



GUILD MAG

ISSUE 17: UNEARTHING ELONA

NIGHTFALL REVISITED

Discover a land ruled by an undead king

HISTORY OF PALAWA JOKO

To defeat a god, we sacrificed a continent. Relive the decisions that brought Joko to power.

ELONA NEXT EXPANSION?

Will we head to Elona next? Unearth what could await there...

AWE-INSPIRING ART

Hand-picked community creations, curated just for you.

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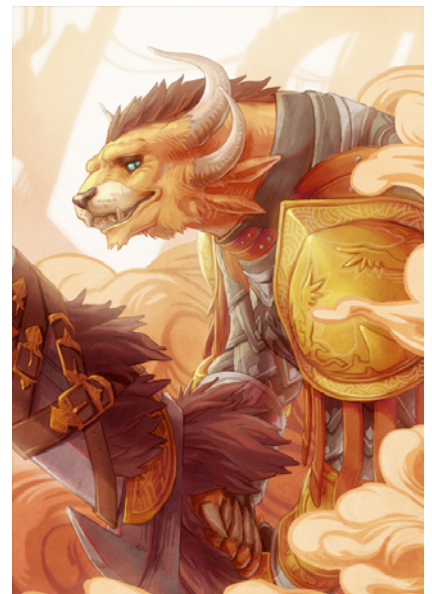
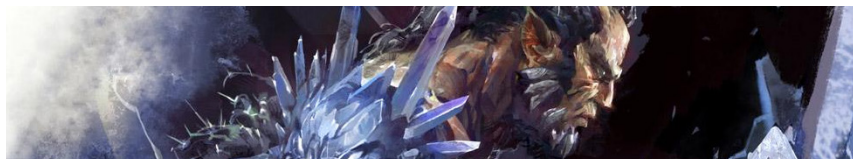
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Join us as we journey into Elona, Land of the Golden Sun. Is this where Season 3 is heading?

By all appearances, GuildMag's had a quiet year so far. The success of our last issue, *The Annual 2015*, has spurred us on to make a physical GuildMag issue a yearly occurrence, which means that we'll be releasing our 18th magazine *The GuildMag Annual: 2016* **very** soon. This year's Annual will be bigger and better, and physical copies will be available for pre-order from 28th November 2016 for delivery before Christmas - more information will be available on guildmag.com nearer the time, so stay tuned!

For now, though, we present to you our Elonian-inspired *Issue 17*. The community has been awash with speculation about where Season 3 and the next expansion will take us; to the Crystal Desert and Elona, or perhaps somewhere else entirely? Elona has yet to feature in a GuildMag issue, so we're remedying that with this one! We've put together a magazine that encompasses all that was great about the Land of the Golden Sun from the original game, and what you could look forward to should we ever get to visit the golden continent again. With *Nightfall* having just celebrated its 10th anniversary,

now seems like the perfect time to unearth the desert's hidden treasures. In "The Scourge of Vabbi", Starconspirator explores the evil deeds of Palawa Joko, and in "A History of Nightfall", lore guru Draxynnic uncovers the dangers of the revenant's Legendary Demon Stance. As always, we've also included a myriad of community art and fiction, plus many other articles just waiting to be discovered.

Got feedback on this issue? We'd love to hear it; send us an email at contact@guildmag.com!

Happy reading!

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A HISTORY OF ELONA



229 DR // 29 AE

The Primeval Kings consolidate their power over Vabbi and the Desolation. They bury their rulers in the Crystal Desert. Queen Nadijeh forms the Sunspear Guard, which later becomes the Order of the Sunspears.



25 DR // 1 BE

The Margonites, worshippers of Abaddon who ruled the Unending Ocean, begin to settle along the coastlines of Elona.



-5 DR // 205 BE

The first human settlements appear in the valley of Elona and the islands of Istan.



374 DR // 174 AE

The Forgotten withdraw to the Crystal Desert.



200 DR // 0 AE

The Exodus of the Gods and the fall of Abaddon leads to the collapse of the Margonite civilization as they accompany their god into the Realm of Torment. Creation of the Crystal Desert and the Desolation.



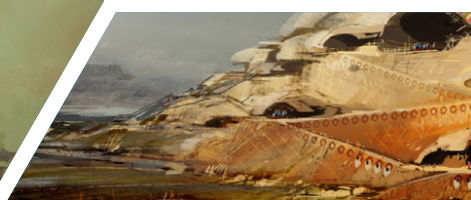
0 DR // 200 BE

The first Dynastic Kings come to power, ruling Elona from the City of Fahnur in Istan for over 650 years.



524 DR // 324 AE

First reports of Corsair activity in the coastal regions around Elona.

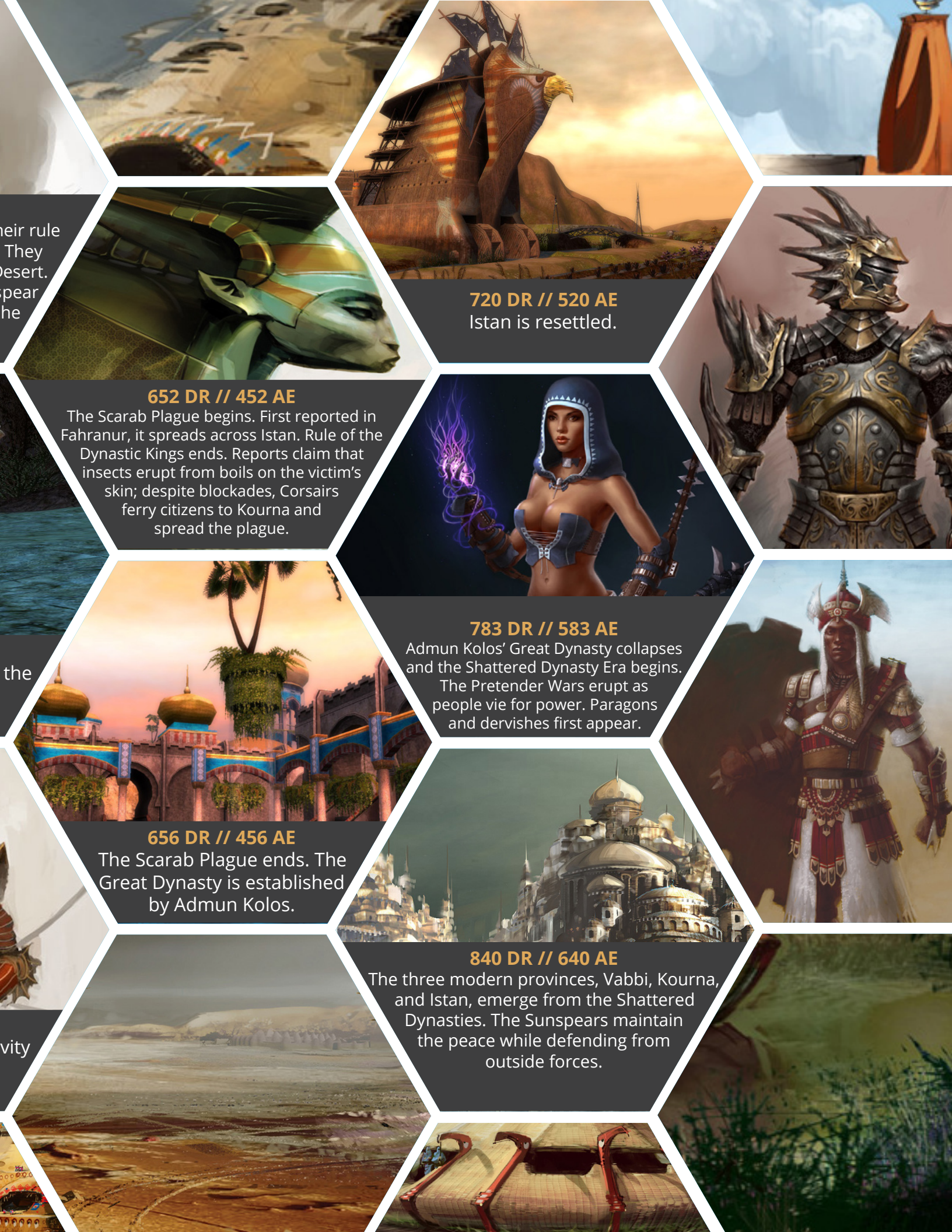


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720 DR // 520 AE
Istan is resettled.

652 DR // 452 AE
The Scarab Plague begins. First reported in Fahranur, it spreads across Istan. Rule of the Dynastic Kings ends. Reports claim that insects erupt from boils on the victim's skin; despite blockades, Corsairs ferry citizens to Kourna and spread the plague.

783 DR // 583 AE
Admun Kolos' Great Dynasty collapses and the Shattered Dynasty Era begins. The Pretender Wars erupt as people vie for power. Paragons and dervishes first appear.

656 DR // 456 AE
The Scarab Plague ends. The Great Dynasty is established by Admun Kolos.

840 DR // 640 AE
The three modern provinces, Vabbi, Kourna, and Istan, emerge from the Shattered Dynasties. The Sunspears maintain the peace while defending from outside forces.



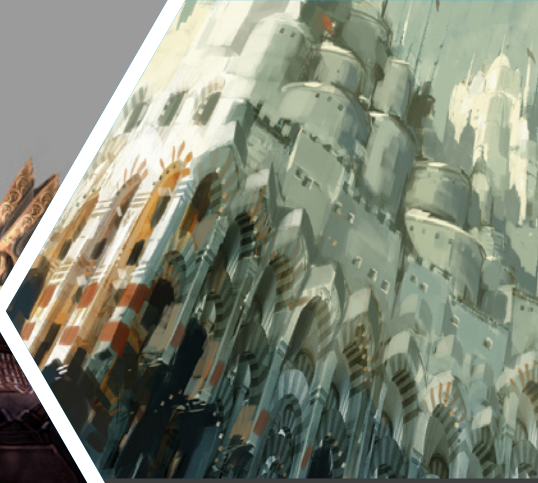
912 DR // 712 AE

The first Great Corsair War begins.



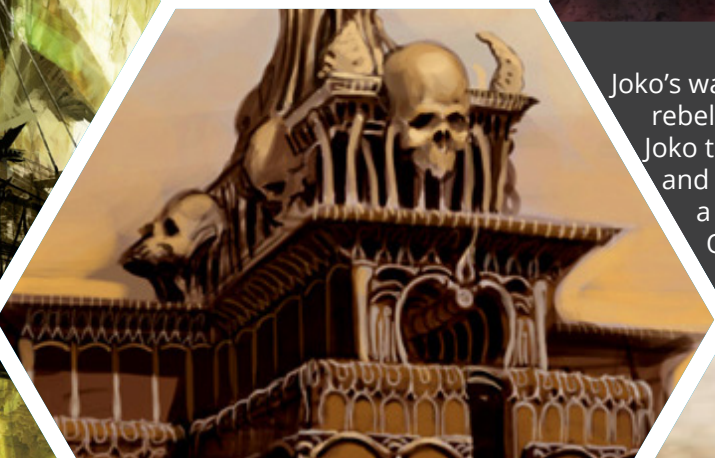
1062 DR // 862 AE

Joko's war reaches a stalemate against Kournan rebels led by Turai Ossa. Ossa challenges Joko to single combat at the Battle of Jahai and wins. Joko's body is sealed beneath a stone plinth and guarded by the Order of Whispers. Turai Ossa is named King of Elona.



1074 DR // 874 AE

Clanmarshal leadership of Istan and Vabbi is restored.



957 DR // 757 AE

Palawa Joko builds his Bone Palace in the Desolation and begins gathering an army of undead.



1099 DR // 899 AE

The Great Fortress of Jahai is built.



1068 DR // 868 AE

Searching for Ascension, Turai Ossa leads the Great Pilgrimage into the Crystal Desert. He names his son, Kunai Ossa, Warmarshal before leaving.



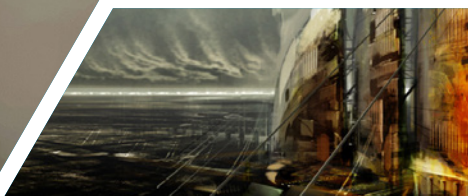
1060 DR // 860 AE

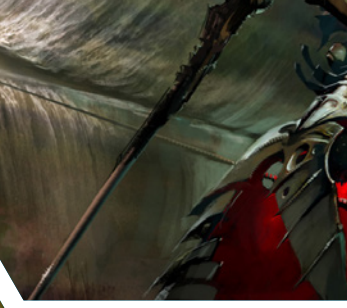
Palawa Joko invades Elona and captures most of the mainland.



1100 DR // 900 AE

Amaki Voss becomes the first "Prince" of Vabbi.

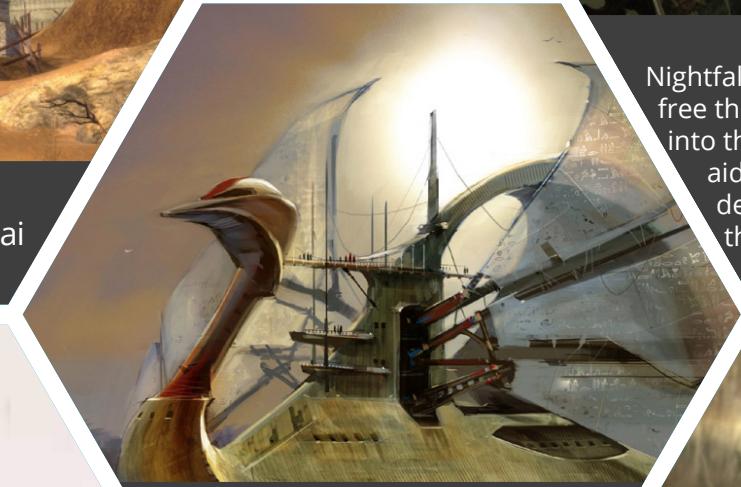




1216 DR // 1016 AE
The Second Great Corsair War ends. Seamarshal Matcha defeats Lady Glaive's Armada. Istan's maritime strength grows.



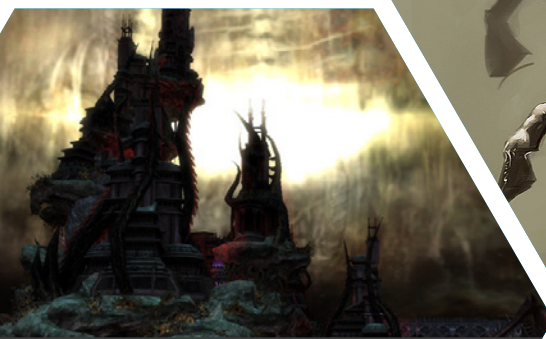
1140 DR // 940 AE
Cantha's isolation leads to the closing of their embassies in Tyria and Elona. The Corsairs are left to dominate the sea.



1275 DR // 1075 AE
Nightfall. Warmarshal Vares Ossa attempts to free the fallen god Abaddon, opening a door into the Realm of Torment. The Sunspear, aided by Palawa Joko, stop Ossa and destroy Abaddon. Kormir becomes the Goddess of Truth, absorbing Abaddon's power.



1188 DR // 988 AE
The Second Great Corsair War begins.



1335 DR // 1135 AE
Palawa Joko and his rebuilt army retakes Vabbi to rule all three provinces, isolating them from the rest of the world. Joko destroys the Order of the Sunspear, driving them out of Elona. Some abandon their oaths and serve as part of the Mordant Crescent.



WRITTEN BY
STARCONSPIRATOR



Elona belongs to the **undead**.

A

baddon's attempt to regain his freedom had a lasting effect on the world – but the fallen god was not alone in shaping the history and environs of Elona. As a catalyst for change, Palawa Joko occupies a position of unique power and continues

to this day to influence the Land of the Golden Sun. The undead lord of the Desolation and Scourge of Vabbi, Joko first appeared in the history of Elona in 757 AE (957 DR) with the building of his Bone Palace in the Desolation. Prior to that, he was known as an “upstart king” in the time of Mad King Thorn – the

two of them enjoyed quite the rivalry. However, how he became a lich and undead king remains a mystery.

For over one hundred years, until 860 AE, Joko built up his undead army by raiding the ancient tombs of the Crystal Desert and enslaving humans from the civilizations that



BY STARCONSPIRATOR

THE SCOURGE OF VABBI

faltered due to the expansion of the Desolation. With his horde of undead, he then invaded Vabbi, quickly taking control of the province. For two years, Joko waged war against the Elonians, easily capturing the unprepared estates of the merchant princes. He proclaimed himself sovereign ruler of

the area, and eventually controlled most of the mainland province of Kourna and all of Vabbi.

Palawa Joko's advance was countered by a small rebel force consisting of Elonians from all three provinces, led by the Kournan warmarshal Turai Ossa. Although Turai's

hit-and-run tactics had some success, his forces eventually found themselves surrounded at the Grand Cataract of Jahai, where they prepared to make their final stand. In a desperate gambit, Turai Ossa challenged Joko to single combat and won.

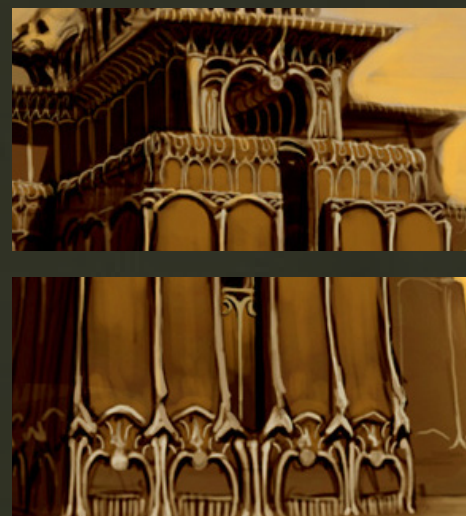
With Joko defeated, his undead armies retreated back to the Desolation and the Bone Palace. Yet despite his defeat, he could not be killed; instead, his body was broken and sealed in a tomb beneath a stone plinth. Afterward, Turai Ossa assigned his elite guard to the task of watching over this tomb – giving rise to the Order of Whispers.

In the wake of Joko's rule, Turai Ossa was given the title King of Elona and the survivors rallied behind him. But Ossa obsessed over the gods. The Warmarshal eventually departed for the Crystal Desert seeking Ascension, leaving Elona behind to rebuild. Palawa Joko remained trapped under his plinth, unable to effect any change for hundreds of years and he faded into legend. However, in 1075 AE (1275 DR), as Abaddon attempted to break free from his own prison, Palawa Joko once again found his way to the world of the living.

When Varesh Ossa discovered the rituals necessary to bring about Nightfall and release the fallen god Abaddon, her actions also weakened the bonds that held Palawa Joko. Although the Sunspears worked against Varesh from the moment they discovered her plans, at every turn she outmaneuvered them. Finally, Varesh's quest took her through the Desolation to the Mouth of Torment. With her goal in sight, the Sunspears desperately needed to catch up to the Warmarshal and stop her. However, with its poisonous sulphur sands and hordes of undead, the Desolation proved too great a barrier for the mere mortal Sunspears to cross. Their frantic research led them to only one possible source for aid in crossing the Desolation – Palawa Joko. Even consulting with the centaurs of the area, who had once been enslaved by Joko, yielded no other option. The Sunspears' only chance to catch Varesh and

stop Nightfall was to convince the undead king to help them.

Hoping to find Joko, the Sunspears sought the monument that marked the place where Turai Ossa had defeated him, where Joko's tomb lay. Once free, Joko fled and the centaurs and Sunspears had to recapture him before they could discuss crossing the desolation. Although the centuries of imprisonment had weakened Joko, he was still able to lead the Sunspears to the Desolation and reveal the only way for mortals to cross: riding inside the giant Junundu Wurms that lived there. With Joko's help, the Sunspears were able to tame the wurms and enter the Desolation, but Joko's aid did not come free, nor cheap. Despite the centaurs' warning not to trust the undead king, the Sunspears allowed him to go free.



This decision to free Joko in order to save the world from Abaddon would later prove devastating to Elona. Some might argue it was short-sighted, others that it was a necessary exchange, even a bargain.

Free from his prison, Joko began immediately to retake his kingdom and rebuild his army. Because their goals were compatible – clearing the area of Abaddon’s minions and reaching Varesh – the Sunspears found themselves aiding the undead king as he reestablished himself. The work began with retaking the Bone Palace from Varesh’s rearguard. In order to do so, the Sunspears subdued several of Joko’s generals, returning them to his service or destroying those who would not. In the process, they were warned again, this time by the Order of Whispers, not to trust Joko. Fearing that the Scourge of Vabbi would return, the Order began preparations of its own to counter him - but they knew Joko could outwait them if he had to.

In the meantime, the Sunspears continued to aid in the rebuilding of Joko’s army as they consolidated their position and cleared a path through the Desolation. With the vestiges of his army once again under his command, Joko reasserted his authority over the Desolation and

reestablished his seat of power. Aided by the Junundu Wurms and Joko’s forces, the Sunspears cleared the Bone Palace of demons before moving on into the Desolation and to the Mouth of Torment. With Varesh’s forces cleared from the area, Joko turned his attention to rebuilding his kingdom and plotting his return to power over all of Elona.

Other than the occasional spat with King Thorn – continuing their rivalry even in undeath – little was heard from Joko after his release. For sixty years, he gathered strength and renewed his forces, reestablishing his power base. Then, in preparation for a new invasion of Vabbi, he dammed the River Elon, diverting its water toward the Crystal Desert. Facing a devastating drought and accompanying social unrest in addition to the undead army, Vabbi soon surrendered. After the province fell, Kourna and Istan followed.

With little opposition, Joko set out to destroy both the Sunspears and the descendants of Turai Ossa. In a sadistic twist, he ordered his forces to bring any Ossa descendant to him, forcing a number of them to serve as his generals – living or dead made no difference to Joko. For over a hundred years, Joko worked to drive the Sunspears

from the land. Those who did not perish fighting the undead king left Elona, wandering foreign lands, passing down the teachings of a barely-remembered Order. Some Sunspears did remain in Joko’s Elona, choosing to serve as Joko’s knights in exchange for power. These fallen Sunspears form the Mordant Crescent.

In the intervening time, Elonian citizens have also fled the Scourge of Vabbi and today the Land of the Golden Sun is as sealed off as the Dominion of Winds, having very little contact with the outside world. Joko’s kingdom shared borders with the Elder Dragon Zhaitan’s area of influence, which brought the two undead armies into contact with one another for years. However, now Zhaitan is gone and Joko remains the unchallenged ruler of the dead. The only humans to still have contact with Elona are agents of the Order of Whispers, but few details regarding Joko’s kingdom are publicly known.

Palawa Joko will likely make another appearance in the future. Perhaps the Pact will seek his help with Kralkatorrik, the Elder Dragon awaiting us nearest Elona’s border. We may also meet him once again when the exiled Elonians follow their prophesied leader home. Regardless, we should always remember the undead king **cannot be trusted.**



A HISTORY OF NIGHTFALL

Professor Blorp presents a lecture on the history of Nightfall: *Beware the Dangers of History Ignored.*

By Draxynnic

Greetings, empty heads in need of filling, it is I, Professor Blorp, here to warn you of the threat that these so-called revenants may be unwittingly bringing to our world! While I remain perplexed as to why Gixx

saw fit to place my important message at such an early hour in the fourth day of the Priory's symposium on revenant magic and what it could mean, allow me to congratulate those of you who chose to forego studying firsthand the aftereffects of excessive intoxicant

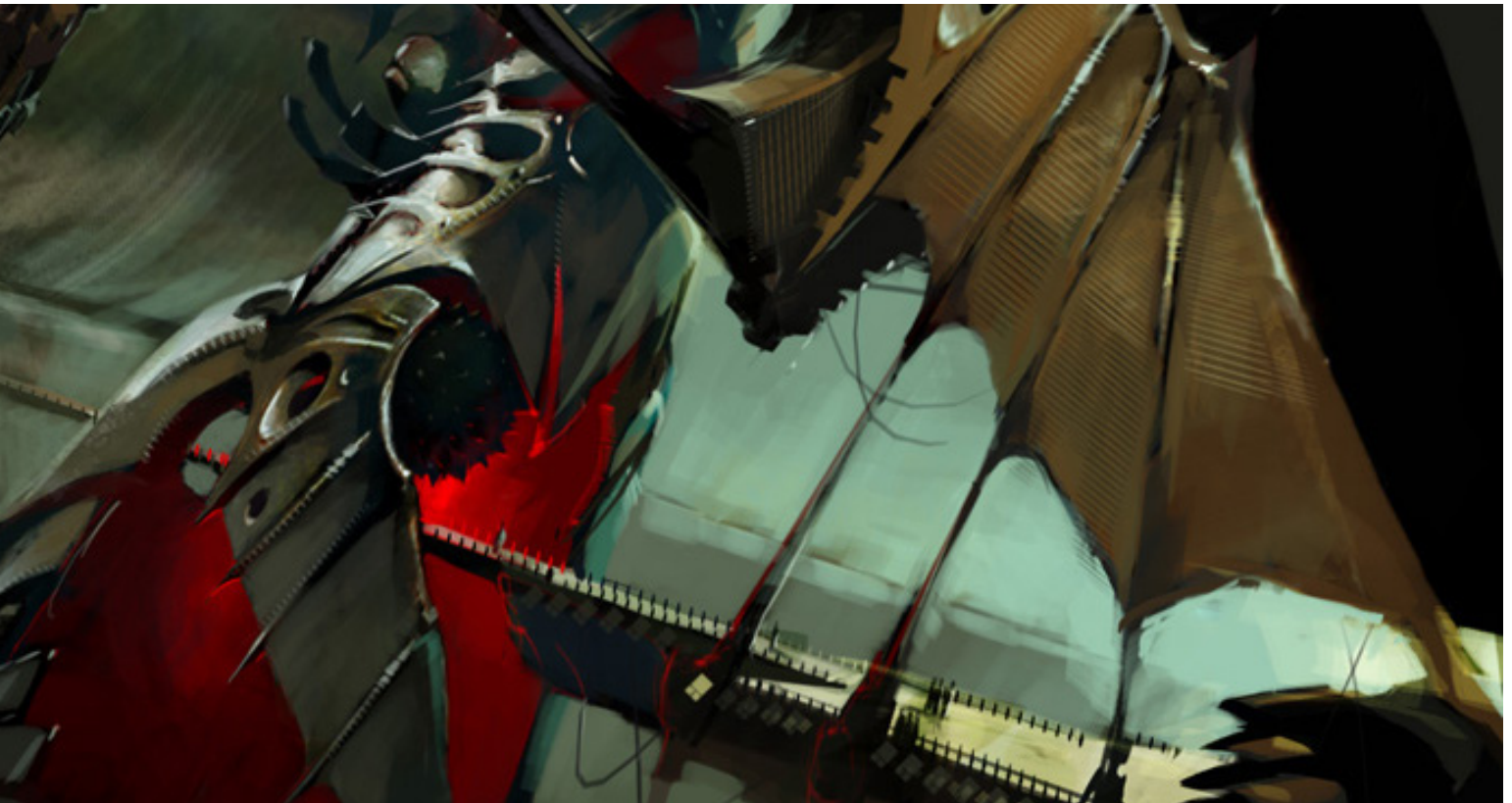
consumption in order to receive this warning! Your presence here may well lead to making the difference between success and disaster for all our efforts!

Since Rytlock Brimstone's return during the Maguuma campaign in the Mists, we're suddenly being inundated by a flood of soldiers calling themselves "revenants".

be well known to any of you who have paid the slightest modicum of attention to Tyrian history. However, some of you, who might have slept through your classes in the history of other lands, may be blinking at unfamiliar so-called legends like Shiro and Mallyx and asking yourself: "Should we be worried?"

awakening of the Elder Dragons! And those foolish revenants are willingly inviting them right into their minds!

It all started over thirteen centuries ago when the bookah gods decided to break the magic battery of the Seers and introduced magic into the world on a scale not seen since the last rise of the Elder Dragons, supposedly as a gift



These revenants invoke the powers of legends of the past to grant themselves magical abilities, and, some say, hear the voices of those legends in their heads. Some of these legends, such as the philosopher Ventari, the dwarf king Jalis, and the dragon prophet Glint, will

The answer, as those who actually paid attention to the histories of lands outside your own little patch would know, is: Yes, you ignoramuses, by the Eternal Alchemy you should! These two were nothing less than the lieutenants of the greatest threat to Tyria before the

to make life easier for the races. Naturally, the surface races did what bookahs with more belligerence than sense usually do with a new toy and started killing each other with it. One with a little more sense than most, King Doric - of the kingdom that later fragmented into Ascalon

and Orr - recognised that this was quickly turning into a scenario of mutually assured destruction. Leaving glaring at the charr across the northern border behind, he fought his way back to Arah to persuade the gods to reduce the power of their gift.



Those so-called gods that were present at the time agreed to do so, but Doric paid the price for their mistake, with his lifeblood being used to seal the Bloodstones in their current separated state. However, the god that had been responsible for distributing magic in the first place, Abaddon, wasn't present when this decision was made. When he found out, he responded by throwing a massive hissy fit and declaring war on the other gods. To cut a long story short enough to fit within your limited attention spans, this resulted in magical devastation on a level not seen since the last rise of the Elder Dragons.

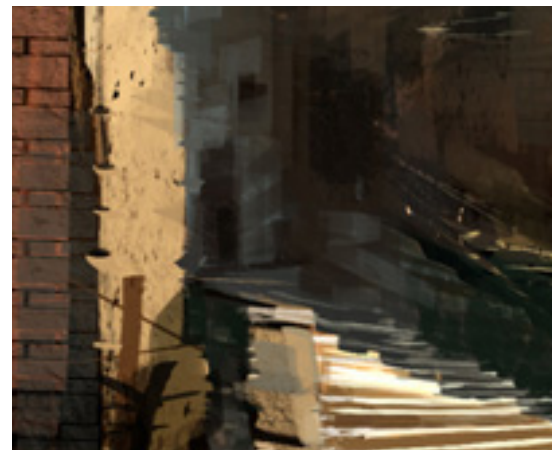
This included boiling away the inland sea that once separated Tyria and Elona into a parched desert. Abaddon was trapped with his surviving followers in a hellish prison-dimension called the Realm of Torment. The other gods were so ashamed at the destruction that had been unleashed that they chose to leave Tyria rather than stay and risk destroying the place the next time one of them throws a massive tantrum over, I don't know, stubbing their toe or something.

However, the gods did know that knowledge of Abaddon could allow him to retain influence over

our world. So, before they left, they made a half-hearted attempt of erasing references to Abaddon that could be stumbled on by mortals before abandoning the problem for future generations to deal with. But it apparently slipped their miniscule minds that even that early on human civilisation had left a bunch of ruins and tombs around the place, and some of those contained scriptures of Abaddon. Whoopsies!

" The other gods were so ashamed at the destruction that had been unleashed that they chose to leave Tyria rather than stay and risk destroying the place.

One of these places happened to be located in the city of Fahrunar, the first human city on Istan and once capital of the Elonian empire. While the city still stood, it seemed that even the bookahs knew better than to go poking around in there and stir up something



they shouldn't. This injunction even survived the Scarab Plague where the Primeval Kings that ruled there were eaten from the inside out by insects whose eggs had contaminated their food supplies. Even after Istan was resettled, stories of plagues and curses from the ruins discouraged bookahs from going there. This changed two and a half centuries ago. Kormir, then Spearmarshal of the Sunspears, decided that her curiosity was more important than letting be what had been wisely left alone for over a thousand years. Warnings of danger were for other people... an attitude that I'm sure many of you can relate to. Stop preening, you in the middle row - that was not a compliment!

Her excavation awakened the Apocrypha of Abaddon, a construct inscribed with texts of Abaddon. At this stage, Kormir realised she'd made a colossal blunder and took steps to contain it,



While the city still stood, it seemed that even the bookahs knew better than to go poking around in there and stir up something they shouldn't.

but it was already too late. A visiting Kournan delegation, ostensibly on a diplomatic visit but actually stirring up pirates in order to weaken Istan for future invasion, happened to contain secret cultists of Abaddon, including Kournan's leader Vareshe Ossa. Before Kormir and her Sunspears were able to destroy the Apocrypha, the cultists were able to access it and learn what they needed from it. Only they knew exactly what that was, but given the events that followed, it evidently involved the summoning of demons.

In response to the wave of demons that started popping up all over the place, Kormir abandoned Istan to cry for help from the heroes that had defeated Shiro and the Lich Lord in Cantha and Tyria respectively, leaving the investigation of what was

happening in Istan to her junior commanders. These commanders uncovered the Kournan conspiracy, but were themselves implicated for killing the Kournan general Kahyet in the process. When Kormir returned, they were being tried for murder, their defence resting on proving Kahyet's guilt. Kormir immediately ended the trial by fiat and began preparing Istan and the Sunspears for war.

Her master plan was to strike directly at Vareshe's capital, the Moon Fortress of Gandara. Naturally, this was exactly what Vareshe expected, and the Sunspears were led into a trap where Kormir was taken prisoner as her soldiers, and her eyes, were eaten by demons. Only a few survivors escaped into the surrounding countryside with their tails firmly between their legs. Showing an unusual amount of sense for bookahs, however, these survivors found an underground shelter where neither the Kournan army nor the demons could find them. From there, they built a resistance from oppressed Kournan villagers



“CRESCENT STREET”

Concept art of the inner streets of Gandara, the Moon Fortress.

and the enslaved Veldrunner centaur tribe of southern Elona.

However, the Sunspears realised that they did not have the forces to take on Kourna's military, and needed to enlist the aid of Elona's third province, Vabbi. With the assistance of the Order of Whispers and some corsairs with a grudge against Kourna - it's apparently okay to collaborate with pirates when it's the Sunspears doing it - the Sunspears were able to rescue Kormir from the execution block before using a secret tunnel to bypass the Kournan fortress of Jahai and make it to Vabbi. On the pretext of pursuing the Sunspears, Varesh reinforced her army with a second wave of demons and invaded Vabbi.

" The Sunspears realised that they did not have the forces to take on Kourna's military, and needed to enlist the aid of Elona's third province, Vabbi.

The Sunspears found that the Vabbian self-styled princes were too busy sticking their heads in the sand over Varesh's intentions - or the fact that she was slowly turning into a demon herself - to heed their warnings. Naturally, Varesh took this as an invitation to rampage at will through Vabbi's holy

sites, tearing new holes in the walls of Abaddon's prison. She then took her demonic army and hightailed it to her real objective - the site within the poisoned sands of the Desolation where Abaddon had fallen, and where the barrier between Tyria and the Realm of Torment was weakest.

Thanks to those poisoned sands, the living Sunspears were unable to pursue without finding a safe way to cross. In a genius move that clearly had no chance of rebounding on their descendents whatsoever, the Sunspears decided to awaken the lich king Palawa Joko from his prison and ask him nicely if he could give them a way. With a little arm twisting, Joko agreed, teaching the Sunspears how to tame Junundu wurms that could carry them safely across the desert - if you call riding in the mouth of a semi-domesticated desert worm 'safe' - in exchange for the Sunspears' assistance in rebuilding Joko's power. Between the Sunspears-controlled wurms and Joko being all too happy to settle scores on Turai's descendent, Varesh's rearguard was overwhelmed, and the Sunspears caught up with Varesh as she was performing the ritual to open the Mouth of Torment.



Despite Varesh completing her transformation into a demon the first time she was killed, and coming back at the Sunspears with a wave of reinforcements from the Realm of Torment, she was defeated. However, she had achieved enough that the energy released in her defeat tore open the Mouth of Torment, sucking the Sunspears bookahs inside. Fortunately, instead of being pulled onto the dinner table of an army of demons, the Sunspears appeared in one of the last remaining strongholds of the Forgotten jailors who had, for centuries, been failing to keep Abaddon and his minions contained in the Realm of Torment.

There, the Sunspears learned that, due to the one-size-fits-all containment policy of their so-called gods that lumped the innocent in with the guilty, their actions in opposing Abaddon had contaminated them with knowledge of Abaddon. Hence, they too

were doomed to be trapped in the Realm of Torment upon their deaths if Abaddon wasn't destroyed. Hearing of an old temple of the Six Gods that had been sucked into the Realm of Torment, the bookahs pushed forth into the hell-dimension, hoping that if they invoked the other gods in the Realm of Torment then the other five would get off their collective laurels and finally clean up the mess they left behind.

It was there that they met two of the generals of Abaddon, both of which had caused chaos in different parts of Tyria three years before - Vizier Khilbron, who was responsible for the Cataclysm and thus partially responsible for that whole situation with Zhaitan and Orr, and the Shiro Tagachi that you may have heard some of these revenant morons speaking so glowingly about. After cutting those two down, the Sunspears, led by Kormir, knelt as bookahs do, and asked for help from their mommies and daddies.



Here, reportedly, the voice of Lyssa gave them an uplifting speech about how the power was in them all along and sent them away with nary a pat on the back. Miraculously, a handful of bookahs then managed not to muck it up any further and proceeded to slay the fallen god. Realising that you do not just simply kill a god and walk away without the god exploding in your face, Kormir decided that one of Lyssa's cryptic utterances meant that she was supposed to replace Abaddon and leaped into the nexus of power left by Abaddon's death, absorbing the energy and thus becoming the sixth bookah deity.

That wasn't the end of it, however, as the remaining generals of Abaddon's forces led an insurrection against the new goddess, seeking to overthrow her and claim her power to become a god instead. The leader of this effort, and thus presumably Abaddon's successor if they had succeeded, was none other than the demon lord Mallyx the Unyielding. Yes, I can see those of you that aren't trying to pretend you haven't fallen asleep recognise that name.

So, as you can now see, these two entities that these revenant ignoramuses willingly allow to possess them were the lieutenants of

a being that the bookah gods considered so dangerous that anyone who even knew about him was consigned to an eternity of torture upon their deaths, simply to prevent that knowledge from contaminating the rest of the Mists. Sure, the revenants claim that they're in control... but how do we know they are really? How do we know that these ghosts of Shiro and

" The remaining generals of Abaddon's forces led an insurrection against the new goddess, seeking to overthrow her and claim her power.

Mallyx aren't simply letting their puppets believe that they're in control, while waiting for the opportunity to carry out schemes that will wreak unmitigated havoc and destruction across Tyria?

The simple answer, bookahs and geniuses, is that we don't. We've just recently seen the Pact all but annihilated by those who believed that they had free will until the moment their true master whistled and they set on their former friends like the warhounds they were made to be. We cannot afford to be blindsided yet again by a betrayal that a half-blind ettin could see coming a mile away.

DELIVERING ELONA

Where will the next *Guild Wars 2* expansion take us? We explore what the continent of Elona might have to offer...

BY AARON HEATH

For many *Guild Wars 2* players, the continent of Cantha to the far south is the be-all-end-all of potential expansion content. However, expansion content only works as well as it fits into the story, and right now, Cantha doesn't have much of a place in the expanding narrative. That isn't to say ArenaNet won't ever be giving us a new continent to explore, though. With

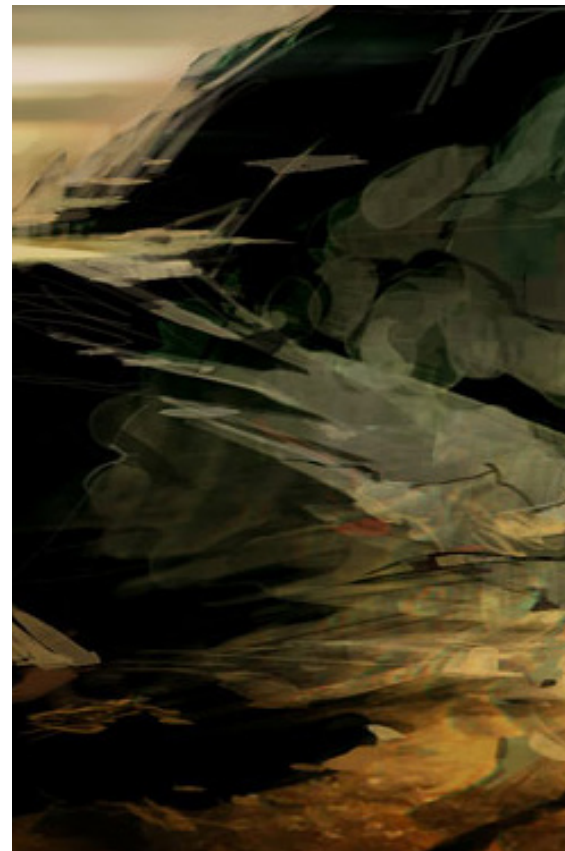
Kralkatorrik residing in the Crystal Desert, and with the recent defeat of Zhaitan, the continent of Elona might just be where we're headed!

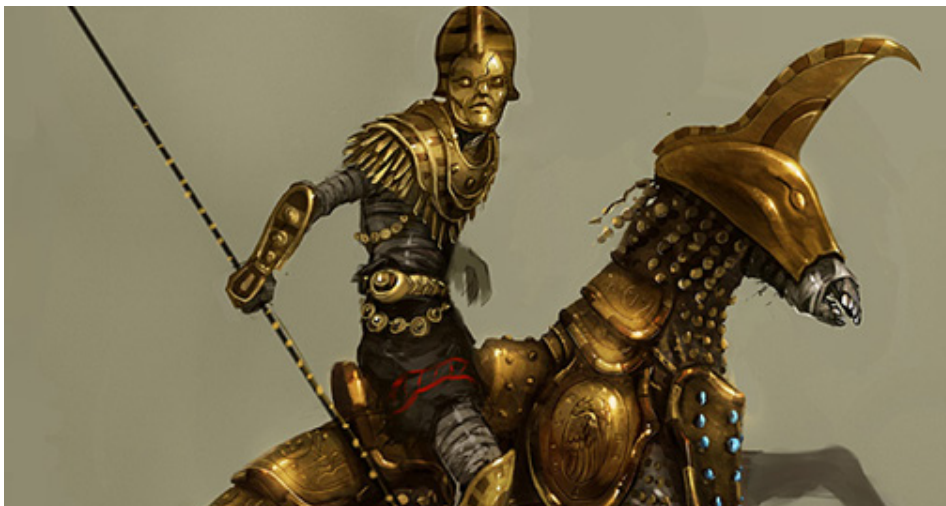
The key to unlocking Elona is the Crystal Desert. We will eventually have to face Kralkatorrik and when that day comes, we will most likely do so on his home turf in the Crystal Desert. But what might prompt us to fight Kralkatorrik? Why should he be the next

Dragon on the chopping block?

Well, he simply connects nicely with the cliffhanger at the end of *Heart of Thorns*. With Glint's egg infused with a significant amount of Mordremoth's magic, the newly hatched Aurene has a very real possibility of bearing some sort of connection to Kralkatorrik, a remnant of its mother's origin. Furthermore, Glint had strong ties to the Forgotten, and it was the Forgotten, through the will of Glint, that constructed

" With Kralkatorrik residing in the Crystal Desert, and with the recent defeat of Zhaitan, the continent of Elona might just be where we're headed.





"AWAKENED HORSEMAN"

Concept art by Doug Williams, depicting one of Joko's Awakened army.

Tarir. The Forgotten were known to reside within the Crystal Desert before leaving Tyria, and there is no telling what answers lie in that arid wasteland for both the player character and Aurene.

So we have just cause to brave

the desert, but what might we find there? Well, first and foremost, there's Kralkatorrik. Kralkatorrik's residence in the Crystal Desert creates an interesting connection to Elona: that of Palawa Joko. You see, the charr and Ascalonians aren't the only ones dealing

with Kralkatorrik's pesky crystalline minions. In the southern reaches of the Crystal Desert, the powerful undead lich, and tyrannical ruler of Elona, Palawa Joko's armies are also at war with Kralkatorrik. Which brings us to an interesting dilemma that will ultimately dictate how we go about exploring Elona: do we enlist Joko's aid against Kralkatorrik, forming an uneasy alliance (as we did in *Nightfall*), or do we take him on as a second enemy? Strategically, it would be prudent to at least attempt the former. Palawa Joko,



now supreme ruler of Elona for several hundred years, is undoubtedly more powerful than ever before, and would prove to be a formidable ally against the Elder Dragons. On the other hand, if the Pact were to attempt to fight both Joko and Kralkatorrik on the same front, chances are Kralkatorrik would come out the victor and both the Pact and Joko would suffer debilitating losses.

However, now that we're "friends" with Joko, the issue still remains: how will we go about exploring Elona? There needs to be motivation to do so, a plot device driving us toward Elona. Well, that's where Joko comes in a second time. Back in *Guild Wars: Nightfall*, we formed an alliance with Joko in order to defeat the much greater threat of Abaddon. However, we made a mistake. After defeating Abaddon, we left Joko to his own devices, naively assuming he would just chill in the Desolation forevermore.

Fast forward 250 years, and he has conquered all of Elona,



bloodline. For all we know, Kralkatorrik could be the only one stopping him from invading Tyria.

This is where it gets very tough to justify passage to Elona. If we ally with Joko against Kralkatorrik then promptly turn on him and free Elona, that's going to seem rather treacherous of both the Pact and our player character.

However, it would also seem strange to simply stand by and let Joko's oppression go unchallenged. ArenaNet's

the first offensive move. With Kralkatorrik out of the way, he is free to expand his empire into Tyria. Rather than having the Pact, the "good guys," betray Joko, why not make Joko be the betrayer? It makes sense: he's power hungry, ambitious, psychotic, and deceptive. It's a move that would give us a valid reason to move against him and, in so doing, enter Elona.

So we've entered into a dubious alliance with Palawa Joko, used our joint efforts to destroy Kralkatorrik, and now Joko has turned on us and intends to bring the continent of Tyria under his control. Now we've got an expansion on our hands! Not only do we get the green light to enter Elona, we have just cause to travel through it in its entirety. Palawa Joko occupies the whole continent, including the island of Istan to the south,

“ There needs to be[...] a plot device driving us toward Elona. Well, that's where Joko comes in a second time. [...] We left Joko to his own devices, naively assuming he would just chill in the Desolation forevermore.

crushed the Sunspears, and assimilated anyone of note that could potentially resist him, including all known members of the Ossa

writing team would need to work very hard to make this part work, but it is possible. The key to spinning this in our favor is having Joko make



and overthrowing Joko would require travelling to Vabbi, Kourna, and Istan and undermining his influence in all those locations, before finally marching on the Bone Palace in the Desolation.



Our story is still pretty barebones, though. The overthrowing of a tyrant is pretty standard fare as far as fantasy stories go, particularly in video games. ArenaNet likes to implement impactful events that change the entire world significantly in their narrative, and the storyline outlined in this article opens up just such a change.

By themselves, the Pact simply lacks the necessary forces to challenge Joko's armies directly. Joko has spent over a hundred years amassing hordes upon hordes of undead minions, and his conquest of Elona has proven that he's a very competent military commander. But where might

the Pact find the help it needs? What force in Tyria could possibly bolster the assault against Joko enough to sway the odds in the Pact's favor?

The centaurs of course! Almost all centaurs in *Guild Wars 2* are utterly hostile in every capacity, and they show extreme hatred, contempt, cruelty, and outright sadism toward other races.

However, we the players have a trump card in our favor: Palawa Joko's empire is built

“ Almost all centaurs in *Guild Wars 2* are utterly hostile in every capacity, and they show extreme hatred, contempt, cruelty and outright sadism.



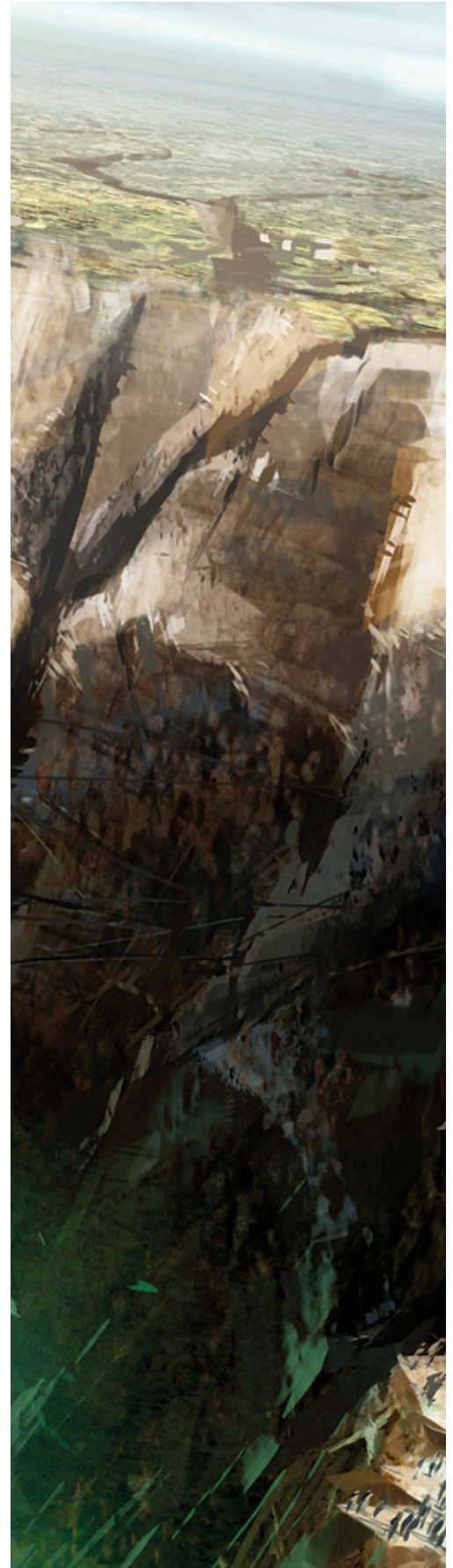
upon the enslavement, labor, and mistreatment of Elona's entire centaur population. If pitched to the centaurs of Tyria correctly, this reality could be enough to rally them against Joko.

Now, at this point, forming flimsy alliances with previously hostile entities is becoming a bit of a trend in this article. However, an alliance between the Pact and the centaurs could potentially result in a peace accord between the centaurs and the other races of Tyria, and could mean huge changes for zones in Kryta and the Shiverpeaks. This outcome, while quite bold, would renew the community's faith in ArenaNet's ability to bring massive, permanent changes to Tyria while also introducing plentiful new content.

The material discussed in this article is honestly a bit much for a single expansion.

Realistically, the defeat of Kralkatorrik would occur over a season of Living World, and then Palawa Joko's betrayal and the liberation of Elona would form an expansion pack's worth of content. With Elona at our fingertips, who knows what kinds of ancient secrets and undiscovered magic we could uncover that might aid us against the Elder Dragons?

Furthermore, perhaps, somewhere in Elona, an alternate solution to the Elder Dragon problem might lie undiscovered. With the story of *Guild Wars 2* going in the direction it is, it would be a shame to see Elona get bypassed or ignored, and hopefully ArenaNet has plans to someday deliver that content in a manner that will leave us satisfied and itching for more.



I awoke into darkness. Lying supine on the arid ground, I stared into the abyss above me. A familiar sight lay there, but twisted and warped from what I remembered. Instead of the clear azure, thick, dirty clouds travelled across a muddied sky that sought to block the light from a bloodied sun. I felt nothing; not the heat of the desert, nor the rock on which I lay. Though numb to the world, my mind felt otherwise, struggling to accept the claustrophobia of the darkness. This wasn't home - so how had I got here?

"Daddy!"

A young girl's face appeared before me.

I sat up, startled.

Four children ran past, playing under the morning sun. My village... my home.

The hallucination left as quickly as it had come. I struggled to make sense of what I had seen, though all too soon the memory of it began to fade. Confused, anxious and alone, I had to uncover where I was. As I stood up, I felt a weight against my hip, and pressed my hand against the hilt of a sword that clung to my leather belt. It looked ordinary and unadorned, though sharp enough to be of use should it be needed - not that I knew how to. On my feet were simple leather sandals, the straps weathered and torn, and I wore my familiar linen garments: beige trousers with a terracotta shirt. Both were dirtied and ripped.

Surveying the surroundings, fierce black tentacles protruded from the ground, twisting their way through the landscape. Sand dunes and tall rock formations surrounded me, running as far as the eye could see and leaving only one direction in which I could walk: forward. In the distance, a faint ethereal voice cried out. It sounded like a young girl, though I couldn't be sure I had even heard anything - this place played tricks on the senses, and seemed far away from any reality I knew. Putting one foot before the other, I began to move forward into the unknown, unsure of what awaited me but determined to find out if nothing else.

It wasn't long before I encountered another creature. As I walked further from where I had begun, the distant noises grew in frequency and strength. Shrill screams and deep, rumbling growls echoed through the rocks and set my mind racing. I tried to feel for my heartbeat, for some reassurance that I was still alive, but the numbness remained. And as I did so, all manner of depraved creatures entered my thoughts as I tried to picture what the sounds could possibly belong to. But when I saw one of them with my own eyes, nothing had even come close. From a rocky cliff above me jumped a large hellish creature made of bone and exposed flesh. It landed on four legs, its tail between its legs and bone spikes running the length of its spine. Its eyes were large but hollow, and from its mouth the creature slobbered like some demonic mockery of a dog. Its stench filled my nostrils, the acrid scent of rotting flesh stinging the back of my throat. I retched. It charged, and I

found myself unable to move, simply staring into the dead eyes of my doom. This is where my life would end, far from home. Would anyone miss me?

"Joseph! ... GO!" screamed a woman, her voice filling my head.

Suddenly, my mind was clear. Without thinking, I dodged to the right, the demon's spiked legs brushing against my arm and cutting deep. The wound was grisly, yet strangely, there was little blood and I felt no pain. The creature stopped running and turned for a second attempt. I knew what had to be done. This abomination would not take me, not now. Still crouched, I reached down and withdrew the sword hanging from my waist. It was too big to attack head-on, so there was only one other option. It roared and charged again, this time its mangled tongue hanging from the side of its mouth. As the creature came closer, I once again dodged to the side, this time thrusting my sword towards it. The metal met its target, rending through dead flesh and bone on the creature's flank as it darted past me once more. It howled in pain, crumpling on its side, twitching and struggling. Wasting no time, I scrambled from the dirt over to where the creature lay and, gathering my strength, plunged the sword through its skull, crunching the bone and penetrating inside like a knife through butter. I let go of the sword, and it remained embedded in the creature. It was over; I was alive. But I had taken a life in exchange. A wave of emotions crashed over me; a tear began to form in the corner of my eye, and I looked out at the surroundings once more. I was scared. Would I ever make it out of this place? Around me, the world grew darker still as the sun transformed to an abyssal black. Why me? Why now? Where...

"You should not have done that," came a sharp, feminine voice from behind. "That pet was not yours to destroy."

I spun around to face her, my eyes meeting with a flash of bright purple light and the rough shape of a human.

Piercing screams filled the morning air.

"NO! PLEASE!"

"I'm begging you, don't take-"

"Charmah! Run!"

"Joseph! ... GO!" screamed the young woman who stood before me with brown hair and teary eyes.

My... my wife.

"Joseph! Find her!" she begged, sobbing.

I looked past her face and out onto the destruction around us. Black smoke bellowed into the air as huts burned, and innocent villagers lay slaughtered on the blood-stained sand. Hellish monsters took life after life, their bright purple bodies and worn metallic armour clearly not of this world. Though human in shape, the resemblance ended there. And then I spotted her: Maia, a young girl with long, dark hair, strewn over the shoulders of one of the demons and being carried out of the village. I glanced at the young woman before me. Her mouth was open, and her blue eyes grew wider as she clutched her side.

She fell, lifeless, and in that instant I brushed past her and ran. No time to grieve. Not now...

"You see them."

The light began to fade, and in its place the details of the humanoid were revealed.

One of them. Demon... from my memory...

The creature stood taller than me, slender and almost graceful. She - no, it - wore a bronze metallic mask that covered its face. Almost insect-like, bright sources of light shone from six eye holes in the mask's intricate design. It wielded a sweeping scythe in both hands, and its body was covered by ripped, yet once-ornate, robes that swept from its chest to its feet. Its shoulders were left uncovered, showing pure purple energy in place of flesh or any normality.

"Please... where am I?" I asked, not truly knowing what to expect. I didn't doubt it was here to kill me, but I had nothing else.

The demon tilted its head slightly, and, still clutching its weapon, began to laugh. A deep, ancient laugh that came from beyond its female form and filled my mind.

Maia - hold on! I was running, feet pounding the parched ground as the sun burned down on me. I stumbled as my sandals gave way beneath me, the straps broken, but I did not fall. I grunted and continued. Almost there.

"He will be with Her once again," came the demon's voice.

My thoughts cleared once more.

"And you provided the power to do so."

What did it mean? Who's it talking about?

"WHAT IS HAPPENING?" I yelled, unable to contain... anything anymore.

"Where's Maia? That all happened, didn't it? You... took her! What did you do?!"

"You worship false gods. Their lies, their intolerance... they did this. THEY built this place."

No, don't listen. Think...

Maia lay on the ground, her knees curled up to her chest and her hair hiding her fear. My sword struck the demon's abdomen, and it howled. I rolled backwards, hitting the ground hard as it swept its sharpened scythe round for

a rending blow. I glanced back at the poor girl; she was safe, as long as this thing was stopped. The screams from the village behind me had ceased - dead, all of them, most likely. With renewed vigour, I looked at my enemy. Its weapon glistened in the sun as the creature brought it back up to its chest, longing to dirty the blade with my blood. Sword extended, I charged, determined to end this nightmare. The slicing moon crescent came from above, but instinctively I blocked the attack, moving the sword to parry. The scythe deflected off it, and I saw my chance. With lightning reflexes, I aimed for its throat and thrust, the blade connecting with the ethereal energy and embedding itself deep. A muffled whisper, and the demon fell where it stood. I had done it. We were safe.

"Fool. You think a mere farmer could defeat one of His servants?" It began to laugh again, the sounds echoing around me.

"I... remember. I killed you. You... you should be dead!"

"It is not I who is dead, Joseph."

The demon's scythe glistened in the sun as the creature brought it back up to its chest.

This memory... it's... the same.

Sword extended, I charged, determined to end this nightmare. The slicing moon crescent came from above, but I was too late. The blade buried itself deep in my shoulder, and searing pain shot through my body. I was paralysed with shock, unable to do anything but accept my fate. I felt myself lifted from the ground, blood trickling down my arm and body, and then thrown back against it to face the sky. I stared up at the clear azure, before a glimmer of light against chilling metal turned everything black.

Once more the vision faded.

No, I don't believe it. Lies! It has to be a lie!

I fell to my knees and wept.

"Nightfall comes, Joseph. Abaddon rises, and your family shall witness it all," the demon announced, as it turned from me and began to walk away.

I sat there, weeping, lost. Through the tears, another shape appeared before me: a young girl, with dark hair hiding her face.

"Daddy?"



Swapping legends refreshes your energy to 50; if you're above 50, you'll lose any bonus energy.

In a raid squad, place yourself in a separate group with the chronomancer to ensure 100% uptime on Facet of Nature for them.

Vengeful Hammers will toggle off if they collide with a wall. Demon stance (Mallyx) is better in this scenario.

Using a sword? Wait until your auto-attack finishes before using Precision Strike for maximum DPS.



DYE SCHEME



It has been too long, allow me to act

THE HERALD

Mist Scrim

Obtained through character creation biography option.

Herald's Shoulderplate

Awarded for fully unlocking herald elite specialisation.

Banded Coat

Available on the Trading Post.

Dragonhunter's Gauntlet

Awarded for fully unlocking dragonhunter elite specialisation.

Heritage Legplates

Hall of Monuments reward - original *Guild Wars* required.

Grasping Dead Greaves

Arah dungeon armor reward. 180 Shards of Zhatain.

Chaos Weapons

Black Lion weapon skins.





PVE BUILDS

RAIDS



//



Sword/Axe
Staff



Herald
2/3/1



Invocation
2/1/1



Devastation
2/3/1

Skill Rotation

- Maintain Facet of Nature
- Don't interrupt sword auto-attack
- Precision Strike on cooldown
- Facet of Elements -> Elemental Blast
- Facet of Light
- Facet of Darkness
- Swap to Jalis before energy reaches 0
- Vengeful Hammers
- Swap to Glint before energy reaches 0

FRACTALS & DUNGEONS

Got a chronomancer in the party? Follow the raid build.



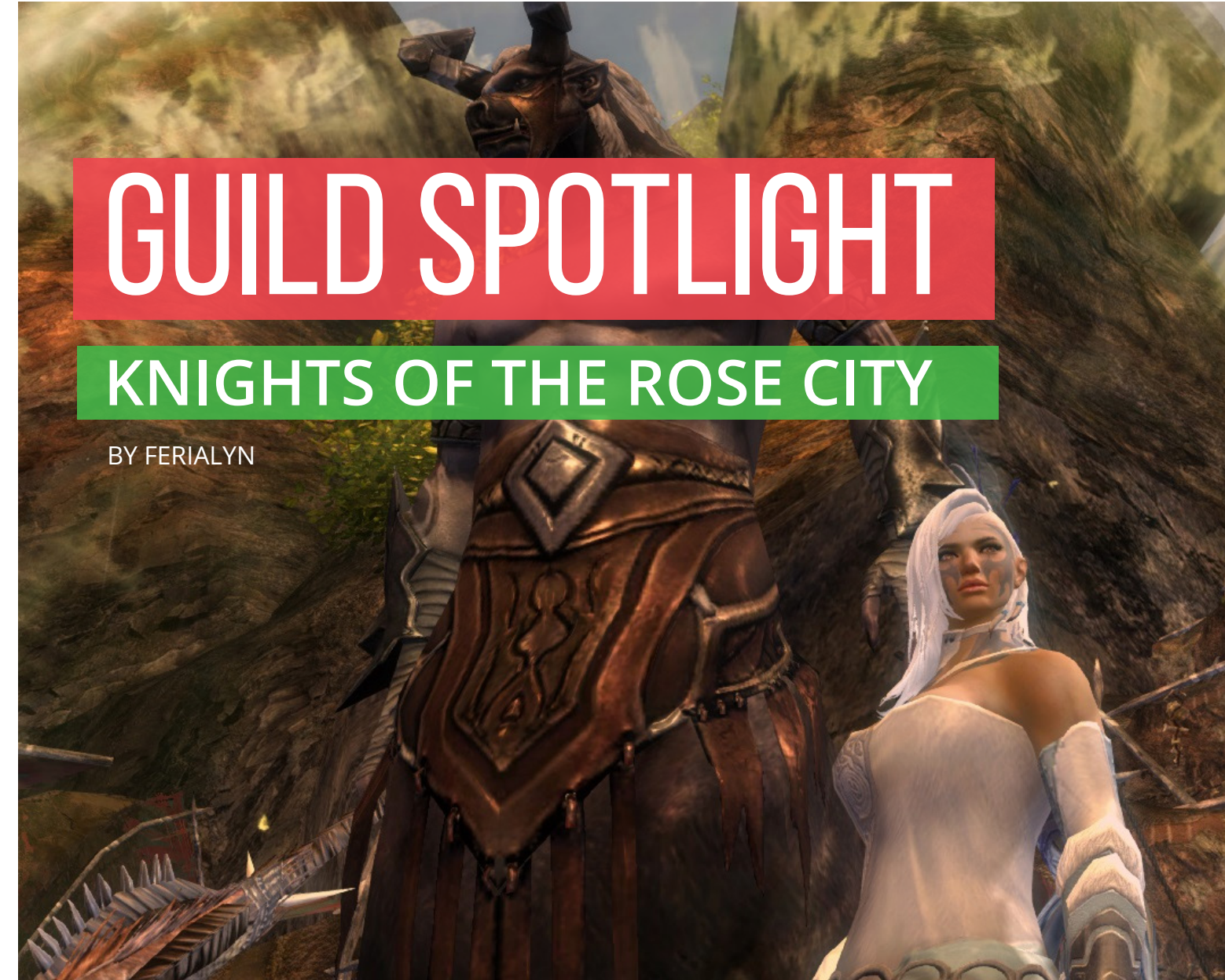
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*Same traits &
weapons as raid build*

Skill Rotation

- Facet of Nature -> One with Nature on cooldown
- Don't interrupt sword auto-attack
- Precision Strike on cooldown
- Facet of Elements -> Elemental Blast
- Facet of Light
- Facet of Darkness
- Facet of Strength
- Swap to Shiro
- Enchanted Daggers
- Impossible Odds & sword auto-attack ONLY
- Swap to Glint



GUILD SPOTLIGHT

KNIGHTS OF THE ROSE CITY

BY FERALYN

They come from different backgrounds with their own stories and lives, but the players who compose *Knights of the Rose City* have this in common: They're aged 18+ adults who live in or near Portland, Oregon, and frequently step away from their keyboards and rigs to mingle with their guildmates in real life, whether at a local bar

or city staple.

Enyalmo, one of the guild's officers who has been a member for around eight months, said *Knights of the Rose City* is essentially "a casual hardcore, Portland-based guild that focuses on hanging out with friends both in game and real life."

Leader Fyasco, who started [KPDx] in spring 2014, said

the group began with eight close friends who were local: "I thought it would be fun to have our own little guild."

"Eventually, as our interest and involvement in the game grew, I started searching for a Portland guild that we could possibly merge with," she continued. "I was really surprised that I couldn't find one since I had a feeling that there had to be a lot of people



Knights of the Rose City [KPDx]

Leader: fiasco.2489

Size: 70+ members

Preferred game mode: PvE

Quirk: Nearly every member of [KPDx] lives in or near Portland, Oregon.

In-game contact: fiasco.2489

www.knightsoftherosecity.com



in the Portland area who played the game.

"Why not just make KPDx the Portland guild, then?"

Having a location-based guild, she said, makes it easy to meet compatriots with the same common interest: In this case, *Guild Wars 2*. But then players can also turn to that common interest of living in the same area, whether it's discussing

places to eat, upcoming events or more.

And over the course of two years, [KPDx] has only continued to grow its ranks, bringing together more people from the Rose City. While Fiasco said their greatest recruitment numbers have come from the Portland subreddit, she also said people have found them just by Googling for a Portland guild.

"We've had people see our [KPDx] tag in-game and message us. We've even bumped into people playing *Guild Wars 2* in public places and just told them about the guild right there!"

To keep that momentum going, the guild tries to stay active in area gaming events and conventions, according to the guild's leader. Members of the guild ultimately fill out

an application on the group's website for the officers to consider.

Fiasco says the guild's age range "is more like 21-45" with most somewhere between their late 20s and early 30s—everyone is at least 18, though. "Career-wise, we do it all: Anything from students to artists to software engineers! You can't really pin down one field."

And while not every member is specifically located in the hip Oregonian city, all members at least have ties or prior residence in the city (screened through the application process).

"We definitely are pretty Portland-centric," Enyalmo said. "We try to get as many people as we can to hit up local bars, cider houses and whatnot. Being a part of that is being a part of the guild."

Knights of the Rose City have also engaged in many real-life field trips, including a guild outing to an Escape Room and the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry for its After Dark program. Of course, experiencing life both in-game and in real life means the members of *KPDX* build all kinds of memories. For Fiasco, this is the best part:

"...The first time we had a large group show up for some board games, I was meeting a lot of guildies for the first time," she said. "Everyone was getting to know each other, having some drinks, enjoying food, and

having a good time. It really made me feel like a local guild was actually going to work out, which was really exciting!"

But that doesn't mean everything always comes up roses for these knights.

According to the guild's leader, running a location-based guild is a lot like running a startup because it involves a lot of energy to market the "product" and try to ensure it reaches the right set of people.

It also requires just a little more creativity to keep players involved.

"As a local guild, one of the biggest differences is that we often go out and do official guild events IRL," Fiasco said. "Planning those definitely takes time and energy, and I like to make sure I'm constantly planning new things for the group to do."

Despite these real-world applications, *[KPDX]* still runs into the issue of maintaining an active and engaged player base. Even though they can meet up for drinks or go catch

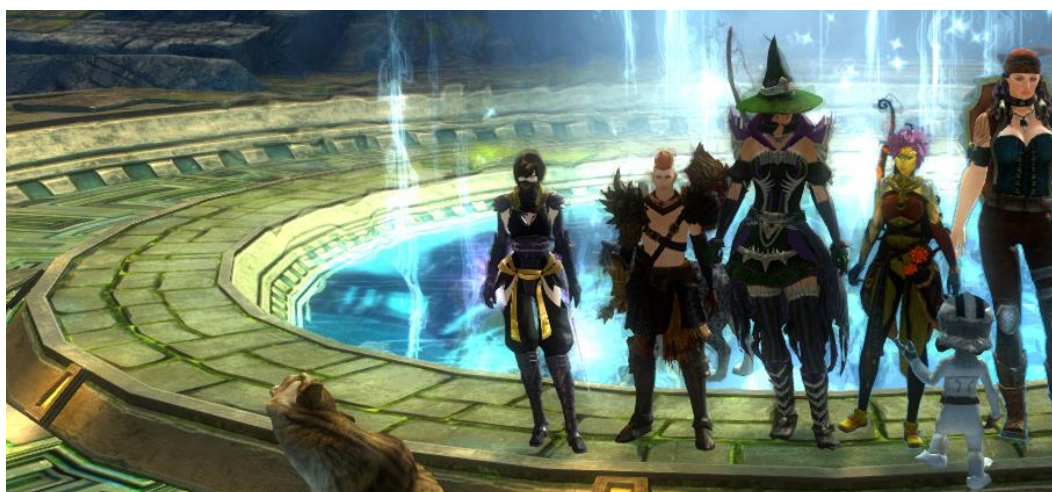
a movie, it can be difficult to get people to remain active and involved in the guild's doings beyond the guild's core group.

The similarity in activity issues ends there, though. As Fiasco says, other guilds can implement rep requirements or kick inactive members to overcome some of that bloat in member counts. The *Knights of the Rose City* chooses not to do that.

"As a local guild, one of the biggest differences is that we often go out and do official guild events IRL.

"Our guild doesn't do that because we're more of a guild/meetup group hybrid. Our goal is really to connect Portland *Guild Wars 2* players," she said, "and give them opportunities to meet and game together if they like, regardless of how much they play or rep."

In-game, the PvE-focused group works toward whatever they want, really. Right now, that's raid progression and gearing up.



"We're taking a crack at the raids, but we haven't managed to kill a boss yet, but we're having a lot of fun doing it," Enyalmo said. "We're definitely trying to help each other gear up ... [because] people are interested in gearing up and trying to get through the raid. That's one of the goals that we've got, trying to get through that. And just helping people gear up in general and helping people do whatever they're interested in in the guild."

That said, the guild in general tries to help out its members first and foremost, like a recent slog through the personal story achievements, which Enyalmo said they undertook chapter by chapter.

"Trying to further the goal of each individual member would be the closest we've got to a goal as a guild," he said.

Meanwhile, Fyasco said she'd love for players in Portland "to know there is a local guild here if they'd like to join." Reddit, Google and word of mouth have done wonders for [KPDX], but she said they're still working out new ways to get



the word out about the guild.

Enyalmo, who found [KPDX] when Fyasco's sister posted on Portland's subreddit, said he expected them to be like every other guild. He was pleasantly surprised by what he found instead.

"The friends I had normally played with had stopped. And there were these meetups happening in real life," Enyalmo said. "I went to one of those: We played board games, had beer, things like that, and it was fun."

" Our goal is really to connect Portland *Guild Wars 2* players [...] and give them opportunities to meet and game together.

Future shenanigans like a camping trip — and maybe a jaunt to PAX Prime further down the road — are tentatively in the cards for this year.

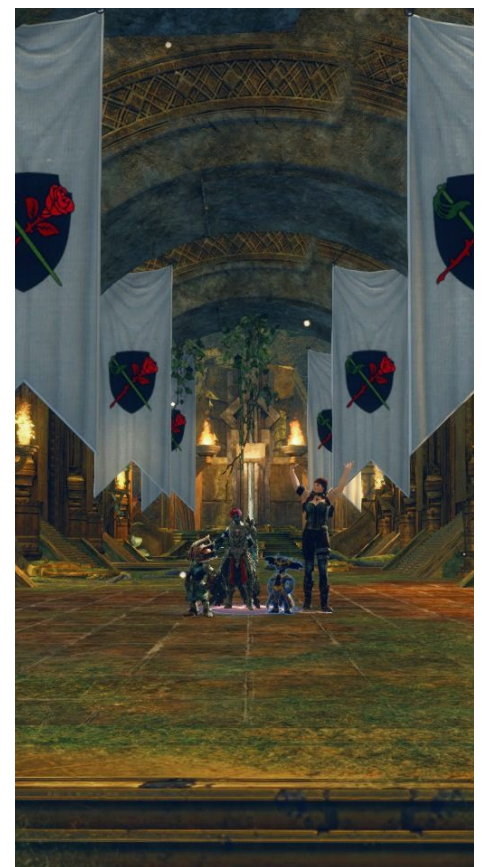
"[KPDX] offers so much stuff beyond just the *Guild Wars 2* aspect. It's really nice to be able to go out and do fun activities with the guild," Enyalmo said. "Really, it's the people. Everybody is laid back and there's very low, there's not really drama. ... It's really a big group of friends and everybody's pretty chill and we're just a fun group to hang out with, both in game and out."

And it definitely doesn't hurt that the guild seems to share the same interests when not in-game, either.

"I've always thought that the *Guild Wars 2* community has been the best of any MMO I've ever played," Fyasco said, "and to have a bit of that right in my backyard has been wonderful."

For anyone who might be considering their own location-based group, she also has some advice.

"Post to your local area's message boards! Posting to r/Portland is what really got this guild going, but I've also teamed up with other local video gaming communities and posted to their forums. Chances are that there are a lot of people in your area who play and want to join. Other than that, just be passionate and engaged. Enthusiasm toward building something like this is really contagious."





A STUDY INTO

BY DRAXYNNIC

THE NATURE OF THE MISTS

PART II

The conclusion of a review into the nature and denizens of the Mists, penned by Scholar Eleanor Draxynnus in the year 1328 AE.

Part I available in GuildMag Issue 16.

In the first part of this treatise, I examined the properties of the Mists themselves and outlined some of the locations and divisions that could be found there. In this second part, I will look over some of the non-demonic entities that dwell in the Mists, and how those entities relate to Tyria, and possibly other worlds as well.

THE FATE OF THE DEAD

As well as being a creative force, the Mists also serve as the home of the spirits of the dead for many races. When a sapient being's physical form expires, their soul will normally appear in the Near Mists. This transition releases a small amount of energy that necromancers can harvest - which is typically employed to generate the 'shroud' effect, allowing the necromancer to gain many of the abilities of a manifested spirit.

Most souls, however, do not remain in the Near Mists for long before moving on to a new destination elsewhere in the Mists. Humans have the most complicated belief for the destination of the spirit - human souls that pass on transition to the Underworld, either by themselves or with the aid of spirit entities called 'Envoys', where they are judged by Grenth. Those deemed deserving of punishment could be subjected to one of Grenth's own imaginative and often everlasting punishments

such as being fused into the landscape of the Underworld, or (at least before Abaddon's fall) be cast down the Bone Pits into the Realm of Torment. More virtuous souls may be sent to the realm of their favoured god, or find their rest in one of the more peaceful regions of the Underworld. The most worthy souls are ensconced in the aptly named Hall of Heroes.

The norn have a similar view; earning the worthiness to ascend to the Hall of Spirits upon death is a life objective for most norn, driving their hunger for glory. Sylvari souls are said to return to the Dream, while the final rest for the asura is to 'become one

with the Eternal Alchemy'... a phrase that says much about their philosophy while saying little about the actual fate of asura souls.

Modern charr society takes little notice of the fate of their souls after death. During the period when the Flame Legion was dominant, Titan-worshipping charr found themselves in the same prison as those they worship (thus disproving the claims by some that they do not have souls!), where most were devoured by the demons in the Realm of Torment. Some surviving charr spirits, however, defected by joining the fight against Abaddon and playing a small role in the death of the god that had manipulated them.



Some spirits, however, do not move on at all. In most cases, this is either due to some purpose that keeps them close to Tyria, or simple confusion – the souls do not realise that they are dead, and therefore do not think to move on. Such souls may have a presence only in the Near Mists, where they can only be seen and interacted with by those with special abilities to do so, but they may have a ghostly presence in the physical realm as well. Switching between these states may be instinctual for such spirits, depending on whether or not they wish to interact with the mortal realm: Only the most powerful spirits appear able to interact with the mortal realm while remaining completely apart from it.

There are some parallels between this behaviour and the mursaat, which could reportedly make themselves invisible to all but the Ascended, but needed to return to our plane in order to fight. Research in Arah indicated that this magic involves going “out of phase” with Tyria, a process they undertook in order to hide from the Elder Dragons; it is unclear whether this is the same as going into the Near Mists or some other realm.

(Note that the legends invoked by revenants are not believed to be ghosts per se, but appear to be copies of the personalities and powers of historical figures formed from the Mists.)

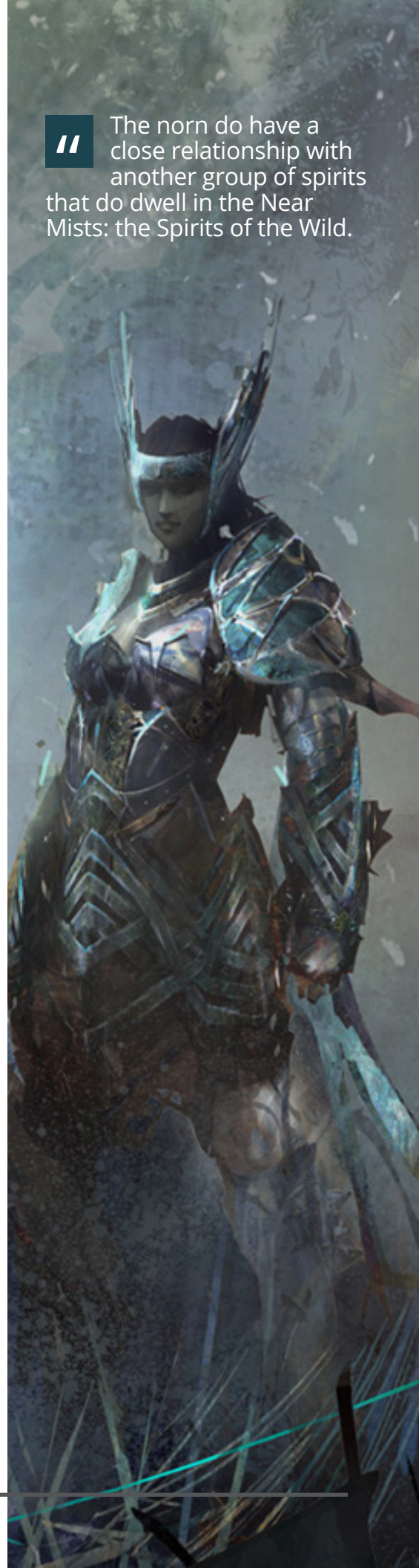
THE SPIRITS OF THE WILD, AND OTHER COMMUNAL SPIRITS

As well as the spirits of the dead, there are spirits of those that were never alive in the normal sense. Kodan tradition speaks of a time when the spirits were “wild,” and norn legends speak of hostile spirits – spirits of locations, seasons, fire and darkness. It is likely, however, that many of these spirits are not directly related to the Mists. It has been well observed that in regions of high magic, natural forces and previously inanimate forces can gain a form of sentience, giving rise to elementals and, possibly, beings formed from other branches of magic such as vaettir and nightmares. Such spirits are probably simply a manifestation of magic’s life-giving properties—as Magister Ogden says, magic is life, and thus it is possible that a high enough concentration of magic will give life to things that did not have it before.

However, the norn do have a close relationship with another group of spirits that do dwell in the Near Mists: the Spirits of the Wild.

These “animal spirits” appear to be another case of the Mists replicating something from the physical realm—however, instead of copying individual creatures, the animal spirits are idealised forms that represent that type of animal as a whole. These spirits broadly have the personality

“ The norn do have a close relationship with another group of spirits that do dwell in the Near Mists: the Spirits of the Wild.





of the animal they represent, and can also be regarded as a 'gestalt consciousness' of all of the animals of that type. However, they are often much more intelligent, and some spirits that have close associations with the norn have taken on characteristics the norn associate with that animal, even if those concepts are too advanced for most beasts to comprehend. This may be a reflection of the greater capacity for abstract thought by these sapient spirits than the animals they represent, and these characteristics may be associated with that species because the spirit has developed them since reaching sapience.

Such spirits have a symbiotic relationship with the animal they represent. If the population of a given species falls, the strength of the spirit will also wane, and it seems likely that their extinction will also lead to the death of the spirit. The reverse, however, is not true: The death of a spirit simply leaves the animals in a weakened state, and the norn believe that a destroyed spirit will reform over the centuries. Whether this is a resurrection of sparks of the original spirit that remained within the animals or the birth of a completely new replacement, however, is unclear.

While animals are often represented by a spirit, the same cannot be said of most sapient beings. There is no single Spirit of Human, for example, or Spirit of Charr.

This can probably be explained by the greater variability within a sapient species. The best candidate for a Spirit of a sapient species, for instance, is the Great Dwarf, which remained a legend until the dwarves completed a ritual that attuned them all to a single united purpose. In the words of King Jalis, this made it so that dwarves "were all the Great Dwarf now." Animals of a given type also generally share the same character, and thus all bears can be represented by a single Bear, and so on. Most sapient species, however, are more complex, and can demonstrate a wide variety between individuals within the same species while bridging the gap between species. The mindset of a human farmer, for instance, may have more in common with a sylvari gardener or charr rancher than with human soldiers.

THE SPIRITS OF ACTION: THE SIX, AND OTHER GODS

This property of sapient beings—where members of different races with similar philosophies have more in common than members of the same race with different philosophies—may have given rise in the lost human homeworld to Six Gods. The norn, perhaps more accurately, regard these as "Spirits of Action." Essentially, instead of forming a separate spirit for each sapient race within that world, it was the common philosophies between

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Kodan tradition speaks of a time when the spirits were "wild".

members of different races that were copied into the Mists in order to form a spirit that embodies that philosophy, thereby creating the gods. Thus, fear of death led to a god of death, violence begot a god of war, and empathy formed into a goddess of mercy and compassion.

The Six Gods' known history is one of struggle, which nearly consumed Tyria and possibly did consume their homeworld. Many of the predecessors of the current gods were considerably more violent and primal than those that humans worship today—however, the gods that represent gentler philosophies (such as Dwayna and Melandru, who also seem to be among the most senior members of the pantheon) appear to have steadily won the fight, taming or outright replacing the personifications of the more destructive

Death has been mediated by Justice, and Knowledge by Spirituality.

However, it must be remembered that the Six Gods (with the exception of Kormir after she replaced Abaddon) appear to be foreign to Tyria. Some native races extant today have their own deities, such as Mellaggan of the quaggan, Zintl and Ameyalli of the hylek, and Koda of the kodan. Many of these gods appear analogous to the Six, leading some to believe that they are in fact different aspects of the same gods that reshaped Tyria centuries ago, although the races claim they are distinct (Koda, in particular, may be an independent Spirit of Balance, or may simply be the Spirit of the Kodan in a similar manner to the Great Dwarf). Certainly, if these gods are distinct from the Six, they do not appear to have been able to influence the world on the level of the Six Gods before the Exodus.

It is possible that while in the history of the Six more destructive, primal deities were progressively replaced with more civilised ones, this struggle worked out very differently in Tyria's distant past.

Several scholars have presented theories that the gods and the dragons may be analogous to one another. Attempts to line up the gods with the dragons directly have failed: While it is tempting to draw parallels between Balthazar and Primordus, Melandru and Mordremoth,

Zhaitan and Grenth, the others simply do not line up in a believable fashion. However, there certainly are parallels between the two groups beyond each numbering six—the Elder Dragons do seem to embody abstract concepts such as mind, death, and elemental forces, albeit in a more primal and destructive manner than the Six Gods.

Furthermore, recent studies into the All reveals that the magic of Tyria is linked to six different domains, each one corresponding to one of the Elder Dragons. Could this be an indication that a set of six "Spirits of Action" did once form in Tyria's distant past? If dragons were the first sapient species to arise on Tyria, then these spirits could also have arisen in draconic form, directly creating the Elder Dragons we know today; this would make the Elder Dragons Tyria's native equivalents of the Six Gods, dwelling on Tyria itself rather than in the Mists. Alternatively, the nascent spirits may have fallen victim to opportunistic, magic-eating dragons before they developed the capability to defend themselves, catapulting those dragons into a position of supremacy among their peers after each dragon added the proto-god's power to their own.

Certainly, if there were any gentler concepts among those nascent emotions, there is no sign of it in the Elder Dragons that threaten all our lives.



COMMUNITY

BY
KENT BENSON

ART

In this latest community art feature, I delve headfirst into some of the hottest, dustiest, and desert-themed artwork the *Guild Wars 2* community has to offer. From the Crystal Desert to the Silverwastes, Tyria is no stranger to harsh desert climates, so grab your goggles and face masks because we're about to head straight into the sandstorm that is art critique. Of course, this is art. My opinions and perspectives are subject to my preferences and the limits of my artistic knowledge, but are ultimately bound to one important rule: I'm here to have fun.



Handwritten signature and date:
10.5.15

A dark, armored creature with a large red plume and a glowing blue cube. The creature has a menacing expression with sharp teeth and yellow eyes. It is holding a glowing blue cube that emits bright blue energy. The background is a warm, orange-hued landscape.

"DRYTOP PORTAL RUN" BY KNIGHT-MJ

gears2gnomes.tumblr.com

Two characters in a desert landscape. The character on the left is wearing a dark, armored suit with a large red plume and a glowing blue cube. The character on the right is wearing a light-colored, hooded robe and a green scarf. They are standing in a desert landscape with a warm, orange-hued sky and some cacti in the foreground.

"ADVENTURES IN DRY TOP" BY EPENDA

twitter.com/Ependa_

This first piece represents a moment many MMORPG players are probably familiar with: When you come across a new zone and take on the adventure ahead. In this instance, the zone is Dry Top. The artist, knight-mj, really captures that impulse to charge into the new and unknown (the upturned sand footfalls are also a nice touch). While deserts and wastelands can often be portrayed with a more monochromatic color scheme (I'm looking at you, Fallout 3), knight-mj doesn't shy away from a more vibrant palette. The colors used are mostly warm copper and orange tones with some brown that noticeably bleeds over some of the more saturated or cooler colors, like a thin layer of dust whipped up by desert winds. The background is mostly nondescript, which is fine as it doesn't immediately steal viewer focus from the subject matter, and is done so under the guise of a brewing sandstorm, while the edge of the rock face

creates the perfect visual guideline for the viewer's eye to follow.

The asura's outfit is not bogged down in details due to the lighting and how it's dyed. It serves to pin more focus on the teal glow of the hammer's magic (a very cool detail) and the character's pink hair. Ultimately, I spent more time focusing on the character's action, location, and purpose than absorbed with the character's look, which is a success in my book. Finally, I do have a couple small critiques. One is that the hammer could use a little fixing as it appears warped in shape and perspective as it passes underneath the quagga backpack. Overall, it's a colorful piece that invokes the delight of exploration, even if that place is a sandy wasteland filled with devourers, Mordrem, and Inquest.

Marjory Delaqua and Kasmee Meade are a dynamic duo that have fought and flirted their way through the perils of Tyria; their adventure into Dry Top is only a footnote in their epic tale. That said, with a pair so in-sync, it would only make sense that the couple that fights together also accessorizes together. The artist, Ependa, has a knack for these gestural illustrations where, like the painting above, they establish a thematic setting that doesn't steal attention from the focus. Here more than other places, the sketchy lines work well with the location and its coarse blustery nature, not to mention how the style accentuates Lady Kasmee's discomfort. I would liken it to plucking Glinda from Oz and dropping her in the Dust Bowl of 1930s Kansas. Marjory, on the other hand, is cool and composed, to no one's surprise. Her face is almost completely covered but it doesn't matter: Her posture does all the talking.

Another detail I like about this illustration is its layers. Marjory and Kasmee aren't immediately in front but are instead caught behind a cactus and the sand whipped up by Dry Top's frequent sandstorms, which (like the painting above) is used as the perfect means to keep the background terrain detail to minimum. That said, I like that the landscape shapes, while minimal, are true to Dry Top's geological identity with its land arches, mesas, and hoodoos that fade into the backdrop. Ependa's piece places us in a shared memory, at least, for those who played Season Two of the Living World. When I look at this picture, I'm not just looking through my eyes, but the eyes of my characters as the three of us investigate the wreckage of the Zephyrite ship.

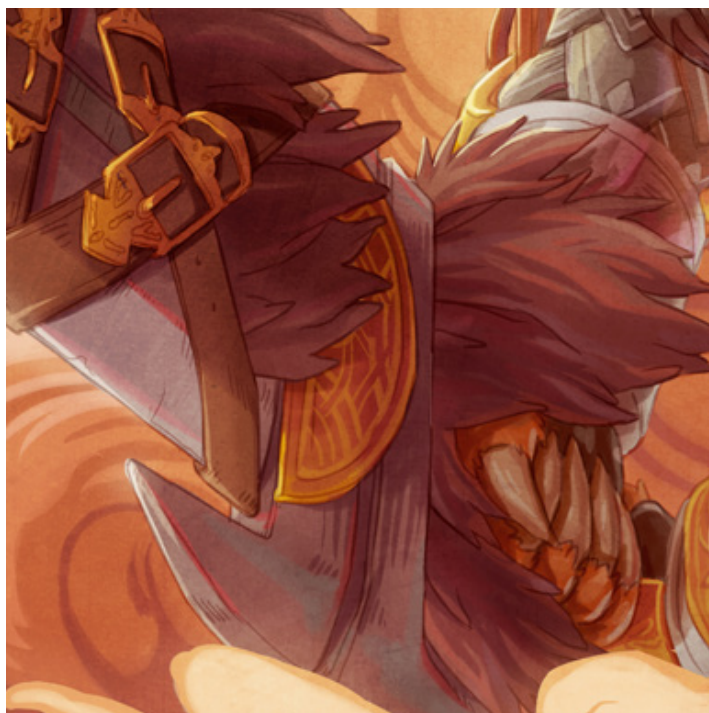
"GEOLUHREAD" BY ORANGETAVI

[orangetavi.deviantart.com](https://www.deviantart.com/orangetavi)



This is the second of Orangetavi's charr pieces I've seen, and like his other art work, it bursts at the seams with detail and expression. I can't exactly say this is a desert-themed piece, as the location is fairly ambiguous, but because desert-themed *Guild Wars 2* artwork is not the easiest to come by, I thought this looked dusty enough to make the cut. "Geoluhread" is a portrait of one of Orangetavi's charr-acters (*womp womp*) dressed horn-to-claw in some of the shiniest armor. Right out of the gate, similar to Ependa's piece, I like the use of layers of whorled dust to help create depth, especially where the cloud in the back is darker to provide contrast. The color palette isn't very saturated as the artist uses more earthy and natural metal colors; even the background silhouettes are covered in a sunny but sandy haze. The gold of the shoulder pauldrons and the sword adornments stand out the most, which works out fine as my eyes are drawn to the armor and weapons' more intricate details.

On that note, there's a good grasp of texture and texture lighting. Metal looks like metal (polished or otherwise), leather like leather, and fur—well, you get the idea. I even like the hash marks around the horns, accentuating the curves and serving to add or subtract light. Finally, there's the charr itself: The details in the lips and creases around the muzzle area really give Geoluhread this aloof but slightly endearing expression, as if he's staring at something. Maybe it's a comrade and they're grinning at each other in the midst of a fight. Whatever the reason, it's calm and inviting.



For the final featured piece, we have “Crystal Desert” by Uunimod. As a whole composed of four main shapes of color, this piece exhibits the most minimalist approach. Even the two objects of the piece, the asura explorer and the creature skeleton, while pretty descript, are footnotes in the vastness that is the Crystal Desert, threatened to be swallowed up by its elements. In addition, I love the stark contrast between the light-and-fluffy rolling sandstorm and the dark-and-heavy blue of the empty twilight sky. There is a somber tone to the landscape’s emptiness, one that is magnified by the lone adventurer—whose only companion is the skeleton in the distance, a warning for the unprepared. However, at the same time there is also peace in that isolation. For any wanderer, I imagine there is some serenity in being left to one’s own contemplations and reflections. There is also courage where the asura, while small, stands firm in opposition to the approaching sandstorm and possibly the symbol of death itself.

One of the smaller things I enjoy is where small flares of one color’s shape (say, from the dark foreground) is blended a little into the sky, or the lighter sand shapes, to represent small tufts of sand kicked up by the wind. Other good details include: the texture and depth of the sandstorm that give it the look of a rolling cloud, the tiny details on the asura figure, or the subtle ridges and shifts in color to give each shape and shade of desert sand proper definition. Finally, I leave with a small critique, which would be to reduce the strength of that segment of dark line between the lighter sand slope and the oncoming sandstorm. I feel it creates a sort of false edge on the terrain that can be defined just as well by the upheaval of sand, much like the area to the right of the skeleton. Beyond that, I can say that I sort of lost myself in this piece. To create a sense of immersion from staring at a work of art is no small victory.



"CRYSTAL DESERT" BY UUNIMOD

uunimod.deviantart.com





WAR PROFITEERS

PART I

BY KENT BENSON

"Whaddya see, Crusader?" whispered Greer, the charr to Rilana's left, while slightly shaking free the condensed mist that had slowly soaked into his rust-colored fur throughout their morning trek. His massive armored body pressed hard up against a titanic tree trunk.

Rilana turned away from the scope of her sniper rifle, hugging the jungle floor. "A group of sylvari, not Pact by the look of them. They're camped around a pile of burning Mordrem corpses."

Greer let out a muffled growl, looking up into the jungle canopy. "You think they killed them?"

"The group is armed; I'd say it's very likely," she replied.

"Mind if I take a look, Captain Bladewind?" asked a third voice.

"If it's okay with the crusader; it's her rifle," the charr said.

With a coy smile, Rilana rolled over to her left, past her grenade satchel, gesturing at the gun now flat on its side. "She's all yours, lyone."

The female sylvari to the engineer's right, also lying flat against the mossy ground, shifted into position while the human engineer quietly crawled and sat at Greer's side.

lyone re-aimed the sniper rifle through the hole of a fallen tree. Its trunk was small by comparison to most local trees and had eventually toppled along the ridge of an eroded bluff. In death, it served as excellent cover for their scouting party.

"Still can't believe the fleet is going to deploy a scorched earth approach to the jungle. There's so much life here," Rilana said, adjusting the headband that kept her frazzled dark brown hair out of her face. "If there were another way..."

The charr met the sullen gaze of the human's golden brown eyes. "The dragon's roots run deep, Lana. Find solace in our history. It took decades for Ascalon to recover from the Searing, but it did. Just like it will from the Brand."

She looked away. "Maybe, but not all wounds heal. The Desolation never did."

Greer raised a single wild silver eyebrow. "The what?"

"Just an old Elonian story my gran used to tell me and my father," Rilana teased, shooing his attention away with a bat of her hand before returning her attention to lyone. "How are things going over there?"

The sylvari laid the rifle flat on its side. Her yellow eyes nervously darted about as she joined the other two behind the large tree. Even her naturally pastel green skin appeared paler than usual.

"They're Nightmare Court, all of them."

"There were a few Mordrem corpses strung up between smaller tree trunks covered with burn marks and stab wounds," Iyone paused. "No sylvari worth a damn would string up any creature to torture or use as target practice for personal amusement; it's not our way."

The charr quietly chuckled, shaking his head. "I have no love lost for the slaves of an elder dragon. Your obvious fear of the Nightmare Court aside, it might be worth finding out what they're doing here."

Iyone began to slowly back away from the cover of the tree trunk. "Fear?" she replied, eyes glistening. "They murdered my closest friend, my brother. I do not fear them; I hate them!"

Rilana slowly rose to a full stand, her hands raised in a guarded manner. "I get it, Iyo. I do. When one of my fathers was captured and ransomed by a bandit cult, I wanted nothing but revenge."

The sylvari dismissed the crusader's plea, turning away from her two comrades. "It's not revenge; it's recompense for all the lives they've ruined. They're monsters, and they won't be leaving here alive."

Before the other two could stop her, a blue crystal holstered on one of the sylvari's two bracelets shimmered to life, launching her into the lower canopy with a burst of wind. With fairly little rustling, she'd vanished through several layers of the tree's leaves, sending a few fluttering down to the jungle floor below.

"Blasted zephyrite magic! She'll give away our p—" Greer fell silent as Rilana stamped an index finger over his snout. His blue eyes trapped in her iron stare.

"And so will you if you lose your head. Get in position for attack; I'll lock down their position with the sniper," she instructed, removing her finger as the charr regained his composure. Back on the cold leaf-littered ground, the crusader propped and steadied the rifle with her right hand, left hand in the back. A single umber finger laid on the trigger.

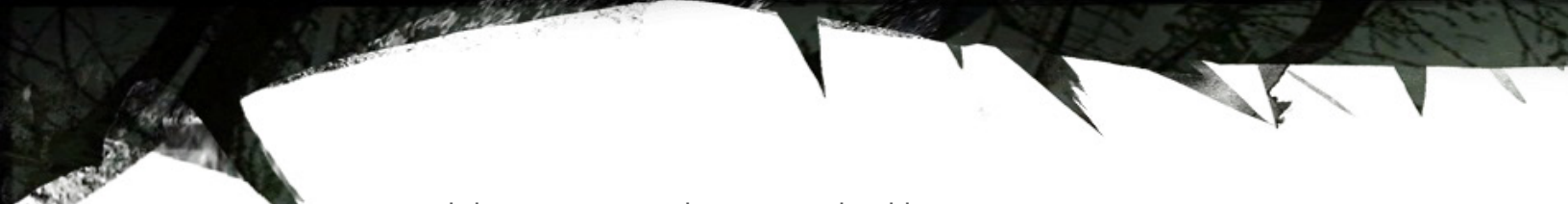
"This can't go unpunished, Lana. You know that?" he grumbled.

Rilana glanced up at her friend one last time. "If that's what you decide, fine, but forgive me if I don't shed a tear for the Nightmare Court. Not after they played patsy for Scarlet Briar and poisoned Kryta with their tower."

With a grunt, Greer readied his single-handed hammer and shield as he ducked out from the cover of the tree, stepping cautiously around the engineer's legs. The eroded bluff was too unstable for a charr of his size, and while he knew the fall wouldn't be far, it would make him an easy target for the courtiers if they spotted him. Instead, the captain crept as fast as he could through the dew-soaked ferns and bush-cover along the ridge towards a different fallen tree that had toppled over the bluff's edge, forming a natural ramp to the floor below. An initial scan revealed a possible safe climb to the top of the trunk, but as the charr proceeded to the back of the open uprooted end, he found that the tree had been hollowed-out, carved. Greer paused after his first step inside, unsure of the wooden tunnel's stability. He took a few extra heavy steps into the tunnel before making a small jump. Nothing. No vibrations, no jostling.

"Feels safe enough," he mumbled before breaking into a jog. The rounded walls of the wooden tunnel sat a couple of feet from him on each side, visible from light that streamed in through the occasional hole carved into the tunnel's ceiling. Without a second thought, he passed through the the tunnel's exit, claws gripping his weapons tightly.

On the bluff, Rilana kept a continuous aim on her first chosen target, a male sylvari with cobalt skin. The engineer had already studied his sly cat-like movements around the camp. His conversational gestures were a dangerous mixture of boredom and arrogance that told her he was either foolishly overconfident or just deadly enough not to register the dangers of the jungle



as a real threat. He was the group's backbone.

"You. You'll do," Rilana whispered as her finger lightly hugged the curve of the trigger. Even in her narrow sights, she saw the flash of Iyone's first strike.

The male sylvari dropped as a vibrating black sphere sucked a couple of unprepared courtiers into its pull. As they reached the core, it pulsed with a fiery orange glow, setting the trapped sylvari aflame. The air filled with their screams before the core exploded outward, whipping the two through the air before they joined the lifeless male sylvari in kissing the cold, leaf-littered dirt. The remaining courtiers armed themselves just before the charr captain barreled through the leafy overgrowth with a tenacious roar. His first target barely had time to lift her shield to block the sweeping blow of Greer's one-handed hammer. There was a loud "crack" as the sylvari's defense splintered against the force of tempered Deldrimor steel, knocking her to the ground a few feet away. Without a break in momentum, the captain charged the next courtier with his shield, preparing to bash him aside.

The sylvari readied his slender blade as Greer approached striking distance. Like a serpent, the courtier flowed around the shield blow, making a quick slash at the exposed underside of the charr's forearm, protected only by a cloth jerkin. The captain howled in pain as the attack drew blood. The two spun to face one another, squaring-off in a circular walk.

"You think a little cut will bring me down, whelp?" Greer spat.

"Not at all, but the bristle-burn poison will. Tell me, charr, have you ever been in so much pain that you begged for the comforting release of death? No?" the courtier sneered as the charr dropped his shield, arm numb. "This should be an exciting new adventure in suffering for y—"

In an instant, Iyone appeared in a flash of lighting. The courtier's sinister expression vanished as the Pact recruit ran two curved metal daggers into his chest before sending a burst of elemental lighting throughout every inch of his body, his corpse twitching erratically after it fell to the ground.

The last of the Nightmare sylvari stood at the edge of the clearing, wielding a knotted wooden staff with both hands. As her eyes met Iyone's, she dropped her weapon and turned to run only to trip on the burnt corpse of a former ally. As she scrambled to stand, she watched as the Pact sylvari wrenched her daggers free and started over to her. Before she could flee, an earthy hand rose from the ground and caught her ankle. A second hand emerged and caught her other leg, bringing her to her knees. Tears streamed from the courtier's eyes as Iyone stood directly in front of her, hands gripped firmly around her daggers.

"Please! *Please!* I only joined the court because they made me; they threatened to do terrible things to me, to those I loved. You have to believe me!"

"Recruit! Stand down!" Greer howled through his own pain.

Iyone turned back to face the injured charr. "They don't deserve your mercy, Captain."

"She's unarmed, defenseless, and she's surrendered," the charr grunted, falling to one knee. "You're better than them, Iyo. You don't have to stoop to their level to avenge your friend's death."

A few seconds passed in silence. Iyone stepped back from the hostage and dropped her daggers, placing a hand on her forehead. She staggered just to keep balance. "I-I'm sorry. I don't know what I was... thinking."

The earthen shackles dissolved and the courtier slowly rose to her feet, hands in the air, her face a mixture of fear and gratitude. "Th-thank you. I promise, I'll go. You won't see me ever again," she said, backing away cautiously before breaking into a full sprint, vanishing into the overgrowth to the east.

With an audible thud, Greer collapsed onto the ground, armored body writhing from the poison. His vision blurred, barely able to see the recruit run to his side.

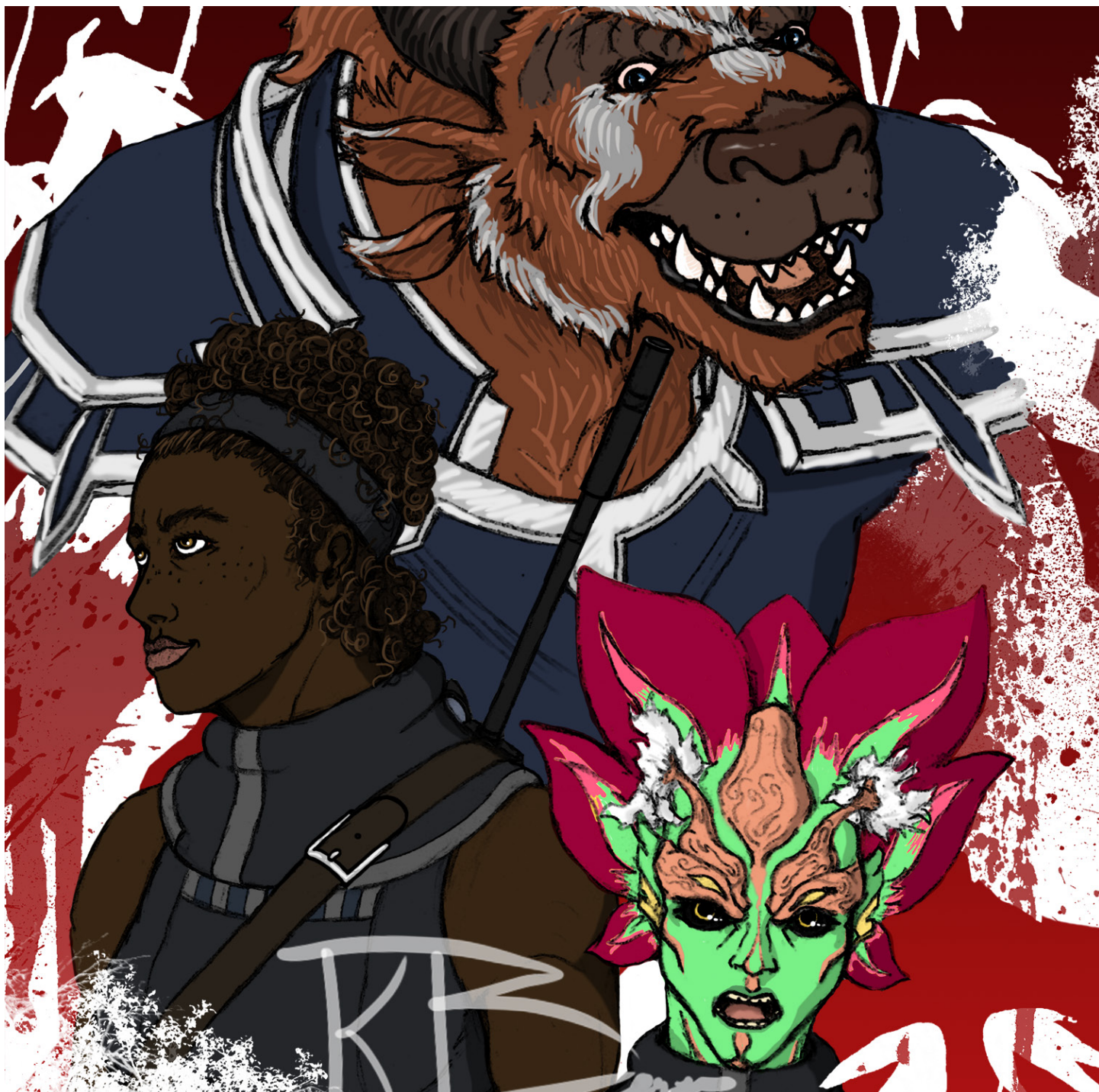
"Captain?! Captain!" Iyone wailed, dropping to her knees to find the wound. She reached

down to unstrap one of the charr's plated shoulder pauldrons, but stopped as Rilana bolted into the encampment.

"Don't move him! It'll just make his pain worse," the human cried, nearly throwing her medic bag down at the Greer's side.

The engineer's arrival brought the sylvari some ease. "Rilana! Thank the Pale Mother."

"Thank her later, you're going to need to hold him steady while I give him a poke."





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