

GUILD MAG

ISSUE 14

RETURN TO **CANTHA**

A HISTORY OF CANTHA

Visual timeline of Cantha's past

RECAP: POINT OF NO RETURN

The last episode of Living World Season 2

COMMUNITY ART, FICTION & MORE!

More awaits inside this issue!



EDITOR'S LETTER

Happy Canthan New Year! For our first issue of 2015, we've chosen to celebrate this historic event with a magazine dedicated to Cantha and Guild Wars: Factions! Although we may not be heading back there in an expansion any time soon, it's always fun to reminisce (for those who played the original game) and speculate on what could be.

In Issue 14, you'll find an excellent lore primer on why Cantha is so important; an editorial piece on what Heart of Thorns can learn from Factions; and our usual creative fiction and art pieces, all inspired by the Empire of the Dragon! We've also recapped the last Living World release for Season 2: Point of No Return for those that missed it or would like a refresher, ready for Heart of Thorns later this year.

As always, we're constantly on the look-out for community submissions. If you fancy yourself as a writer, and would like an original piece of work featured in a later magazine, then navigate your browser to guildmag.com/submit for all the information.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we did producing it!

- Valiant





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A BRIEF HISTORY OF CANTHA

WRITTEN BY DARRYSHAN

0 CC (510 BE)

Cantha unites under Kaineng Tah (Old Canthan for 'Lord Emperor'), with the first Raisu Palace beginning construction. This heralds the beginning of the Age of the Marmoset.



48 CC (462 BE)

After becoming a target of Emperor Yian and being labelled as the 'Luxon insurgency', the Luxons secede from the Canthan Empire, becoming a vassal state instead.



51 CC (459 BE) – 511 CC (1 AE)

Not much is known of events in Cantha during this period, but nine emperors are known to have ruled the Empire.



510 CC (0 AE)

The Human Gods split the bloodstone, a stone which is the source of magic on Tyria, into shards and spread them across the world. Abaddon betrays the other Gods and is defeated. The Exodus of the Gods takes place.



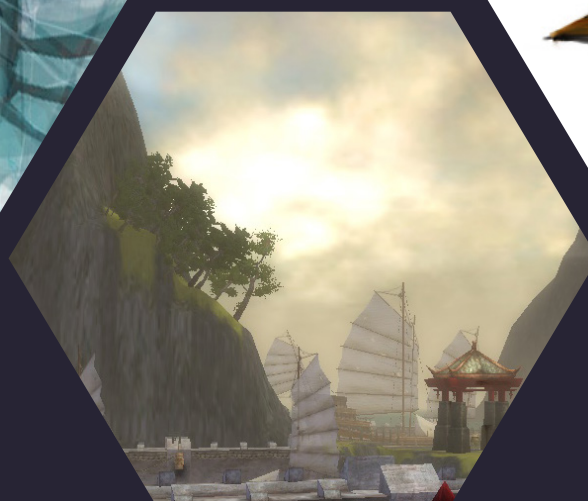
46 CC (464 BE)

Kaineng Tah dies in mysterious circumstances with his son, Yian Zho, following as Emperor, despite lack of a formal succession system.



51 CC (459 BE)

Yian declares war on the Kurzicks in the Echovald Forest, who become an independent vassal state as a result.



511 CC (1 AE)

The Age of the Bat begins. Chang Hai becomes the first Ascendent Emperor of Cantha, and sets a precedent for all Emperors after to be Weh no Su, the Canthan equivalent of Ascension.



305 CC (205 BE)

The Age of the Falcon begins. The beginning of this age coincides with humanity first setting foot on Tyria and Elona.

1204 CC (694 AE)

The cruel Emperor Singtah, known for mass public executions and unfair taxation, is burned alive in the original Raisu Palace, built by the first Emperor, in a fire started by rebels.

882 CC (372 AE)

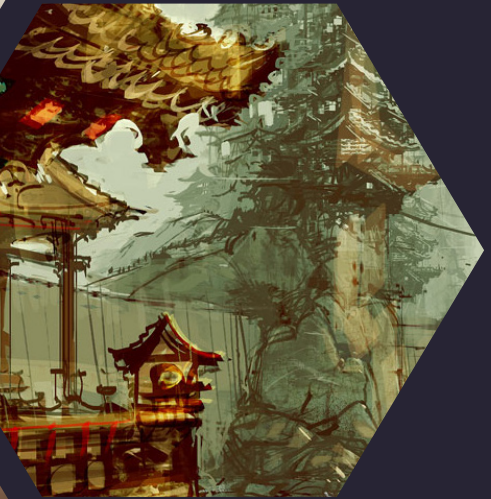
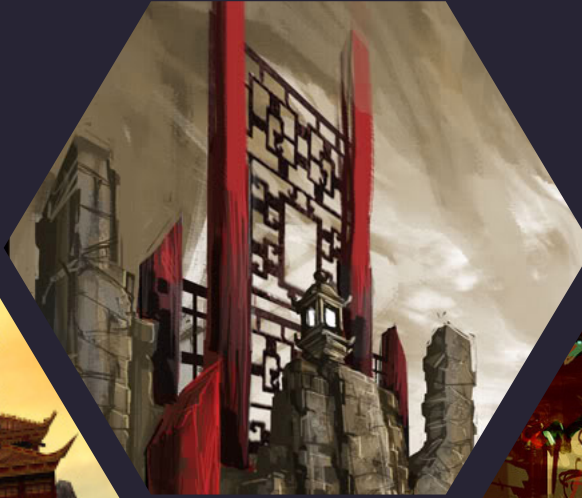
Karei, a powerful healer, is approached by Dwayna, human Goddess of Life and Air, through a series of trials. He passes all three, and is thus made the Master of Kaziin Monastery.

1284 CC (774 AE)

The 24th Canthan Emperor, Senvho, dies after sitting on the throne in the newly built Second Raisu Palace for the first time.

731 CC (221 AE)

Cantha begins trading with Tyria and Elona. Logging on Shing Jea Island is outlawed, and the Age of the Hedgehog begins.

**1282 CC (772 AE)**

A pirate fleet led by Appollonia attacks the port of Dinfang, and is defeated by a force stationed in Fort Fu, led by Kitah. With her mesmeric powers, Kitah increased the size of the defending fleet, causing the pirates to flee. Both Kitah and Appollonia are killed in single combat.

1082 CC (572 AE)

Magadore, a powerful wizard, drains the life-force from Cantha's forests, turning it into pure energy. Magadore plans to use it in a magical war against the Emperor, but is defeated by the ranger Zojun and his army of beasts.



1375 CC (865 AE)

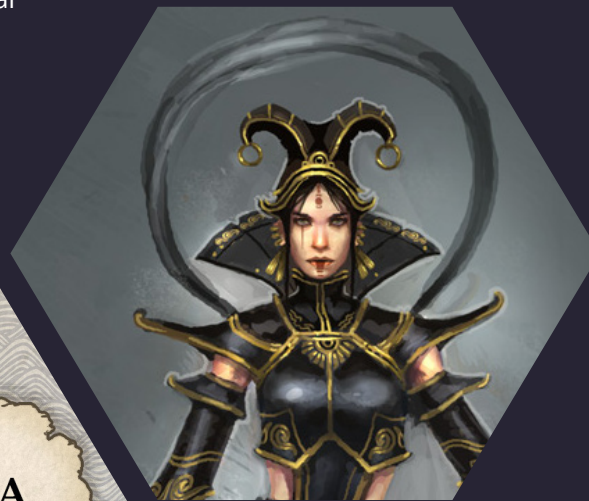
Shiro defeats a coup d'etat by rebels in the Celestial Ministry, executing any perpetrators in front of the Emperor's captured son.

**1390 CC (880 AE)**

Hostilities with the native tengu rise, but open war is avoided with the Angchu tribe due to the efforts of Emperor Hanjai's ambassador. Soon, however, the Tengu Wars begin.

**1527 CC (1017 AE)**

The Luxons and Kurzicks end formal diplomatic contact, the only communication taking place through the Celestial Ministry, and only when absolutely required.

**1412 CC (902 AE)**

Trade agreements with Orr, Ascalon and Kryta are ended by an imperial decree.

**1382 CC (872 AE)**

Shiro Tagachi is killed in the Harvest Temple after murdering Emperor Ansiyan, being tricked into it by the fallen god Abaddon. The Jade Wind occurs as a result, solidifying the Jade Sea and turning the Echovald Forest and the creatures within into stone.

**1396 CC (886 AE)**

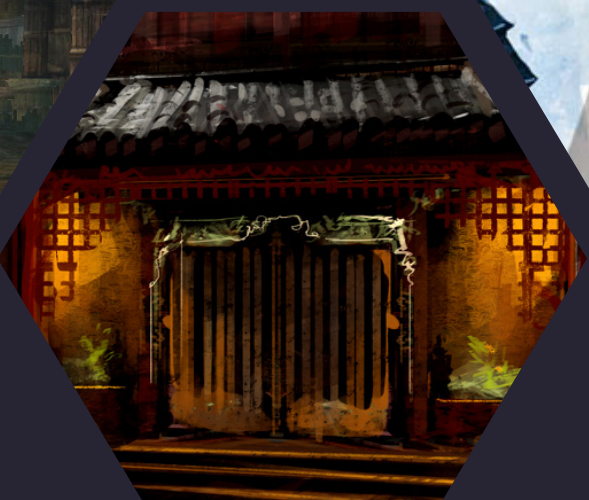
Courthouse Square in Kaineng City is renamed Vizunah Square, in honour of the efforts of the assassin, Vizu, defeating Shiro Tagachi after his murder of the emperor.

**1532 CC (1022 AE)**

Ermenred of Ascalon travels to Cantha to meet Emperor Kintah. Shortly after, trade routes between Cantha and Ascalon are reopened.

**1450 CC (940 AE)**

The Canthan Embassies in Ascalon and Elona are closed.



1637 CC (1127 AE)

Emperor Usoku spends millions of gold preparing the armies of Cantha, then declares war on the Kurzicks and Luxons. The newly invigorated Canthan army sweeps through the countryside, defeating the Luxons and Kurzicks, and re-incorporating them into Cantha. All non-humans are driven out of the Empire, along with all who opposed Usoku. This forces Canthan migrants to Tyria and Elona.

1587 CC (1077 AE)

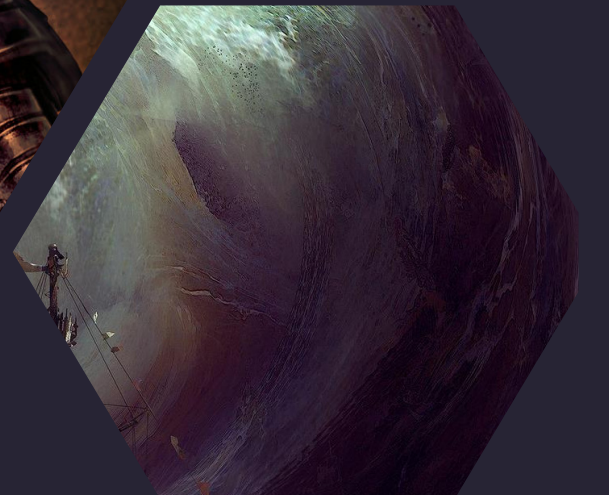
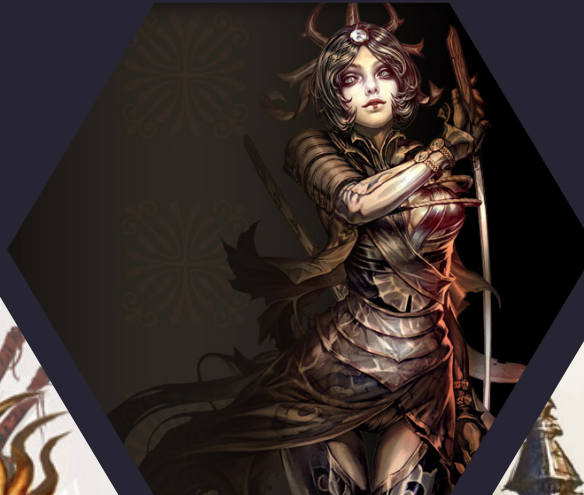
The Ministry of Purity, tasked with eradicating the Afflicted, is founded by Reiko Murakami.

1582 CC (1072 AE)

Shiro Tagachi comes back to life, unleashing a plague on Cantha called the Affliction.

1568 CC (1058 AE)

Emperor Kintah dies, and is succeeded by Emperor Kisu, his son and 31st Emperor of Cantha. Open warfare between the Luxons and Kurzicks ends.



1589 CC (1079 AE)

The last remnants of the Afflicted are destroyed by the Ministry of Purity, which turns its attention on others that it sees as enemies of Cantha - the Luxons, Kurzicks, tengu, and the Jade Brotherhood. Minister Reiko is assassinated, and Ashu Yuudachi, a child, assumes control of the Ministry of Purity.

1583 CC (1073 AE)

Reiko Murakami, a minister in the Celestial Ministry, rallies the people in Cantha against the victims of Shiro Tagachi's plague, "the Afflicted", whose only release from the condition is death.

1729 CC (1219 AE)

Orr rises, sending a huge tsunami towards Tyria, and possibly Cantha, cutting off all communication. After this point, nothing is known of events in Cantha. Tengu exiles view this Great Tsunami as a sign that it is time to form their own nation, settling in the Sanctum Cay region to found the Dominion of Winds.

1581 CC (1071 AE)

The Tengu Wars end, and trade is re-established with Kryta amidst the destruction of Orr and Ascalon.



CANTHA: A CULTURAL & GEOGRAPHICAL PRIMER

WRITTEN BY DRAXYNNIC

In order to help facilitate discussion on a possible Priory expedition to re-establish contact with Cantha, I have prepared the following briefing on what we knew about Cantha prior to the closing of Cantha's borders. For convenience, it is split among three sections, detailing in turn the original Empire of the Dragon and each of the Vassal States.

THE EMPIRE OF THE DRAGON

Geography

Before Usoku's reconquest of the Vassal States, the Empire of the Dragon proper was confined in the supercity of Kaineng on the continent's northwestern shore. Originally a network of smaller cities and towns, Kaineng became the biggest city in the known world when an influx of refugees from the Jade Wind filled the spaces between the original settlements with hurried construction. The need to rapidly build housing for so many people led to the erection of what most visitors have described as towering slums, reaching high into the sky as new construction is piled on the old. While these apartment complexes often looked shabby, reports indicate fewer collapses than might be expected given the external state of the buildings – while Canthan architects cared more for need than for aesthetics, they likely became experts at keeping these sorts of construction stable.

Food and water for this metropolis was sourced from a series of islands off the western coast, the largest being Shing Jea Island, home of the famous Shing Jea Monastery. A mountain range on the southwestern coast became a popular location for summer retreats for the wealthy seeking to escape the teeming metropolis, although the Forbidden City of Raisu also allowed some measure of relief for those close to the emperor.

Politics

During the time before Usoku's ascension, the Canthan government was split between the hereditary monarch and the Celestial Ministry. Unlike the Krytan ministry, the Canthan ministry did not pretend to represent the people but served a purely bureaucratic role, theoretically performing those government functions that the emperor and his direct representatives could not attend personally. Visitors' accounts, however, report endemic incompetence and corruption, and observe that in practise the Ministry served no function apart from enriching its members and ducking blame.

Officially, there were four subministries, each with a different field of responsibility – and credited with magic powers related to the element. The Ministry of Flame had control over law enforcement and, supposedly, the sun; the Ministry of Earth over planning, and record keeping (and credited with ensuring good harvests); the Ministry of Water over the city's water and sewerage systems (and the moon and rain), while finally the Ministry of Air justified supervision of trade through dominion over winds.

There was an additional ministry, the Ministry of Purity, briefly formed in the years after Shiro's defeat. Initially focused on cleansing the last remnants of the Afflicted, the Ministry of Purity afterwards turned on other perceived threats to Cantha, including the vassal states and the tengu.

While initially contained by more moderate forces, it was not destroyed and likely influenced Usoku's later policies.

A third, less official element of Canthan politics was organised crime. Through violence and Ministry corruption, criminal gangs had effective control over much of the city's economy and populace. Two in particular stood out, the Am Fah and the Jade Brotherhood – the former mainly recruiting from the poor and destitute and revelling in its origins, while the latter affected a more aristocratic air. These were powerful enough that imperial agents had to adopt a strategy of balancing them against one another (even after it was revealed that the Am Fah were worshipping and deliberately spreading the Affliction) to prevent either from growing strong enough to topple the emperor. Both organisations were significantly weakened in the rise and fall of the Ministry of Purity, possibly allowing them to be brought to heel afterwards.

Culture

The heart of Canthan worship was at Tahnnakai Temple – although after Kaineng's explosive growth, the temple became unglamorously nestled among the foundations and sewers of the overgrown city. In addition to shrines of the five gods, the Temple housed the spirits of eight Canthan heroes – one representative of each of the heroic professions then known in Cantha.

After the Exodus, it became tradition for Canthan emperors to Ascend through the trial of becoming Weh no Su ("Closer to the Stars"). This trial required defeating reflections of four celestial creatures, taking the form of the dragon, turtle dragon, kirin and phoenix. Each represented a figure from a tragic event in Cantha's past – some heroes, some object lessons, but victims all. As well as imperial heirs, these trials were available to citizens and visitors who proved themselves worthy to the Oracle of the Mists.

Another set of celestials were honoured during the celebrations for the Canthan New Year. Twelve figures from Canthan history were honoured by the gods through making them into constellations, and each year is dedicated to one of these figures in turn, for whom a five-course feast is prepared at Shing Jea Monastery. Since the dragon was included in both sets, this brings the total number of celestials to fifteen. Additionally, fireworks were used to scare off creatures called Nian, preventing them from stealing the year's good luck.

Another festival of note was the Dragon Festival, which commemorated a Canthan legend in which a celestial dragon promises that Cantha would recover from the Jade Wind.

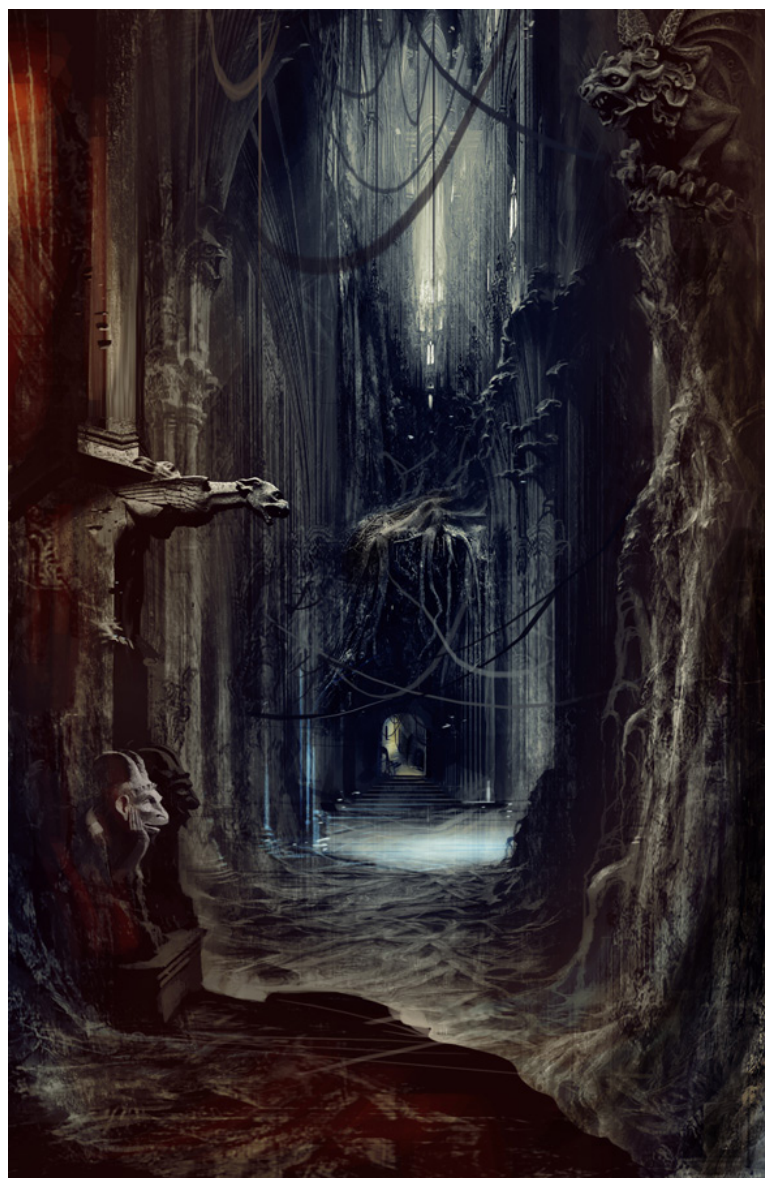
THE KURZICK GREAT HOUSES

Geography

The home of the Kuzicks was the Echovald Forest, once a vast woodland covering much of central Cantha, transformed by the Jade Wind into a forest of petrified trees. While green meadows showed the land remained fertile when not shaded by the massive stone trees, the agricultural capacity of the land remained a shadow of what it had once been, requiring the Kurzicks to fight with the Luxons for the resources needed to survive. Some evidence indicated that the forest had begun to recover after Shiro's second defeat, however, so it is possible that it has returned to what it once was.

Politics and Culture

Deeply religious, the Kurzicks were divided among five Great Houses, each devoted to one of the five gods and adopting a role consistent with the interests of that god. House Durham, sworn to Grenth, kept history and maintained a tradition of poetry and playwriting; house Lutgardis, devoted to Melandru, employed music as part of their responsibility to maintain the forest, and house Brauer, dedicated to Lyssa, fostered the visual arts. The most powerful houses are the militaristic house Vasburg, following the path of Balthazar, and the Dwaynan house, zu Heltzer, which focused on philosophy and medicine. While these two were rivals, the greater political acumen of House zu Heltzer ensured its pre-eminent position among the houses. Like the Canthans, the Kurzicks venerate ancestral heroes as well as the gods, each house regarding their most honoured ancestor as a patron saint.



THE LUXON CLANS

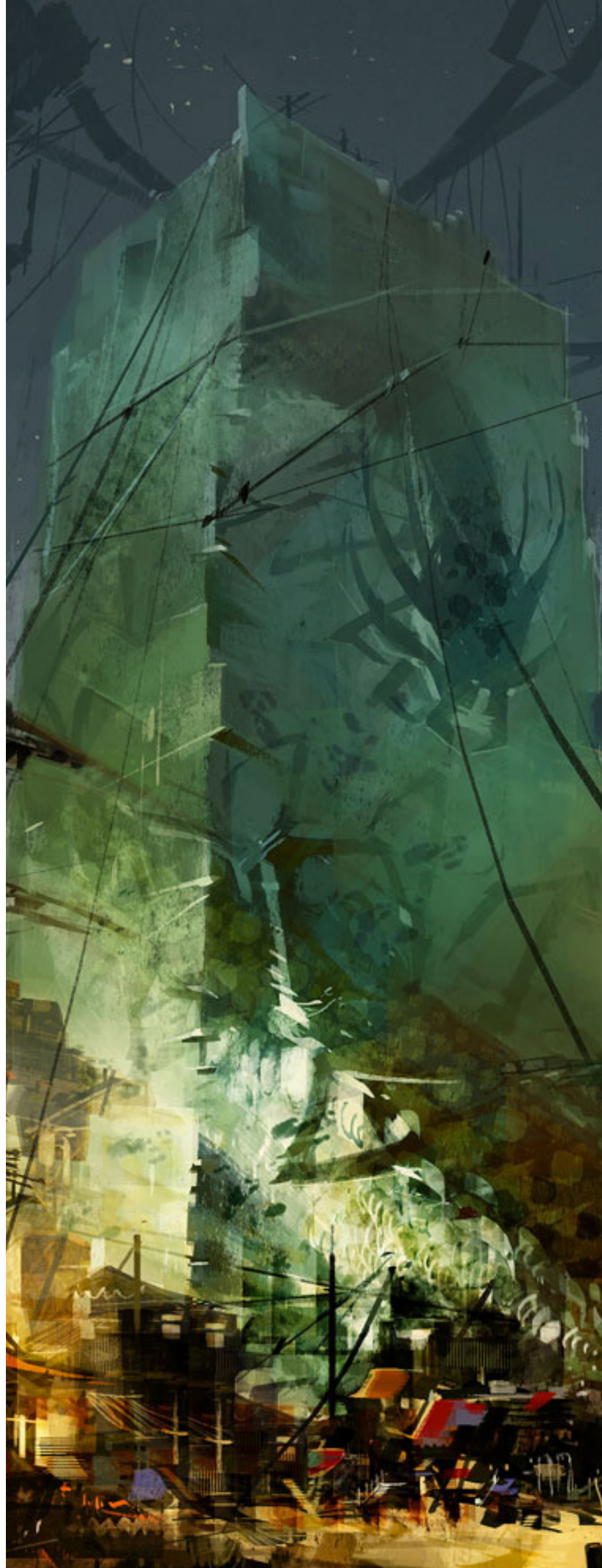
Geography

Originally a seafaring people, the homeland of the Luxons were the islands of the inland Jade Sea. The Jade Wind solidified this into a wasteland of actual jade inhabited by magical walking fish, stranding the Luxon fleet. In response, the Luxons found alternate means than ships to sustain a nomadic lifestyle, taming giant turtles and crabs to carry their homes and constructing magical vehicles capable of travelling using wind or mechanical legs. Having lost the bounty and trade of the ocean, the Luxons took to mining particularly magically potent regions of the Jade Sea for jadeite... and raiding Kurzick settlements. Like the Echovald Sea, rumours from the late 1070s suggest that the Jade Sea may have started to recover.

Politics and Culture

The Luxons organised themselves into three clans – the Crab, the Serpent, and the Turtle. To mediate disputes between the clans, a council of elders met annually at an event called the Convocation to set codes of behaviour for the clans to hold until the next. During this event, a gladiatorial contest was held between the champions of each of the clans – the purpose of the contest was to determine without permanent deaths (in a time when resurrection magic was more common than now) which of the clans was strongest. As a result, the winning clan likely received favourable terms until the next Convocation. While each clan was represented at the Convocation by its champions and elder, it was the Captain that provides the overall leadership of each clan.

Along with the gods, the Luxons worshipped three demigoddesses, named Alua, Elora, and Ione. Some historians have speculated that these might be the founders of the Luxon clans, making it another case of ancestor worship – however, the sources that led to this conclusion have been lost.



A TALE OF TWO EXPANSIONS

WRITTEN BY STARCONSPIRATOR



With Heart of Thorns, the first Guild Wars 2 expansion, revealed, it is quite natural to look toward previous ArenaNet expansions for comparison. Released in 2006, the first Guild Wars expansion, Guild Wars Factions, opened the land of Cantha to the population of Tyria, allowing for exploration of new maps and the acquisition of new skills. As a stand alone game, it brought with it a unique storyline and two new professions: the assassin and ritualist. Players who purchased Guild Wars Factions could create Canthan characters and play through the new storyline, expanding their worlds to the Guild Wars Prophecies story once they reached Kaineng City. Those who chose to move Prophecies characters to the Canthan storyline could do so upon reaching Lion's Arch. In this way, the expansion was cobbled together with the previous world.

Heart of Thorns, given the Living World motif, grows more organically from the Living World of Tyria. As the content must tie in with what has gone before and cannot be egregiously out of sync, it highlights the commendable attention to story progression and character growth that ArenaNet has been focused on, even though there may be fewer new maps and only one new profession. Because of the organic growth, Heart of Thorns' new content may be seen as limited in comparison to that introduced by Guild Wars Factions. However, what is being introduced is likely to improve the game immensely. Heart of Thorns will introduce the Mastery and specialization

systems; a way to continue character improvement beyond max level. It is an interesting way to branch out into new builds, skills, and weapon sets, and is reminiscent in some respects to Ascension – where characters in the original Guild Wars could choose a different secondary profession. The Mastery system will allow level 80 characters to earn (and later spend) points in order to unlock account bound abilities. Making them account bound removes the grind of leveling, as a player will only have to buy each ability once. As they begin accumulating at level 80, this system should revitalize max-level characters and provide players new content without simply increasing the level cap. Through the specialization system, characters will be able to use different weapons and learn new skills as they expand upon their original profession; for example, rangers can become druids.

As previously mentioned, Guild Wars Factions involved the creation of two new classes unique to Canthan lore - the assassin and the ritualist. Because Guild Wars Factions was a traditional expansion - a stand-alone game that did not require ownership of the original Guild Wars Prophecies game - the skills and weapons used by these professions, along with their armor and weapons, were easily incorporated into the Canthan world. Players who wished to start one of the new professions were required to begin in Shing Jea. Heart of Thorns' new profession, the revenant, must grow out of the living story. Details regarding the creation of the class are

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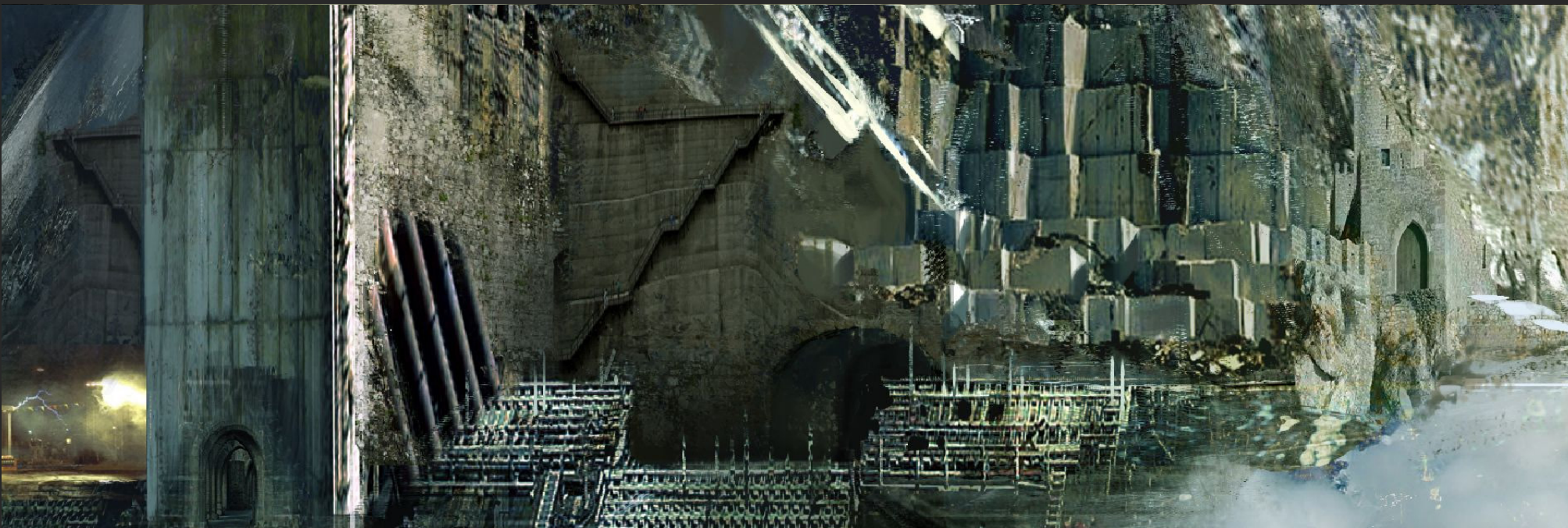
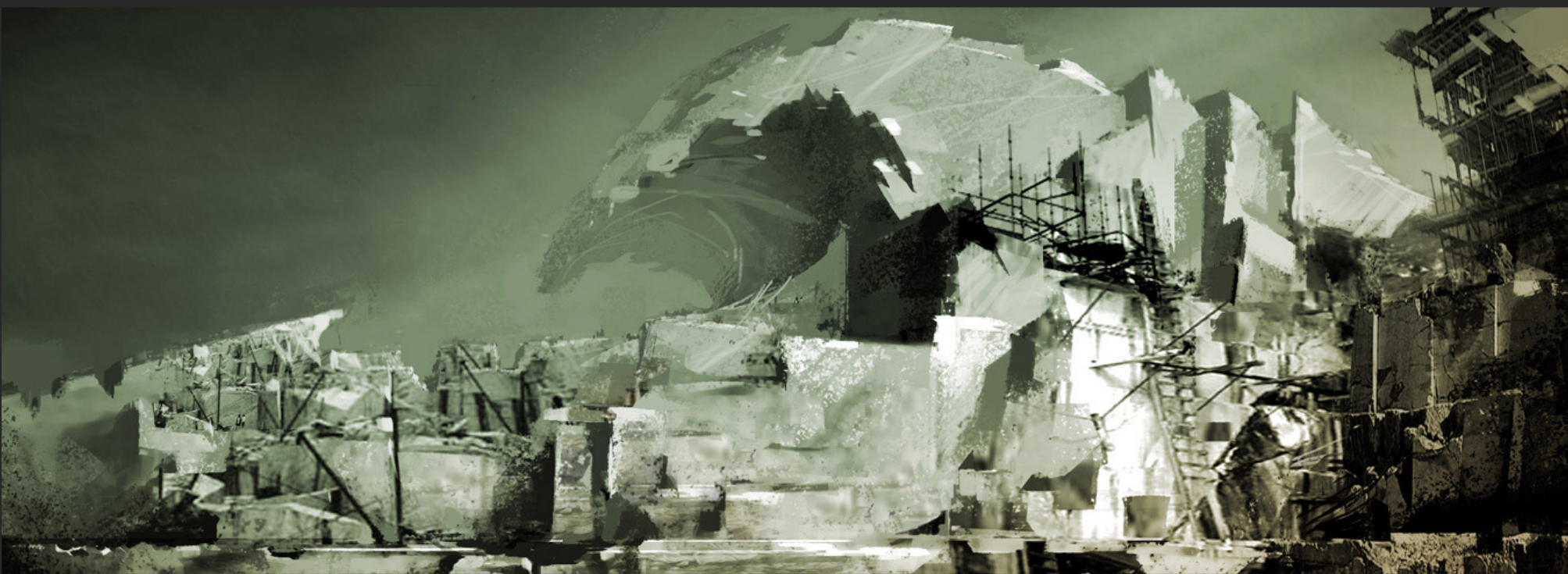
entwined with the story of Rytlock, the charr tribune who disappeared into the Mists. This creates a quandary over how to introduce a new profession that never existed in past story steps. Will there be a new personal story for revenant characters? Will it be possible - or impossible - to power-level them? Arenanet has stated that people who begin a revenant will be on equal footing regardless of whether or not they are new to the game or veteran players. If done correctly, the introduction of the revenant profession may provide a unique experience for players and provide an example of the myriad possibilities found in the melding of game design and storytelling.

Additionally, when Guild Wars Factions launched, it brought four new maps for players to explore: the tumble-down warren of Kaineng City, Echovald Forest's stone trees, the frozen surf of the Jade Sea, along with the tutorial island Shing Jea. New characters in the Guild Wars Faction campaign began in Shing Jea as initiates in a monastery. For experienced Tyrians, the initial hand-holding instance was skippable, although characters still had to progress through the Island's stories and learn of the horrors taking place on the mainland. Heart of Thorns will expand upon the Maguuma jungle, opening three levels: the Canopy, Core, and Roots. Although only one distinct region, ArenaNet has stated that it will be one of the most expansive areas in Guild Wars 2.

In addition to this new PvE area, Heart of Thorns will bring a new WvW Borderlands map, featuring element-themed keeps

and a new PvP mode patterned after the original Guild vs. Guild play - introducing strongholds and allowing the hiring of heroes and armies. In order to facilitate this Guild vs. Guild mode, Heart of Thorns will bring with it the guild halls that many in the community have been longing for. While these are important improvements to the second game, the new PvP modes introduced with Guild Wars Factions took better advantage of the new world and unique storyline. Of these, the Alliance Battles held the most sway over the world of Cantha. During an Alliance Battle, teams of twelve people, supporting either the Kurzick or Luxon faction, battled for dominance. As teams won various battles, the area of Kurzick and Luxon influence shifted. This, in turn, affected the PvE experience in those areas, limiting services and Resurrection Shrine usage. Through the Alliance Battles, guilds could also claim ownership of the various outposts in the Echovald Forest and the Jade Sea. Because growth within Guild Wars 2 requires synchronization to the Living World, only time will tell if something similar to the Luxon and Kurzick factions will return in the future.

Given the fundamental difference between the two expansions, Guild Wars Factions being a stand-alone new story, and Heart of Thorns being a continuation of a story already solidly anchored to Tyria, comparisons between the two expansions must be done with care - not to suggest that either one is "better" than the other. Although they were fundamentally different, the previous expansions each hold a special place in the history of the game.



FIGHTING DRAGONS WITH DRAGONS

WRITTEN BY DRAXYNNIC

Making the case for a Priory expedition to Cantha



With the fall of Zhaitan, a new opportunity has arisen that, sadly, has not yet been taken up by the Durmand Priory or the Pact. I speak, of course, of re-establishing contact with Cantha.

While the isolationist policies of Usoku have led the Empire of the Dragon (referring to the relatively mundane native dragons of Cantha rather than the Elder Dragons – see my previous research summary for more information) to expel nonhumans and limit access to foreigners, trade continued between Cantha and Kryta until the raising of Orr and Zhaitan's stranglehold on the seas around the peninsula blocked this route. In fact, students of Lion's Arch history of the period will note that Cobiah Marriner, founder of the modern Lion's Arch, was part of a mission to investigate a possible threat to this trade when Orr rose.

With the death of Zhaitan, it is possible that a route to Cantha may be open. The rise of the deep sea dragon means that a conventional sea voyage may still be impractical – however, a properly stocked airship may be able to float over the deep sea dragon's notice and survive the trip.

As scholars of the Durmand Priory, many of my esteemed readers will be familiar with at least the basics of Canthan history and government, but for those who are not, I have prepared a brief primer:

CANTHA IN A NUTSHELL

Founded long before humans expanded from Orr into Elona or northern Tyria, the empire of Cantha is a conglomerate of three distinct cultures – the Canthan majority, which historically has mostly been confined to the northwestern shore and the nearby islands; the Kurzicks of the Echovald Forest, and the Luxons, once a seafaring society out of the inland Jade Sea, and reduced to a lifestyle of raiding and jade mining after the sea was frozen by the Jade Wind. As well as reverence to the Six Gods, all three share a deep reverence for their ancestors, with particularly important figures being revered as saints and demigods themselves. Examples

include the founders of the five Kurzick Houses and the three dominant Luxon clans, as well as numerous Canthan heroes, while the practitioners of the ancient ritualist tradition serve as mediums not only with these significant figures, but with the lesser ancestor spirits of individual households – invoking

the blessings of benign spirits while exorcising those with ill intent towards the living.

While formally part of the Empire, the Luxons and Kurzicks have always been fractious vassals, eager to fight among themselves as well as to assert their independence. After the unification of the continent into the empire, the formative event of Cantha in recent history was the Jade Wind, a magical death wail of the betrayer Shiro who slew the Emperor Angsiyan. This transformed the inland sea of the Luxons to jade and petrified the Echovald Forest, forcing much of the population to concentrate in the city of Kaineng on the northwest coast – this influx caused Kaineng to explode in population faster than its infrastructure or building industry could cope, resulting in a city of slums hastily erected in order to shelter too many people in too little space.

These conditions provided ripe ground for criminal gangs to seize control of much of the city, leading to a perpetual gang war barely kept in check by overt and hidden security forces. Meanwhile, the Luxons and Kurzicks that remained in their ancestral lands found that the petrification left them unable to fully support even what population that remained, and tensions between the two soon erupted into an all-out war over resources.

A brief truce formed in 1072AE allowed the three nations to work together against the return of Shiro and his Afflicted plague, but this was not to last. Soon afterwards, the Kurzicks and Luxons fell back to fighting one another, while in Cantha

the effect was more insidious. A vigilante organisation initially formed to purge the last remnants of the plague, the “Ministry of Purity” then turned towards all other perceived threats, including Luxons, Kurzicks, nonhumans, and Kaineng’s out of control criminal gangs. While the Ministry of Purity was initially defeated by more

moderate forces, their ideology survived to influence Usoku, the heir to the throne – and upon his inheritance, Usoku raised an army to reconquer the Luxons and Kurzicks and to purge nonhumans, including the tengu that would go on to settle the Dominion of Winds, from his lands.

Little information is known about Canthan political developments since – prior to Usoku’s ascension, however, the Canthan government was split between a hereditary monarch and a ministry. Unlike the Krytan ministry, the Canthan ministry did not serve to represent the people but served a bureaucratic function, theoretically performing those government functions that the emperor and his direct representatives could not take the time to attend to personally. Visitors’ accounts, however, report widespread corruption, nepotism, and incompetence, and report that in practise the Ministry served no useful function apart from enriching its members and shifting the blame for its failings.

So, with all this in mind, what are the reasons why the Pact in general and the Priory in particular might want to go to the effort of an expedition to Cantha?

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THE KURZICKS AND LUXONS FELL BACK TO FIGHTING ONE ANOTHER, WHILE IN CANTHA THE EFFECT WAS MORE INSIDIOUS





POSSIBLE REINFORCEMENTS

The most obvious motive for seeking to re-establish contact with Cantha is the possibility of being able to form a cooperative defence strategy with the Empire of the Dragon. While the Cantha we last knew would be unlikely to make a good ally, multiple shifts in imperial policy have been recorded in Canthan history, and modern Cantha might be open towards such an arrangement – possibly enticed by the opportunity to help ensure the restoration of the ancient holy places of Orr. Of course, we should make sure that the price of any such arrangement is one we are willing to pay.

ANCIENT CULTURES

With the possible exception of Orr itself, Cantha is the oldest known place of human habitation. Because of this, it is possible that Canthan histories may contain hints of human origins that are not available on Tyria. More tantalising still are hints of even older cultures – historical accounts contain descriptions of ruins that predate human arrival on the continent, and speculate that Kurzick civilisation and traditions might have formed before they arrived in the Echovald. Who knows what secrets of the past might await a diligent seeker of lore on that ancient continent?



REDISCOVERY OF OLD MAGICS

Despite the Priory's efforts to recover and conserve important books and documents from the flooding of Lion's Arch, much practical knowledge was lost through the drowning of teachers of foreign magic. While some vestiges of the teachings of ritualists and assassins remain in modern adventuring professions such as the guardian and thief respectively, the more advanced magics employed in these Canthan traditions have been lost.

If Canthan trainers could be persuaded to take Tyrian students, perhaps these techniques can be recovered. Similarly, if the method of their creation has survived the subjugation of the Kurzicks by Uzoku, the process for creating Juggernauts – infusing human souls into plant-like creatures that are immortal for as long as the tree they are bound to lives – may prove valuable in the fight against the dragons should any be willing to make that sacrifice. Assuming, of course, such beings are not made vulnerable to Mordremoth in the process. Meanwhile, stories of the Luxons speak of giant crabs and turtles as well as mechanical vehicles that they employed in their nomadic life on the Jade Sea – if these marvels can be acquired by the Priory, they may prove to be useful additions to the Pact's inventory.

FRIENDLY DRAGONS

While many were driven mad by the Jade Wind, most of the dragons recorded in history to have friendly dispositions towards civilised humanoids have called Cantha home. Some years ago, I speculated that this may be caused by the presence, now or in the past, of a benign Elder Dragon, similar to the future Magister Stonehealer predicted for Glint had she not been slain by Kralkatorrik. Even if this is not true, an increasing number of scholars have been growing concerned in the past year that the death of Zhaitan has put the world's magic out of balance, and that slaying additional Elder Dragons without an alternative location for the magic to go would be unwise – the dragons of Cantha might be able to serve as such a receptacle. If they lack the magic-absorbing properties of their local namesakes, they may still be valuable allies and sources of knowledge.

POSSIBLE MORDREM CONNECTIONS

Botanical studies of Cantha describe a variety of aggressive, self-mobile flora with more animal-like characteristics than the aggressive flora known on Tyria or Elona prior to the appearance of the sylvari and the mordrem after that. This might be evidence of Mordremoth having influence on Cantha during a previous cycle – in which case, thorough investigation may reveal information useful for the fight against Mordremoth.

With all these considerations in mind, I hope you will agree that the potential benefits of an expedition to Cantha could outweigh the risks and costs associated with such an expedition.

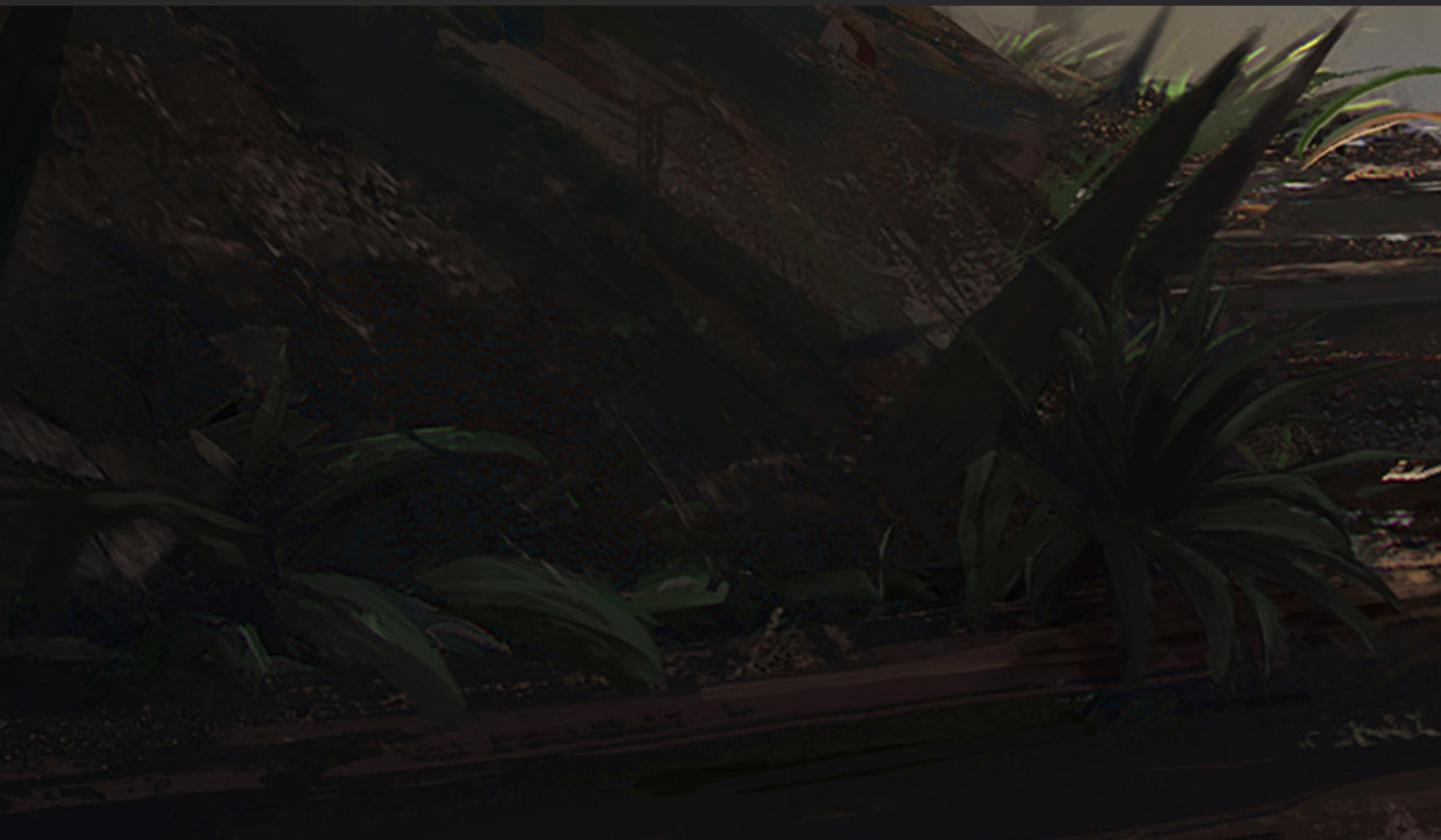
Yours,
Scholar Eleanor Draxynnus



RECAP

LIVING STORY RECAP: POINT OF NO RETURN

WRITTEN BY STARCONSPIRATOR



Point of No Return, the final chapter of season two, held a great deal of promise. Previous chapters had set a number of plots in motion; we knew that the culmination of Caithe's personal story lay sealed within a Forgotten cave, Mordremoth's forces were advancing across the Silverwastes toward Camp Resolve, and Rytlock was missing. Given that it was the final chapter of the season, many in the community were expecting great things and the revelations unearthed in this chapter were extraordinary, even if some questions remained unanswered at its conclusion.

The episode begins with a missive to return to the special collections library in the Durmand Priory. Sous Chef Seimer Oxbone has returned to the kitchen and will gladly provide you with a bloodstone dust pot pie if you ask. As it turns out, there are no culinary applications for bloodstone dust. However, if you eat the pie and then continue with the story instance, you will unlock one of the story step achievements at the end. This is one of the more clever achievements, in my opinion, as the possibility exists for a player to stumble upon it accidentally, simply because they ... like bloodstone dust-based food. For those who attempt this achievement, the detrimental healing effect is removed upon completion of the instance and you are rewarded with a metabolic primer.

Within the special collections once again, the player undertakes a small number of fetch quests in order to open the sealed tome (or would that be tomb?) of Turai Ossa. From a lore perspective, the artifacts and books in the collection are less intriguing this time around, only giving general descriptions instead of snippets of text. However, The fetch quests are not onerous and Ogden Stonehealer will provide hints if you need them. The dwarf believes that the Divine Fire, first seen in Guild Wars' Ascension quests, will unseal the Mystery Cave and grant access to Caithe's final memory. Once again, the Priory's special collection brings nostalgia to players of the original game, this time in an echoed ascension ritual, which scales well to the party's size. The related achievement will require a player to complete all three phases of the ritual in under eight minutes – perhaps not doable solo.



Fetch quests for the Priory

While searching, take note of the mirror and return at the end of the instance, before giving the Divine Fire to Jory, in order to unlock another achievement, the doppelganger fight – another echo from the original Ascension quests. Unlike the original guild wars doppelganger, it is not a perfect copy of your character. For example, when faced with my axe/warhorn, shortbow ranger, it used a longbow.

This story instance is solid all around save for some of Ogden's quirky dialogue – Ogden's insistence that there will be no Ascension, as if the developers at ArenaNet were listening to the fanbase - and the illogical passing of the Divine Fire torch to Jory for transport to the Mystery Cave. The only aspect of this nostalgic step that disappointed was the lack of actual Forgotten enemies.

After passing the torch to Jory, you receive another letter urging you to join Destiny's Edge and the Pact at the front. In hindsight, passing the torch to Jory belongs after you receive this note, rather than before. This could be a simple oversight or it could be a quirk of the programming. Next, travel to Camp Resolve in the Maguuma Wastes and meet up with Destiny's Edge to continue the story, which contains a brief, somehow lackluster "Oh by the way, this is my son," family bonding moment with Eir and Braham, along with dialogue that bringing Destiny's Edge up to speed regarding Glint's egg and Caithe's behavior.

The reunion is interrupted by a sustained, multi-stage attack from the Mordrem. Most of the stages are time-gated and you are scripted to lose. However, there are two attacks in the middle of the battle where you must perform specific tasks – killing specific enemies and then releasing pact soldiers from vine chambers – before they will end. The final stage is a mix of both, being time-gated until the signal flare becomes available. Once the flare is unlocked, the attack will continue until the signal fire is lit and an airstrike called in.



The battle for Camp Resolve

While sustaining the Mordrem assault by ignoring or being unaware of the steps necessary to end each stage may appeal to some, the battle intensifies with each attack. These battles feel well-scaled to party size, and anyone familiar with the battles of the Silverwastes should be well-prepared for them. As each wave intensifies, the assault provides players with a satisfying battle, balancing feelings of frustration and desperation with determination and focus.

Afterward, Trahearne informs you that the Pact will assault Mordremoth as soon as everything is ready, despite your absence. Confidently, you continue toward the Forgotten cave, where Jory is waiting with the Divine Fire. However, if the skritt tunnels are blocked due to the timers at work in the Silverwastes, your continuation of the story will require unblocking them. Although this is an organic incorporation of the living world and its timed events, which is very admirable, it can be frustrating and potentially progress-blocking if the tunnels do not open or the bandit event near Picatoon

Scratch bugs and does not begin.

The skritt tunnels will take you to charnel grounds in the far Silverwastes. To begin the final step, you must use the Divine Fire to open the sealed Forgotten cave, which is a simple matter of interacting with the wall, while your party holds off a small group of Mordrem. Through this battle, it becomes obvious that the Divine Fire has an exploitable effect on Mordrem, although its cause remains unexplained. The foray into the cave is direct and, given the darkness, probably a bit more visually stunning if you have luminescent armor. Beyond the tunnel, the cave opens onto an awe-inspiring, golden chamber, which later becomes the arena for the final fight against the Shadow of the Dragon. The ruins here hint at those seen in the Heart of Thorns trailers.

After witnessing the last of Caithe's memories, Caithe returns for a brief word before disappearing once again; a very unsatisfying set of circumstances. However, her disappearance triggers the final fight against the Shadow of the Dragon. This fight follows a predictable pattern: Mordrem must be attacked in order to weaken the dragon and its invulnerability must then be removed indirectly with the divine fire before it can be attacked directly. There are two rounds to this battle with the second being made more difficult by enemies who attempt to extinguish the Divine Fire as you work to remove the dragon's invulnerability. If the pattern is unknown or your build and skills are less than optimum, the second round in particular may prove to be frustrating. Once the dragon has been defeated, you rush in for a killing blow. It is only slightly disappointing that the "finish 'em" animation does not include a custom finisher. Screenshots of the Shadow of the Dragon succumbing to snowglobes, bunny banners, dragon fireworks, or llamas would have been priceless.



Caithe confronting Wynne

Yet, the revelation regarding the true nature of the sylvari found in Caithe's final memory proves to be worth the journey that players have undertaken in this season of the living story. Under threat of torture by Faolain, Wynne reveals that the sylvari are agents of Mordremoth, meant to serve him. In a bid to keep Faolain from learning of this, Caithe kills Wynne and then lies to Faolain, saying no secret was revealed. This revelation and the boss fight may leave players reeling as they exit the cave only to be greeted by yet another cut scene: the artistic storyboard rendering of the Pact's ill-fated attack on Mordremoth. The jungle comes alive, destroying the airships, leaving Destiny's Edge, Trahearne, and the Pact helpless against the onslaught. With the Pact fleet in ruins, Destiny's Edge lost to the jungle and Caithe, Glint's Egg, and even Rytlock still missing, the next chapter of the story, the Heart of Thorns expansion, has a great deal of storytelling to do.



WRITTEN BY AARON HEATH

A SHATTERED PACT

Sound was the first thing that penetrated the silent, unending pit of utter darkness that was Arcadia Steelfur's reality. She could hear a soft, rhythmic thrum all around her, punctuated by sharp cracking noises like twigs breaking underfoot. Wind? No, too warm, thought Arcadia dully, and no breeze.

Fire! At this sudden realization, her eyes snapped open. She was lying on her back in the middle of a small clearing in what looked like a forest, but was unlike any forest Arcadia had ever seen. The trees grew this way and that, crisscrossing and intertwining with one another. Thick, ropey vines hung from their branches, trailing down into an impenetrable undergrowth of multicolored and vibrant vegetation. The flames that had awoken her appeared to be emanating from burning piles of charred wood and twisted bits of metal. Are those airship parts?

As she continued to take in her surroundings, Arcadia finally realized where she must be. The Maguuma Jungle. But if I'm there, then- her thought trailed off as she realized what must have become of the Pact's assault on the elder dragon Mordremoth's inner sanctum. Involuntary tears welled in her eyes, and she blinked them back furiously as she tried not to think about what might have happened to her fellow warband members. Charr don't cry, Arcadia, get it together! They can take care of themselves. Right now, you need to focus on getting yourself out of this mess!

As that thought crossed her mind, she realized she was unable to move. Looking down at her prone form, still clad in her Vigil uniform, she could see that she was trapped beneath an enormous pile of airship wreckage and smoldering vegetation. She struggled feebly to extricate herself from the oppressive mass, but her efforts met with little success. She slumped back in defeat, her long horns digging into the soft earth as she stared up into the impenetrable blackness of the jungle canopy.

What was that? Her four ears twitched as her heightened sense of hearing picked up the sound of multiple high-pitched voices drawing near. Lying still, Arcadia listened warily.

"The plan failed, Flune!" said a shrill, insistent voice; it sounded male, "The fleet is in ruins, Trahearne and Destiny's Edge, well, the members of Destiny's Edge that bothered to come along at any rate, are missing, presumed dead, and the likelihood that anyone else survived this mess is minimal at best! We need to evacuate the area, now!"

"We survived, didn't we?" Countered a new voice, female this time, her tone sharp, "I don't suppose you factored that statistic into your calculations, Mister 'dragon magic analyst expert.' If there are survivors, Drixx, we have to stay and look for them. It's our duty to the Pact."

"It's 'savant in applied magical analysis,' thank you very much. Not that you'd care, Miss 'glorified tree historian.'"

"For your information, the Priory considers me their senior-most authority on the Maguuma Jungle, which makes me imperative to this effort."

"Well thank the alchemy we had you with us, or else we would have really been in trouble. Oh wait..."

"I don't have time for your foolish antics, Drixx. I'm going to search the area for survivors and help anyone I can. I'll be sure to report your desertion when I regroup with what remains of our allies."

"I see no reason for that type of behavior. I –"

"Would you two stop squabbling like a pair hornless cubs and get me out of here?" Arcadia asked loudly, cutting off the conversation. She still could not see where the voices were coming from, but they were clearly with the Pact and at least one of them sounded like they would be willing to help.

"Who said that? Where are you?" shouted the female voice, clearly caught off guard by the sudden interruption.

"I'm in the clearing, underneath all this junk!" Arcadia shouted back, wincing at the effort.

Arcadia heard the muffled shuffle of hurried footsteps from somewhere behind her, and after a few seconds, two squat figures appeared through the gloom. Arcadia had assumed they were asura, and their large, floppy ears, disproportionate heads, and unusually short stature confirmed her suspicions immediately. Catching sight of her torn and soiled Vigil garments, they hurried over and knelt by Arcadia's side.

"Alright, let's get you out of here," said the female asura, whose bright pink hair shone merrily in the dull firelight, "Drixx, we need to displace the debris impeding this charr's mobility. Would you mind doing the honors?"

"Um, ah, yes, of course, stand back, Flune," said Drixx, flushing

slightly. Brandishing a short staff with an odd, rectangular mechanism whirring at its tip, he pointed it at the immense heap of wreckage and waved it once. A powerful gust of wind emanated from the staff, causing Drixx's dark hair to stand on end and sending both the debris and Arcadia flying across the clearing into a nearby clump of vegetation.

"Drixx, you dolt!" Flune shouted angrily, "look what you've done now! We're trying to rescue survivors, not kill them!"

Drixx rolled his eyes as he retorted, "Relax, she'll be fine. The charr are very durable specimens. You should see what kind of punishment they can take in the lab."

At that moment, Arcadia staggered out of the trees, brushing leaves off her fur and looking disgruntled.

"You could have been more diplomatic about it," she said huffily, "but thanks. I'm Arcadia Steelfur, Vigil Engineer and Pact Airship Technician. I'm from the Firefang, though I doubt it's any more than a smoking heap of garbage at this point. I don't remember much, one minute I'm in the engine room making sure everything's ship shape, the next I'm waking up down here beneath a pile rubble. Do either of you know what happened?"

Flune walked over to Arcadia and shook her outstretched paw, wincing as she made contact with Arcadia's razor sharp claws.

"I'm Flune, and this bumbling idiot is Drixx. We're both with the Durmand Priory. We were aboard the Raithwurm when it happened. We had been bombarding the jungle with everything we had for several minutes, when enormous vines shot out of nowhere and made lab fodder out of our ships! The fleet didn't stand a chance. Drixx and I have been searching for survivors, but you're the only one we've encountered thus far."

Arcadia frowned and looked at the jungle floor, a pit of worry growing in her chest. Looking up at Flune, she said, "Vines, eh? If it weren't some Durmand Priory know-it-all telling me, I wouldn't believe it. I didn't think they made bigger vines than the ones back in the Silverwastes. My warband were all stationed aboard the Firefang, and finding them is my first priority. Thanks for the save, but it looks like this is where we go our separate ways."

"You want to go deeper into that deathtrap of a jungle?" Drixx cried, almost incoherent with disbelief.

Arcadia looked at him with dislike and remarked flatly, "You wouldn't understand."

Turning her back on the two asura, she began her trek into the Maguuma Jungle. As Arcadia disappeared into the dense overgrowth, Flune bit her lip, looking first at the retreating charr, then at Drixx.

"You can't possibly be considering going with her..." Drixx asked incredulously.

Flune gave him a half smile, "She's going to need our help, Drixx. She'll die out there on her own. I'm going with her." Turning away from Drixx, she scuttled off after Arcadia.

"Are you insane?" Drixx cried after her, not bothering to hide the panic in his voice, "That's literally the home of an elder dragon! What you're doing is suicide! Are you listening to me?! Get back here now!"

Flune merely waved over her shoulder as she continued after Arcadia, not even bothering to look back. Irrate with indignation, Drixx stood alone in the clearing for several seconds before sighing and running after her.



COMMUNITY ART: THE LEGACY OF CANTHA

WRITTEN BY KENT BENSON

One of the best things about expansions, especially in the world of Guild Wars, is that they often take you to new places with entirely different cultures. Cantha boasts a massive urban civilization with many rural and nomadic sub-cultures. In the north lies Kaineng City, the heart of the Canthan Empire. To the south are the Echovald Forest and the Jade Sea, home of the Kurzicks and Luxons, who, in recent times, have been absorbed into the main empire. Shing Jea Island and other portions of mainland Cantha were originally home to the tengu, who fled to Tyria due to the Dragon Empire's growing xenophobic nature. Today, it's likely that the tengu still honor some aspects of older Canthan culture along with their own in the Dominion of Winds.

Below are my brief thoughts on four pieces of art from the Guild Wars community that either depict or pay homage to Cantha's style, scenery, and culture.

"ECHOVALD FOREST" BY VASBURG

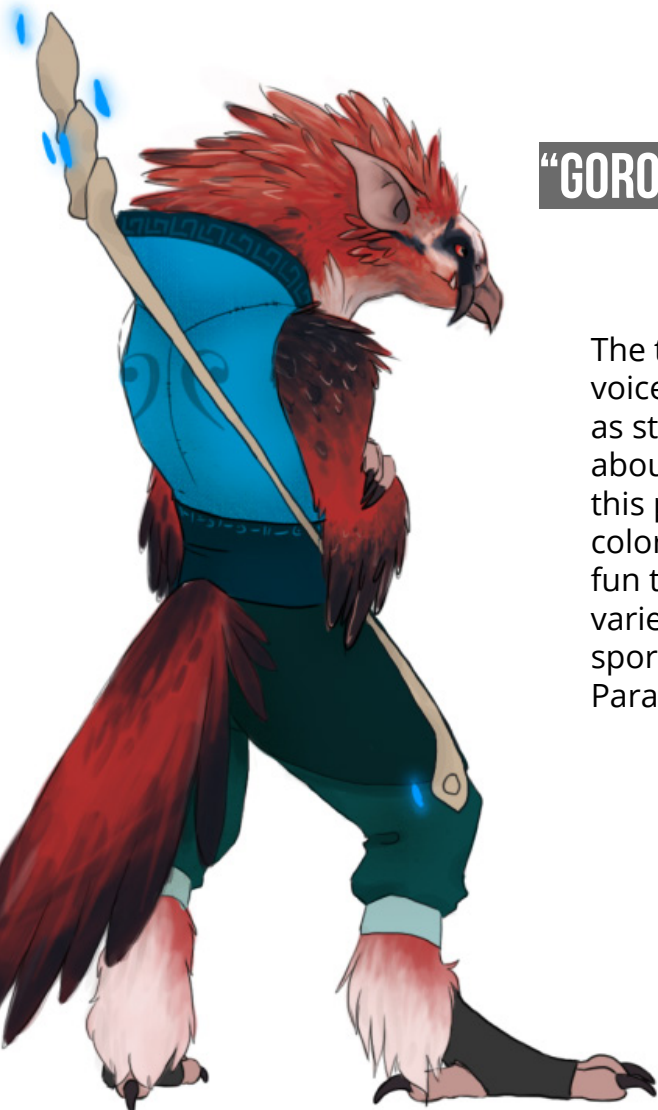


A single splendor among the many of Guild Wars: Factions was the eerie yet beautiful aftermath of Shiro Tagachi's death and the events of the Jade Wind. Along the shore of the Jade Sea runs the Echovald Forest, home of the Kurzicks. The region is a bleak mash-up of Gothic petrified tree sculpture, architecture and the slow but subtle reclaiming of the land by nature. This piece exhibits all of the characteristics that make Echovald and its people what they are. The sharp contrast between the faded shadows; the glowing light from the buildings; the occasional sunbeams that break through the stone canopy; and the elaborately dressed Kurzick figures cast a vision of a land living and thriving in almost perpetual darkness.

“HELMET BREAKER” BY CHANGINGHAND



Armor and clothing designs often play a big part of character identity in many games, especially RPGs. What started as a self-portrait of the artist eventually grew into a full-fledged illustration. The armor is Cantha-influenced, as can be seen in the samurai-esque helmet, plate paneling, as well as some of the armor's more subtle, ornamental features (note the dragon's head on the belt). One thing is for certain: this character is ready for battle. It brings me back to the same battle cries that St. Victor and Archemorus made before dueling Shiro Tagachi in the Factions cinematic trailer.



“GOROU” BY LLIMUS

The tengu have been involved to varying degrees in the world of Guild Wars from voiceless antagonists to fleshed-out and powerful allies. Guild Wars 2 has used the tengu as story and setting props, often using them to introduce small tidbits of information about their race and hints at their possible involvement in the future. What I like about this piece is that it captures the tengu's potential, like the sylvari, to be a very vibrant and colorful race (I also have a love for guardians, at least, I think it's a guardian...). One of the fun things about sylvari character creation is that they have the largest amount of color variety for their skin, pattern, glow, and "hair". Like bird species in real life, the tengu could sport any number of colors and patterns. Red-ish vulture-headed tengu? Sure! Bird of Paradise tengu? Why not? Penguin tengu? Adorable.

“HIDE IN SHADOWS” BY: CLOAK & DAGGER



While the thief profession is not exclusively Canthan in conception, its roots lie with the old assassin profession from Guild Wars: Factions. The featured cosplayers really capture that assassin look with their choice of armor and weapon props. The black and red armor pieces re-conjure memories of fighting Am Fah in the streets of Kaineng City. Nostalgia aside, the intricate detail that went into creating these outfits truly bring these characters to life in all of their shadowy and stabby glory. Unlike in the game, however, I can look forward to not being ganked by these two thieves in the near future. Much appreciated.



THE AWAKENING

WRITTEN BY LADYLALA

Lin sighed, then adjusted so she could see her target better. He was an older man, standing in one of the many abandoned marketplaces scattered around Kaineng City. She felt as if she'd been waiting in the same spot for hours. Her target was restless as well; he shuffled around and glanced from side to side. His eyes were tired; she knew he was suffering from insomnia. She remained still and watched him. Suddenly, she felt a presence behind her. A gloved hand wrapped around her mouth and strong arms kept her in place.

"Don't move," the presence whispered. Lin was about to struggle when she recognized the voice. She turned her head, then wriggled away as the hands fell.

"What were you thinking, Katsu? I could have killed you!" she hissed back. Katsu grinned.

"No, you couldn't. I'm too fast for you." Before she could respond, he quickly added, "The other associates are on their way. I wanted to give you a heads up, and be here if it turned ugly."

Lin nodded. "Thanks. So now we wait."

They didn't have to wait long. A few minutes later, two men walked out of the shadows and into the dim light of the marketplace. They were garbed in loose, black clothes, but their muscles were still evident, rippling under the dark cloth. Lin's target turned to greet them.

"Do you have it?" the target asked the men.

"We do," one of them replied.

"It better be good."

One of the men pulled out a stack of papers from a bag around his shoulders. "Don't worry, it is. Is your loyalty still true?"

"More than you could ever imagine," the target replied as he took the papers. "I will use these well."

"Good," the other man replied. "The emperor is counting on you."

At that moment, Katsu shifted his weight from one leg to the other. As he did, a metal can by his feet rolled slightly, causing a scraping sound. The three men whirled around and stared at the small entrance to where Lin and Katsu were hiding. The target slowly walked over and peered through the darkness.

"When I say, start climbing," Katsu whispered to Lin. She squeezed his hand as an affirmative. The target walked closer, and started to reach out.

"Now!" Katsu cried, and Lin sprang into action. She jumped up and grabbed a wooden board nailed to the wall next to her, and used it as leverage to climb, grabbing more boards as she went. She could feel Katsu just below her, and heard the other men yelling after them. She knew from seeing the men's body types that they wouldn't try scaling the wall in such a dangerous fashion, but there were other ways to get to the rooftops. She climbed faster and faster, until she felt a breeze on her face. She sprang up the last few feet and emerged onto a shoddy rooftop. Katsu wasn't far behind.

"We didn't lose them for long," he told her breathlessly. "We've got to keep moving."

He took off running over the rooftops, jumping gracefully from one ramshackle building to another. Lin ran after him uncertainly, and loose tiles slid under her feet as she ran, sending shocks of terror through her. She blindly followed Katsu as he continued to race over the unfamiliar rooftops. She skidded to a halt next to him and looked up at him, puzzled.

"Why did you stop?" she asked, panting.

"I think we lost them. Besides, we can't go any further."

She was about to ask him why, but then she looked down. Twenty feet below them, a body of water slowly rippled. It stretched for what seemed like miles, and the only thing that broke the stillness was the occasional peak of a tower stretching above the water. Lin peered into the murky liquid, and saw the outline of stairs and bridges.

"I don't recognize this place. Where are we?" she asked Katsu.

"This, dear sister, is Kaineng Center. A couple of centuries ago, it was the capital of Cantha. People came here to trade, travel, and explore. But since the Great Flood... well, this happened. Didn't you pay attention to the Master's lessons?"

Lin shuffled her feet. "Not really. I found them boring," she admitted. Katsu laughed.

"Speaking of the Master, we need to get back. I'm sure he'll want to know what we've found." He reached under his tough leather armor and pulled out the stack of papers her target had received. Lin gasped.

"How did you—"

"I told you, I'm fast. Now let's get going."

They climbed down from the rooftop and started creeping through the remains of the city. Golden floors and rich brocades soon gave way to ramshackle buildings and makeshift bridges. They picked their way over and around the rivers and lakes dotting the cityscape. After a while, they descended into the sewers. The vast network of tunnels held a familiar darkness. The tunnels were once much larger, but the flood cut off more than half the network.

After traversing miles of dark, damp tunnels, the pair emerged from the sewers and stood in front of an iron door. Katsu knocked, and a small window opened up. Eyes peered at the two of them, then the window was shut. They heard the clicks of multiple locks, and the heavy door swung open.

"Welcome back," a gruff voice said. "You were gone so long we thought you were dead."

"Nice to hear you have faith in us," Lin retorted, gently pushing the man in front of her. He laughed, then embraced her. He was a tall, burly man with red tattoos running up and down his arms.

The two walked into a courtyard teeming with people. Families were huddled in corners, children ran amok, and lines of people stood waiting for food. The courtyard was surrounded by stone walls, stretching up towards the sky.

"Karna, where's the Master?" Katsu asked the man.

"Where he always is. You got something good?" Karna asked him.

Katsu smirked. "Definitely."

Lin and Katsu started climbing up a narrow staircase. Lin peered out of the small windows as she ascended. She could see the sprawling wilderness beyond the walls; she heard it was once a beautiful stretch of grass and hills; now it looked like a jungle. They were at the edge of the city, in what used to be a mighty keep. Now it was just a refugee camp.

Nearing the top, they walked along a hallway to a room with the door half-open. Katsu gently pushed the door fully open. An old man was sitting by the window, looking out onto the courtyard. He turned to see the siblings standing at the doorway, and smiled.

"Welcome back, young ones. Was your mission successful?"

"Master Cato, I bring good and bad news. Unfortunately, the mission did not go undetected. We were chased by the architect and his associates, but we got away. I did manage to get this." Katsu pulled the papers out and laid them in front of the old man. Master Cato picked them up and started to look through them.

"Very good, both of you. This will serve us well. We'll - have you seen this?" the old man suddenly said. They shook their heads. Master Cato spread out the papers on the floor, and the other two peered at them.

"They're plans for a ship," Lin said.

"And weapons," Katsu added.

Lin read the footnotes on a page. "No," she gasped. "Has the emperor gone mad?"

"He went mad many years ago, my dear," Master Cato said.

"They're planning on invading Tyria! How do we know there isn't still a dragon blocking the sea? And why try and conquer them when there used to be peace between the continents?"

"Because the Ministry is hungry for power. Cantha is nothing but a desolation of refugee camps and resistance fighters. They've given up on us, and they're moving on to something bigger and better," Katsu told her.

"But we have no idea what Tyria has done," Lin replied. "For all we know, they could have an army twice the size of the emperor's."

"I know. Which is why we have to stop them."

Suddenly, they heard screams emanating from the courtyard. The trio rushed and crouched down by the window to see people fleeing in different directions. Soldiers dressed in white slowly advanced through the entrance, cutting down anyone who stood in their path. They saw Karna gather a group of fighters and charge the Ministry soldiers.

"What are they doing here?" Lin hissed. She started to get up to go help, but Katsu grabbed her and pinned her down. "It's suicide. They want the plans. We have to sneak out of here with them. Master, any ideas?"

"A few," the old man replied.

As they watched the battle, they saw an elaborately garbed man step from the shadows into the middle of the courtyard. He raised his hands, and the fighting stopped. Everyone in the courtyard stood motionless.

"Master Cato," the man shouted, loud enough for the whole keep to hear. "You have something of mine. You think we forgot about you? You're slipping in your old age. Send that pretty girl down with the plans, and maybe I won't slaughter your little band of misfits."

Master Cato was about to reply when a rumble shook the keep. It started slowly, then intensified. The walls started shaking, and books fell off their shelves. Lin and Katsu clung to each other as the sound assaulted their ears. The rumbling turned into something more, something Lin couldn't identify at first. Then it clicked. It was something she had heard only once, when she was a child. She had stumbled upon a lion while wandering in the forest. She remembered it opening its mouth, and realized it was the same sound, only much, much louder. It was a roar.

"Master Cato," she shouted, "is this an earthquake?"

The old man looked at her and sadly shook his head. "No, my dear. It is something I had hoped you would never hear in your lifetime. It is a dragon."





HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: THE TENGU

WRITTEN BY KENT BENSON

Since their occupation of what was Sanctum Cay, the bird-like race has stowed itself behind the massive walls that border their realm. Today, the tengu refer to their land as the The Dominion of Winds. The walls had been built to keep their people safe, but also to keep the other races, their influences, and the other dangers of Tyria out. However, even after Zhaitan's death, the threat of the Elder Dragons remain. With the imminent rise of Mordremoth, many wonder how long the tengu will remain behind their walls in the face of a threat that could eventually consume the entire world.

HISTORY

In the distant past, long before the events of the Guild Wars and The Searing, the tengu were said to live all over the world. Their race is ancient, possibly even old enough to have seen the last days of the Elder Dragons before they went into their deep sleep.

The first historical mention of the tengu coincides, not surprisingly, with their first interactions with the early Canthan Empire. The effects of the Jade Wind had corrupted and transformed much of what was once more habitable land. This eco-disaster led mainland Canthans to look to Shing Jea Island for further colonization. The Sensali tengu, one of the two main tribes of Shing Jea tengu, did not take this well. Eventually, they were responsible for the slaughter of an entire human village. The other Shing Jea tribe, the Angchu, managed a somewhat stable peace with humanity, which put the two tengu tribes at odds with one another. However, further settlement by humans exposed the Angchu to illnesses

that killed many of their young, igniting a conflict that would eventually grow into what was known as the Tengu Wars.

The Tengu Wars raged for two centuries before Emperor Kisu and the tengu leadership sought an end to their conflict. The Emperor's half-brother, Master Togo, met with the tengu leaders at the estate of Minister Wona. There, the Minister betrayed both sides forcing Togo and the tengu named Talon Silverwing to fight against the Minister and his army of assassins. The Sensali broke from the negotiations, scorned by the Minister's betrayal. The Angchu, valuing Togo's bravery and honesty, chose to reach out to humanity once again.

“ LONG BEFORE THE EVENTS OF THE GUILD WARS AND THE SEARING, THE TENGU WERE SAID TO LIVE ALL OVER THE WORLD

Relations with the Angchu remained stable, even through the second rising of Shiro Tagachi and his Afflicted. Shortly after, the Ministry of Purity, riding the eradication of the Afflicted and the larger Canthan gangs, turned towards the non-human inhabitants of Cantha such as the dredge and tengu as their next targets. Fortunately, the Ministry of Purity's

Purity's corrupt leadership was exposed, but not before its ideals had influenced the hearts and minds of thousands.

In years to come, the future Emperor Usoku would unite all Canthan humans under one banner and drive the tengu from their homes. After the cataclysmic rising of Orr and the Great Tsunami, the Canthan tengu sailed north, cutting a swath through Zhaitan's seafaring monstrosities to reach Tyria's shores. From there they reached out to the Tyrian tengu tribes, the Caromi, the Avicara, and the Quetzal, and formed the Dominion of Winds.

CULTURE AND POLITICS

Today, not much is known of current day tengu politics and culture due to their isolated nature. Sometime during the construction of their realm, the old tengu clans formed four houses named after one of the four directional winds. Clans from then on continued to exist on a familial level. At some point, the tengu appointed or perhaps a tengu appointed his or herself as the Emperor that presides above the four houses. Unfortunately, how decisions within their "Empire" are ultimately decided is still a mystery.

Religion for current tengu is also an unknown. In the past, the Canthan tengu revered the Celestials and believed in an afterlife known as the "Sky Above the Sky." They were also a superstitious people that used physical charms and talismans to ward away evil; whether that still holds true is not known, though some in-game items/trinkets imply that they may.

As for tengu culture, many of the tengu within the Dominion of Winds speak Old Canthan and those who do not are scorned similarly to the outside races. Tengu societal values tend to focus on ideals like integrity, honor, family, history. The first two virtues are commonly heard in tengu NPC dialog. On a more individual level, tengu names are not entirely consistent. Some have Japanese-rooted first and last names, while others have a clan name for their surname and/or a first name that represents physical/non-physical racial attributes like "Soar" or "Talon."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

There has been little inclusion of the tengu in the game's overarching story. So far, tengu serve as a few merchants, guards, scouts, and a few rare map completion-related NPCs. Later on, amidst the chaos of Scarlet's invasion of Lion's Arch, the tengu outside the shuttered gate retreated behind their wall and killed anyone who came within range with a storm of arrows.

Until now, the tengu's lack of involvement has been relatively understandable, but there are few troubling inconsistencies. The tengu are not, or rather, they do not appear to be naïve. They are seemingly aware of the threat the Elder Dragons pose and, with any luck, have heard of Zhaitan's passing at the hands of the Pact, followed by Tyria's fight against Mordremoth. Furthermore, for a race that upholds itself as honorable and virtuous, they have been strangely unhelpful as a whole. Even races like the kodan and largos, races still shrouded in mystery, have been playing a role in the war against the Elder Dragons, despite their flaws. With an enemy like Mordremoth, whose rising poses the biggest and most imminent threat to Tyria as a whole, you would think the tengu emperor would have received an invite to the World Summit at the Pale Tree.

So what does it all mean? For those who might not know, the tengu were meant to be a playable race in Guild Wars 2. In some more recent interviews, developers have expressed some knowledge about the future role of the tengu in game and their awareness of player's fondness for ninja-running bird people. Whether that will eventually lead to them playing an active role in Tyria's fight against the Elder Dragons is anyone's guess, though I would hope so. The tengu represent a powerful people and potential ally that are untapped, and ready to be unleashed on the dragons. The only real question left to be answered is "when."





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