a weekly Livestreaming in which I help out with the program and schedule.

Dutch: Woah, that's a load of work, and from what I know, you also co-host a *Guild Wars* & *Guild Wars* 2 related podcast, right?

Rubi: Yep! Shawn has been the host of Guildcast since about 5 years ago, and when the show came off of hiatus a little over a year ago, he brought me on as co-host.

Guildcast obviously had a *Guild Wars* focus in its first iteration, but when the *Guild Wars* 2 news started really ramping up in the spring of 2010, Shawn was ready to bring it out of storage and he needed a co-host. We've always had a pretty good rapport—I am also his co-host for the weekly Massively Speaking podcast, so our gaming talk flows very well.

We've gone to a somewhat lighter schedule right now for several reasons—Shawn's getting married this Sunday and he's been up to his ears in wedding plans. May is always a busy month for me because of so many family obligations. Then we will both be attending E3 next week. As soon as Shawn returns from E3, he'll be off on his honeymoon, then I'm on vacation, then convention season really kicks into high gear. Something had to give, so we scaled back to a semi-weekly schedule for now. But we love doing it so much, I think we're both really looking forward to jumping back in full steam when we can.

Dutch: Seeing all your appointments, that's indeed one busy schedule. Speaking about *Guild Wars*, what is your most favorite thing about *Guild Wars* and what's your most favorite announced feature of *Guild Wars* 2?

Rubi: My favorite thing about *Guild Wars*. That's an easy one—my guild! I've been in the same guild for almost three years, and we truly are like a big family. It's incredibly sappy, but we've been there for one another through some hard times, encouraged one another through the good stuff, and done about everything in *Guild Wars* that you can think of together. In fact, my guild mates were some of my biggest cheerleaders when I applied for the job at Massively. They cheered me on, held my hand (virtually speaking) through the excruciating wait to hear if I was hired or not, and jumped up and down screaming with me when I *was* hired. I love them.

As far as the announced features of *Guild Wars* 2—wow, that's harder! It all looks so great! Let me think.

I'm going to have to say the open world. As my previous answer probably indicated, I'm a really social player, and I love the thought of exploring this beautiful new world with the people around me. I want to see *everything*!

Dutch: That's probably going to take you a long time, but hey, it's a nice goal! So you'd like to explore the world right? But is that also the first thing you'll do when you start up your own copy of *Guild Wars* 2, when it releases?

Rubi: Yeah, that's one of the first things I want to do. Once I get out of character creation, anyway! I plan to start with a human character and explore Divinity's Reach. I wanted to see more of it at PAX Prime last year, but I just didn't have enough time in the demo. Then and there I knew I wanted to explore every nook and cranny of the city at the first opportunity.

Dutch: Ok so, if you had to support new bloggers that want to start up a fansite, what would you advise them to do?

Rubi: I talked about this a while back in a Flameseeker Chronicles column. Take it slow. Focus on quality and the learning process, and make sure you're keeping a focus on providing a service to the community for love of the game, not on making a name for yourself. Recognize that you're part of a whole, rather than the one and only. I watched a fansite/blog fade out and die a while back because... the owner didn't do any of that, and it annoyed people.

Dutch: That seems like good advice. For yourself, what has been the best experience as a blogger yourself?

Rubi: My best experience? Does getting to do it as my career count? LOL. Seriously, the best experience for me is knowing that my hard work earned me a reputation as someone knowledgeable within the community. I'm so proud of that, because I worked a lot of hours for it over the past few years, and I hope to keep deserving it.

Dutch: Okay so, this is it already, thanks for being on this interview and I'll keep looking forward to your articles, as will others!

Rubi: Thank you! Thanks for having me!

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Humans of Elona

by Asuran & Konig Des Todes

Elona, Land of the Golden Sun, is a region where the sun is brightest and is home to the three human provinces of Istan, Kourna, and Vabbi. Though divided, they still help each other when needed. However, before they were divided by the Pretender Wars during the Shattered Dynasty Era, which were the bloodiest wars Elona ever saw, the three provinces were united under the Primeval Kings.

The Primeval Kings:



Overall, little is known about the Primeval Kings except for a few individual names, a degree of their reign, and that one of them, Queen Nadijeh, established the Sunspear Guards – the original name of the Order of the Sunspear, which now protects all of Elona.

The Primeval Kings reigned for over six hundred years during the era named after them: the Primeval Dynasty. From 200 BE (Before the Exodus) until being wiped out by the still-mysterious Scarab Plague in 452 AE (After the Exodus), the Primeval Kings' rule was firm and widespread. They ruled all of Elona and had their lands stretched from the island of Istan to the northeastern Vabbi and far into the northern Crystal Desert where their Tombs of the Primeval Kings now lie. Aside from the famous Tombs of the Primeval Kings, there were also the Dynastic Tombs located in the southern portions of the Desolation, along with other structures throughout the now-deadly region. They even held a colony in the Tyrian mainland, the land now known as the kingdom of Kryta. Compared to all other human kingdoms, they had the widest rule near the end of their reign.

These kings ruled from Istan, in the city of Fahranur, nicknamed The First City. It was here that the Scarab Plague, described as being a plague where insects burrowed out of humans, was believed to be caused by their eggs being eaten with their food. Though initially contained within Fahranur, the plague spread throughout Istan and eventually ended the Primeval Dynasty.

The Istani:



Southwest of the Elonian mainland is a huge island called Istan. This island was one of the first locations where humanity touched foot on Elona and, as implied by Fahranur's nickname, was the home to Elona's earliest human settlements.

After the Scarab Plague ended, it took another sixty-eight years before settlers began to return to Istan. Once a small port, Kamadan grew into a large city and became known as the Jewel of Istan. From Kamadan's harbors, traders go to the mainland, Tyria; Cantha; or to one of the many small islands around Istan. In that same harbor, the Istan fleet is stationed; this navy is the pride of Istan and renowned throughout Tyria. Most Istani live either on trade or by fishing. Ever since the Scarab Plague, those on Istan reward acts of bravery and achievements with promotions, eventually leading them to be part of the meritocratic government. Among this government, each village has an elder, each elder governing many towns and outposts. Many of these elders are also part of the Council of Elders, which governs Istan as a whole. The elders in the council are elected through their deeds; among them, one is elected as Clansmarshal who leads the council in its decisions. Also on Istan lies the home to the Order of Sunspears.

The Kournans:



On the southern portion of the mainland lies Kourna, surrounded by harsh conditions with little water and many savannahs and dangerous wildlife. Kournans are tough and they have their military to show it; Kourna is known for military history and is even ruled by the military, led by the Warmarshal, which for the past two hundred years has been passed down through the Ossa bloodline. Some of the greatest wars in Elonian history were fought in or near Kourna, the most famous of them being the Battle of Jahai, between the forces of Turai Ossa and Palawa Joko.

Along with its government, Kourna's culture is focused around its military. If a Kournan doesn't work within the army, it is working to support and supply it. In turn for their services, Kournans receive protection. While the average Kournan tends to live in simple houses, their fortresses are grand and large. The capital of Kourna is Gandara, the Moon Fortress – which, as the name implies, is a coastal fortress shaped like a crescent moon. Being the capital, it is also where the Warmarshal resides most of the time, and it also acts as a major port for Kourna.

Also within the borders of Kourna is the land where the centaurs live. Over the centuries, they have been at war with the Kournans and are now on the brink of destruction, forced into the wilderness near the Desolation to the north or, worse, into slavery.

The Vabbians:



In northeastern Elona is Vabbi, the richest of the three provinces. Other than their wealth, which comes from various gem mines in the wilderness, the Vabbians are known for their well refined culture. The Vabbian leaders are known as Clanmarshals, who are more commonly referred to as princes. Unlike royalty, however, the rulers of Vabbi are determined by wealth and not hereditary. Currently, Vabbi has three princes – the Merchant Princes – that stand above the rest, being far wealthier than any other Vabbian. The Clanmarshals make the laws and make sure the Vabbians obey those laws through the military. The military of Vabbi is not a united force but instead is divided and each division works under each prince.

Vabbians live in luxury, having servants, expensive clothing and more; they enjoy the finest art, food, drinks and theatre – the last of which makes Vabbi very famous throughout the world. Vabbi also produces some of the most famous actors, such as Norgu, a member of the most renowned actors' guild, the Lyssan Fools. They're also known for their large parties and festivals, the most acclaimed being the Festival of Lyss in which they honor Lyssa, the twin goddess of beauty and illusion. Lyssa is the Vabbian's patron goddess and is revered by most in the province. Most Vabbians say that Lyssa shaped the land and molded the Vabbians in her own glorious image. There is also a belief connected to Lyssa behind the Seborhin Tree, said to be nourished by the light of Lyssa's smile; they believe it is Lyssa's favorite tree and when a leaf falls on you, Lyssa is watching over you. All of the Vabbians live either in big cities, such as the Kodash Bazaar, or small towns, like Mihanu Township. The Vabbians are also famous for their architecture which can be seen in their big cities.

Elonia:

Alongside the colony of Kryta, there was a second colony of Elona, established by Turai Ossa during the Great Pilgrimage into the Crystal Desert in search of Ascension. Its name was Elonia and those from it shared the same name as those from Elona – Elonians. Being situated primarily in the Arid Sea and Elona Reach, it was a short-lived colony. Exactly how long Elonia thrived is unknown, but within a lifetime the colony of Elonia was divided into at least three groups, perhaps more, and eventually annihilated. In the north, the Elonians divided themselves as they squabbled to protect the three shards of the Vision Crystal required for Ascension. In the south, the Elonians built the Temple of Ascension and its Throne of Pellentia in an attempt to gain the attention of the gods, and soon began fighting amongst each other as well (though they may have been the same three groups as in Elona Reach), eventually creating a powerful weapon which destroyed them all. There was also a town, Lannur, in the northernmost reaches of the Desolation which was built by Turai's pilgrimage, the ruins of which can now be seen in the Crystal Overlook. Now, their task incomplete, their souls wonder throughout the Crystal Desert and even in the Desolation, hoping to one day see the completion of their life's goal.

The Margonites:

Another extinct group of humans from Elona, the Margonites were once an ancient seafaring culture. They roamed the coast of Kourna and the Crystal Sea that was once the region where the Crystal Desert now lies. Being a seafaring culture, they had a heavy worship of Abaddon, who was the god of water and secrets before his fall. When Abaddon fought the other five gods, he transformed many of the Margonites into ethereal demonic beings, ending their humanity altogether. When he was cast down into the Realm of Torment, they were imprisoned there as well to share the same fate as the god they so loved.



After Abaddon's fall, a group of Margonites dwelt in the newly formed Crystal Desert – whether these Margonites were still human or have become demonic is not entirely known. This group of Margonites took apart their wrecked ships to build structures and attempted to reach the heavens where the gods were resided. Only a handful of ghosts from their human days remain now in the Thirsty River.

Other notables:

There also exist other settlements and former kingdoms throughout Elona, all of which are no more. Even when they existed is not entirely known.

In the center of the Desolation, bordering the Mouth of Torment, lies the now-ruined city of Morah. Once a majestic city, it was built to overlook the place of Abaddon's downfall but eventually succumbed to the spread of the deadly desert. When it stood is unknown, but given information implies it was once a part of the Primeval Dynasty, as it was established after Abaddon's fall and before the Desolation became sulfurous.

Another famous location along the inner border of the Desolation is the Remains of Sahlahja. Once led by a line of kings, it fell to Palawa Joko. In fear, the last king, King Sahlahja, struck a deal with the undead lord to spare his people. In turn, however, Joko betrayed the king, slaughtering his people and entrapping the king into eternal servitude. Now the kingdom remains as part of Joko's reforming kingdom. When this small kingdom flourished is unknown, only that it was no later than the beginning of Joko's invasion into Elona in 860 AE.

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The Decaying Diary

First installment of a new fanfiction series by Valiant

Prologue

They say that power corrupts. There's no truer case than with Abaddon, God of Secrets. I, Halrah of the Mists, am the true witness to the events which unfolded in Elona involving Abaddon, his demise by Sunspear hands and the following story of one poor traveller. I write this account neither for glory nor pleasure, but so that once and for all the truth may be known. In 1075AE, Abaddon was not destroyed - not completely. The Sunspears thought that with the ascension of their beloved Kormir, all was well in the world, but they were wrong. So long as I may exist, Elona shall not be plagued by ignorance of these events. From here, let it be known that this is the story of what truly happened; this is the story of the decaying diary.

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At the hands of Abaddon magic was cast out to the world, flowing outwards towards the races of Tyria. He blessed each one in turn, bestowing upon them the greatest gift of all. Inside, he began to fill with contentment, basking in the enjoyment he was bestowing upon Tyria. He thought about this new feeling he was experiencing. Not contentment, he thought, it feels more than that, it's almost...
"Abaddon!" came a female voice from the distance, desperate to hear a reply. Arah was large, and sounds echoed through the city's walls. He had no time to finish his thoughts, but for her he did not mind.
"Abaddon! Please, I beg you, stop this! You were warned of the consequences, you know not to give out magic so freely! For one so powerful, how can you afford to be so ignorant?"
"Lyssa, I'm-"
"Don't tell me you're sorry; don't lie to me. You know how much your actions disturb the other gods and they can't remain neutral for much longer. The human king, Doric, has been pleading with us to intervene, and the others are listening. They will stop you if you don't stop yourself. Just do it, for me. Please."
"Lyssa, I can't. Of all the gods, you know most that I cannot remain a passive god. Without this I'd be nothing, but with this power it fills me with a feeling that I've never felt before in all my existence and I'm not ready to let go, not yet."
The goddess sighed. She knew she could never change Abaddon, no matter how hard she begged him. She felt like saying to him "You wouldn't be nothing, you'd have me", but couldn't bring the words to her lips. And at the same time, she realised what a mistake it was to entrust this power with him to begin with. Fools, all five of them had been. Fools. "They're going to take you; the Underworld is already prepared and lying in wait for your arrival. I don't want them to but they're being forced by your actions. I don't want to lose you; I don't want to lose what we have."
Lyssa extended her hand to Abaddon, her palm encircled by a cloud of pink mist. The mist began to form a small, leather-bound book and as it did so, a tear began to move down her pale face.
"Take this. If you feel the same way about me as I do about you, you'll put something in it. I don't care what it is, I just... just want something to remember you by when you're gone, something to hold onto always."
"Lyssa, I'm not going anywhere..."
Another tear began to form in her eye. "Yes, you are. I don't need one of my visions to see that. I'm sorry Abaddon, for everything."
Seeing that he would not take her gift, Lyssa placed the diary on the floor beside Abaddon and began to walk away slowly, forcing herself not to look back.

***

Lyssa appeared by Abaddon's side again the next day. Soon after she had left him, he had left Arah in search of some final moments of peace, arriving somewhere along a beautiful stretch of coastline spanning outwards into the Crystal Sea. A look of despair covered her face and her lips trembled as she spoke.
"They're coming for you. I tried to reason with them, but Balthazar and Grenth insisted. You're going to die, Abaddon. I can't tell you how sorry I am."
Once again, tears began to run down her face. Abaddon turned to look her in the eyes.
"I put something in the diary," he replied.
"May I have it? This means so much to me, I promise I'll forever... forever..."
Lyssa's despair had turned to fear, her mind becoming wracked with the stuff.
"I can't, I refuse to seal my fate so easily."
Abaddon moved quickly, dashing behind Lyssa before grabbing her neck with his hand. Choking, Lyssa forced herself to expel a pink energy from her hands, causing Abaddon to lose his grip. Lyssa turned to him, a mix of confusion and fear in her eyes.
"What are you doing?! You cannot hope to defeat five gods!"
"I don't have five to defeat, only four. Come to my side, Lyssa, together we can defeat the others, or if not defeat them then at least flee together. Come to my side and I'll give you the diary. Inside I placed the thing most special to me, the thing that I'd share with nobody else: part of my magic. Come to my side and you can have it. We'll be together, forever."
"No, no, this is wrong! Abaddon, I cannot do what you ask of me, I have a duty to Tyria to uphold. Even if I didn't, we cannot defeat the others, let alone comprehend capturing their power should we manage it! Please, don't fight their decision..."
Abaddon began to join her in tears, allowing himself a moment of weakness.
"Then it is I who is sorry for you, Lyssa. Forgive me."
He growled deep within his throat, calling his Margonites to him. Hundreds appeared, and pointing to Lyssa, he commanded them to capture her. In a flurry of purple energy, they travelled as one towards the lone goddess. She fell easily, not wanting to fight. They cast brutal chains around her, bringing her kneeling before the renegade god. In that moment, the others arrived: Dwayna, Melandru, Balthazar and Grenth in one line stretching far along the coastline. No words were exchanged for everyone present knew what they were here to do. In harmony, four of the Five True Gods cast a spell directed towards Abaddon, which he did his best to counter, casting a blue shield made of magic around himself. But it wasn't enough. Their combined magic broke through his shield, reaching the god behind it. He became paralysed, unable to move his body. The summoned Margonites raced to attack their master's enemies, their weapons pointed and primed, but with simply a whisper from Grenth the first line of the Margonite army fell. As Abaddon's servants attacked, Lyssa's chains began to fall from her body, loosened by Abaddon's deteriorating control. With metal

crashing to the floor, she ran to Abaddon.
"Please, give me the diary!"
Abaddon strained to close his eyes, saying nothing, wanting to escape the situation.
"It's time, Lyssa," said Grenth.
In one of the quickest battles, the gods had defeated the army of Abaddon. Grenth and Lyssa stepped back a little to join the others and once more, this time with the fifth god, they cast in harmony. The spell erupted towards Abaddon, reaching him. Time stood still. What happened next, none of them had expected: Tyria shook, the landscape being transformed into a dry wasteland. A hole was ripped in the newly-formed desert that would come to be known as the Desolation. Inside it, a twisted world of nightmares emerged. Abaddon had become trapped in his selfish mind giving magic to Tyria, and now he was to become trapped in it once more. The gods threw Abaddon into this new world for him to rot eternally, unable to do anymore than that. They had tried their best to destroy the god but had failed. Still paralysed, but with the grip weakening, Abaddon managed to force himself into looking up through the opened Mouth of Torment to see Lyssa calling out to him.
"Ab..do., I lo.. .ou!"
The Mouth closed and, together, the Gods left Tyria, ashamed.

***

1075AE and the Sunspears entered Torment to end Abaddon's increasing reign over Elona – to end what the gods had begun. Their bloody battle succeeded, ending in the ascension of Kormir, Goddess of Truth. With Abaddon's defeat, his energy was absorbed by the mortal Spearmarshal and she rose to join the Five in the Mists, becoming the stuff of legends. What nobody noticed, however, was the diary. Ever since he was imprisoned, Abaddon had held onto his precious diary containing a portion of himself. Now, with his defeat, it vanished in a cloud of purple smoke.

Chapter 1

Sandals crunched on the arid ground. Walking slowly, with his head drooping, a weary traveller moved closer to the Mirror of Lyss. Droplets of sweat dripped from his brow onto the ground below, evaporating almost as soon as they touched it. He was tall, with wide shoulders and a muscular build. As he grimaced with each new difficult step, the shallow wrinkles around his mouth and eyes became deeper. The journey he was on had aged him far more dramatically than he'd have liked; those who'd have known him before he set out would now not recognise the man standing before them, instead seeing a weary man, lost. He sighed, moving a long dark strand of hair from his eyes. He had been walking these lands for years, wandering from place to place, searching - none of his travels had been so hard as this portion of his journey, though.

He kept going, however, because recently he had felt drawn to this place like a moth to a flame, his instincts telling him to come here after his many years of wandering. The man breathed in quickly, pushing his chest outwards, before exhaling, allowing another sigh to leave his body. He stopped, in need of a break. Unbuttoning his white cloak, which had turned brown in many areas due to many years of living wild, he lay it on the hot ground beside a large rock, the traveller himself seeking what little shade he could find. Doing this revealed a large, silver scythe climbing up his back, which shone in the hot Elonian sun. He sat on his cloak, knees up to his chest. Around his waist was a tattered leather belt, from which hung many small bags. He removed this too, though he made sure to keep his precious weapon upon him. He hadn't taken it off since he began his journey, and would not do so until the very end. From one of his bags, he produced a small, brown container filled with water, from which the traveller took a gulp, the cool liquid rushing down his parched throat.


The rock the traveller sits against

The sun continued to blaze down on him, forcing him to squint into the distance. Doing this, his eyes caught something a little away from him; a small object lying alone on the ground. Looking harder, the traveller saw what appeared to be faint purple smoke rising from the object. Staring at the mysterious object, he eventually let his curiosity get the better of him and deciding to see what it was – after all, what else was there to do except bake in the heat? He stood up, placing his water container on his cloak, and began to walk forwards to the object.

As he moved closer, it began to take form; a small, leather-bound book lying in the middle of nowhere. The traveller moved closer still, curious as to why such an object would be out here. The purple smoke he had witnessed just moments earlier had appeared to have vanished, leaving no trace behind. Upon reaching it, he found himself bending down to pick up the book, for he was like that – always inquisitive into his surroundings, always wanting to know more of the world in which he lived. Clutching the somewhat tattered book in his hands, he began to walk back to his resting spot, eager to see what was inside.

He sat back down on his cloak, noticing a small spider creep underneath to seek shelter. He had grown used to sharing his things with the creatures of the wilderness, and in some ways he was glad of the company they brought. Though they couldn't communicate, the presence of another life reassured him that he was not alone in this world. The urge to open the book was growing inside him, like some form of primeval instinct, similar to that which drew him here. His head began to swim, feeling as though this moment was what his whole journey had been building up to. Opening the book, he carefully placed his fingers on the outside cover so he didn't accidentally ruin whatever may be contained within the pages. Nothing - the pages were blank. Disappointed, he closed the book and threw it beside him. As he did so, his head began to turn wilder and wilder, a sick nauseating feeling coming up within him. Assuming this feeling to be because of too much walking, the traveller readied himself to rest for a few hours, before resuming his journey. He leant backwards on the rock, closed his eyes and slowly drifted off to sleep, before beginning to twist and turn as the nightmare began.

Piercing screams filled the morning air in Kourna.

"NO! PLEASE! HELP! AHHHHH!"
"Dwayna, save our village! Cast these demons out!"
The screams awoke the traveller from his sleep, jumping out of bed and rushing to the door. Monsters not of this world were attacking the small, peaceful village set in the middle of Kourna. Unsure of what to do, the traveller frantically looked around the village, but everywhere he turned all he could see were monsters slaying the cowering villagers, recklessly tearing through them as though it were a game. Bodies lay on the floor, arrows and spears triumphantly sticking out of them with small capillaries of blood beginning to creep along the sand. The monsters themselves were blurred to the traveller; something was preventing him from seeing them clearly. All he could see was bright purple light protruding from each of their bodies and the faint outline of weapons as they took life after life. They were tall, he could see that, and loud; their war cries heard over the screams of his friends.
He began to despair, quickly indentifying bodies of those he had come to know so well. He had not been born in this village, but had stumbled upon it with his partner many years ago and had come to like life here, and now it was being slowly taken from him with each new death. The pain of losing his life here became unbearable, quickly turning to a pure, violent rage. He would not lose everything, not again. Darting quickly back inside his hut, he grabbed his scythe next to where he slept and set out to attack the enemy. Just as he had been taught, he swung his scythe, precisely striking the nearest foe in the abdomen. It fell, wailing. Rage had

blinded him, though, and he was not striking to kill instantly, but rather exact a slow and painful death by bleeding. He was going to make them suffer as they were doing to him. He thought, "I will exact my own retribution on these demons which plague us."

A flash of purple light, brighter than the others, drew his eye to the left. He saw a monster, taller than the rest, carrying a small, frightened girl on its shoulders. Her face had drained of all colour and fear had paralysed her lips, making her unable to scream for help. Black hair covered half of her face, the other half showing an eye filled with tears. The traveller threw his scythe on the ground and ran after this monster, determined not to let such an innocent child die at its hands. It began to move faster, calling the other monsters to its side. They joined it, moving as one in a huddled group. The traveller ran faster, his bare feet pounding the earth, all the while regretting throwing away his only weapon. But no matter how hard he ran, no matter the fact he was not encumbered by weaponry, he could not make the distance. The huddled group moved farther and farther away, edging steadily towards the horizon. Moans of pain could still be heard behind the traveller, yet he had no time for them; he was going to save the girl. And as soon as that thought had left his head, they vanished. Roars came up from the earth and the monsters disappeared from sight in a dark cloud, taking the girl with them. He stopped running, and fell to his knees, sobbing.

The traveller awoke, unshaken by what had just happened inside his head. He had been experiencing the same nightmare over and over again ever since he began his travels and now they no longer affected him as they once did. He had come to expect them every time he went to sleep, and in some ways they had begun to comfort him, much like the wild creatures he met, providing normality in his otherwise so-far chaotic life. But most of all, they reminded him of why he was here, why he had been travelling all these years. "Years," he thought. "I've spent so long searching, so long walking across these lands. What if... No, I cannot think like that. But, just, what if I don't find what I'm looking for? What then? No, I will, I must. But I'm getting older... in fact, how old am I? I've been travelling for so long I can't remember my age! Maybe it's time to think of alternatives..."



The traveller himself

And with that thought, the traveller decided to leave behind a memory of himself. Although he dared not doubt he would succeed, he wanted to leave behind something just in case all else failed. He grabbed the book he had thrown away. Taking a quill and ink from his belt beside him, he opened the book, touching only the outside cover once more to help preserve the pages. He thought for a moment about what to write, unable to convey everything he wanted to say in mere words. "Perhaps once I begin, it will come to me," he thought. He set the quill to the paper of the book and began to write.

My beloved H..

The quill was sticking to the paper, making it difficult to write. He placed his thumb on the page, to get a better grip. Immediately, the traveller's world went black. His eyes were forced shut, limbs becoming instantly limp. His head fell forwards and his hand dropped the quill, the feathered instrument rolling away from his lifeless body, as though it knew what was coming next. Abaddon's diary had taken him from the Mirror of Lyss, and he would not be coming back.

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Amazing. That's what we would like to call our experience with Guild Wars 2 in one word. From when we tried the first demo last year till the one we experienced this year, Guild Wars 2 has proven to us that it can change the way MMORPGs work. From those in our team that had the opportunity to travel to such a convention and experience the game itself, we only heard the same kind of response. Obviously there are some of you who couldn't make it to any of the conventions. For you, but also for those who could only play the demo once, we tried to capture as many of our own experiences on camera so that you can still enjoy some of the fun that could be had during the conventions. Do not fear, as this year we packed out big! This special is packed with interviews, hands-on impressions, videos, lots of screenshots and more! Let's get started!

Interviews

Community Interview with Colin Johanson

http://www.guildmag.com/community-inter ... n-johanson

Lore Interview with Ree Soesbee

http://www.guildmag.com/lore-interview-with-ree-soesbee

PvP Interview with Jon Peters

http://www.guildmag.com/pvp-interview-with-jon-peters

PvP Map Design Interview with Tirzah Bauer

Not done with PvP? Neither were we! On recommendations of Jon Peters we went and asked Tirzah on her domain of interest – map design! Want to know more about map design, how it's balanced and looked at from a design perspective, then check this one out!

http://www.guildmag.com/tirzah-bauer-pv ... -interview

GamesCom Chats

While Jonny and myself handled more professional interviews with our camcorder equipment, Arghore had the chance to chat with almost every ArenaNet employee that was present at GamesCom. From Colin Johanson to Tirzah Bauer and Randy Price to Kekai Kotaki, this series is bound to cover any topic of interest regarding Guild Wars 2.

GamesCom Chat Series - Part 1

http://guildmag.com/gamescom-interview-series

GamesCom Chat Series - Part 2

http://guildmag.com/gamescom-interview-series-part-2

GamesCom Chat Series - Part 3

http://guildmag.com/gamescom-interview-series-part-3

Hands-on impressions

GamesCom Pre-Show Hands-On Guild Wars 2

I was quite surprised when, a week before GamesCom started, I found an invite in my mailbox to attend a pre-show of Guild Wars 2. During the pre-show I was told all kinds of nice tibits, like that quivers are definitely being looked into and probably will be part of Guild Wars 2. I also had the chance to be one of the first to try the demo and you can read about my experience in our article.

http://www.guildmag.com/hands-on-guild- ... escom-2011

4 Years in the Making: Finally Playing Guild Wars 2 – Eurogamer Expo

Next to GamesCom, we also had a presence at the Eurogamer Expo. Daelin Dwin came back from the expo to give us his own first hands-on impression of how the game played. In this hands-on experience he takes a look at both the humans and sylvari, playing as a warrior and a thief!

Videos

Human Videos

Human Territory Tour



Charr Videos

Charr Intro Cinematic



Charr Tutorial



Ruins of Rin



Charr Territory Tour + Gameplay Part 1



Charr Territory Tour + Gameplay Part 2



Charr Territory Tour + Gameplay Part 3



Charr Personal Story Part 1



Charr Personal Story Part 2



Charr Personal Story Part 3



Asura Videos

Asura Guardian Gameplay (Focus on ingame sound)



Asura Thief Gameplay



Asura Guardian Gameplay



Player versus Player

PvP Walkthrough



PvP Match: Two Perspectives

Dutch Sunshine’s Perspective:



Nightshade's Special's Perspective:

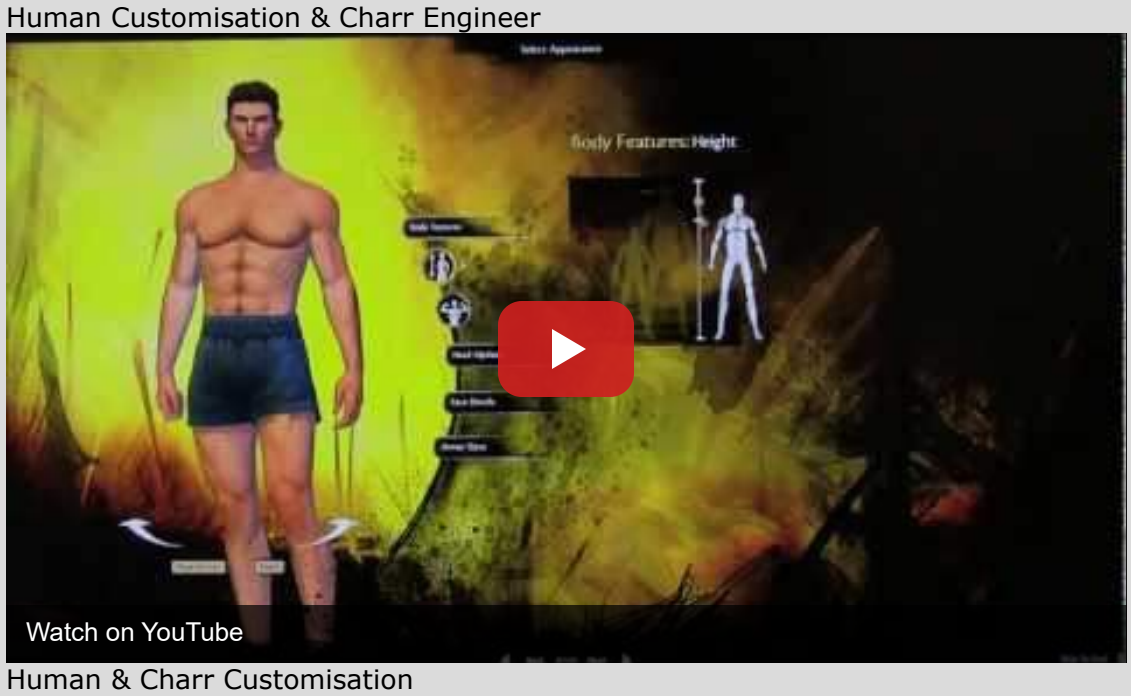


PvP Walkthrough (with a focus on Ingame Sound!)



Costumisation and others

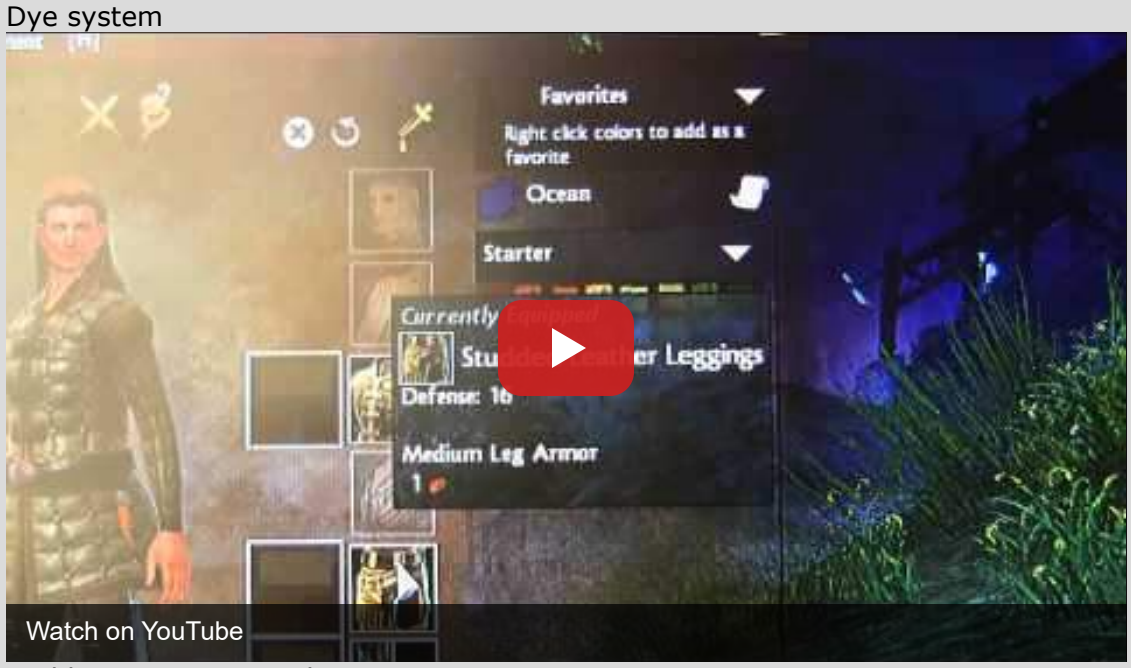
Human Customisation & Charr Engineer



Human & Charr Customisation



Dye system



Guild Wars 2 ESL Booth



Wildstar Impression Interview



Screenshots Gallery Discussions

At GamesCom we received a press package with lots of awesome screenshots - Draxynnic examined all screenshots and made a series of Screenshot Analyses out of them all.

GamesCom Screenshots: Characters
http://guildmag.com/gamescom-screenshots-characters

Gamescom Screenshots: Combat
http://guildmag.com/gamescom-screenshots-combat
GamesCom Screenshots: The Black Citadel
http://guildmag.com/gamescom-screenshot ... ck-citadel
GamesCom Screenshots: Dungeons
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The unofficial Guild Wars magazine.

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Mercenary Heroes winners!



We've received dozens of amazing entries into our Mercenary Heroes Contest in the last issue, but sadly enough we only got four codes to give away. After our internal vote we found the next four entries stand out the most to our personal liking. Below you can read why these heroes thought that they were deemed to become a mercenary hero!



I have to… introduce myself, it seems. You will keep this information to yourself. My name is Fuuka Kirijo. It's a flowery name courtesy of my Japanese mother. … She trained me in brush painting and tea ceremony as well as the hidden arts. In other words, she trained me to become an assassin. My guildies call me "Micro." If you must know, "Micro" is short for "Microraptor." I like to think it's because I'm fast, vicious and always wear a suitable color: gray. I suspect, however, that they're mostly ribbing me about being short. Some days it's hard not to stab them. Need more information? Shiro of the Jade Wind died by my hand and I own his blades as proof, though Deldrimor daggers are my work tools of choice. I've even killed a god. So, if you were thinking of hiring Ebon Vanguard Assassin Support, you're headed in the wrong direction. I'm a hundred times more flexible and far more durable. Get yourself the real thing. Hire me. --- I catch every target that I am assigned. The only one who continues to elude me:

I have spent the last 5 years apart from my love. Whenever I arrive at a town, it is only to learn that she has just left. Hearing the tales of her journey is simultaneously joy and torture. I am always elated to hear that she is alive and well, but I can only barely suppress my jealousy of the others she adventures with. She has become the elusive word always at the tip of my tongue and I desperately wish to speak her. I would give anything to smash through this mysterious barrier keeping us apart so that I could travel at her side.



The humiliation! "Mesmers can't get in parties" they'd say. "Take the Ele" advise others. "Oh no, NOT a Mesmer!" wailed one party member. Well, I may have been the last of the 10 classes added to my master's account, but FINALLY he realized the best profession in the game was ME, Mesmerelda Mindburn, Mesmer extraordinaire!! Distorter of visions, befuddler of thoughts, interrupter of all! Even though I've completed EVERY Guild Wars campaign in my short lifetime my master is still a slow learner. When it came to dishing out the Mercenary roles, what does he do? Oh yes, he takes care of the Holy Trinity... Merc Tank, Merc Healer and that annoying Merc Elementalist! Empathy, Blackout, Power Block and that threesome become nothing more than minion fodder. Oh please kind Sirs, I beseech you, bestow upon me the Mercenary honor so I may show my powers in a manner befitting this wonderous profession! Please don't make me wait until Guild Wars 2 to have my revenge on the Holy Trinity Yours most sincerely, Mesmerelda Mindburn

The Mad King demands that I enter that contest. He will eat all of my pudding if I don't obey! My precious dessert will be gone without a merchenary hero! If I had just one merchenary hero I could get his pudding instead... By Grenths gallbladder, I will enter this contest and win!

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Featured Artist: Charlie Dayman

by Arghore

For this issue we have a rather special artist, as in my personal view he is one of the best and most talented amongst the Guild Wars fan artists. If you are familiar with his work you will probably agree. We have already featured some of his work in a previous issue of GuildMag, but we did not interview him back then. The artist is Charlie Dayman. If you have never 'walked' through his thread on Guild Wars Guru I would advise you to do so, even if you are not really into art, as I am fairly sure everybody can appreciate cool artwork.

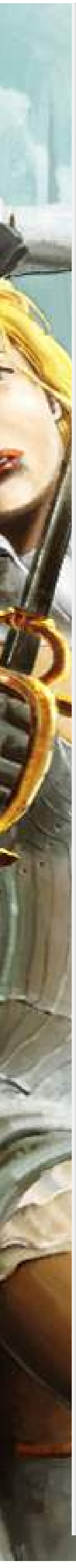
We had a chat with Charlie and asked him the following questions, and apart from a good artist he is also rather witty, as those familiar with him might already know. But enough of me talking, here is the interview in which you will hopefully get to know Charlie a bit better.

GuildMag: Can you tell us a little bit about your IRL self?
Charlie Dayman: I'm a student enrolled at California State Long Beach, currently pursuing an art degree till' death or madness take me.

GuildMag: So you are busy with your study, which is art related, can you fill us in on what sort of study you are doing, and what they have you do?
Charlie Dayman: My degree path requires that I delve into various fields of art, not just illustration. It's a good way to branch out and get involved with methods outside of your comfort zone. This previous semester I had an advanced ceramics, character design, and an illustration course. The ceramics class allowed students a lot of freedom in what they could make, and additional studies in glazing formulas. The "Executioner" statue was my favourite project from the course.



Character design was focused on a character and environmental redesign of "The Wizard of Oz". This was probably one of my most challenging classes as it was geared towards animation, and forced me to create an entirely new drawing style. Rather than just drawing cool looking characters, our professor taught us how to approach characters design in far more dynamic ways through



shape, posture, personality and context. It was extremely work demanding, but one of the most fun learning experiences I've had. Illustration provided assignments through mock commission requests and introduced us to freelance projects. It was also a review on colour theory and compositional skills.

GuildMag: Do you aspire to work in the game industry after your study, or will any art related job do?
Charlie Dayman: Ideally, I hope to find a spot on an art team geared towards game development - especially one like ArenaNet. There's a lot of amazing artists out there though, so I'm still keeping other doors open if that doesn't work out.

GuildMag: What is your favourite art form? Do you have a favourite medium for your art?
Charlie Dayman: I don't think I really have any one single favourite art style. Normally I look to the Classics, but recently I've been completely taken in with contemporary folks like Mary Blair and Earl Oliver Hurst. It all really just depends on my mood and what it is I'm working on at the time.

As for my favourite medium, I love working digitally. It allows me to be more experimental in terms of how I draw and is significantly cheaper than traditional mediums (starving college student). However, it's not an end-all solution as digital work cannot replicate the beautiful surface textures you can get through painting or other methods. It's always good practice to use other mediums to keep yourself from getting bored.

GuildMag: Any advice for aspiring artist on how to progress their skills?
Charlie Dayman: You're only an artist so long as you're making art. Keep practicing as often as you can. If you start to get bored in one style, then start looking at others you find interesting. Analyze those traits you like, and interpret them through your own unique voice.

GuildMag: If any of our readers would like to check out any of your art, where should they go?
Charlie Dayman: They could go to 'my' thread on guildwarsguru; or check out my gallery on deviant art.

GuildMag: When did you join Guild Wars?
Charlie Dayman: I think it was around Spring 09' when my brother introduced me to the game. I was never heavily involved with RPGs, so I didn't expect to get that attached to GW. I loved games with a heavy dose of historical influence like the Total War and Dynasty/Samurai Warrior series, and the all-out-battle vibe they had to them. It wasn't until I loaded up Factions that I picked up on that feeling and started to get way more involved.

GuildMag: Do you have a favourite profession?
Charlie Dayman: Definitely a Warrior. Playing casters can be a lot of fun, but bludgeoning your enemy to death is far more satisfying. It also goes back to my love for ancient warfare - Hoplites, Samurai, Teutonic Knights, Praetorians, Gladiators, etc. The warriors and front-liners were always the most fascinating characters, with the best looking armour.

GuildMag: Did you do art before you started making Guild Wars related art?
Charlie Dayman: Yes, like many others I've been drawing for as long as I can remember.

GuildMag: When did you start making Guild Wars related Art? (was there a special occasion that sparked it?)
Charlie Dayman: It was the 09' Halloween Workshop contest hosted by Tzu that sparked my interest in fantasy and GW related art. It was also that thread that introduced me to the Nolani board and GW art community.

GuildMag: Have you ever participated in a Guild Wars art contest, and did you ever win a prize with your Guild Wars art?
Charlie Dayman: Yes, in the 2010 Halloween Art Contest where I submitted a semi-animated piece referencing Stanley Kubrick's classic "The Shining". The piece was named "Panic", and was a first-time experiment with both simple animation and custom sound editing. I was extremely excited about winning an "Art of Guild Wars" book signed by their entire art team. A prize like that is worth getting into a fist fight for.

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GuildMag: In your thread on guildwarsguru I saw you also got a 'mention' on deviant-art, what was that about?
Charlie Dayman: That would be a Daily Deviation - a daily gallery featuring a number of artists and one of their works. Artwork is suggested to the team in charge of the DD catalog, and they in turn choose which works will be shown that day. It's a nice way of getting your work circulated and shown to a larger audience.

I was featured sometime in Fall 10' for my "Confrontation at the Skyway" piece. This was a little less than a year after I had begun painting digitally, so I was still working out the kinks in Photoshop. Either way, the DD certainly helped boost my gallery views and number of followers. Looking back at last year's paintings, I'm hoping to get another DD on something much nicer and more recent. We'll see with the next piece I'm working on.

GuildMag: We hope we will be seeing you (and your art) in Guild Wars 2. Do you have any idea on what sort of character (race, profession) you will play?
Charlie Dayman: You'll definitely find me running around on the day of release. As far as race/profession combos go, I'm looking at a Human/War, Charr/Thief, Norn/Ranger, and Sylvari/Guardian.

GuildMag: If you could ask yourself one question, what would it be?
Charlie Dayman: Pirates or Ninjas?

GuildMag: And what would be the answer to that question?
Charlie Dayman: Pirate ninjas.

GuildMag: Anything else you would like to share with our readers/your fans?
Charlie Dayman: ENTIRE TEAM OF AFFLICTED IS BABIES.

GuildMag: Thank you for your time and interview, it was an honour to feature you in our Mag.
Charlie Dayman: No worries, thanks for the questions!
GuildMag: And thank you for your art.

Seeing we could only put one animated work of art in this interview, we choose to feature his price winning work 'Panic'. But as I was doing my background research I stumbled upon this animated piece that I just don't want to withhold from our readers. So follow the link http://changinghand.deviantart.com/gallery/#/d3823ok and enjoy!

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Dwarven Religion

by Draxynnic

Part eight of a study by Gawain Draxynnus, penned 1080 AE

With dwarven culture, at least as it was known before, apparently coming to an end in the wake of the recent destroyer crisis, I feel the need to preserve what is known of the beliefs of the dwarves, both for the benefit of the future historical record and in case the knowledge of the dwarves may prove valuable for future generations in a time when living dwarves may not be present to ask. While this initial document is, unfortunately, brief, it is my hope that some of the surviving dwarves will grant other scholars or myself the time to help in expanding and completing our knowledge of their beliefs.

While sometimes mistaken as monothiestic, dwarven religion is, essentially, semi-dualistic. I say "semi-" because the dwarves are known to invoke the same deities as humanity when it is appropriate to do so, so they clearly acknowledge the existence of other divine entities beyond their own – however, in most cases it is not clear whether the dwarves actually do venerate the human deities, or they simply invoke them when humans are present to be polite to their allies (similar to how some human adventurers will invoke the animal spirits when in the presence of the norn). However, the apparent naming of the explosive Balthazate crystals after our own god of fire suggests that the dwarves have at least had enough exposure to the pantheon for references to them to enter their culture.

One exception to this general rule is the curious case of Ural Highstone. After being "rescued" from the Stone Summit shortly before the fall of Sorrow's Furnace, Ural repented and became a follower of Dwayna before returning to the broken Stone Summit in the north to spy on their activities. No stigma was apparent from his fellow dwarves related to his new religious views, although this may have been a case where anything was an improvement over membership of the Stone Summit. Either way, the personal appearance of an avatar of Dwayna to claim his soul on his death suggests that whether his worship of her was accepted by his fellow dwarves or not, he was deemed to be suitable by the goddess of life. Beyond this example, the Wintersday contests between Dwayna and Grenth has spread to the dwarven city of Droknar's Forge, with carollers mustering for both sides during the festival.

Normally, however, dwarven religion is focused on the struggle between the Great Dwarf and the Great Destroyer.

The Great Dwarf

> *The Great Dwarf's power is upon you all!*
> *The final battle lies before us! Great Destroyer against Great Dwarf!*
> *In victory, the Dwarves will be changed forevermore!*
> *We are ALL the Great Dwarf now!*
> *- King Jalis Ironhammer, 1078 AE*

According to dwarven legend, their race was forged by the Great Dwarf upon the plateau known today as Anvil Rock. While the dwarves did not settle in the area, a cave beneath the Rock became a traditional meeting place for the clan chieftains of the dwarves until the outbreak of the dwarven civil war lead to talks being replaced by contests of arms.

After this act of creation and the Great Dwarf's first struggle with the Great Destroyer (the legends we've heard so far are unclear on which was first), the Great Dwarf apparently left Tyria for a new domain in the Mists called the Great Forge, which also serves as the site of the dwarven afterlife. Some of his tools, however, remained behind on Tyria, hidden in the deep places of the earth.

According to legend, one of these tools is the Anvil of Dragrimmar, employed by the Great Dwarf to craft weapons of unmatched power. Hidden for centuries, the sepulchre in which it was hidden was recently uncovered in the same caverns near Sifhalla that contain the norn shrine to the Wolf Spirit – apparently intended to be found and used, as it was, to combat the rise of the Great Destroyer. To prevent it from being found and used before its intended time or by the wrong person, however, it was guarded not only by its location far from the heart of the dwarven empire, but by a host of powerful ice elementals and a series of trials to test the supplicant's commitment to dwarven ideals of strength, unity and kinship.

Even more important, however, was the Hammer of the Great Dwarf itself, hidden deep in the Shiverpeaks in a location known only to the Blackpowder Clan. This artefact was to prove the most significant of all, as it was this hammer that held the power to enact the recent transformation of the dwarves from flesh and blood to implacable soldiers of stone.



King jalis Ironhammer invoking the power of the Hammer of the Great Dwarf...

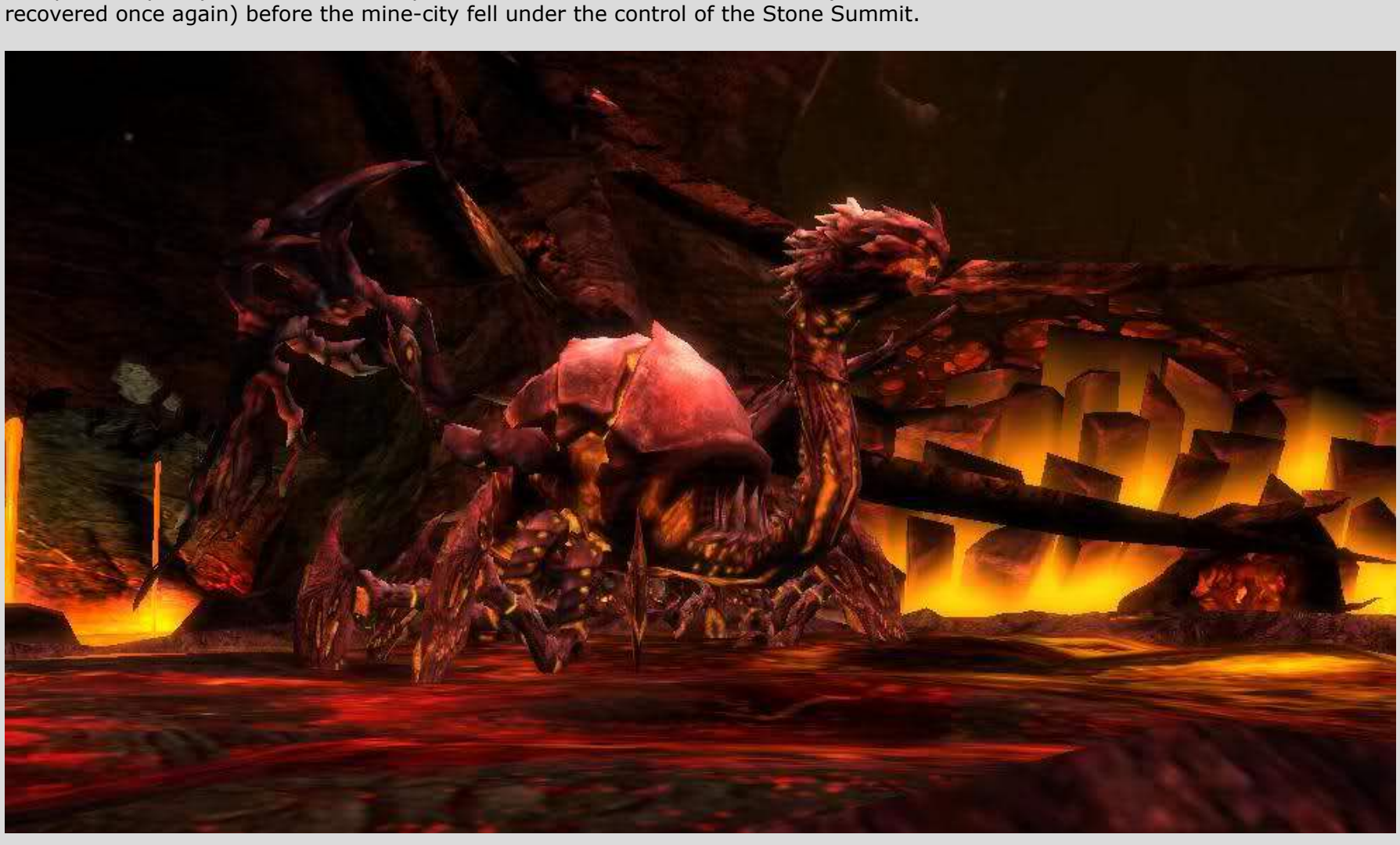
This transformation, however, may reveal something interesting about the true nature of the Great Dwarf. In a ritual intended to invoke the power of the Great Dwarf, there was no apparent appearance of the deity, not even an avatar or representative as might be sent by one of the Six Gods in response to an entreaty. Instead, the power was distributed through all of the dwarves present, and, apparently, among nearly all the dwarves that remained true to the ideals of the Great Dwarf. In addition to this physical transformation, it appears that the invocation of the Great Dwarf placed those dwarves affected into a kind of collective consciousness or hive mind, similar to that observed among the destroyers… although discussions with the dwarves after their transformation reveals that they did retain their individuality. Since then, dwarves that had not been present during the ritual have also been turning to stone, and it is possible that the ritual will, over time, eventually come to have transformed their entire race.



...and the result

Because of this, many human scholars have come to believe that this collective consciousness is all there is to the Great Dwarf. Certainly, the Great Dwarf has not been known to manifest in any other way during living memory, however, this form of existence does not appear compatible with the legends of the Great Dwarf taking direct physical action (especially the initial creation of the dwarves) in the distant past. One possible explanation is that the Great Dwarf invested his essence into his hammer or dispersed it among his children to be unlocked by the artefact. An alternative possibility could be that the Great Dwarf does in fact continue to dwell in the Great Forge among the Mists, and the ritual of the hammer served to merge the Great Dwarf with his servants on Tyria.

If there are any holy sites on Tyria apart from those mentioned above sacred to the Great Dwarf, they are not known to humans. One possibility may be the now-destroyed Stone Basilica in Sorrow's Furnace (where the Tome of the Rubicon was found, buried, and recovered once again) before the mine-city fell under the control of the Stone Summit.



The Great Destroyer

> *Long ago, the Great Dwarf took from his greatest foe the one thing that give him his power...he took from him his name, sealing it away until the time of their final battle. To ensure the name was unspeakable to all but the Great Dwarf, the name was sealed within the Rubicon. There are few left with the knowledge and power to open the Tome. If the true name of either is spoken aloud, it would mean the end of the world as we know it. We must not allow that which is unknown to again become known. Not now.*
> *- High Priest Alkar, 1072 AE*

In the distant past, it was written that the Great Dwarf battled, and ultimately bound beneath the earth, a dangerous foe known now only as the Great Destroyer. As part of turning their back on mainstream dwarven tradition, the Stone Summit began to turn their worship away from the mythical creator of their race towards his greatest nemesis.

Our first indication of this worship came during the opening raids of the Stone Summit fortress of Sorrow's Furnace after their defeat at Thunderhead Keep, as one of their Hierophants came dangerously close to opening the Tome of the Rubicon and hastening the

Great Destroyer's awakening, but there is no further indication of veneration for this being. By the time the Great Destroyer had risen, however, the entity's title was being invoked by the rank and file of the Stone Summit warriors when confronted with their enemies. When the Great Destroyer was finally destroyed, the last surviving hierophant Duncan the Black attempted to harness the power released by its destruction, but was slain before he could succeed.

It is unclear to what extent the Stone Summit truly understood the nature of the Great Destroyer, or just how deep their veneration was. It's possible that the Stone Summit simply saw the Great Destroyer as a possible source of power – certainly, the Summit dwarves are known to have sought the aid of other evils in the far north, such as the imp Glacius the Eternal and the lich in the depths of the Vloxen Excavations. Certainly, Duncan's attempt to absorb the Great Destroyer's power seems devoid of piety, although given the effects of the rite of the Great Dwarf, it is possible that Duncan was attempting a similar ritual to resurrect the destroyers through the bodies of his followers.

Alternatively, it is possible that the Stone Summit genuinely venerated the Great Destroyer. This may simply be as a replacement to the Great Dwarf, but another possibility is that the xenophobic dwarves learned of the prophecy that sealed the fate of the dwarves with the defeat of the Great Destroyer. If so, the Stone Summit may have railed against the prophesised destruction of their race to save the others, and may have sought to appease and aid the Great Destroyer in exchange for their own survival.

How or even if the Great Destroyer may have responded to this is unknown. Certainly, the events around the rescue of the bulk of the Ebon Vanguard from the charr shaman stronghold in Sacnoth Valley suggest that the destroyers would not spare those that offered them worship; but given that a shaman prisoner outright admitted that the shamans were only using the destroyers as a tool to maintain their power, it is possible that the Great Destroyer realised this and reacted accordingly. Certainly, the Stone Summit were never observed to be in conflict with the destroyers… but neither are they known to have fought beside them, so the true nature of the relationship between the Stone Summit and the minions of their apparent deity is unknown.

The Brotherhood of the Dragon

> *Do not be afraid. I'm sure you have heard the rumors about the Brotherhood of the Dragon, many of which are not so flattering. There are those in the Dwarven community who see our connection to the dragon Glint as blaspheme against the Great Dwarf. But I assure you, our brotherhood is not grounded in the spiritual realm. We are more interested in the... well, practical applications, if you will, of prophecy and the art of prognostication.*
> *- Consular Tronar Ironseer, 1072 AE*

Despite its self-proclaimed status as a secular rather than a spiritual organisation, the Brotherhood of the Dragon is worthy of note in this document thanks to the misinterpretations of the other dwarves… and their responses. With their apparent tolerance of outright worship of human gods by at least a visible minority of their folk, it is curious that a non-religious arrangement with a servant of the gods should earn such distrust among their fellow dwarves. What reasons might the dwarves have of accepting the likes of Dwayna and Grenth but not Glint?

Regardless of this distrust, however, the consulars of the Brotherhood of the Dragon are permitted to maintain a shrine to Glint within the grounds of Droknar's Forge, functioning similarly to the shrines of the Five Gods scattered through Tyria, Elona and Cantha, allowing the Brotherhood and others in Glint's favour to communicate with her without needing to locate her hidden sanctuary in the desert. Through this, the Brotherhood and its allies could receive prophecies from the dragon and assist in ensuring that they came to their desired conclusion.



The Brotherhood of the Dragon's shrine to Glint

Proof of the Brotherhood's continued overall allegiance to the Great Dwarf came in the Destroyer crisis, when consulars of the Brotherhood submitted to the ritual to merge with the Great Dwarf along with the rest of the dwarven nation. Even then, however, they continued their service to the dragon, employing one of the gates in the Central Transfer Chamber to dispatch their own forces as well as human adventurers to aid in the defence of Glint's offspring against armies of Destroyers determined to slay her child.

The Unknown:

> *You don't understand. Win or lose, the time of the dwarves is over. The only question is... is it the end for the rest of you as well?*
> *- Ogden Stonehealer, 1078 AE*

Like most religions, it is likely that dwarven religion and mythology contains truths that are not revealed to outsiders... and some that may not even be known to the faithful, as the shocking truths revealed in the Tome of the Rubicon can attest. If there are any more surprises to arise out of dwarven mythology, we can only hope that some of our stone friends will remain to recount the legends... or that before they disappear completely, they will be able and willing to pass on what other knowledge they have to those who can preserve and, if necessary, use it.

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Fall of Gods (Chapter 2 & 3)

by Konig Des Todes

Chapter 2

"The Doric family had three estates prior to the Exodus, each in what now makes the three Tyrian human kingdoms. The one in what is now Kryta became the castle of the Krytan royal family while the one in Ascalon eventually became the largest structure, outside the Great Wall, of Ascalon City. The one in Orr, which was the home of Konig Doric, was located along a cliff. Some would say it resided within Arah, and others would say it resided on its outskirts. This is because Herzog Doric, the one who commissioned the estate, desired separation from the "common person" and had a large, thick wall surrounding the estate.
>The estate itself is comprised of six outlying towers and one larger central tower, each tower connected to the adjacent ones via a hallway and series of rooms. Each tower, save the central one, was dedicated to the Six Gods; the central one being dedicated to the Doric family. On the outskirts of the estate was a personal arena and a training ground. Due to being located along a cliff, one of the towers was placed slightly off, preventing a perfect hexagonal shape, and in turn unlike the other outlying towers had two connecting wings instead of three."

– Journal of Xaphan Sariel

Grenth rubbed his eyes and yawned as he leaned up against a stone ledge. I've chosen the right place to take that nap, he thought to himself before thinking over what he had just overheard. Konig will run away tonight, eh? Good for him. It's about time he leaves those two.

Grenth stretched out and slowly stood up. Konig and Desmina had already rejoined their families. That woman was very talented in acting. Grenth decided he should head to his study since he heard it was flooded by Konig. It would be best to check on the damage before anything else.

****

It's time to go get Desmina, Konig thought to himself as he grabbed his dark red cloak. After grabbing a small bag of gold, he went out of his room as quietly as he could as to not wake up his sister whose bedroom was nearby. As he suspected earlier, Desmina and her father Joren were put into the south wing's guest rooms. It would take a bit to get through to Desmina's room.

Due to being on the third floor of the estate, Konig couldn't jump out of the window and move around outside like he did from Grenth's study or the library. However, thanks to his materialistic mother who collected anything of some worth, there were plenty of things to hide behind, or in, should someone come his way.

It was a long, boring, and way too silent trip through the Doric Tower of the estate, so inaptly named by Herzog and his overbearing self-conceit, and towards the second floor of the Balthazar Tower. As expected, Konig was easily able to bypass the one guard post that was in his path to Desmina's guest room, as the guards were distracted with something, though Konig couldn't tell what. When he got there, he saw Desmina awake and dressed in uncommon clothing.

"That's an interesting look for you, Desmina. I'm surprised that you were able to get that kind of clothing into here." Konig said as he observed Desmina's clothing. She wore a long, heavy jacket with thick pants and a scarf that she wrapped around her face when Konig appeared in the doorway.

"Aren't you a little early, Konig?"

"I figured that if we get more night time, we'd be able to get further with fewer chances to be seen."

"Good idea. Let's get going." Desmina walked past Konig into the corridor then stopped and turned to him. "Well? Weren't you going to show me the 'safest route' or something?" Desmina smirked at Konig as she waited for him to go on. With a small, barely noticeable huff he moved on back to the Doric Tower. As before, there were few guards on the way. But once they went down to the first floor they were quickly in the guards' and servants' dining room – and it was full of the guards who just got off duty.

Because Konig forgot to look into the guards' schedules for the earlier departure, he was caught off guard. He acted quickly to get to the first piece of cover for the two. Konig knew there would be guards here, but he didn't expect there to be well over twenty guards. And on top of that, they were all wide awake. Luckily, they were so busy getting drunk off of wine and eating their meal that Konig and Desmina were able to easily slip by. Though they thought they were caught once, and it took a while to wait for an opening, the two were able to get through the crowded room after hiding behind various large beams and vases.

"I thought you said you'd get us out of here easily, Konig!" Desmina whispered with a ferociously angry tone. "Do you know what would have happened if I was caught in this?!?"

"Seeing how you were with me, if we were caught, they'd probably think you were a prostitute that I got." Konig said with a smirk. He could only imagine what was going through Desmina's head at the insult he tossed at her and was expecting her to lose her cool

within seconds.

"Me? A prostitute? That's a laugh, 'husband.' Besides, you haven't even gotten me in bed yet. Not like you're going to." she said, returning the insult in the form of a taunt while keeping her cool – or, perhaps, not even getting the insult.

"Whatever. Now that we're out of there, we should only have to avoid one more guard post in the building and another at the gate." It wasn't long for them to reach the last place in the building that the guards were in. With the west wing being full of the food and other commodities, it had never needed many guards, so they met fewer than there should have been in the north and south wings.

It took another several minutes to finally get outside the building. At this time of night, not only are most guards either tired or drunk, but they didn't expect any thieves – though the latter is mainly due to the near non-existent crime rate in Arah, the City of the Gods which neighbors the estate. But nonetheless, Konig and Desmina kept a sharp eye out.

As they slipped outside, the two observed the mostly emptied yard. They headed west towards a gate to the estate's outer wall that led to Arah. Approaching the gate, they ducked over a bush just before the last guard post they would have to get by. "Three of them tonight it seems… Lucky us." Konig said.

"Lucky? There are three people blocking the easiest path out of here!" Desmina said, doing her best to keep her voice to a whisper. "There are usually five people at the side gates, and seven at the main gate. So yes, three is lucky."

"You know, youngin's, there is a better way." An old, almost sandy, voice suddenly sounded behind the two, startling them. The old vizier Grenth began to chuckle at the look of Konig's and Desmina's faces. "You two should really find a new place to talk about secretive things; you spoke right next to me while I napped!"

"Grenth… why are you here?!" Konig said, attempting to keep his voice low so the guards didn't hear them – which Grenth didn't seem to care about.

"I came to help you out. I think it's about time you leave this place, though I do think you and Desmina would make quite a lovely couple." Grenth chuckled again, once more not caring about his voice's volume, making Konig grimace. "Hmmm? Heh, I think you should take a closer look at those guards, Konig. Maybe that'll help remove that scowl from your face." Grenth noticed Konig's dislike for Grenth's loudness.

It was rather obvious to tell once Konig took a good look at them. Though the three guards were moving as if nothing was wrong, he saw their slow movements, and what made their state obviously unusual was that a little bird flew onto one of the guards' head and began pecking at the guard's hair. The guards were in some kind of trance, most likely Grenth's doing.

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Grenth, the aging vizier of King Doric with no history going back further than 63 years ago, had just appeared, as if out of nowhere, behind Konig and Desmina. It's unknown why he decided to enact his duties the king from the Orrian estate of the Dorics, many suspected that he had an interest in Konig, whom he spent a lot of time with, and others thought he couldn't stand Ascalon, King Doric's favorite land. Desmina realized that the former was right. There was no other reason why Grenth would appear out of nowhere, aid Konig and her in leaving, and put the hardest obstacle in a trance. She couldn't get the thoughts out of her mind as the three left the estate grounds and entered Arah.

"Why are you looking at me like that, Desmina?" Grenth asked her with his sandy old voice, peering into her eyes as he spoke. That stare, those eyes… it was like Grenth was looking into her very soul for some reason. Just what on earth is he? Or what, for that matter. Desmina thought to herself. Though he looked human, he moved way too easily for someone who should be over ninety years old.

"Why are you helping us, Grenth? Isn't it your duty, as vizier of King Doric, to act in the best interest of the royal family? Since King Doric has no children, wouldn't that mean that you should act to keep Konig here to sire an heir should the king have no children before death?" Desmina quizzed Grenth. Just what are you up to, vizier? She never trusted any kind of 'advisor' – they always seemed to advise in their own interest. She needed to know why Grenth was helping them.

The two have been following Konig into the streets of Arah. He apparently knew some of the city, but soon Desmina would have to lead. "You're right, I should be stopping you. But Hara would be a better queen than Konig would be a king. How I see it, I am working in the family's best interest!" Grenth said into the silence after what seemed to have been him contemplating the answer. He could have thought of the best answer and lied. "Besides, I like Konig – and of what little I know of you, I like you too. I want you to do live how you should, rather than be bound by the chains of others. I just hope Hara won't mind."

"Just Hara? What about Herzog? He may have your head if he finds out, you know." Desmina was not satisfied, and probably never would be. But Konig stopped and looked at Desmina – it was time for her to lead. "We're going to have to stop at a friend of mine's place before we leave Arah. I trust you won't join us for long, Grenth?"

"I'm just escorting you out of the city. As for Herzog, Dhuum can take his soul and Diana's for that matter." Grenth sped up to catch up with Desmina, instead of trailing behind like he was. "We'd best stop by a friend of mine instead, youngin."

"Why bother? We're here." Desmina pointed to a tavern they were next to as she stopped walking. "You've been rather quiet, Konig." "I'm not fond of being told what to do, Desmina. But since it is necessary, I'm just keeping it to myself. Besides, you two are busy it seems. So why don't you continue your talk inside, I'll stand watch."

"Why are you so nonchalant about Grenth helping us?" Desmina asked. With only receiving a shrug from Konig, she sighed and said "fine then, why don't you come meet my friend, vizier." Desmina walked into the tavern, noticing it nicely cleaned and empty, and was shortly followed by the old man.

"Looks like your friend is sleeping, youngin." Grenth chuckled, just standing there.

Desmina sighed and looked around; having found stairs, she walked up them and knocked on the first door that she passed. "Hey! Wake up, you slob! It's Desmina! I said wake up, Banton!"

"I'm awake!" A voice cried out from behind the door. "And you're early!" The door opened up, and a shirtless hairy man with a large round gut appeared.

"Ugh. Couldn't you have had the courtesy to get a shirt?" Desmina quickly closed her eyes and looked away. "Did you at least get things ready? Where's the caravan at?"

"Yes, yes. The caravan's been paid for and will leave in an hour. It is five streets north from here, just as you asked. Now, my debt is paid, so can I please go back to sleep?" Banton asked, rubbing his eyes.

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"Looky what we have here, bro." A broad man in a dark gray cloak who just came around the corner of the tavern said as he looked at Konig.

"And dere's two more. I heard 'em myself. An old man and a woman." Another man appeared behind the broad man. This one wore a brown robe and looked identical to the first.

"Heh, easy pickins. I told you those 'gods' are nothing to worry about! This place is full of unsuspecting people."

"I say we kill dis one, den off dat old man and do what we want with dat woman. I bet she's pretty good lookin' from how she sounded." The one in brown said as he pulled out a dagger as the one in the dark gray cloak pulled out a hand ax.

"You two are laughable and weak." Konig said with a slight laugh in his voice. "Not only do you not know who you're dealing with, but you think you can take me on." Konig reached for where he usually kept his short sword, but nothing was there. He cursed to himself at forgetting his favorite weapon.

"You foget sometin dere, boy?" The man in brown asked, smiling as he moved his hand up the ax's handle.

"Not at all, you dull rock." Konig taunted the man in brown, who was puzzled at the insult. Though it wasn't intended, Konig gave himself enough time to remember the time in the study and how it felt to cast the spell. All he needed was to recall a spell from the scroll, and he knew just which one to use.

"Acies a calxen"
"Lasses zu air vereisen"
"In laqueus my fein"
"Und tribuos sie erfrierun."

The two stopped coming towards Konig as he began chanting, looking at each other then back at Konig. "What the heck was he sayin,' bro?"

"How de hell should I know?"

"You don't think he… Why is it so cold?" The air around the three began to get cooler and cooler. Then, out of nowhere, around Konig's feet, the ground began to freeze and it spread, quickly, towards the two brothers shaping into small spires and spikes around the two. The spires wrapped around them as it continued to spread, and their feet became entrapped in ice that spread from under their feet.

"He works magic!"

"You think! Gah! Get us out of here! Let us go!" The one in the dark grey became hysterical as the one in brown hacked at the ice with his dagger.

"Konig! What's going on out here?" Desmina shouted as she rushed out of the tavern, shortly followed by Grenth.

"It would seem that our friend here has learned some spells since he flooded my study this morning." Grenth chuckled as he finished. "That's pretty well done, Konig."

"Do you have what you needed, Desmina?" Konig asked, ignoring the two who were screaming and cutting at the ice behind him.

"Uh… yeah, there's a caravan five streets north from here that will take us to Port Amnoon." Desmina said staring at the ice and the two trapped in it.

"I think you two youngin's will be fine from here. I'll take these two to the authorities," Grenth said as he stood at the tavern's doorway in a ponderous position.

"Let's just go." Konig and Desmina said together; Desmina chuckled as she looked at Konig who rushed north to the caravan. I need to get out of here...

Chapter 3

> *"He will move out of boredom and out of desire. The prince shall listen to the Maiden, and together they shall leave the life of chains and shackles. Though they leave together, and they flee together, their time as one shall not last. With the Maiden, the prince shall flee from his life, but without the Maiden, the prince shall flee for his life.*
>
> *Though they go different paths, their fate is intertwined, and their presence shall never truly part each other. While one shall face death, the other shall meet it. Together, they shall beckon forth death and change its rules.*
>
> *But before then, in the prince's most desperate time, he shall do the unthinkable."*
>
> *– Excerpt from the Tome of Time*

"That wasn't as hard as I thought it would be… it's only been five days and we're already at Amnoon. So, Konig, where will you go from here?" Desmina asked as she looked around. Just as the rumors said, Port Amnoon was a desolate and barely visited town. It lied on the outermost stretch of what was called Orrian soil, and was the last town before the mountains to the north. Some might mistake it for a ghost town, and it would have been if it weren't for the Margonites who used it.

"Don't know, for now just travel."

"It actually was fun while it lasted; I'm going to head north. The lands of Ascalon, which your uncle established, are still rather new and unchecked, so I could probably find a new life there without anyone being suspicious," Desmina said as Konig surveyed the area.

"Do what you want. It doesn't matter to me." Grabbing the hood of his cloak, Konig began walking off to a boat that was being loaded by people who, based on their clothing, were Margonites.

"Be safe, Konig." Desmina sighed as she turned the other direction.

After talking with the captain about its destination and bargaining for passage, Konig got on the ship. Despite the ship being wrecked, in a battle with pirates on their last journey according to the captain, and having paid, Konig had to help out with the cargo of the crew. "Everyman works here, no slackers, not even passengers" is what the captain said.

Margonites, the people of the sea… They are an interesting group, to say the least. I could find myself liking their company. But they're weak and they follow a weak god. Worshiping the god of water may be fitting, but they miss out on true power. Only Dhuum and Balthazar can give the power people desire, yet people such as these who need power to live their daily lives don't even see this! I'll never understand those people…People that care about wealth and not strength… It's strength that moves this world; money cannot save your life from the unforgiving hands of Dhuum. It's a shame that to get off this rock I need the help of people who can't fathom to even think like me.

Konig kept quiet as the Margonites on the ship moved about, and he helped move the cargo into place. According to one of the Margonites, who was the first mate, the cargo was loaded on the wrong side of the ship, so they had to move the crates then secure them on the other side.

He began to breathe heavily as he worked – despite being trained by Afzal in the ways of the Orrian soldier, his training never entailed physical strengthening. "A true fighter should be as swift as the wind and as agile as a leaf. You humans are born to be swifter than centaurs, yet few of you adhere to that calling. I train every man to be swift, and I wish I could be too, but the centaur's body that I have doesn't allow that. I'll never understand the humans who wish to become moving forts; that is not how a true fighter should be." Afzal would preach on about that every training session.

"Orrian! We have to set sail up above, so you'll have to move the rest of the cargo yourself. Don't damage any of them and don't throw up either! All of you damn Orrians can never last a trip without messing up the place." The first mate hollered down to Konig, signaling for two Margonites who were helping Konig move the cargo headed up to the deck to help out with setting off the coast.
Konig mumbled between breaths and quickly grabbed another large crate to shove over. Two more after this… Damn these are heavy.
Konig took a break before moving the last crate, but as soon as the ship began to sway, he got up and started to shove the large, but surprisingly light, crate. Noticing a hole in the crate's side, Konig decided to look in after he moved it and saw a giant crystal being cushioned in the crate. It looked like a balthazate crystal, crystals that were powerful, dangerous, rare, and destructive. In other words: perfect for Konig.

Having intended to steal some cargo anyways once the ship docked, Konig decided he'd steal the balthazate crystal. But for now, he'd have to play the nice passenger, so he finished moving the cargo and secured the multiple crates.

On his way up to the dock, the first mate blocked him at the steps. "Hello Orrian! You finished moving all those crates by yourself? Hah! Who knew you had it in those scrawny arms to do that work by yourself! We finished casting off, so I was gonna lend you a hand. Aw well." The Margonite walked around Konig to inspect the cargo. "Oh, and Orrian, best to keep out of anyone's way. The last passenger we had bugged some crew and got tossed overboard in the Clashing Seas. Just some advice. By the way, name's Rodrick. The captain doesn't like to be bothered often so if you have a complaint, come to me instead."

****

"Hey! Orrian! Last time I checked, I was on night watch, not you." Rodrick tossed his arm around Konig's shoulders. "You should get some sleep, or are you up here because you're seasick? Hah!"

"I enjoy the moonlight. Not to mention, I'm used to lacking sleep. But I don't see how that's any of your business." Konig responded, shaking the first mate's arm off. The Margonite then began to lean on the edge of the ship as Konig was.

"We'll be docking tomorrow. And I just wanted to say that you're possibly the least irritating Orrian I've ever had to deal with on this ship. All you Orrians are so stuck up just because some of the gods live in your capital. You're the first one who didn't complain about working on this ship under our captain's order!"

"I'm not like the rest of the Orrians. So don't clump me with them. Please leave me be."

"Jeez! I was giving you a complement! Do what you want, I'll leave you be Orrian." Rodrick pushed himself off of the edge of the ship and began walking away to continue his watch over the water.

Yes, please do so I can steal that crystal without being noticed.

"Oh, before I forget again. Konig, was it? I noticed that one of the crates had a hole in it. Did you have anything to do with that?"
"No, I just moved them as told."

"Hmmm, okay. The captain's still gonna be annoyed. Best watch your back to make sure he doesn't go blaming you and have you tossed overboard. But you could probably use the swim. Hah!" The first mate continued walking, whistling a tune that was common among the Margonites – 'Abaddon's Grace' Konig thought it was called.

Will these Margonites ever not be annoying? Konig decided it was best time to get to sleep. After heading to the spot given to him to rest in, Konig quickly fell asleep having an unusually peaceful time asleep.

The next morning Konig wasn't woken up by someone telling him to do a job, but instead by the sound of the Margonites shouting orders at each other. Konig quickly got up and headed to the deck.

"Orrian! Go make sure the cargo is secure. It's a bit rickety this morning. There might be a storm coming in. Get to it!" Rodrick shouted at Konig. Konig quickly headed to the cargo. Now was the chance to take the crystal. It was small enough to hide under his cloak, so he grabbed that before heading to the cargo – no one would realize he took a detour anyways.

After re-securing the crates, Konig carefully grabbed the balthazate crystal and strapped it to himself, covering it with his cloak. He heard the sound of the plank used to bridge the ship with the dock land on the ship's end. Being eager to get off and others eager for him to do so as well, Konig headed to the deck and was let off immediately.

****

That was easier than I thought it would be. Konig thought to himself as he looked around the docks. The place was a loud, crowded slum of a town – which meant it would be easy to remain hidden; though it also meant Konig will have troubles keeping an eye out for the crew he just left.

His stomach grumbled as he walked on, determined to get out of the area as soon as he can without being seen. Though red stuck out among the crowd, his cloak that he brought with had become dirty over the past thirteen days since he left Arah and, as such, it was easy for him to blend into the crowd. His stomach became irritable; searching through the crowds, Konig spotted just what he needed: an out of the way tavern.

"Ah, greetings there! How may I help you, sir?" The barkeeper asked, with a shine off of his balding head, as Konig walked into the tavern.

"Whatever's the most filling meal you have." Konig said to the barkeeper as he looked around, making sure there wasn't anyone from the ship around, and then sat down into a corner of the tavern. It wasn't a long wait until an aging barmaid, perhaps the barkeeper's wife, brought the meal.

"What is this stuff?" Konig asked as he poked the slightly green slimy blob that took up most of the plate.

"It's shell-less scarab meat. It turns from a whitish pink to a light green as it heats up, hence the color. Despite its look, it is quite tasty – and filling." The barmaid smiled at Konig as she explained the dish to him. "I suggest not eating the leaves underneath – they're for seasoning only. I'll be back with some water, you'll want that."

"That's… foreboding. Ah well, food is food…" Konig said to himself, gulping as he looked at the scarab meat in front of him. Hesitant, he took his knife and started cutting off a bit of the slimy meat.

"Ah, it's always fun to watch first-timers squirm when they try to eat it." The barmaid said as she returned with the water. "Ever had any seafood, boy?"

"Yes, I have. Crab's always been my favorite dish."

"Then why are you having so much trouble eating that, boy? They taste almost the same." The barmaid said as she walked away, chuckling at Konig.

"I find that hard to believe." Konig muttered to himself as he took a bite of the scarab in front of him. The barmaid was wrong, the scarab didn't taste like the crab he usually eats, but it still tasted well. Konig ate as quickly as he could, having stalled enough with worrying about the taste of the meal. The Margonite crew has probably discovered the missing crystal by now.

Konig finished his meal quickly, paid the barkeeper, and headed to the door. A tall, broad man stood blocking the doorway. "Please move." Konig said, keeping his hood from showing most of his face.

"Hey there, Orrian." The voice of the first mate came from the man, startling Konig. "You wouldn't happen to have taken something of ours, have ya?" Rodrick put his hand on Konig's shoulder with a very tight grip. Panicked, Konig punched Rodrick with a right uppercut that sent the Margonite flying back at least three feet. Immediately after, Konig ran.

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Skritt and Asura: Deep Hostility



by littleboat

The Elder Dragons have resurfaced. Amidst the destruction and horrific transformations caused by their arrival, there's a secondary—and, frankly, more interesting—effect. The real stories of *Guild Wars* and *Guild Wars 2* are about the struggles between races and nations. The Elder Dragons are the catalysts of these struggles; specifically, Primordus has driven the rat-like skritt (presumed extinct) back into territories the asura consider their own.

The Elder Dragons can only be fought if the peoples of Tyria can form an honest alliance. And this is Primordus's role in the asura's story: not to be a big scary monster, but to force them to confront a race whose ideology couldn't be further from their own.

Intelligence

The skritt were designed "to challenge the asura on their own terms," according to Ree Soesbee (http://www.arena.net/blog/those-sneaky-sneaky-skritt). You can see this in the way each race views and values intelligence. Nothing is more important to the asura than an individual's intelligence, so much so that they're known for their arrogant gloating and competition. They will go out of their way to make sure their ideas are not shared, as Snaff and Klab did in *Edge of Destiny*. That episode in the novel ended with the Arcane Council appointing Klab to a new position. Public service, rather than being an honor or a duty, is a punishment, preventing the "honored" individual from pursuing their own goals.

So, how insulting it must be to an asura to see skritt, little more than vermin in their eyes, functioning intelligently at all, let alone outsmarting an asura. The skritt do so with their network; as it grows, so does their collective intelligence. Individualism impedes them. This is more than just a simple opposite of the asura; it's a metaphor and a foil for how the asura function. It's through sharing ideas that skritt intelligence is able to rival the asura's. And through resorting to asuran methods that they fail.

Language

The asura are famously long-winded and view this feature as a sign of superiority. They believe they need to explain the simplest concepts to other races, and will do so as laboriously, condescendingly, and sadistically as possible. The skritt contrast this, often assuming that they don't need to help a non-skritt keep up with their chatter.

The skritt language conveys ideas quickly and efficiently; the more there are, the faster they can communicate and brainstorm. My first thought was that it worked like crowdsourcing, or even Twitter. A group of skritt will each constantly throw out ideas, with the good ones being repeated (retweeted) until the most favorable ideas become predominant. (Now my mind is tickled with things a skritt might possibly tweet; I'll just say maybe the reason the asura want to exterminate them is because they've read the trending topics.)



Skritt

This network is what has been called their hive mind. I've been pouring over different examples of hive minds in and out of the Guild Wars universe to find something similar to what Ree described: able to accelerate and parse ideas as more skritt join the conversation. We've seen hive minds in Guild Wars before: first with the destroyers, but they weren't explored much beyond being a typical insectoid hive mind, I think. The sylvari are unique on their own, but wholly different to the skritt. The skritt don't share a consciousness, they only have a way of communicating that's hard for us to grasp.

Or is it? Maybe the nearest analogy to the skritt's hive mind is in the history of human development (that's *Homo sapiens*, not the tiny norn). As we've come to understand our evolution, two theories explaining our intelligence have been prominent. The more favored one is that through networking with other groups we were able to share more novel ideas and make life easier, allowing our intelligence to develop. Compare this to an average chimp, which may have a network of maybe 15 other chimps through its entire life--that's not a lot of new ideas. It's estimated that an early human would have access to a network of nearly a thousand other humans, through family, in-laws, and peaceful tribal neighbors, increasing the spread of information and exposing them to many more ideas. (Some further information: http://www.cbc.ca/quirks/episode/2011/0 ... il-16-2011)

Theories of human evolution have a tricky chicken-and-egg problem: did our evolution allow our brain to increase in size (via networks) or did the size of our brain drive our evolution? The skritt are analogous with the first example on a smaller and faster scale, although with the unfortunate drawback that they don't retain any of the info once they're split up. Ask an asuran if a large brain or a network is the key to their intelligence and... well, she probably wouldn't bother taking the time to explain it to a bookah—if it weren't for the opportunity to demonstrate the abstrusitude of her eruditity.

Faith

Finally there's faith. You have the asura's Eternal Alchemy: "eternal" is an infinite concept and "alchemy" is the chemistry of the



Asura

impossible—two purely conceptual ideas. (Less conceptual in the eyes of the power-hungry Inquest, at best an eccentricity of the faith and at worst a serious danger to society.) Skritt faith, as described in the post, is materialistic and practical. The asura look for meaning and purpose in the metaphysical machinations of the world; the skritt look for use. (The Inquest combines a little of both, believing they can control the Eternal Alchemy for their own ends.)

There's nothing mutually exclusive about these faiths, and neither seems to see the other as heretical, yet in the end there is such a fierce rivalry between the two. Why are the asura so hostile towards the skritt? Are they just being territorial? Do they like the fact that the skritt provide endless fodder for their weapon experiments, and simply don't respect the personhood of the skritt enough to be bothered? Or are they so high on their own egos that they can't accept that the skritt are able to rival them?

The skritt have a tough battle ahead of them in order to survive above ground, and the asura will have their own struggle to avoid falling into the depths of genocide. I don't say that lightly; the asura believed the skritt had been wiped out by Primordus and greeted their return with renewed attempts at extermination. They apparently had little remorse in the skritt's elimination, as if the belief that *Primordius* was responsible tacitly removed any responsibility the asura had in their extinction. Now the skritt have returned like ghosts to dare the asura to do it again.

I am fascinated by the asura. No doubt they will be the first race I play. I hope to see how their dark past with the skritt weighs on their conscience. Is it a price they've paid for their values? We can already see how the differences between the two races highlight what makes them unique. I can't wait to see how each race will confront the Elder Dragon's true challenge.

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GuildMag

November issue #8: Depths of Tyria

GAME



EMBARK BEACH TRAVELS

Even though summer is at an end, there's always ample opportunities to have some holiday fun courtesy of Embark Beach Travels: Guild Wars' number one travel agency.

After months of research by top asura scientists, it's been determined that people don't enjoy lying on beaches during a snowstorm, so the kind folks at the agency have lined up some fantastic adventure holiday packages instead in a bid to help keep you warm. Whether you're chasing the last glimmers of (sun) light or planning a dark and dismal discord on your day of rest, we've got it covered! If you love swinging your weapon of choice into many monsters, many times, many days of the week then you simply can't miss these amazing last-minute deals; and even if you're the kind of person who enjoys face-planting the floor instead, there's room for you too!



Urgoz's Warren

When people say 'fun', do you immediately think of being party wiped by a load of angry creatures found in the Kurzick forests? If so, have we got a holiday package for you! For a limited time only, Embark Beach Travels are offering you the chance to travel with 11 other adventurers to Urgoz's Warren, the notorious area where many Survivors have been claimed over the years. Whilst there, you'll be involved in the murder of Urgoz himself, all the while fighting off hordes of enemies. Murder not your thing? We've still got you covered: a brief 30 second walk into the wilderness and you'll be killed, allowing you to view all the excitement without having to get your hands dirty yourself. Be sure to bring lots of consumables during your trip; it's hungry work! Pets are allowed on this holiday.

Gate of Desolation

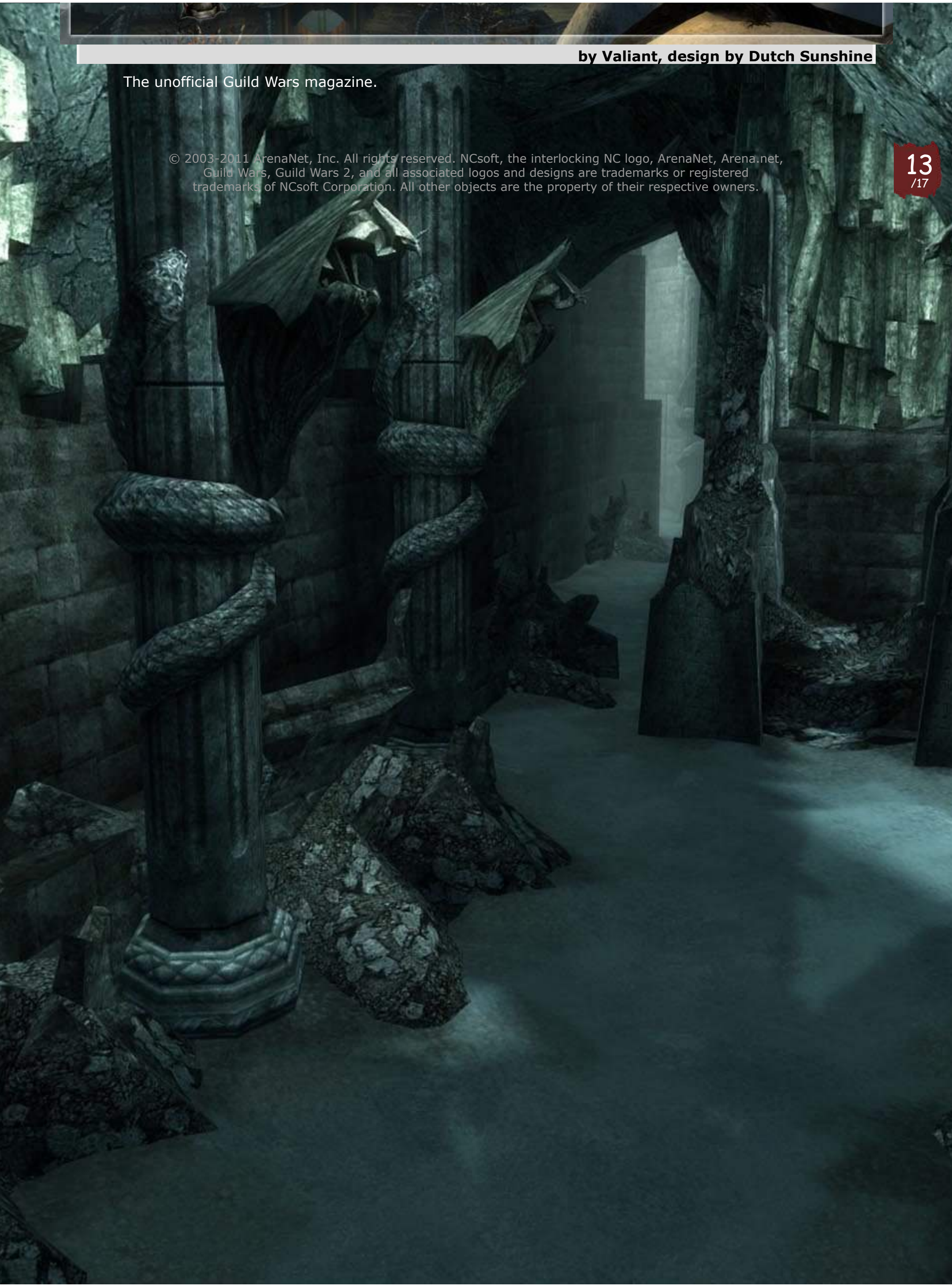
Fancy some summer sun? Elona has plenty of it, and you'll not find a drier, more uninhabitable place than the Desolation! Our exclusive Gate of Desolation adventure holiday includes taming Queen Aijundu of the Junundu and then climbing inside your very own wurm escort! Whilst inside the wurm, your hair will be covered in gooey slime that's just perfect for those with dry, frizzy, untameable hair – because you're worth it! Whilst enjoying your holiday, we recommend setting your heroes to Guard or Fight beforehand and bringing sunglasses with you; the Queen has a frightfully bright green ranger aura around her, despite her using no ranger skills!





Thunderhead Keep

If you're looking for something a little different, away from all the tourists and the heat, then Thunderhead Keep is the place for you! Set in the Shiverpeak Mountains, this cozy little castle-come-lodge is the capital city of the Deldrimor dwarves and is currently under Stone Summit control, so naturally it's up to you to take it back! But that's not all that's planned: as well as a day of slaying armour-clad dwarves, you'll then have the chance to defend the Keep against the mursaat onslaught, all the while preventing King Jalis Ironhammer's demise! Phew, sounds like fun, huh? Well believe me, you've got it easy! Back in the good ol' days, this adventure holiday was much, much harder - so much so that we had to tone the violence down for fear of too many backs being broken. To compensate for how easy Thunderhead Keep has become, we'll throw in a cinematic film for you to watch at the end of your exciting holiday, where you'll be able to see the Undead Lich and a certain undead prince near a cave to the north.



by Valiant, design by Dutch Sunshine

The unofficial Guild Wars magazine.

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Community Reaction to the Engineer



by Draxynnic

Short of the removal of dedicated healers (and the breakup of the classical idea of the holy trinity this causes), the introduction of the engineer is one of the most daring moves on ArenaNet's part in the development of *Guild Wars 2* – to the point that there was a conspiracy theory among some in the fanbase that the engineer was released before the expected mesmer on the basis that the mesmer release could win back fans that were disgusted by the engineer. Paradoxically, this is because the engineer both is and isn't new to the genre.

As far back as Tolkien, there has been an unwritten rule limiting the level of technology present in a fantasy setting to a pre-firearm level (although, anachronistically, still containing armour designs that were historically made to protect against early firearms). Sometimes there'll be a firearm or two that are essentially treated as super-crossbows or a culture or two that employs advanced technology (usually as compensation for lacking magic) but most of the setting will generally remain comfortably technology-free.

Until the release of the Engineer, despite ArenaNet's comments about the world having advanced, *Guild Wars 2* did seem to be fitting this general mould. You had one profession each with rifles and pistols… which could probably be replaced by large and small crossbows with little change in the mechanics. You then had the technological charr and the technomagical asura, but the belief existed among some of the fanbase that these would still be restricted to the areas of those races, something like the technological goblins in *Dungeon Siege* that can be visited for a change before getting back to the serious fantasy. The engineer as a playable character overturns all that, since in a persistent world no matter where you go there's nothing stopping a norn or sylvari engineer running up and popping a turret next to you.

However, this isn't the first time this unwritten law has been broken. The eight hundred pound gorilla in the MMO genre (you know who I mean) has engineers, although there it is a crafting profession rather than a class that fights. A closer precedent is in the *Warhammer Online* engineer… which, if the opinions expressed on the forums before ArenaNet released their version on the engineer are to be believed, was an abject failure. So while on the one side it's different enough from the usual fare to be a risk, it's also not so original so as to avoid the charge of ripping off the competition. Thus, it's no surprise that the unveiling of the engineer resulted in a polarised reaction from the community. This has come in a number of forms.

The Ritualist Question

One part of the discussion has been the question of whether the engineer is a suitable substitute to the ritualist. The official line is that the engineer is not intended as a replacement for the ritualist, but it does clearly fit a similar playstyle, and articles from before *Factions* released reveal that the ritualist did spring from seeking to introduce a playstyle like the *Team Fortress* engineer into a setting that lacks the technology that normally supports it.

Regardless of the ritualist's history, however, it did build a core of dedicated followers among *Guild Wars 1* players, and the reactions between them have been mixed. For some ritualist players, the aesthetics of the spirit-wrangler are as important as the playstyle, and the engineer – which appears to be aiming to fill the same playstyle – represents the death knell to any real expectation of their favoured profession making the transition to the sequel. Others acknowledge the change, but also recognise the similarities between the new turrets and kits versus the spirits and item spells of the past, and look forward to trying out the new system.

The FPS Question

While the likely ultimate inspiration for the Guild Wars engineer has been mentioned, it is certainly a broader profession than its source. As one observer mentioned, it's not just the engineer, it's half of the *Team Fortress* classes in one – as well as the titular engineer, a flamethrower kit makes a pyro, grenade and mine kits makes a demo, and the med kit and the elixir gun make a medic.



Who ya gonna call? GhostBURNERS!

How this is regarded, however, varies. Some see this as good – another example of ArenaNet drawing inspiration from another source to shake up the MMO genre, while creating a vector for players that might not otherwise play an MMO to try the genre. Others think that the two genres should remain separate, and even fear what effect an influx of first-person shooter players might have on the community.

The Technology Question

As described in the opening, the introduction of the technology-based engineer represents a significant increase in the real penetration of technology into the setting. We were told and in some cases shown that some areas in the world had strong technological themes, but previous professions could easily fit into a classical fantasy setting with minimal if any modification. The engineer, clearly, can't.



Is that an advanced targetting AI in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?

For some, this is to be commended as the company sticking to its guns when it comes to the advancement of the world's technology level. It's not just something crazy pushed into one corner of the world – it's now possible to create characters that embrace technology unreservedly instead of adopting a limited selection of gadgets.

However, there is still some resistance to this idea of progress. Advanced technology is certainly a different aesthetic to that normally associated with fantasy, and not one that they like. For some people, it even serves as a threat to immersion, or to the escapist quality of the game – the appearance of technological devices too similar to today's serving as a reminder of what they're trying to keep their mind off. Others point out how some of the things that the engineer is based on represent capabilities that are not even possible today, such as the ability of turrets to independently identify and fire on hostile targets without risk of targeting allies instead.

This question also has a middle ground – people who approve of the technological advancement in general terms, but find some parts that are just too close to modern. The prime example of this is the infamous digital beep and LED-like flash on the mines. While it has been pointed out that there are valid gameplay reasons for this as well as explanations for how it may have appeared apart from electronics, the truth is that for some it really does appear too reminiscent of not just the modern era in general but the computer age specifically. It has also been pointed out that different effects may produce the same gameplay result.



Beep!

A second offender is found with the grenade kit – while grenades (and, for that matter, flamethrowing devices) have existed for much longer than most give them credit for, some of the icons at least appear similar to the grenades found in modern inventories.

The Racial Question

Another criticism of the engineer that has arisen is the question of just how universal it is in a game where every profession is available to every race – in the eyes of some, it is far too charr-oriented a profession. The close-to-nature norn and sylvari are most commonly cited as races in which the engineer doesn't fit, but even humans (with the lack of obvious steampunky technology in their cities) and the magic-specialised asura have been mentioned as not suited for the technology-focussed engineer.



Many fans consider the technological engineer unsuited to the arboreal, elflike sylvari.

Answering this, however, the proponents point out ways in which other races might indeed adopt the toolbelt of the engineer. A sylvari or asura might become curious enough in the new technology to specialise in it – and working some magic into the groundwork laid by the charr may well fill in some of the gaps that cannot be breached by contemporary technology alone. Humans have their own Leonardo-like figure (mentioned in the redo of the human page during Human Week) who may prove to be an inspiration or even mentor for player character engineers, while norn culture allows for a variety of ways for seeking glory – a great craftsnorn is worthy of respect, but a great craftsnorn that takes their inventions onto the battlefield to achieve worthy deeds may be even greater.

Kits and Guns

Finally, one last element that has naturally garnered a lot of attention is the engineer's kits, backpacks, and other devices. The backpacks themselves have attracted some criticism for being big and ugly, but otherwise they seem to have been received as a novel way to introduce unique weapon-like objects into the game. The lack of a cooldown for kits – a decision likely made so that kits with every skill on a cooldown don't leave you stuck once they've been emptied – has also gathered some attention as allowing the possibility for complex kit-flipping skill combinations.

However, a recent concern that has arisen is that the profession may be a little too reliant on them. In the speculation before the engineer was revealed, pretty much everyone scoffed at the idea that the mystery third adventurer, called 'Gunner' by some, would actually rely exclusively on rifles and pistols, and yet if you ignored the kits that really is pretty much what they've got. Furthermore, so far the most interesting skills to be found on the toolbelt – which takes up the space occupied by the special profession mechanic in other professions – are those associated with kits. This has lead some to feel that the way the profession is set up might lead an engineer that *doesn't* make use of kits to be rendered bland compared to other professions, limited as they would be (since conventional weapon-swapping is not available to the engineer) to only the skills associated with a single weapon to go with their utility skills.

Another aspect that has garnered some criticism is indications that kits will not be customisable in appearance, prompting fears of enforced conformity and more specific dislike from those that haven't liked the look of one kit or another.

(Post-writing addendum: Testimony from Comic-Con so far (posted by Palmtree on Guild Wars 2 Guru) describes elixir-only engineers as "relatively viable but boring".)

A Final Word

One thing that must be remembered with all such discussions, however, is that very few of the fans have had the opportunity to try the engineer as yet. Reports from those lucky few who did have been glowing so far - although, to be fair, it can certainly be argued that so far they have not had enough time to evaluate what flaws may exist in the profession. Either way, a full judgement cannot come until its evaluation in the demos of the coming season - and of the beta testing that is sure to (eventually) follow in the months to come.

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Dungeons: The Structures and Their Builders

by Artaxerxes

It's no secret to anyone who has ever played Eye of the North that the imposing dungeon system that spans the underground of Tyria is rich with wonder and intrigue. And while we get to explore and fight our way through them in our quest for glory and gold, not many take the time to examine the evidence left behind as a shadow of their former history. What is the origin of these structures? Were they built by the same people responsible for the Eye of the North? A thorough investigative venture would begin to unearth that the origins of these continent-spanning underground systems are far more curious than first meets the eye, and may point to an underlying factor that could very well have shaped human culture in the whole world of Tyria.





The architecture in the dungeons of the icy north seems to have a consistent theme of ice and stone. Carefully carved into the body of the majestic Shiverpeaks, it appears to be an enigma as to how a system so intricate, large, and complex can have such consistency throughout much of its parts. Evidence points to a grand designer in the construction of these systems, full of a consistent trend of ice and stone carved into the most intricate shapes. Humans certainly weren't responsible; they're a scarce sight in the far north. As far as the dwarves and asura, it is said they did not build these networks, but rather stumbled upon them and took to their care and restoration. Who, then, is responsible for such a massive feat? One thing we know is they definitely lived before the time of men. Thus, many signs point to the seers, the elusive and mysterious race we briefly encounter during the course of the game.

Inside the dungeons themselves we seem to encounter a main trend amongst many of the dungeons. That is, walls of ice carved into blocks and placed carefully like bricks. Sometimes, these ice bricks cover walls made of stone, possibly as some sort of insulation, but why? Are there more chambers we don't know of behind these mysterious walls? Stone walls which appear curiously similar to those across the great sea, in the Echovald Forest. Not only that, but there also seems to be a great abundance of carvings and statues suspiciously similar to architecture of Ascalonian origin, particularly that in the Catacombs. We know for a fact that these dungeons far predate the dawn of humanity, so how could such architecture end up so far north, so far underground? The most likely explanation, the builders of these caves, the precursors to humanity, influenced the culture and intellectual prowess of men after their unexplained disappearance.



A prime example of such influences are a peculiar style of pillars seen all along many of the dungeons up north, a detail which goes unnoticed to the casual onlooker. These snake-wrapped stone pillars, seeming both as decorations and as structures to hold up the stone and ice arches separating chambers in the dungeons, can be seen in the initial dungeon on the way north, when we first meet Odgen and Vekk. They can also be seen in Sorrow's Furnace, along many of its excavated paths, as well as throughout the entirety of the Depths of Tyria and Jaga Moraine. The Cathedral of Flames, Vloxen Excavations, as well as the Tarnished Coast contain many ruins of seemingly Ascalonian origin, as well as said snake pillars, sans the snakes on occasion, though the style of the pillar, as well as the carvings on its bases, remains the same. Also present are the infamous stone faces, mysterious heads carved into many Ascalonian walls and bridges, displaying a ferocious complexion most players are familiar with. Where else can we see structures such as these? Well, in the Catacombs of course, there is also a great influence of religious symbolism throughout the underground systems. Statues of the Six are present, though few and far apart, inside the underground chambers. Grenth statues, for the most part, can be seen in Spechlure of Dragrimmar and Raven's Point, though they seem to be in ruins. Did the ones who came before worship the Six? Or were these dungeons simply renovated to fit the religious beliefs of its new tenants before they too disappeared?

More amazing, however, is how a race in the far north could have ever affected the architectural trends of the people living down in the Echovald Forest, a world away. Though we know tunnel systems exist between the two continents, the dredge escaped Stone Summit oppression through one such underground system, it's curious how the Kurzick themselves admit to not being the original creators of such architecture, mentioning that the ruins in Altrumm are not of their making, but was their inspiration. These ruins, interestingly, are very similar to parts of those found in the far north. It is evident, therefore, that this old elusive race managed to influence most, if not all segments of humanity and the way they made a home for themselves. Perhaps they even managed to get to them when they were still few and close together geographically.

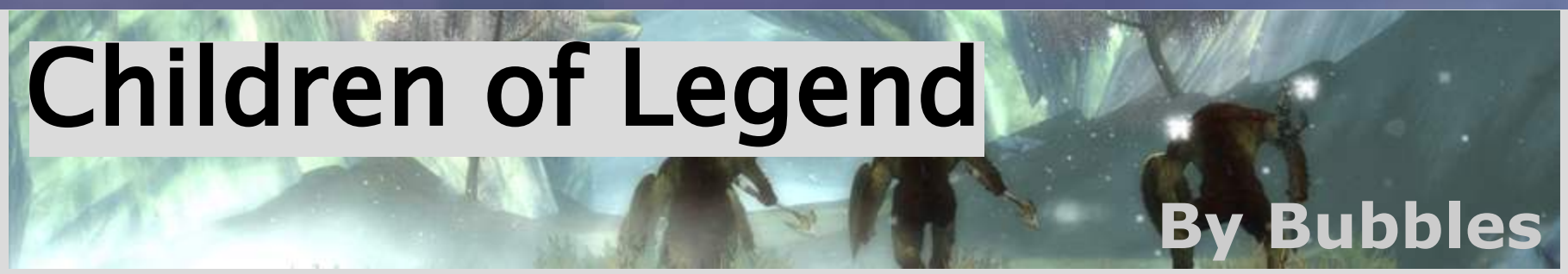
And so the mystery stands, just who were this ancient race that spanned the continents? Parts of the architecture hold some similarities to that found around the Rift. Perhaps they moved on from their earthly forms into a more ethereal form of being? Maybe they just went extinct, due to war, plague, or whatever ills may have stricken down upon their civilization. We know, however, that their influence spanned much of the known world, far earlier than men were around. And judging by the style of statues found in many of the dungeons, humanoid in shape, with perhaps a set of horns to match. Thus, we know them not to be the asura or dwarves, and certainly not the forgotten, another possible suspect. Perhaps they were the seers, or maybe the mursaat we are already quite familiar with, despite the large air of mystery around their origins and existence.

One possibility, however, is that it was not one, but many races who built these systems far before the dawn of men. It is evident that though very similar, there are many slight differences between the dungeons in different parts of Tyria. Could the peoples responsible be not one singular race, but instead a council or committee of sorts, vowed to the progress and development of Tyria before their unexplained demise or division? It's hard to say, however, given how little evidence we have to go for. For now, we can only hope that the upcoming release of Guild Wars 2 sheds some light on the truth of these very mysterious structures inside the world of Tyria.

For a more detailed look into the Depths of Tyria and their structures, see the original research here.



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Children of Legend

By Bubbles

It is not often that a lone man enters the realm of Jormag. The dangers are endless. Great wurms, elemental beasts, and the bitter cold claim most who dare traverse these frozen lands. Some would say those were the lucky ones. “Better to have your body ripped apart by a snow wurm than to have your soul ripped away, only to become one of the dragon's new abominations of snow and ice,” they would say, warning those not to venture far into the icy north.

Bundled in layers of thick hides and soft furs, Dassk scanned the white, lifeless landscape. He had not seen another human for months, not that he expected such nonsense. Humans typically kept to the much warmer climates of Kryta in the west. To the east, where the city of Ascalon once flourished, there remained one last stronghold, Ebonhawke, a solid fort protected by strong walls and large mountains.

“Mostly fools gripping too strongly to the past”, Dassk had told some norn a week past. They were not met under to best of circumstances. A wurm shot up through the ground and sent him soaring through the air. As a child Dassk once dreamed of flying. It was nothing at all like he had hoped.

He was found, contorted and battered yet not altogether dead, by a norn hunting party that was tracking the wurm. They brought him to a recent settlement, and he was given a bed to rest. They dressed his wounds and fed him. He recovered in the cold while exploring their cozy encampment built into the side of a mountain. He felt short, weak, and overdressed, though he was not made a spectacle. Forget flying, thought Dassk, if only I had their tolerance of the cold.
Then I wouldn't be burdened with ten pounds of grawl fur!

On his fifth day at the norn camp, he gathered his things and set out to continue his search. A norn by the gate tried to dissuade him. He told him not to go so far north, that even norn do not travel the area in parties of less than six. The gatekeeper smiled as he walked past. Apparently, the norn understood him better than humans.

Dassk had little love for his homeland. Even amongst the people of Ebonhawke, among the people he spent his youth with, he felt no attachment. They did not trust him; they would never understand. Out here, amidst the quiet solitude, he was free. The new Warmarshal said he found a message from his predecessor. Dassk was told that there was something he must find, here, near the far northern reaches of the coldest mountains. He would wager the Warmarshal had finally found an excuse to be rid of him. Dassk jumped at the opportunity. The ice welcomes him, people do not.

Shifting his third and fourth fur overcoat to better retain the heat, the frigid traveler finally arrived at his destination. Amidst the frozen lake, Dassk marveled at the giant building, a resounding bronze against the white winter. From afar, the massive structure appeared to be abandoned, yet as he reached it, there seemed to be a sort of warmth from within.

The young traveler spent the next hour banging his shoulder into the door, chipping at an icy hinge with his knife, and cursing loudly. Eventually, and with a great deal of effort, he opened the heavy doors enough to squeeze himself through.

It was impressive enough. The walls were large and ostentatious, with great murals depicting the epic battles of the heroes of legend, before the awakening of the dragons. The large canvas and solid oak frames would fetch a lofty price. It should have taken more than ice to protect these relics from raiders and treasure seekers. Perhaps there was more to this place than metal and stone. Despite the open ceiling, there was certain warmth Dassk felt within these walls, a certain presence pushing him forward. He looked towards the inner chamber.

Dassk fell hard as he toppled into the main room. He ran, expecting once again to have to barrel open doors that were frozen stiff. As he got up, rubbing the numb spot where his arm should hurt, he looked into a vast blackness. This room did not have an open ceiling to allow for light. Dassk searched for some way to rid the chamber of its darkness.

Dassk felt around until he bumped into a loose branch. A torch, perhaps. He wrapped his outermost layer of fur around the branch and made use of what little magic he knew. Though he couldn't actually create fire, he could concentrate enough to make sparks in the air. Though barely suitable to impress small children, it is sufficient to catch fur aflame. Dassk was momentarily pleased as he saw his impromptu torch light the room. His glee was short lived as the fire spread quickly to a nearby tapestry. It burned quickly. It looked expensive.

It did allow enough light for Dassk to see a nearby brazier, which he guiltily lit as the fine tapestry was quickly consumed by the flame. This light granted Dassk a better look at his hand-held lighting fixture. It was not a torch. It was a flaming fur coat wrapped around a half-burnt bow. He rushed to put out the flame. The bow now had its only use as kindling and the tapestry was all but nonexistent. Oh well, he thought still feeling a bit guilty, no one will know but me. Dassk took a mental note to bury it under some snow on his way back.

Dassk used this new light to look to his right, where he grabbed the wooden bow, and found a collection of artifacts, mostly weapons, arranged in a display with plaques and labels beneath them. There was a single empty display. The plaque said, “Here lies the bow of Urgoz, spiritual demon of the Echovald Forest.” Dassk looked down in despair at the scorched remnant of wood.

He moved sheepishly on toward the next display. Shiro's daggers! Forgetting his failed torch, he enigmatically stalked from one display to another. He saw an Am Fah mask, a Margonite chest piece, a Sunspear's spear, and a shield of the Mursaat. The next bow he recognized sent a chill down his spine. He did not need to read the label below. "Here lies the Ironwing Flatbow of Beta Ray Wade."

Dassk knew of this legendary archer all too well. All humans have seen the painting of Beta Ray Wade wielding this fabled bow in the legendary ring of fire islands, traveling with a small group of heroes to fight the Lich Lord, who unleashed the Titans on the lands of Tyria. Dassk's mother named him after this hero. He has been ridiculed since childhood because of it.

His eyes grew wide, frantic at his newfound realization, as a brilliant sparkle was caught in his peripheral. He was disappointed to find that the glimmer of light originated from a Celestial Longbow, an ancient treasure from the lost lands of Cantha, and not the Legendary Stormbow he used when he fought The Great Destroyer. Dassk took a moment to calm himself. Perhaps some of the stories could be true, not all of them of course, embellishments gaining grandiosity as time passes. Though, despite his disclaimer, here were the artifacts that seemed to hint towards these tales' veracity.

Daskk began to wonder about this place. Could it be some sort of monument built to pay homage to this mythical figure, or was it something more, something that has somehow kept itself isolated from the filth and decay that seems to have taken hold of the rest of Tyria?

His answers would be revealed at the next display. If this was some sort of monument, then they would not have made this shrine. There were titles, deeds, historical records, and maps of planned routes with hand-drawn buildings and locations. Next to the desk was a large bust of Beta Ray Wade. This is the real proof that the legendary heroes existed, conformation that this isn't just some sort of abandoned shrine. This was a place where the hero must have spent a lot of time. Before him was the plan to strike an assault at heart of The Great Destroyer.

Dassk moved on to the statues on the far side. The plaque on the bottom shined Hall of Fellowship. The statues were skillfully carved with a lifelike, intricate detail. There was the great warrior, Tzimite Dreadlord, the wizard Arkillius Deathmage, and the famed paragon Wonko the Sane. There was also an unknown dwarf that seemed to be missing the label below where it should say his name. Dassk looked to the side to see the hero's greatest companion; one of the great white moas, which are now extinct. He looked at the plaque below in anticipation to read the name that has been lost to historians. "Birdie." Dassk sighed, such a stupid name. Dassk felt some sort of pull from the center of the chamber. It was the same feeling he felt in the outer chamber, like a body recently passed, the soul seeking its proper place. He had been trying to ignore it, scared that it could consume him. It was the heart of this place. Dassk felt strong. He would not let it overtake him.

Dassk turned and stepped down the stairs toward the middle of the room. There was a thick liquid in its center. It looked to be a pool of melted iron, yet flowed thin as water. Dassk saw shadows form and light bend. He bent down to get a closer look. There was an image forming in the center of the strange liquid.

"You look like him." A raucous voice bellowed throughout the hall. It sounded like a dull sword scraping hard granite. Dassk had assumed he was alone in the room; the door was shut and hadn't been opened for generations. He looked around, only to find a lifeless chamber. Am I hearing things, he thought. His face was contorted, his eyes held bewilderment. He held his strength tightly for fear it would depart.

"My apologies." Dassk could still not tell where the voice came from. It echoed throughout the chamber.

Frantically looking around, Dassk reached for his knife on the side of his boot. "Show yourself," he cried.

"Over here." Dassk sought the sound of scraping stone. To his amazement, one of the statues in the Monument of Fellowship began moving. "Ahh," the statue groaned. "I seem to be a bit stiff. I have not moved for some time. There are not exactly visitors here."

"A stone dwarf!" shouted Dassk, still clutching his knife, too excited to notice his grip still held. "They are told about in legends but I thought it was just some exaggeration of the truth. And wait, what did you say?"

"I said you look like him," the stone dwarf said, apparently less rigid, now able to raise an arm to point to the bust of Beta Ray Wade. Dassk walked over and took a moment to examine closer. He actually did bear quite a resemblance to the hero of legend.

"And what exactly are you implying?" Dassk said cautiously.

"Nothing really," said the dwarf, now able to raise his legs. He began slowly moving off the platform with the other statues. Dassk wondered if they would start moving as well. The stone dwarf tried not to let his gaze linger on the burnt bow and tapestry. Dassk look down abashedly. "We dwarfs, we see things, and we tell people what we see. Everybody else takes too close a look at what we say. I say you look like him. That is all there is to it. Just a simple observation from an old dwarf."

"Right," Dassk retorted.

"And now I see some visions forming in that scrying pool over there." The dwarf looked more limber now. He freely strolled down the stairs to the room's center, which held the mysterious liquid. Dassk joined him. There were indeed images that were coming into focus. Dassk thought he saw a baby.

"That must be you," said the dwarf. "Let's see what it wants to show you."

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Poetry submissions by Unraveled

The Dream

An alien face, yet not so it seemed
Peeked shyly forth, eyes verdantly green
With wonder I watched as the forest drew breath
Then stepped into the glade a creature of myth

Like a tendril unfolding, the creature approached
With footfall as soft as a leaf to the earth
Clad of the forest, of field and of grove
I regarded the creature and slowly arose

Aglow with strange light, to my face a hand raised
Cool fingers touched softly and the creature exclaimed
I mirrored the gesture and cried out in kind
We stood as though timeless, her eyes locked with mine

The glade slowly darkened as shadows embraced
Time now remembered, our reverie ceased
She returned to the forest and faded from view
I fell to my knees, observed by the moon

“What manner of being?” I cried at the trees
Soft whispered the wind
“…Syl…var…i…”

The Forge

Wrought of war and seared by flame
Undone by lies and a mad king's reign
Bowing to nothing, we stand on our own
Carving our future, reclaiming our home

Branded by dragon and haunted by wraith
Beseiged and beseigers, driven by hate
Victory wrested by tooth and by claw
Iron, Ash, Blood - we are charr

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