GUILDMAG

ISSUE 13

WINTERSDAY 2014 EDITION



THE HISTORY OF WINTERSDAY

LIVING STORY SEASON 2 SUMMARY

EXCLUSIVE

FEATURED ARTIST: VASBURG

EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to GuildMag's Wintersday 2014 issue, and the beginning of a new era for GuildMag as a whole. I'm extremely excited to publish this issue as the first under my leadership, following Ollannach's departure earlier this year. Myself and the rest of the team have worked tirelessly over the last couple of months to produce a magazine that we hope will be our best to date, and truly encapsulate what Wintersday is all about.

This year has been a time of ups and downs for the Guild Wars 2 community: we've seen the arrival of the second Living World season (and some of the best Living World content yet!); we've had two Feature Packs that have changed the game considerably; and for some of us, it's also been a time of turmoil as ArenaNet has overhauled various UI elements, continued to change classes and equipment, and kept the lid firmly shut on their plans for Guild Wars 2's future.

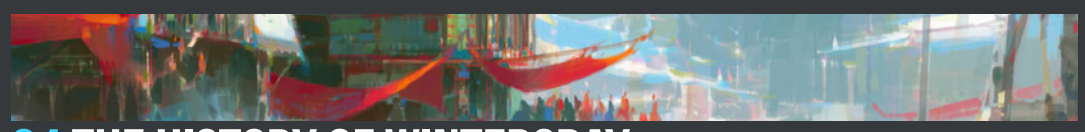
Wintersday is a time for celebration, and bringing our community of amazing individuals together. And that's what we're hoping to capture with this issue. We've teamed up with Vasburg to bring you the jaw-dropping art on the front cover (you can read about his process in our 'Featured Artist' article!), and we hope that this serves as inspiration for you too to get involved! GuildMag has been a community-driven project since we opened our virtual doors in 2010, and we're only here today because of you.

On behalf of everyone at GuildMag, thank you for supporting us. Here's to another great year!

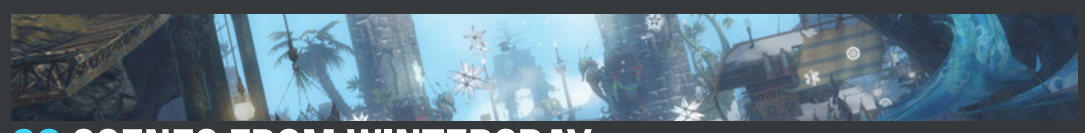
- Valiant



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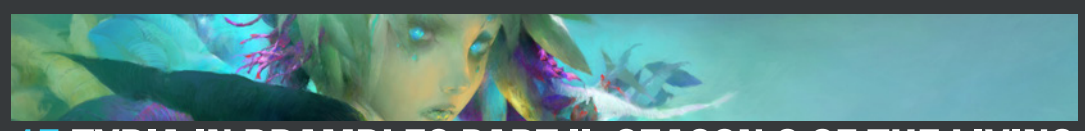
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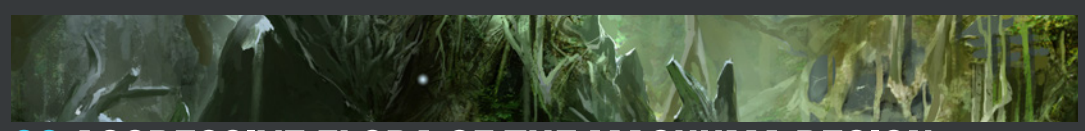
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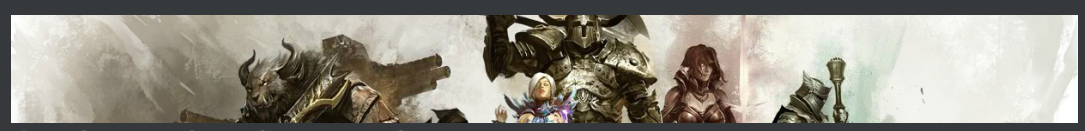
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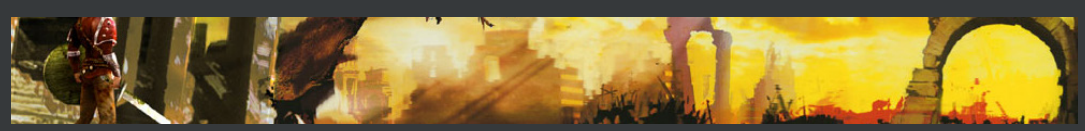
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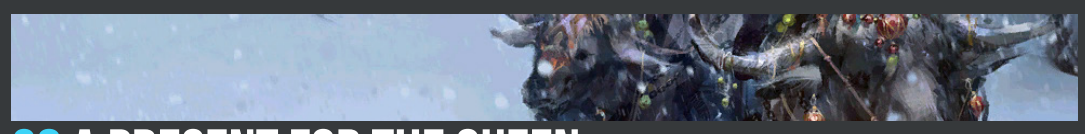
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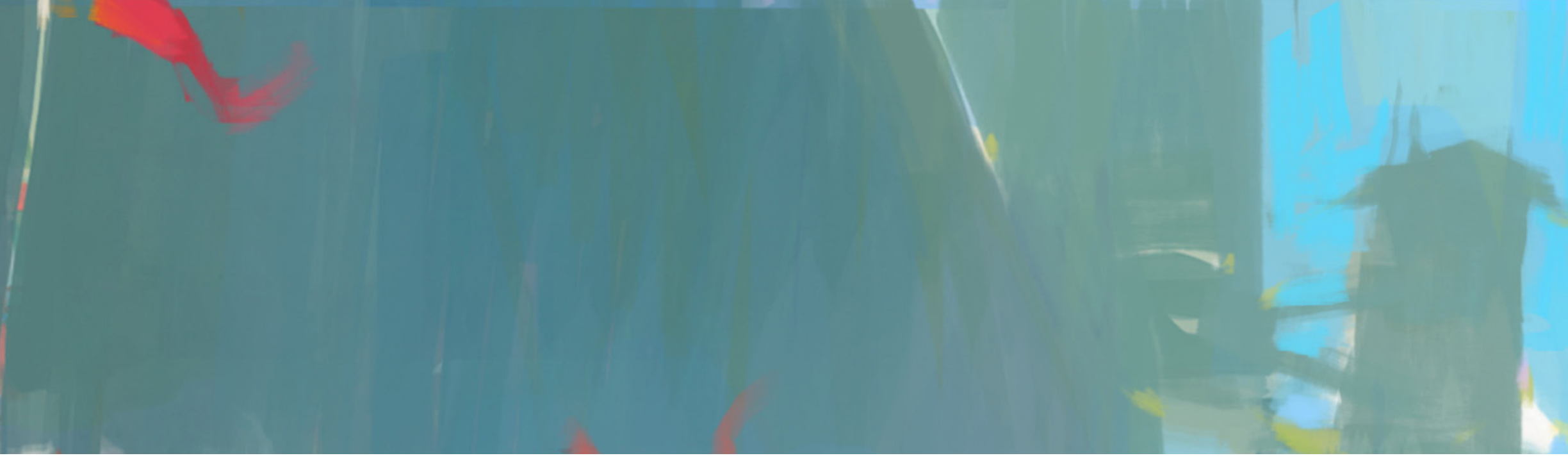
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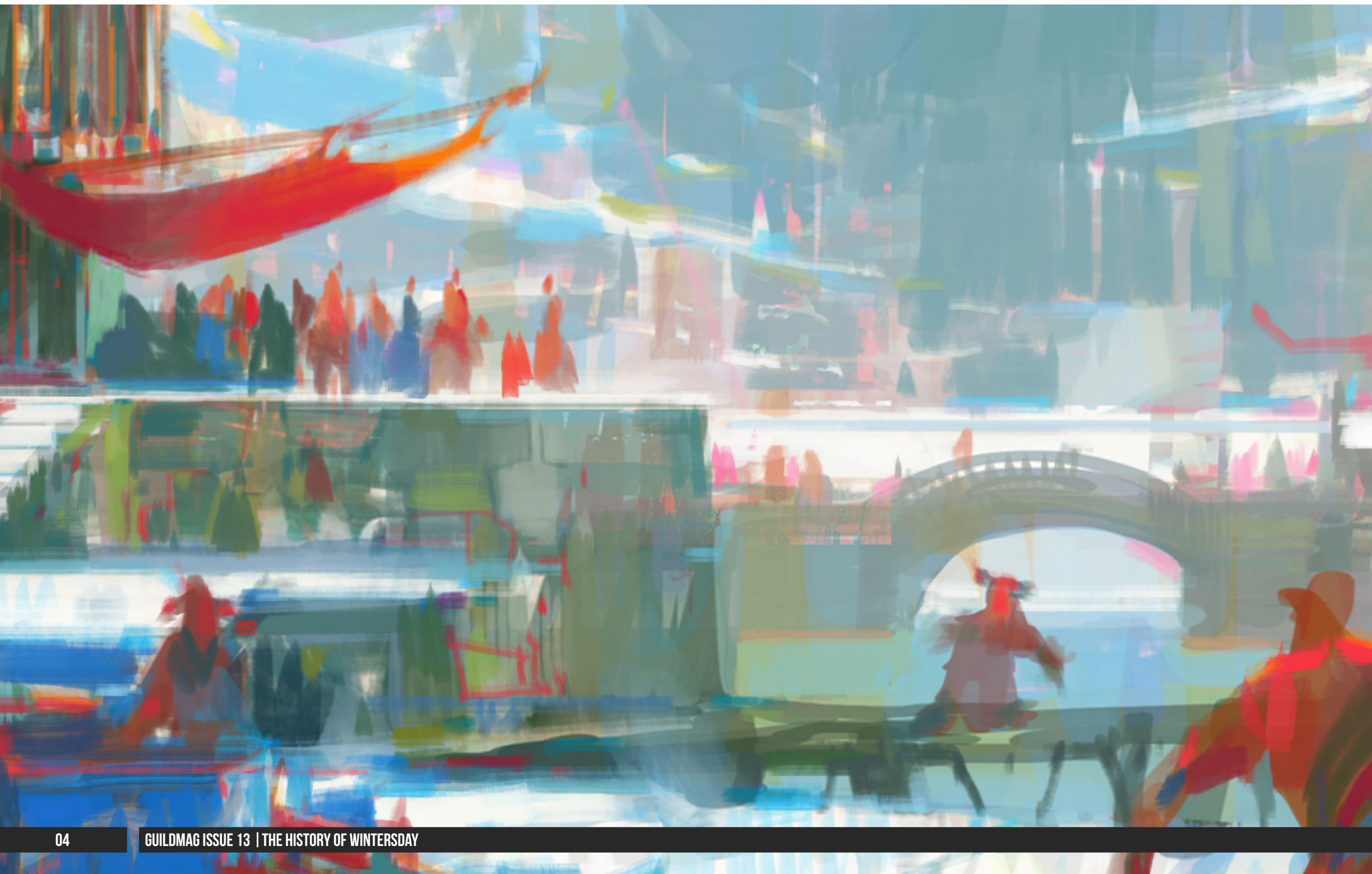
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LORE

THE HISTORY OF WINTERSDAY

WRITTEN BY DRAXYNNIC







According to human beliefs, the rituals of Wintersday began as a disagreement between Dwayna and her son Grenth over the proper way for humans to celebrate the end of the year. Dwayna felt that it should be a time of merriment, community, and generosity; a chance for people to take a break from some of the harsh realities of life and celebrate the imminent coming of spring. Grenth, on the other hand, felt that it should be a time spent in sombre contemplation and in paying respect to the dead – similar to how, in those days, the charr regarded winter as the season of death.

To resolve this, Dwayna and Grenth agreed on a bet that would be repeated every year – each deity would attempt to bring more people over to their point of view, to be decided by how many supporters each received at a rite held on Wintersday itself. The stakes were the beginning of the Season of the Zephyr – if Dwayna won, then Wintersday would mark the end of the cold season, while if Grenth won, the thaw would be delayed.



For many years, Dwayna received victory after victory, as the message of good cheer accompanied by the generous granting of gifts by Dwayna's followers proved again and again to be easier to spread than Grenth's message of dour reflection. This was to change, however, when some of Grenth's supporters came upon the idea of sabotaging the gifts spread by Dwayna's followers. This turned what had been a war of words into a war of tricks – the followers of Grenth attempting to destroy presents and slip in their own booby-trapped substitutes, while those of Dwayna sought to protect them – a new phase in their rivalry that led to the two deities gathering new servants to fulfil these roles. In an ironic twist, Dwayna's new servants were composed of ice, an element normally associated with Grenth, in the form of snowmen constructed by children in honour of the joy of the season. Disturbingly, the legends claim that the Grentches, twisted green creatures with 'hearts three sizes too small', were created by feeding tainted potions to unwary drinkers. As time passed, this conflict escalated: when Grenth attempted to hide presents in the Underworld until they could be sabotaged and redistributed, Dwayna's followers began invading the Underworld to retrieve them, and after the Secret Lair of the Snowmen was discovered by a dwarf treasure-hunter after the Great Destroyer campaign, it became subject to regular invasions by Grentches and Grenth-worshippers every Wintersday.

Sometime after the Great Destroyer's defeat, this rivalry expanded further when Balthazar and Melandru entered the fray. Balthazar's stated reason for intervening was that he foresaw a 'coming darkness'
and that he felt that the winter period should be spent in preparation for this fight instead of frivolities. Melandru, however, disagreed, feeling that the cessation of joy was not needed in order to prepare and fearing the effect that a delayed spring would have on the balance of nature. Thus, as Balthazar's supporters joined those of Grenth, Melandru's maintained the balance by siding with Dwayna.

Events since have demonstrated that the priests of Balthazar were likely right in their concern, and whether their methods were too extreme or not, humanity certainly would have benefited from better preparation against the calamities that would follow. However, despite the tribulations that came for humanity after the departure of the gods, Dwayna's vision of the season being as a time of joy and celebration would not only win out, it would also come to spread among the other races that humans kept regular contact with, albeit without the religious trappings that humanity associated with the festivities. While the tradition of snowball-fighting at Wintersday remains, this has become simply part of the merrymaking, rather than a part of a serious contest to determine the nature of the festivities.

Other activities similarly harken back to that ancient competition: instead of running a gauntlet of Grentches to bring presents to children, contestants run through a magical obstacle course, and the bell choir tradition may be a distorted reflection of the carolers of Dwayna and Grenth that competed to bring their message to the citizens of human and dwarven cities while drowning out the opposition, the vocals removed to be more inclusive of those who do not worship the Six.

> "WINTERSDAY BEGAN AS A DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN DWAYNA AND HER SON GRENTH OVER THE PROPER WAY FOR HUMANS TO CELEBRATE THE END OF THE YEAR

Even the idea of training moas to dance, now a common sight at festivities and circuses at any time of the year, seems to have been first hatched as part of the Wintersday tradition, as followers of Dwayna sought unconventional means of reviving Wintersday cheer during a year when Grenth's tricks had proven particularly effective.

As Wintersday transitioned from a religious observation to what is essentially one big party, commercial enterprises and industries have been quick to get into the action. The Black Lion Trading Company can usually be relied on to offer products unique to the season, some new and some repeated from previous years, although the Black Lion's trading practices often put them out of reach of all but adventurers and other wealthy Tyrian citizens.

However, the winner for sheer showmanship has to be the asura known as Toymaker Tixx.



An early adopter of airship technology, Tixx installed his workshop into his golem-shaped dirigible and made his debut by touring the major cities of Tyria, showcasing an animated toy designed to be suitable for the locals at each stop, finally reaching Lion's Arch where all five were displayed. At each stop, Tixx invites adventurers on board his airship to assist with various teething troubles in his manufacturing process, such as rebellious toys and rage-inducing malfunctions of his golem assistant, Toxx. Some of these adventurers claim that these malfunctions are not simply the occasional glitch, and that Toxx has blown her insurrection inhibitors and is actively seeking to sabotage the operation, including being responsible for reprogramming the 'malfunctioning' toys. Despite Tixx's cheerful obliviousness, however, the manufacturing process always seems to be brought under control in time for Wintersday, although the legions of rebellious toys that adventurers are often forced to violently decommission cannot be good for Tixx's overhead.



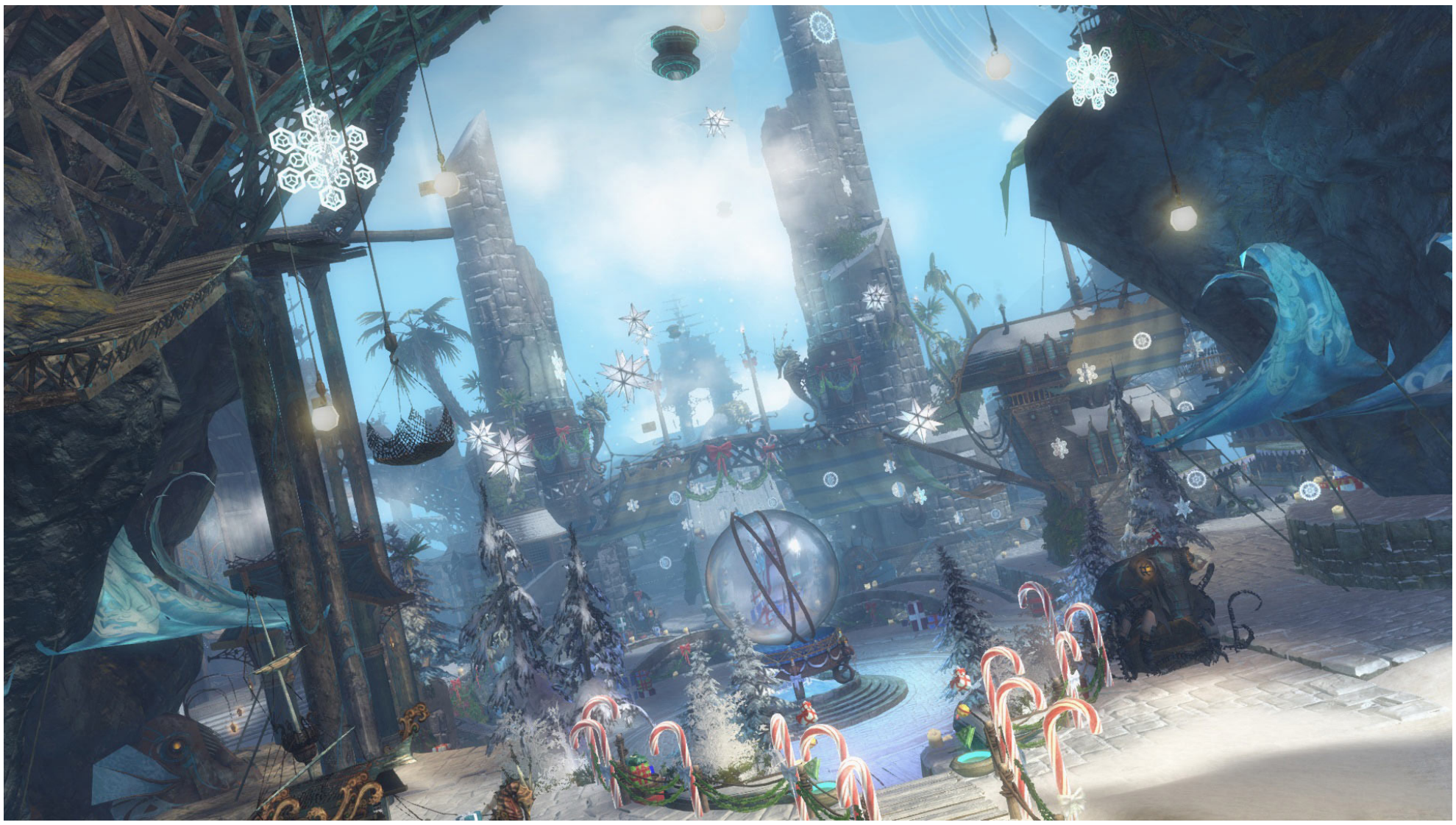
> SOMETIME AFTER THE GREAT DESTROYER'S DEFEAT, THIS RIVALERY EXPANDED FURTHER WHEN BALTHAZAR AND MELANDRU ENTERED THE FRAY

SCENES FROM WINTERSDAY

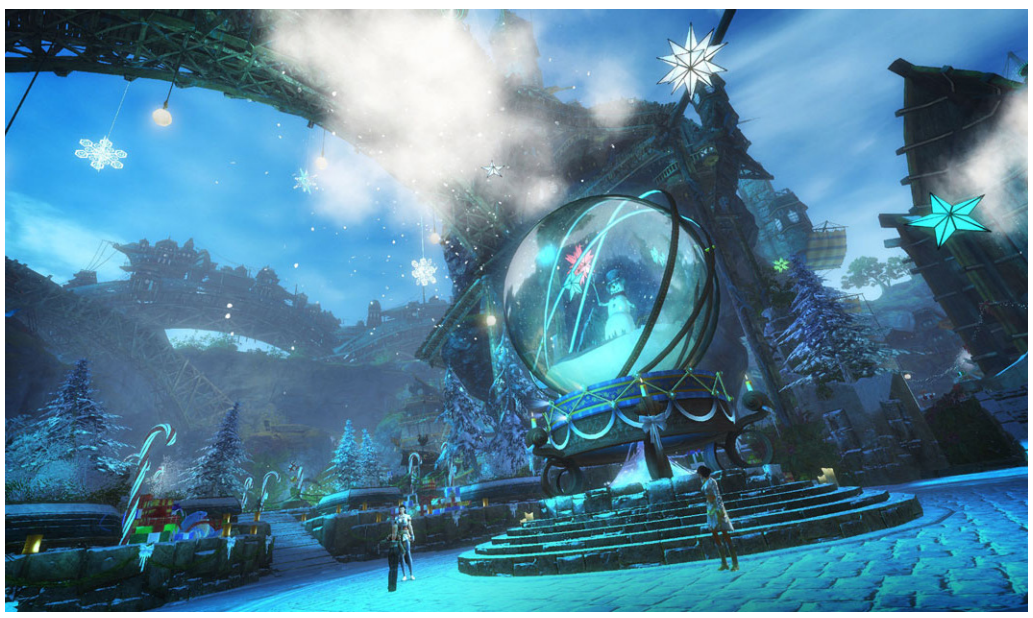
WRITTEN BY MIKO RIEL

Wintersday in Tyria is usually a festive feast for the eyes, with candy canes and wrapped presents decorating cities, mini-games and puzzles to entertain and delight, and seasonal themed gear to make our Wintersday merry-making a little more fun.

The centerpiece of Wintersday is usually Lion's Arch. In the aftermath of Scarlet Briar's attack on the city, Tyrians are now celebrating in Divinity's Reach.



Lion's Arch decked out, Wintersday 2013
(source: https://www.guildwars2.com/en/the-game/releases/december-10-2013/)



Snowglobe at the Mystic Forge
(source: https://www.guildwars2.com/en/the-game/releases/december-2012/)

At the Mystic Forge, a giant snowglobe has traditionally appeared, complete with a snowman enticing you to build one of your own from magical snow piles. Why not join in a snowball fight while you're at it? Of course, if fighting is more your style there's always ...



Take that! Merry Wintersday to your face!

... the Snowglobe Finisher. Because nothing spreads holiday cheer like gingerbread men and plush toys to rub your victories into people's faces. This finisher features scenes inspired by Tixx's Infinirarium and the crazed toys you encounter there.



Tixx’s Infinirarium
(source: https://www.guildwars2.com/en/the-game/releases/december-2012/)

In the Infinirarium, players can assist Tixx the Toymaker with malfunctioning toys, and stop skritt invaders from stealing presents and ruining Tixx’s workshop. As rewards, players can earn …



Toy Ventari

… one of Tixx’s toy minis …



Tixx’s Toys weapons skins, pictured Toy Staff

… and they can also earn toy weapon skins.

Mini Dolyak Calf (taller than an asura!)

Last year, players could also take the three minis from the Wintersday Mini 3-Pack and combine them with ugly wool hats, socks, or sweaters to obtain the Mini Dolyak Calf bearing gifts.



Winter's weapon skins, pictured Winter's Edge greatsword

Cuteness isn't for everyone, though. Sometimes wooden weapons decorated with snow crystals and snowflakes when wielded are better.



However you choose to celebrate Wintersday, be sure you do it in your own stylish way!

Fancy Wintersday outfits
(source: https://www.guildwars2.com/en/news/wintersday-items-and-more-in-the-gem-store/)



ART

FEATURED ARTIST: VASBURG

WRITTEN BY KAYSEE



In this month's issue of GuildMag, we feature perhaps one of the most celebrated Guild Wars fan artists: Vasburg. His hauntingly beautiful and unique art style have long set him apart from other artists. Vasburg has been recognised and well-loved in the Guild Wars community for his breathtaking renditions of his favourite Guild Wars subject: Cantha. As evidenced by his artwork, Vasburg has been an avid fan of the Guild Wars universe since Guild Wars 1. It was GuildMag's pleasure to sit down with him and ask about his love of art and Guild Wars.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO DRAW?

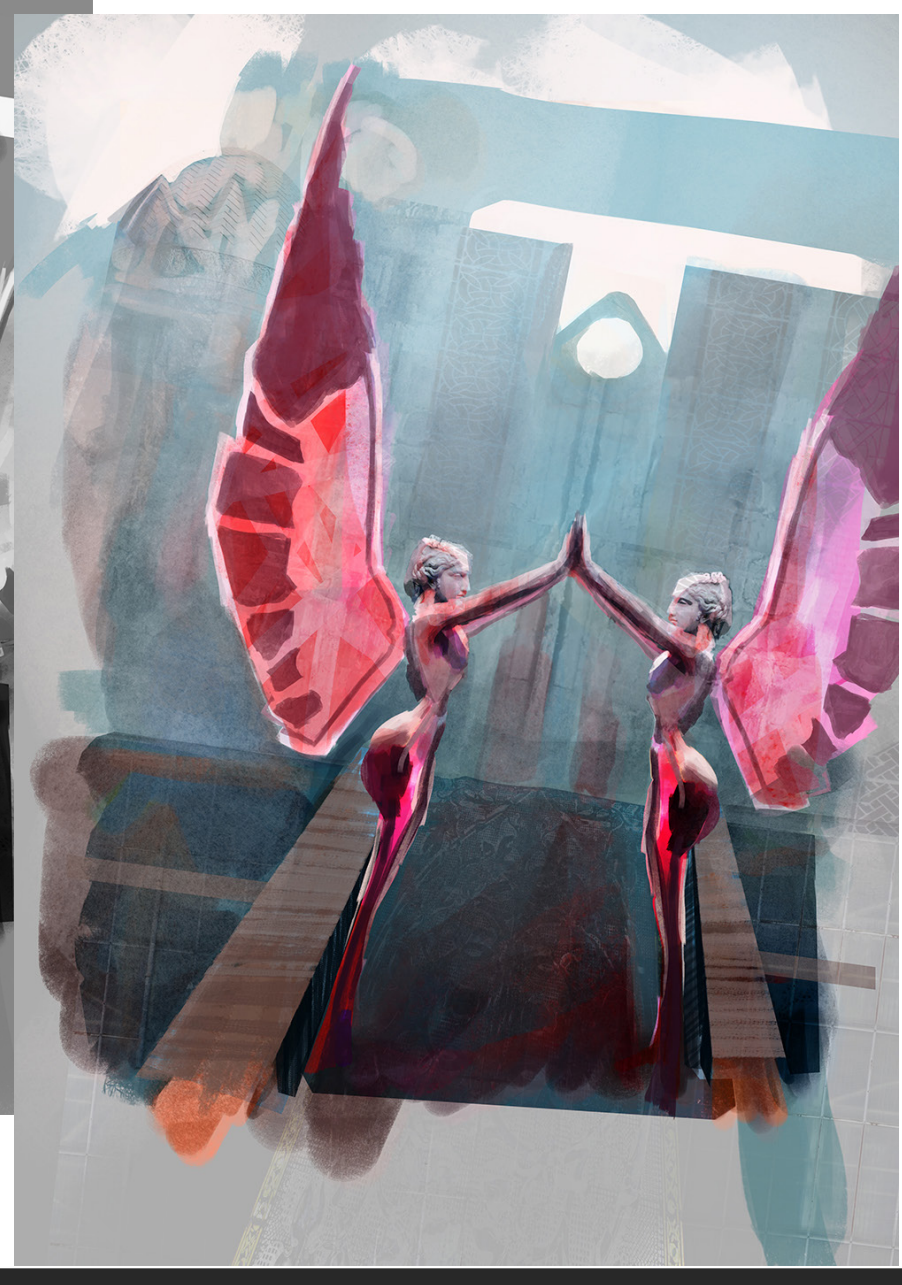
Nowadays the inspirations are very diverse. Mostly, I have ideas that I want to simply visualise, as well as master my craft and pay my bills.

This may sound cheesy, but painting really is what defines me at my core. There were times where I had nothing to eat; times where I was terribly sick; times where allies abandoned me. However, the only thing that was clearly persistent through my whole life was the urge to paint. To make it cheesier, my biggest motivation was that I always wanted to work with ArenaNet, as they introduced me to the path of concept art. After seeing ArenaNet's art I realised that to choose to do anything other than concept art myself would be an illusion of free choice.

COULD YOU BRIEFLY EXPLAIN YOUR ART PROCESS FROM FIRST CONCEPT TO FINAL PRODUCT?

If the idea is very complex, I usually go with a bunch of thumbnails to define the solutions and gather references. After that I start to randomise and bash in texture brushes to give me something to paint on, rather than a blank canvas. From there on I usually introduce colour and define the shapes. I rarely use line-art, since I feel more comfortable with getting shapes out as soon as possible. After the framework is established, I simply refine and refine until I feel that my actions don't improve the image anymore.





The whole process is rather unspectacular in my opinion, since I don't consider myself a traditional artist anymore. Concept art is design, and design is communication. I don't ask myself how I can criticise society, or express my distrust for vegetables. I'm an advocate of design principles and colour theory. If it's used as a way of communication, design never was a question of taste, and therefore it is clearly defined by rules, even though you can sometimes break them.

YOU'RE QUITE A PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE GUILD WARS AND ART COMMUNITIES. HOW HAS THE COMMUNITY'S INTERACTION AND FEEDBACK AFFECTED YOUR ARTWORK?

Am I? I feel honoured!

There's actually quite an impact. Speaking honestly, if it wasn't work related to a community project, the community wouldn't have an impact on the artwork itself. However, all the replies and comments are a huge motivation boost.

WHAT WAS IT THAT DREW YOU TO GUILD WARS 2 AND KEEPS YOU PLAYING TO THIS DAY?

I was a fanatic player of Guild Wars 1, which eventually led me to its successor. Howbeit, I can't really point out a defined thing that makes me enjoy the universe of Guild Wars as much as I do. Even if I can't exactly tell why, I always felt at home in Tyria.

Although I have to admit that I happen to play Guild Wars 2 less and less, since I feel like there isn't much content left to explore and also due to my limited spare time.

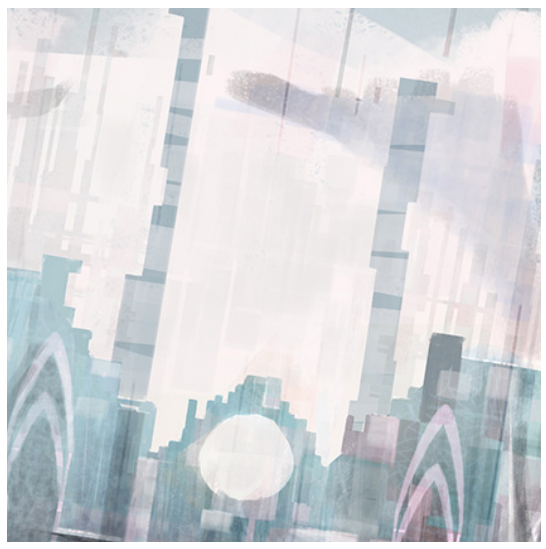
WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO ASPIRING ARTISTS?

Practice, practice, practice. Education is more accessible than ever, hardware has become cheap, plus, you won't need to attend a fancy art school or to buy a pricey graphic tablet. Keep in mind that there is no teacher that will dedicate the thousands of hours needed to master your craft; the only person capable of this is you. The main difference between you and Kekai Kotaki is that he has failed more often than you; he learned from his mistakes to maximise his potential. Also, get familiar with design principles and colour theory.

GuildMag would like to thank Vasburg for all his hard work on this issue; creating the cover art specifically for the Wintersday edition.

If you'd like to see more of Vasburg's art you can find it at his website: www.vasburg.com.









RECAP

TYRIA IN BRAMBLES PART II: SEASON 2 OF THE LIVING STORY

WRITTEN BY KENT BENSON



SEASON 2: EPISODE 5
ECHOES OF THE PAST

With the Pale Tree in the *"I.TREE.U"* (I'm sorry…) and the races of Tyria poised to return fire at Mordremoth, the war preparations overshadow the Commander's vision from the Pale Tree for a time.

Via pigeon mail, Magister Ela Makkay requests that the Commander check up on one of the Priory's field researchers, Explorer Campbell, at Fort Salma. The hero fights through a troupe of Seraph ghosts. Fortunately, Marjory Delaqua and Kasmeer Meade sprint onto the scene from the west road and shakes her sister, Belinda, from her post-Mordrem trauma. In an emotional "goodbye", Belinda fuses her spirit to her old sword, now in Marjory's possession. Explorer Campbell and the Commander travel to the new Pact base in The Silverwastes.



Soul-binding? Ritualists? CANTHA CONFIRMED! *twitch*

The Commander arrives at Camp Resolve and reconnects with Trahearne. He asks the hero to investigate a missing Pact squad he'd sent out into the Wastes with two sylvari, Caithe and Canach. Shortly after, the Commander joins Braham and wanders over to Taimi who is busy questioning the three Aspect Masters. The Masters leave and Taimi takes off after Brun Ingotspitter, an acclaimed charr engineer, with hopes of improving her golem, Scruffy.

The Commander makes one last stop by Rox, leaves the camp, and heads far west, tracking every sign of the Pact squad. Eventually, the hero runs into Canach, who had been laying traps for the Mordrem. They press forward and catch up to the squad as they come under attack from the Mordrem. Despite the danger, Caithe urges the party to continue the search for the source of the dragon's minions. Atop a high ridge, the group spots the source, but their presence attracts the dragon's minions, forcing them to fight until their extraction.



The Durmand Priory's Special Collections

After their rescue via Pact helicopter, the Commander receives a letter from Marjory. The detective explains that they were unable to reach Ogden Stonehealer. The dwarf is squirreled away in a vault that requires a cipher to enter, a cipher that was said to be given to Explorer Campbell. The Commander quickly hunts down the researcher in the Silverwastes and grabs the nearest waypoint to the Durmand Priory to join the two detectives.

There, they share the cipher with Ela Makkay and gain access to the "Special Collections" portion of the library. The group descends even further to a hidden storage room where they meet with Ogden. He asks the Commander to inspect an artifact that he claims is relevant to the Pale Tree's vision. The heroes touch the hourglass, it shatters and warps the space around them, dragging them into what they would discover to be Glint's Lair. Separated by the terrain, the Commander pushes on alone, fighting through various "environmental hazards" before reaching the others. At the end, they see a vision of the Master of Peace receiving an egg-shaped object from an invisible source, revealing what the Master had been protecting from the crazed sylvari, Aerin: a dragon egg.



Shouldn't Glint appear in this scene?" "Female dragons are hard to render with magic.

The three are warped out of the lair and back to library storage room. Ogden, amused by their wonderment, sends them on their way.

SEASON 2: EPISODE 6
TANGLED PATHS

A new letter arrives. Logan Thackeray requests the Commander's presence back at Camp Resolve. The Commander returns to the Pact base to meet up with Destiny's Edge and reveals the information about the dragon egg. The hero's old team is surprised by this new development. After the meeting, the Commander and Braham catch up with Taimi, hoping the asura can share any clues as to where the Aspect Masters were going. Then, the Commander confronts Caithe, who had been tailing them. She explains that the dragon egg is too important for her not to help.

Following a trail of clues, Rox, Caithe, and the Commander discover the Aspect Masters fighting for their lives in a cave filled with dragon minions. A Mordrem Teragriff impales the Sun Master just as they arrive. Shortly after, the Master of Wind is wounded and shambles off to the side. The Master of Lightning, determined to get her injured friend back to safety, leaves finding the Master of Peace to the Commander.

When the Commander catches up with the “biconic” team in the Modrem Labyrinth, they’ve already been separated. With Caithe, the two free the others from their Mordrem traps and head for the center chamber. The Master of Peace is found gravely wounded on the ground. After killing the Mordrem Troll in the chamber, the Master of Peace dies, leaving Glint’s egg in the Commander’s care. Without warning, Caithe snaps up the egg saying that there’s “no time to explain” and vanishes into the shadows. The team agrees to go after Caithe, and Marjory suggests that they have an audience with the Pale Tree, the one being with access to most sylvari memory.



“Conniving vegetable!” - Rytlock Brimstone

SEASON 2: EPISODE 7
SEEDS OF TRUTH

Marjory and the Commander arrive at the Omphalos Chamber just before the Pale Tree wakens. She’s conscious enough to discuss the dragon egg and what should be done about Caithe. The Mother Tree asks Mender Aine to present the heroes with four memory seeds. The seeds, as Aine explains, resonate with the location of where the memories occurred. The Commander plants the first seed and, in a whirl of magic, becomes one with Caithe’s body and mind. In the chamber are Trahearne and Faolain, discussing the merit of Ventari’s tenets. The three of them reconvene with the other firstborn below to discuss what should be done about the “secondborn”. There, the Commander learns a little about each of the firstborn. Each is guarded, even Wynne, who, according to Faolain, keeps her own secrets. The discussion ends with a disruption. A newborn rushes in, detailing an encounter with the asura and the capture of several newborns. Trahearne suggests that Caithe and Faolain investigate the matter.



Trahearne was a master of delegation before the age of three.

The Commander and Marjory follow the clues from the first vision to an Inquest lab in Metrica Province. The second seed is planted, and the second vision begins. Caithe and Faolain infiltrate the asura lab where their kin are being experimented on. There, they confront Vorpp, the krewe leader, but he escapes. Together, they return the surviving sylvari to safety. Faolain, bitter from the encounter, vows to confront Wynne about her secrets.
This leads the Commander back to the Silverwastes, where after questioning some Seraph and skritt about any known local centaur, the pair is directed to the Far Silverwastes. After crawling through a claustrophobe’s nightmare, the Commander locates the site for the third memory seed.

Caithe, Faolain, Cadeyrn, and his followers approach the centaur camp, but split at the entrance road. The centaur guards are curious of the two sisters. Eventually, Nekhii Burnthide greets them, mentioning that Wynne is not currently at the camp. Caithe offers to wait around until she returns, but Wynne approaches them at that moment. The conversation between the four of them becomes heated and Nekhii asks to speak with Caithe in private. Caithe tries to explain that they mean no harm, but a scuffle takes place outside and soon Faolain is fighting the centaurs with Cadeyrn and his “back-up”. The centaurs are wiped out and Wynne, traumatized by the loss of her friends, flees into a cavern hidden behind a stone door imbued with a magical illustration of serpents.

A shaken Commander walks with Marjory to the same door nearby to find it sealed shut. Marjory offers to research the images on the door at the Durmand Priory and promises to send word once she’s found something.





GUILDMAG WANTS YOU!

ALL OF OUR CONTENT IS PRODUCED BY A TEAM OF VOLUNTEER GUILD WARS 2 FANS, AND WE'RE LOOKING FOR MORE TO JOIN US!

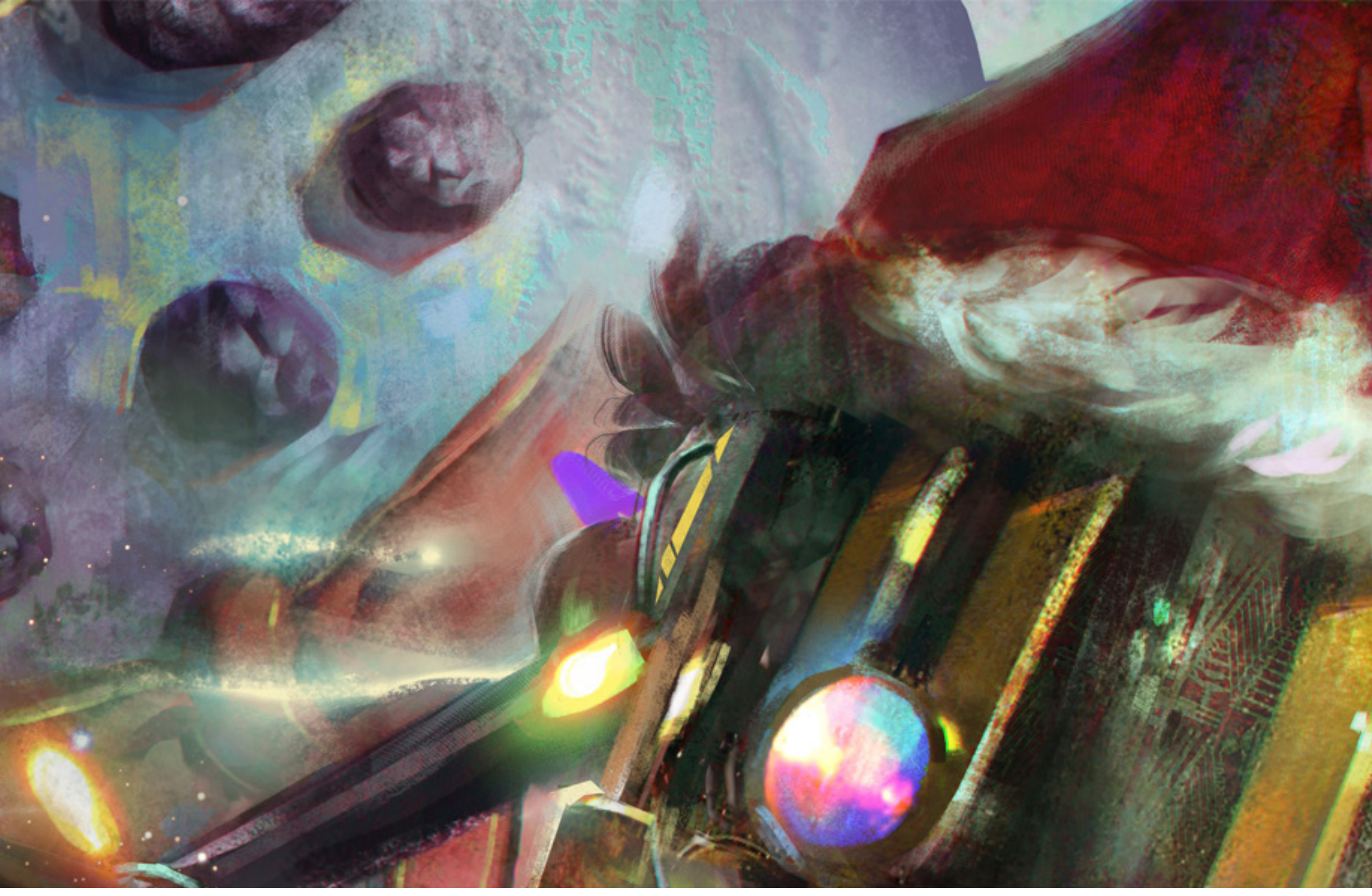
No matter what your skills are, and how long you've been playing the game for, there's a place for you at GuildMag! We've got a tonne of different roles to suit everyone's skillset - read on below for more information!

WRITERS

Our writers are the backbone of GuildMag. They're the ones who spent their time playing, researching and then writing about the game. Some specialise in one topic - such as lore or fiction - whilst others simply write about whatever takes their fancy at the time. To become a writer, all you need is a good understanding of the English language, and a passion for Guild Wars 2.

EDITORS

Without these guys, GuildMag would be awash in a sea of missing punctuation and mistyped words! Editors help writers clean up their articles, proofreading each for mistakes and ensuring that everything we publish is as good as it can be. Editors are our final line of defense in the endless war against bad grammar; to join their elite ranks, your English needs to be top-notch!



JOIN THE TEAM

DESIGNERS

If you have an eye for good design, then this might just be the role for you. Designers are responsible for, you guessed it, designing each magazine article. It's a designer's job to make sure that an article looks pretty on the page; we give them a blank canvas, and they give us a masterpiece. We applaud bold design, and look for even bolder individuals. To become a designer, you don't need a qualification in graphic design - just show us what you can do!

HOW TO APPLY

If you're interested in one of the above roles, simply navigate yourself to **www.guildmag.com/join.**

You'll be able to find more information on each position, as well as an application form.

If you do choose to apply, good luck!



LORE

AGGRESSIVE FLORA OF THE MAGUUMA REGION

WRITTEN BY DRAXYNNIC

A lecture reviewing the dangerous plantlife once found in the Maguuma region, given by Professor Blorp in late 1327AE as preparation for the possibility of their descendents being corrupted by Mordremoth.

Greetings, empty heads in need of filling! I am Professor Blorp, archaeologist, palaeontologist, xenologist, biologist and historian extraordinaire, here to give you a review from historical records on threats that adventurers have previously faced in the Maguuma region, and which may be encountered again as our explorers and magisters push further into the jungle!

I'm sure that you are all aware of the rise of a new dragon in the Maguuma region, one that has becoming the focus of the efforts of the Pact due to its threat to the waypoint network and the general observation that newly awoken dragons tend to be more destructive than those that have already established a territory. For those that are not aware…

…then how do you have the gall to call yourselves Priory scholars!



Get out of my sight and don't come back until you at least have attained a minimum level of comprehension about current events! In case you're too stupid to figure it out, the door is THAT WAY. Off you go!

Nobody? Good. As I'm sure you all know – if not, door is that way, turn left, third door on the right, and ask the librarian for the Mordremoth reports, you can read can't you – the new dragon's signature characteristic is that it has constructed much of its army from the corruption of plants. As a result, in order to possibly predict what new threats we may be facing, I have prepared a review on asura and bookah records on hostile plants that used to dwell in the Maguuma region. Most of these were thoroughly catalogued and exterminated in the Tarnished Coast region after we asura reached the surface, however, they may still dwell deeper in the jungle where they may be available for Mordremoth to recruit. Due to the resemblance of many of these plants to animals, some scholars believe that these may have been surviving examples of an earlier generation of sylvari, where their trees lacked bookahs as a template and made do with copies of even less intelligent creatures.

First, there are the 'aloes', a plant that was regarded as the least threatening but most annoying among many bookah adventurers. Once ranging across Tyria but now apparently extinct in settled regions, the aloe had a tendency to form symbiotic relationships with more dangerous creatures in the area, whether animals or other plants. While their partners attack anything that enters the area, the aloes would pop up from hiding below ground and use their healing properties to keep their symbiotic allies in good health, making them priority targets for adventurers. Without such partners, nests of aloes used their powers to keep each other alive, making them difficult to root out.

Next on the list are the 'stalkers', to which I direct you to the reproduction of a two hundred and fifty year old painting that my mesmer assistant is projecting on the screen behind me. Note the generally humanoid appearance and the hollow abdomen – some scholars have speculated that these may have been immature examples of the 'husks' now associated with the Nightmare Court and Mordremoth's minions. Bookah records credit these creatures with wielding elemental and mesmeric magics, depending on the variety… but as we all know, the ancient bookahs had a tendency to regard anything they did not understand as 'magic', so this may have been some other process rather than truly being magic.

These creatures were usually found in the drier parts of the Maguuma and the swampier areas of Kryta, but another variety – switch to the next image now - used to be found close to the Grove's current location: the snakelike ayuhuasca. Again, bookah records credit this plant with magical abilities, particularly in the ability to generate mesmer illusions. I suspect that the ayahuasca may instead have developed a kind of poison with hallucinogenic properties, which bookah adventurers interpreted as magic use.









While there are a variety of other forms of dangerous plants that have been reported in other parts of Tyria – I'm sure you are all familiar with the oakhearts and their relatives – there is one more form of dangerous plant that was reported in the Maguuma region: a sedentary, in the adult phase, family called 'blooms' (next image, please!). Two forms were known to exist, one described as fungus-like and the other with nettle-like foliage – given their similarities otherwise, though, I suspect that they were closely related species, and one either had something that looked like leaves as a defense, or had a symbiotic relationship with a genuine flora species.

Either way, these 'blooms' were known for their reproductive method – they would release large spores – bring up the last sketch - that drift for short distances before settling and undergoing explosive growth into a juvenile bloom. Both varieties were credited with magical abilities to defend themselves against nearby threats in both their adult and juvenile forms, and reports indicate that production of spores is accelerated rapidly when an adult bloom regards itself as under threat – likely both as a means of generating reinforcements as well as a last-minute effort to reproduce before it is potentially destroyed. This made infestations difficult to burn out, since if the adult blooms are not quickly identified and destroyed, even a strong force can be quickly overwhelmed by an expanding tide of new growths.

Now, none of these forms of dangerous plant life have been seen in some time, such that they are believed extinct in settled regions – however, there is no telling what might remain in the deeper Maguuma where the new dragon lies. Thus, while this lecture serves as an overview, I would recommend any of you that are assigned to the region undertake your own study into the records on these creatures, to ensure that you are prepared should we find their corrupted descendents among Mordremoth's armies.

Class dismissed!

EDITORIAL

RECOUNTING REVERIE: ACTIVITY RETROSPECTIVE

WRITTEN BY STARCONSPIRATOR

While Wintersday has a long, rich history beyond the confines of Guild Wars 2, for the last two years the denizens of Tyria have been entertained by a more modern version, featuring asuran genius Tixx the Toymaker, whose arrival triggers a series of Wintersday-themed activities. Like the living world of Tyria, they have changed over time, but like good holiday traditions they continue to thrill and inspire.

The Wondrous Workshop of Toymaker Tixx introduced players to Tixx and his golem Toxx. Together, they traveled across Tyria bringing presents to all, but trouble followed in their wake. For the initial five days of the event in 2012, Tixx's workshop - a dungeon known as the Infinirarium - docked at each major city. Each port introduced players to a different version of the dungeon, creating five "paths" based on which toy Tixx was attempting to make. Players who explored the dungeon learned of the Toymaker, and his troubles with both stowaway skritt and malfunctioning toys. The rewards for completing each path allowed players to collect ingredients they needed to build their own Wintersday Toy mini pets. In addition, each city had its own toy: Ventari figures for the Grove, Princess Dolls at Divinity's Reach, Toy Soldiers at the Black Citadel, Golems for Rata Sum, and Plush Griffons in Hoelbrak. After the first five days, the Infinirarium landed in Lion's Arch and all previous events were available. For the adventurous, a final Toypocalypse event also became available. In 2013, the Infinirarium docked only in Lion's Arch with all events available. Although the activities within the dungeon remained the same in 2013, rewards did change, allowing players to choose one of the festive toy minis after completing the holiday meta achievement rather than building it within the Mystic Forge as they had in 2012. Instead, last year the Forge was used to create a special edition mini: a present-toting dolyak.



2012's Wintersday celebration also saw the introduction of the Enchanted Snow Globe and its three festival events: the Bell Choir, Snowball Mayhem, and the Winter Wonderland jumping puzzle. With few changes, these activities returned in 2013. For the musically inclined, the Bell Choir gave the citizens of Tyria a chance to ring in the holiday. Each map held twelve people – four stages with three players each who played a different octave. Although points were scored for a good performance, the real challenge was not in besting your fellow bell ringers but in staying alive long enough to complete the event. Each wrong note deducted health, although you could easily regenerate it between songs while waiting for others to join.

Snowball Mayhem, the heir to the original Guild Wars snowball fight, pitted teams of eight players against each other in a fight to collect the most presents from a central spawn point and return them to their base. Entering the snowball fight adjusted your skillbar. While some new snow skills were set based on your profession, others depended on the role you chose: Scout, Heavy Hitter, or Support. Given the whimsical skills, it acted as an introduction to PvP for players who traditionally played PvE.

The Winter Wonderland jumping puzzle, the third area of the Enchanted Snow lobe, initially required players to carry a gift through an obstacle course of giant snowflakes, peppermint candies, exploding presents and past giant snowballs, before delivering it to the happy gingerbread men and children at the end. The gift itself bestowed the frostbite effect, which slowly drained a player's health, limiting the time they had to complete the puzzle. While the bell choir and snowball fight remained the same between 2012 and 2013, the Winter Wonderland jumping puzzle was changed slightly, removing the present bundle that needed to be carried by the players but not removing the frostbite effect. Last year, players were only safe from the effect if they were able to stand near a fire.



As a final touch, the 2013 iteration of the event featured two NPCs, Ho-Ho-Tron and Marcello DiGiacomo, collecting donations for rebuilding Divinity's Reach after the devastating attack by Scarlet Briar. Once these two characters had collected sufficient funds, they triggered an escort mission through Lion's Arch.

This year, the festivities have been moved to Divinity's Reach, occupying the Crown Pavilion area of the city. A replica Ho-Ho-Tron has returned, raising money for charity and players are once again able to collect festive skins, outfits, and mini pets.



ODE TO A SMALL GUILD

WRITTEN BY THEBLACKERSHEEP



When ArenaNet decided that Mac owners are gamers too, I finally got access to the game two of my best friends kept going on about and promptly got hooked. Being the newcomer to our very small, besties guild, I've closely watched my friends and their playing styles so that I knew what to aim for myself. After a little more than a year, I've finally come to the conclusion that we are entirely a motley crew, and frankly, trying to watch us all play is completely bewildering, stupefying and a whole lot of fun.

First off, we have Nin. Nin is a very structured and strategic player who knows a lot about the technicalities of play. Build not working? Go to Nin. Need to know about skills? Go to Nin. Which alt to use for a certain boss? Nin. She's the one who chivvies us along when we play together. She keeps us organized, makes us check our skill sets, rearrange traits and focuses us on the mechanics of the fight. She's kind of like a mother making sure we have our jackets on before we go out in the cold. It's not always easy to get us to comply, because who needs to stop and put on a jacket when there's snow? Eventually we listen and that usually means we don't just walk into instantaneous death; we rock that dungeon - or think we do and that's all that counts. Thanks for keeping us from wandering into our very own apocalypse, Nin!

Then we have Al, Al is skilled and knows the technicalities of the game just as well as Nin, but she might, just might, have a problem focusing. She starts off fabulously with a goal in mind and eyes on the prize, but then, shinies! From then on she's lost to us like a skritt to scrap metal. We have to be careful to keep her from wandering off into dangerous areas by herself. Then we remind her that she did actually have a goal for the day and yes, she might be drifting; just a little bit. And yes we know there was a gathering node 20 miles away, but, remember your goal that's in the other direction? Having said that, when she's focused, she's deadly and has saved all our patooties a time or two. Thanks for helping us discover new places and things, Al!

Then there's Marvelline. Unfortunately she doesn't play as much as we would like her to, but when she does, she's enormous fun. Marvelline has all of the enthusiasm of a child in a toy store and doesn't hesitate to show it. She cares not about stats or traits or technical thingies. She just likes to kill things! Kill all the things! Is it moving? Kill it! Something dangerous that you can waypoint away from? Why do that when you can walk into an ambush with 50 enemies who are three levels higher than you? Let's just kill things, now! Watching her play is probably the most fun I've ever had. It also challenges the rest of us to hone our skills as we try and save her hiney from certain death, so it's all good. Thanks for teaching us that it's all about the fun, Marvelline!

Finally there's me, Wee Mad. As you can tell from the name, I'm a bit mad and all over the place. I started out with Marvelline's exuberance and just went in killing things. It was fabulous and a part of me misses not having to worry about anything but exploring Tyria. Never again will I find myself in Queensdale wondering why I've only got my underwear between me and the centaur of doom; or run from Snowden straight into Frostgorge with my level 10; or take on Jormag by my wee self, dying spectacularly in the attempt. This all happening while Nin is screaming in my ear, "Do you want to die? Listen to the guy at the gate, he's telling you you're going to die! Stoooooop...Too late." That part of the fun is over in a sense as I've progressed to actually care about instadeath and broken armor. I've moved on to more technical play; trying out different professions and techniques until I found the ones I like best. That doesn't mean the fun has ended - it's just changed. Although I still can't really be bothered to invest much time into all of the diversities of builds (I have Nin for that), fights have become more complex, more challenging and more interesting. Goals change with each update, and as new content is added, I try to adapt and improve. Finally, to my guildies' great delight, I have, against my very stubborn will and nature, done the very thing I told my besties I would never do. I have become a fashionista and skin hoarder. Don't ask me to personally don anything but jeans and sweaters, but my characters each have a wardrobe that rivals that of Imelda Marcos. There's nothing like making sport for our guildies and laughing with them in turn.

In the end, my game and how I play or how my characters look is not really what's important. What's important are my guildies. Without them, I could (theoretically at least) move on to being the best player in all of Tyria, but it wouldn't be the same. I wouldn't have Marvelline to remind me that sometimes it's just about being a kid; Nin to remind me that maybe taking on fifty foes at once is not such a fabulous idea (even with the #5 longbow skill and a reef drake); or Al to remind me that sometimes it's just about letting yourself wander where the shinies take you. All in all, we may be small and some may consider us anti-social for not joining larger guilds, but we have style and our style is fun!





LORE

MAGICAL DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE SEARING: CHAPTER 2

WRITTEN BY DRAXYNNIC

Part 2 of a series on the progress of magical research, penned by Eleanor Draxynnus in the year 1327 AE.

In the last chapter, I talked about the changes that have occurred in the practise of 'innate' magic, as employed by the adventuring professions of Tyria. In this chapter – of however many parts it will turn out to be – I will discuss the technological developments that have occurred in the last two and a half centuries.

From the modern perspective, there are two main branches of technological development. While there is evidence that neither race were the first to discover their branch, these branches can be categorised according to those now most known for each branch – namely, the charr (mostly lead by the Iron Legion) and the asura.

While there are, of course, significant differences in the outcomes and results of the two branches, the two forms of technology appear, at least from my outside perspective, to have two main differences in philosophy behind them. The first is that Iron Legion technology is intended to be widely disseminated among the legions, often regardless of whether the end user has specialised training. As a result, their technology emphasises practicality – ideally, any given piece should be as simple to produce and operate as possible. As a result, whether intentional on their part or not, examples of technology quickly spread to their friends and enemies both, although the charr still take the lead in developing this form of technology. Their only true competitor in this area appears to be the dredge, whose own technology appears to be a divergent line from the same source – the machines left behind by the dwarves.



Asura technology, on the other hand, is, at least in modern times, employed only by the asura themselves, apart from pieces reverse-engineered by larger skritt scratches. An asura would claim that this is because their technology is far beyond the understanding of other, supposedly less intelligent races. I suspect, however, that they deliberately make their technology, and the jargon around it, needlessly complicated – as a precaution against having it stolen not only by other races, but by other asura krewes as well. While this has certainly served to keep asura secrets hidden from most rivals, this culture of secrecy and paranoia has its costs – asura history is scattered with wonders that have been lost when their inventor died while still unwilling to pass on their secrets. In some cases, the inventor became so paranoid about their secrets being stolen even after death that they deliberately hid them away in secluded locations protected by automated defences.

The second, possibly more substantial difference, is in the relationship of the two forms of technology with magic. Many would say that the charr form of technology does not employ magic at all… however, this is not strictly true. As an example, I have heard of charr collecting elemental lodestones to use in constructing ammunition for artillery pieces – this is clearly making use of the magical properties of the lodestones, even if this is simply that the lodestones can be made to explode under the right conditions.

> "THE FRAMES OF TIXX'S T SERVOS AND LEDITATE THAT THEY ARE ESSENT

The truth is, in present times, it is often hard to say for sure what is the result of magic, and what is the result of some other unknown but nonmagical property of a given substance – for instance, there would seem to be nothing magical about burned wood, but if mixed with brimstone and a certain preservative salt it can create effects that can easily be mistaken for magic. A charr inventor simply doesn't care – he is concerned about whether a given material will react in a predictable manner under the desired circumstances, regardless of whether magic is involved in this property or not. The various ghostbusting devices built by the charr, for example, almost certainly involve making use of magical substances – but all the Iron Legion cares about is that, if used in the correct way, they have





the desired effect upon the ghosts, whether that effect be containment, dispersion, or disorientation.

Asura technology, on the other hand, is focussed primarily on the harnessing and channelling of magical energies. While the physical form of a piece of technology derived from the charr approach is based on the shapes required to make use of the desired properties, the appearance of asura technology is typically determined by the circuits needed to extract magical energy from a source, convert it into a more useful form (if required), and channel it to generate the desired effect.

In a nutshell, a follower of the charr line of technology looks at a lodestone and views it to be useful because it has an intrinsic property that it will explode under the right circumstances. An asura looks at the same lodestone and sees a source of magical energy.

A third line of magical technology exists, although it has mostly been lost since the Searing, and some might not regard it as magic at all. This is the art of enchanting what might otherwise be taken as a common object, granting it properties that would not be guessed at through casual examination even by an expert. From this line we have the likes of cauldrons that conjure a rain of fiery crystals, teleportation pads that appear to require none of the complexity of asura gates, and swords that can transform much of the population of a nation into ghost warriors. Much as the asura might prefer not to admit it, this branch of magical technology may rival or even exceed their own, and is typical of the artifacts of ancient humanity as well as the elder races. However, more knowledge has been lost than gained regarding this branch since the Searing.

As a simple demonstration of the distinction between the second and third styles, consider the line of animated toys colloquially known as 'minipets'. The origins of many of these toys is a mystery – while somebody is clearly making new ones as minipets of significant people continue to appear, usually offered for sale by the Black Lion Company, nothing is known of who that might be.

Evon Gnashblade might know, but he refuses to name his supplier, at least not for any price within this scholar's expense budget.

TOYS WITH ARTICULATED JOINTS INDICATED TIALLY SMALL GOLEMS

However, there are some that are known. While he did not invent them, one of the earliest known minipet creators was Mahk of Kamadan. His breakthrough work was reportedly a miniature of a creature from the Desolation called a Grey Giant – one that was reportedly indistinguishable from the real thing, if one were to overlook its diminutive size and lack of aggression. Mahk had created (some histories say repaired) an exquisitely detailed model of a creature that existed elsewhere in the world, and infused it with magical essence – reportedly from a djinn – in order to animate it. This, along with most models seen today, serves as an example of the third form of magical technology – no special joints or gizmos appear to be needed, the minipet simply moved on its own through magic.

This is in contrast to the mass-produced products of Toymaker Tixx. While in some cases covered by plush and stuffing, the frames of Tixx's toys with articulated servos and levitated joints indicate that they are essentially small golems in nature. Thus, they serve as examples of the common asura approach to magitechnological design. While nobody would describe Tixx's creations as lifelike, Tixx's Emporium is able to produce them cheaply enough that they can actually serve as toys for children – while Evon's ever-increasing prices often relegate the more realistic miniatures to collectors items only afforded by the wealthiest of Tyria's citizens. Certainly, visitors to the Infinarium report that the process seems almost entirely automated (except when it breaks down, which is disturbingly often) and it seems unlikely that even asura-designed machinery could reproduce the lifelike detail of the more traditional (and expensive) animated miniatures.



It is, of course, possible that the asura are perfectly capable of creating lifelike miniatures, albeit not in such quantity. When the asura first broke the surface, they brought with them the game they called Polymock – a game whose playing pieces were lifelike animated simulacra of various monsters that were pitted against one another. Some legends claim that some polymock pieces could even be animated outside the arena to defend their owners against enemies.

However, it is also interesting that the legends claim that polymock pieces, particularly the more powerful and valuable ones, were more often acquired from raiding long-abandoned dungeons than from the asura themselves. In addition, while the asura made an effort to spread the game on the surface when they arrived, the Polymock arenas have been closed to non-asura for years. The asura are known to have made many discoveries that were lost in later years due to the deaths of their creators, particularly in the destruction of their underground civilisation by the Great Destroyer... perhaps the closure of the arenas is due to shame at having lost the knowledge of creating lifelike pieces, and being forced to resort to less artistic substitutes such as the golem tournaments in Soren Draa? Perhaps the asura were never responsible for the manufacture of polymock pieces at all, instead having made a game from them after acquiring them from some other, older culture.



FICTION

A PRESENT FOR THE QUEEN

WRITTEN BY DARRYSHAN

Lori sighed. A few weeks off and she'd been flung right back into incident response. The young man next to her was visibly nervous; a recruit's second day on the job was always the hardest. The two of them walked up the street towards the tavern in Ossan Quarter, the steady rattling of armour like Wintersday bells, as children ran across the road, screaming in delight. It was three days until Wintersday, when Tixx's floating golem would arrive at Divinity's Reach, the festivities being hosted by the Krytan queen whilst Lion's Arch continued to recover after Scarlet Briar's attack.

Lori's cold brown eyes were drawn to the door of the tavern, her age showing from the bags underneath them. She was approaching forty, and had seen two monarchs, two Elder Dragons, and an unexpected truce in her time in the Krytan military. No criminal she encountered would be free for long, her ruthless but logical composure allowing her to take control of any situation, making up for her small stature with her tone of voice. She ran calloused hands through her chestnut hair before placing a golden helmet onto her skull, the din of pre-Wintersday cheer muffled as if diving underwater. As they stepped over the threshold, she barked out stern orders to a large crowd.

"Make way!"

Lori heard several murmurs as the crowd reluctantly dispersed. Inside lay an asura holding a small machine, frantically tapping buttons on the device, cackling maniacally. His face was one you wouldn't forget in a hurry. Scars covered him everywhere below his nose to his neck, standing out like snow and fire on his soot-grey skin. Crimson beady eyes, like holly berries, stared directly into her soul.

The foot-long device was covered in dials and buttons. A flickering display showed an image of the royal palace, or that's what she thought before her colleague grabbed the asura and, in the process, stepped on the screen with a loud crunching sound. Lori growled, clenching her fists.

"Recruit!"

"Yes ma'am?"

She pointed to the device, hands shaking in frustration, and the recruit's proud smile dropped. He picked it up, small chunks of glass falling onto the wooden floor.

Recruits. Always so willing to please, and messing up tremendously almost every time. The asura giggled, and muttered something about explosions. Lori looked at the small figure contemptuously before thrusting her mailed fist directly into his face. She grabbed the device and dragged the unconscious asura after her, glowering at the crowd nearby.

"Nothing to see here."

The recruit swiftly followed suit.

"Ma'am, I doubt that was the best approach."

Lori tightened the grip on her prisoner, angered.

"That asura was mad, Recruit. I'd advise you not to question me."

Silence. Sweet silence. Perhaps the two would get on after all?

As they reached Seraph Headquarters, she looked to the recruit.

"You take this one to the cells, then get medical to come down. I'll write up the report."

"Yes ma'am!"

Always so damn enthusiastic. Lori walked over to her desk, placed her helmet next to an inkpot on her desk and sighed. She picked up a quill, dipped it, and was about to put pen to paper when something in her peripheral vision caught her attention. It was the asura's cracked device further down the desk, put there by the recruit. She squinted at it to see if she could make out the details on the cracked screen, but all she

could see was a model of the palace, and a small flashing dot.

A crash down in the cells.

“Bloody recruits!” she exclaimed out loud. Storming over to the dungeon stairs, a feeling of dread overcame her.

“Just a recruit? This’ll never do! We’ll need the sergeant you mentioned.”

She tensed up, hand reaching for her sword as she picked up the pace down the stone steps. As she entered the dungeons, her eyes locked on to three short figures, one pointing a glowing gun-like device at her body. It sparked, sending a projectile towards her. As it hit, she crumpled to the floor twitching. Then black.

“Welcome!” boomed a disembodied and uncanny voice. “Welcome to my playhouse.”

Inquest. It had to be. But what did they want with her? Experiments? She assumed that’d be answered soon enough, sliding off a clinical slab she’d been lain on. She seemed to be stuck in a glass cube, lit with red lights. It reminded her of a snow globe, but instead of snow falling, perspiration ran down her neck. Outside the cube were three Seraph officers. Her mind whirred busily trying to process information, so she switched to Sergeant mode.

“I demand you let me out! I am your superior officer!”

The Seraph responded by stepping forward once in unison. Before another word left her mouth, they vibrated and folded in on themselves, becoming the usual, benign golems seen every day.

“Oh,” muttered Lori, embarrassed.

“Sergeant Galano, is it?” boomed the voice again.

“Who wants to know?”

“You don’t need to tell us, we already know the answer.”

She placed her hands on the glass, before pulling them back quickly. It was strangely cold. The rest of the room was sweltering, but the glass… The glass was colder than anything she’d ever felt. Even colder than the ice she used to support herself on during childhood skating visits in Hoelbrak.

“You will have your memories and voice transplanted into one of these Seraph golems. It will travel to Divinity’s Reach, enter the palace with a bomb disguised as a present from you, and place it there. A present from a senior Seraph officer will not be suspicious on Wintersday. Unfortunately, you will not be alive to see this step of the plan succeed.”

Lori gulped, a knot forming in her stomach. She could feel bile in her throat. Then, before she could vomit, a strange scent wafted under her nose, and she could hear hissing from above her.

“Come anywhere near me and… an…” Her sentence was cut off as she fell to the floor, unconscious.

Buzzing filled her ears as she came around. A large appliance, crackling with energy, was being lowered towards her head, and Lori instinctively reached out to stop it hitting her face. Or she would have done had her arms not been bound. Instead, the drill-like machine stopped an inch clear of her nose, bouncing a little, and whining quietly. A sudden sharp pain materialised deep in her cranium, driving her half to madness. She lurched up violently, ripping away the restraints and smacking her forehead on the sharpest point of machine. The pain intensified, but the whining noise got louder.

“ENERGY LEVELS CRITICAL. APPROACHING SYNERGETICAL CRITICAL BREAK-POINT,” screamed an electronic voice.

Energy crackled around the room, ripping apart equipment, including the Seraph golems. Lori smiled, though it probably looked more like a grimace.

“Loyal until the end…” she thought, as everything went black.

WINTERSDAY WINDOW DECORATION CONTEST

This year, ArenaNet is sponsoring an awesome contest held across multiple fansites - and GuildMag is one of them!

The Wintersday Window Decoration Contest runs until January 20, 2015. Create a Guild Wars 2 themed Wintersday window decoration stencil, like the examples shown below, and you could be in with a chance of winning some great prizes from ArenaNet. Entries must be your own original work, 300dpi, and saved in JPG, PNG, TIFF or PDF format. The minimum size for all entries is A4 format, and each entry must be the original digital version of the stencil that can be printed, cut and used directly on a window. Only one entry per person is allowed, and any entries already publicly posted are void.

PRIZES

Five potential winners will be selected from all entries across all fansites, chosen by a panel of judges based on creativity, style and originality. In the event of a tie, an additional tie-breaking judge will determine the winner(s).

- **First place** will receive a Guild Wars 2 signed artbook, a signed Rytlock notebook, an exclusive Guild Wars 2 mousemat, a black Rytlock T-shirt, a Wintersday card, a Guild Wars 2 Griffon Mail Carrier, and a code for 400 gems.
- **Second place** will win a Guild Wars 2 artbook, a Rytlock notebook, an exclusive Guild Wars 2 mousemat, a grey Guild Wars 2 T-shirt, a Wintersday card, and a Guild Wars 2 Griffon Mail Carrier.
- **Third place** will get a Guild Wars 2 artbook, an exclusive Guild Wars 2 mousemat, a grey Guild Wars 2 T-shirt, a Wintersday card, and a Guild Wars 2 Griffon Mail Carrier.
- **Fourth place** includes a Wintersday card, a grey Guild Wars 2 T-shirt, and a Guild Wars 2 Griffon Mail Carrier.
- **Fifth place** will be rewarded with a Wintersday card, a grey Guild Wars 2 T-shirt, and a Guild Wars 2 Griffon Mail Carrier.

HOW TO ENTER

Email your entry to **contest@guildmag.com**. Remember that this contest is running across several fansites, and the prize pool is shared between them - so you only need to enter via one!

For a full list of rules, including eligibility, please visit:
http://guildmag.com/wintersday-window-decoration-contest

Good luck!



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