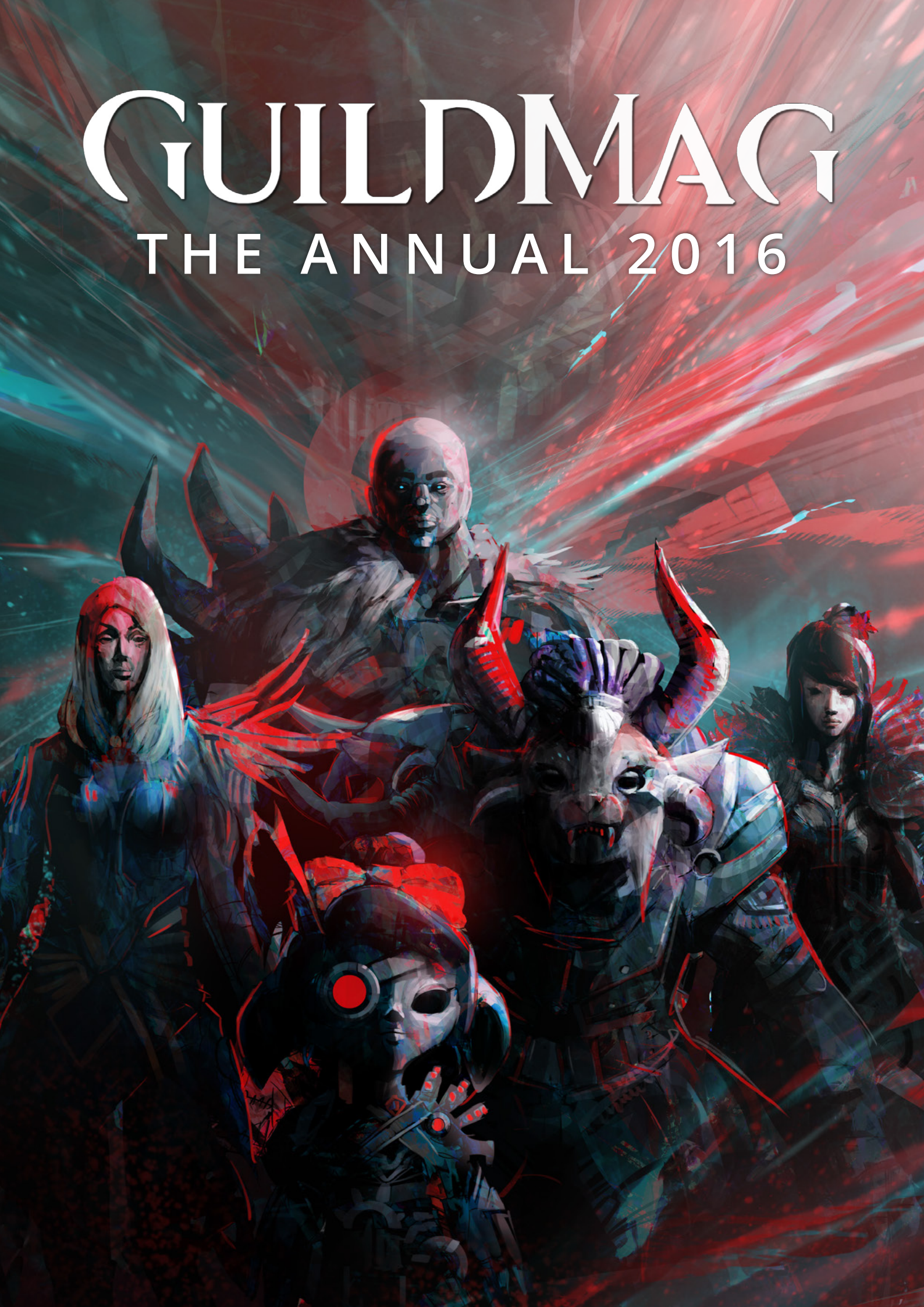
GUILDMAG

THE ANNUAL 2016



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EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to the GuildMag Annual 2016. You're reading a very special magazine produced by content creators from across the *Guild Wars* 2 community - we hope you enjoy it!

Last year's Annual was a huge success; this time around, we've attempted to go bigger and better. We've worked with some amazing people from across the community to produce one of our largest magazines to date - all of whom you can see overleaf (go and check out their content!). Our own team of writers, editors and designers has also worked tirelessly since September 2016 to fill in the rest of the gaps; this entire magazine has been a labour of love to produce something we can all be proud of, and I'd like to extend my gratitude to everyone involved.

For recipients of the printed version of this magazine, we've donated $1 to Doctors Without Borders for each copy sold during the pre-order phase late last year. For this digial version, we encourage you to donate an amount of your choosing at *doctorswithoutborders.org*. Making the Annual much more than just a magazine is something that I'm extremely pleased about, and hopefully next year we can raise even more for a worthy cause.

There's almost too much inside this issue to condense into a few short sentences. We've included typical articles on lore, fashion and art, but there's also much, much more just waiting to be uncovered. I'd suggest grabbing yourself a hot drink and exploring at your leisure - and whilst you're at it, try making one of Peachy's recipes in our Cooking with Kasmeer article!

As a final word, I'd like to thank Vasburg for once again producing an amazing piece of cover art. This is the third cover he's designed for our magazine over the years, and he's a truly awesome concept artist who takes on numerous projects around the Guild Wars 2 community.

Happy reading!

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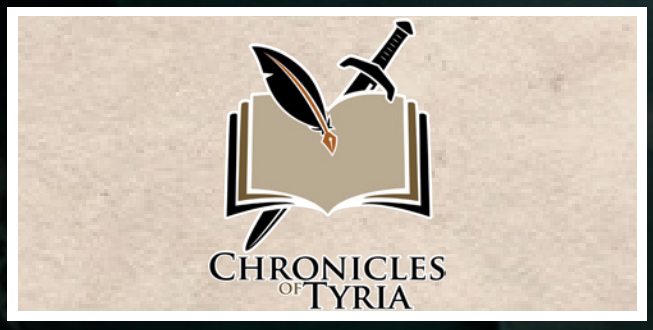
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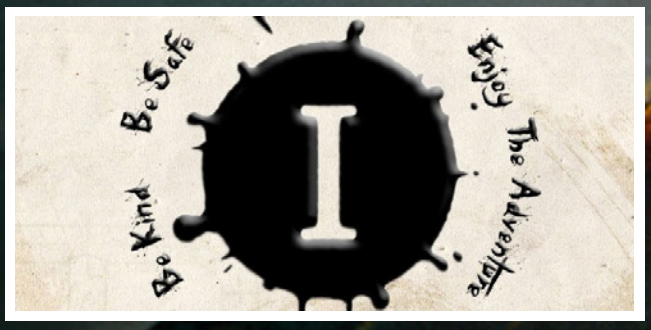


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A HISTORY OF MAGIC

BY DRAXYNNIC

Listeners of the GuildMag Podcast may recall a discussion in Episode 52 regarding questions as to the nature of magic, and if I had been present I might have been able to answer some of them. Unfortunately, due to timezone differences, it doesn't seem to be practical for me to get on one of the shows, so I thought I'd prepare a discussion on what I might have said if I had been on the show.

Since the operation of magic is tightly bound up with the history of magic, I will start with a review of the history of magic in Tyria. Following that, I'll give my thoughts on how magic is currently used, and on just what the ley lines actually are.

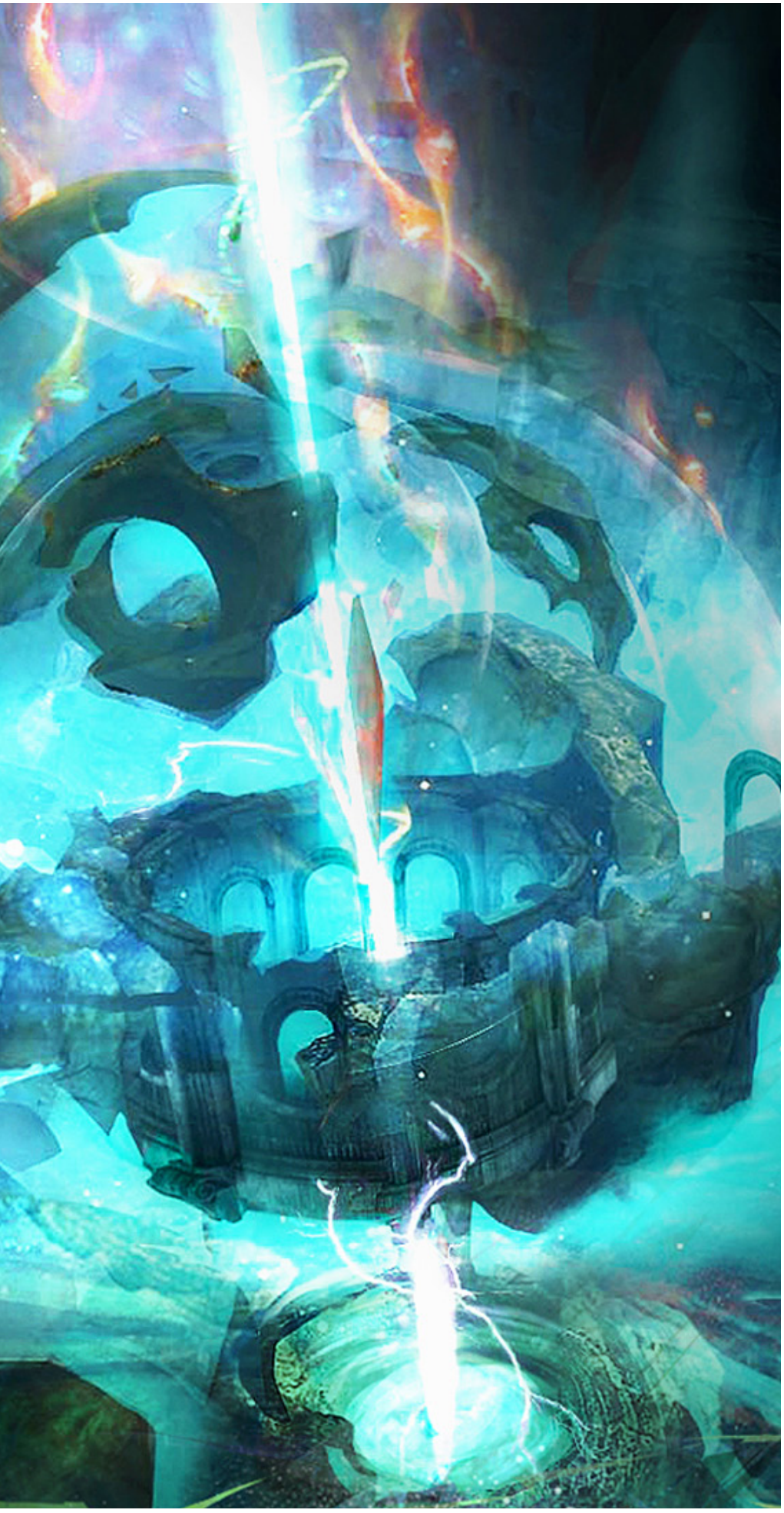
Before I start, I should issue a disclaimer: A lot of this comes from my own deductions and extrapolations: ArenaNet has continued to be fairly cagey on a lot of the details. I'm fairly confident in them, but it is worth taking them with a grain of salt (or your condiment of choice). For those who might draw different conclusions, I'll try to identify what is official lore.

AFTER THE CREATION OF THE BLOODSTONE

Our knowledge of the history of magic largely starts with the Seer-made bloodstones. Legends prior to the rise of the bloodstones, originating from the jotun, kodan, and other older races, suggest that magic was wild and untamed in this period, with spirits forming spontaneously out of this environment. Seeking to claim this energy, the Elder Dragons arose as predators, consuming as much magic as they could for themselves.

In response, the first bloodstone was created, presumably by the Seers. The bloodstone served to suck all of the ambient magic out of the world, starving the Elder Dragons and putting them into hibernation. Over time, magic returned to the world – partially through being radiated from the sleeping dragons (as seen with Primordus in *Eye of the North*) and, possibly, partially through controlled release from the bloodstone to





revitalise the world. Over time, this release reintroduced enough energy into the world that the Elder Dragons arose to consume it once more.

From the speech of the Last Forgotten in Tarir (A Study in Gold achievement), this cycle appears to have repeated more than once until the mursaat betrayal and destruction of the Seers resulted in the loss of the knowledge needed to create new bloodstones.

Immediately after the creation of the bloodstone and the hibernation of the Elder Dragons, it seems likely that the amount of magic left free in Tyria would have been virtually nil. This is not to say, however, that all of Tyria's magic would have been bound up in the dragons and the bloodstone.

> "The bloodstone served to suck all of the ambient magic out of the world

This is because some magic is required for life. A large enough concentration can result in things coming to life that normally shouldn't (such as elementals), but any form of sentient life has some in them (for completely sessile life, such as most plants, it remains unclear if they need magic to live). It is this energy that necromancers harvest through Soul Reaping and, in the original *Guild Wars*, in a controlled fashion through sacrificing their own vitality.

Other spellcasters rarely tap into the power of life force (particularly their own) – however, stories of heroes sacrificing their lives in order to power some extraordinary spell or ritual are probably also the result of those heroes tapping into their own essence.

Even more appears to be required to maintain genuine sapience. This is the explanation that ArenaNet has given for why some dragon minions are automatons and others are sapient: when a dragon claims a creature as a minion, the dragon can choose to suck that minion dry of all but the bare minimum amount of magic required for it to stay functional (resulting in the automatons we see in most minions - epitomised by the Risen farmers in Orr, which mindlessly and pointlessly continue the tasks they did in life unless an uncorrupted creature approaches). Alternatively, the dragon might allow the minion to retain enough to maintain its own sapience, allowing it to continue to act as it did in life except with total loyalty to the dragon - Labwan the Deceiver encountered in the Personal Story being a good example. Or, if the dragon is genuinely impressed with the potential of a new minion, it might infuse that minion with new power, granting it abilities beyond what it had in life - such as the Eyes of Zhaitan.

Some power, in addition to that required for life and sapience, also seems to be able to be stored by an entity for magical purposes. This is probably the "Energy" of *Guild Wars 1* (now largely irrelevant due to the greater availability of ambient magic in *Guild Wars 2*) and more magically potent beings such as the elder races may be able to store much more than the typical mortal spellcaster.

Therefore, since we know that there were survivors (including sapient survivors) of the last dragon awakening, some of Tyria's magic would have remained free of the Elder Dragons and the bloodstone. However, it's possible that a lack of 'free' energy forced Tyria to remain in much the same state of devastation as it had been left in by the Elder Dragons; there was no magic to fuel new life.

This appears to be where the gods came in. Whether by using their own personal magic brought by them from the Mists, or through their initial act of accessing it from the bloodstones, the gods employed magic to revitalise Tyria, an act which causes some to credit them with "creating" the world.

However, the amount of 'free' magic remained slim even then. It's likely that the elder races, particularly those that are exclusively spellcasters such as the Forgotten and mursaat, retained some, either in themselves or in external receptacles lesser to the bloodstone. For most of the mortals in Tyria, however,





magic as we currently know it seems to have been unavailable.

There was, however, an alternative. The world was still filled with spirits that had survived the last dragon awakening, and the spirits of the dead could be contacted within the Mists. Compared to working magic yourself, it seems that it only requires a limited amount of energy to perform a ritual that attracts a spiritual entity, and then to beseech or force it to use its own power on your behalf. According to An Empire Divided, Canthan ritualists used this principle for centuries before conventional magic was available to humans. Other relationships with spirits may also have been formed during this time – early rangers using similar practices to commune with the spirits of nature, and perhaps this was also when the ancestors of the norn forged their bond with the Spirits of the Wild.

It's possible that ritualists had also found a second way to get around the limited availability of magic in Tyria: using what was available to open a small rift to the Mists, drawing on its energy and making use of that.

There were, however, some regions that may have had usable magic even then, due to power emanating from the sleeping Elder Dragons or from other sources. Races that had settled in such areas, such as asura settling near to the sleeping Primordus, may also have been able to develop magical sciences and traditions from the energy that was available in their location.

> " It's possible that ritualists had also found a second way to get around the limited availability of magic

This might, incidentally, explain why the asura never - to our knowledge - had a religion the way most races do. In the time before the gift of magic, most races relied on invoking supernatural entities as intermediaries. Asura, on the other hand, may never have needed to forge such relationships – their power came from the sleeping Primordus, and they didn't have to make contact with anything to use it. Even then, however, it's possible that the energy available to the early asura was less than needed for sorcery as we now know it, requiring them to develop devices to collect, store, and utilise magic - forming the basis for the science of asura magitech as we know it now.

And then, for reasons unknown to the asura at the time, magic suddenly surged in power... and then died back down just as mysteriously, albeit at a higher level than it had been before.

THE GIFT OF MAGIC

The moment at which the gods started granting true magic to mortals is unclear. The first indication comes with the human invasion of the land now known as Ascalon – charr records claim that the humans used spells they had never seen before, and the Scriptures of Dwayna can be read as Dwayna granting healing orisons to Doric and his followers. These events, however, are ambiguous, as both could simply mean that the gods were providing their assistance directly rather than teaching magic to humans. The Scriptures of Grenth and Lyssa, a little less than fifty years before the Exodus, however, appear to reference those gods teaching the first human necromancer and mesmer respectively.

As is well known, this did not go smoothly – Abaddon granted power too freely, and wars erupted as a result. Up to now, we've largely assumed that this happened because Abaddon was unscrupulous and granted too much to those who would use it irresponsibly. With the observation that bloodstone magic addiction can lead to insanity in Bloodstone Fen, however, we might have another explanation: whether by accident or design, Abaddon literally just gave out too much, and the recipients were driven insane just like the bloodstone addicts in Bloodstone Fen. Such an explanation would explain the fall of the jotun.

In response, the gods split the bloodstone into five pieces, and in doing so they split magic into four schools: Preservation, Destruction, Denial and Aggression. Each is generally considered to correspond to monk/guardian, elementalist, mesmer, and necromancer respectively, although only elementalist has been confirmed. This both reduced the amount of energy flowing into the world and, through a mechanism that was never really explained, regulated it so that no one individual could use the power of all four schools through the bloodstones.

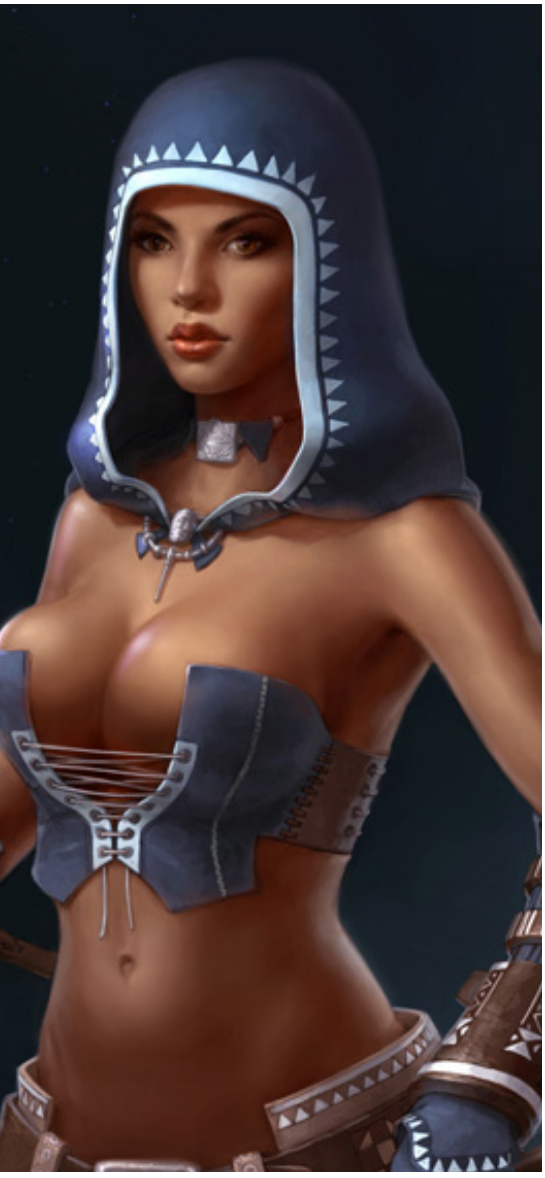
> "Abaddon granted power too freely, and wars erupted as a result

Given Taimi's theory in Season 3, Episode 2 that magic is like a spectrum of energy that can be divided into sections with different properties, it is likely that the effect was to split the spectrum coming from the bloodstones: instead of one stone radiating undifferentiated "white" energy, each of the stones radiated power from a specific part of the spectrum. So instead of spellcasters being able to conveniently draw in power from the whole spectrum at once, they had to choose specific schools (like a colour in the analogy) to work with.

Immediately after this event, it appears that the level of ambient magic in Tyria was still fairly low. Therefore, spellcasters largely drew from the bloodstones and accepted their limitations as a result, forming the four primary spellcasting professions we know from *Prophecies*. According to An Empire Divided, ritualists also started to augment their spirit binding through adopting true magic, but access to spirit binding gave ritualists a greater degree of versatility than contemporary magic-users of other professions. The revelation in *Sea of*



Sorrows that guardians use some ritualist teachings also suggests that the magic they used was the same school as monks and guardians. This was largely how things were assumed to be in *Guild Wars 1*, however, there are some cracks. Some of the professions introduced in the *Factions* and *Nightfall* campaigns appear to be using abilities that belong to multiple schools of magic: assassin skills could be linked to the mesmer and necromancer schools, and dervishes could be linked to monks, elementalists, and necromancers. If



it was assumed that these professions were entirely powered from the bloodstones, it would then be theoretically possible to have a dervish/assassin character in *Guild Wars 1* that drew from all four schools.

The obvious answer is that these professions are not drawing from the bloodstones. Dervishes, for instance, explicitly draw power from the gods, particularly with the Mysticism line – it would be reasonable to assume that the dervish primarily employs elemental magic, and invokes blessings from the gods in order to heal, smite, and steal life from their enemies.

An alternative explanation, however, is that the powers of these professions developed from ambient magic having grown to a level where it becomes useful to mortal practitioners. While assassins and dervishes had a versatility that the four original primary spellcasters lacked, they also had less magical power than the cloth-armoured professions, suggesting that they may have been drawing from a weaker source than the bloodstones. It's possible that ambient magic, leaked from the dragons and possibly the energies remaining from spells cast from the power of the bloodstones, would have served as this alternative source – being independent from the bloodstones, it would have allowed for its wielder to have a greater degree of versatility at a cost in total power.

In the time of *Guild Wars 2*, this power has grown further, to the point where it is possible that all spellcasters are now using ambient energies by default and the bloodstones are only serving to provide a boost (if anything at all). The four schools still have an influence – most spellcasters still fall into one of the four categories – however, this may simply be a product of how magic is traditionally taught rather than a fixed rule. It's been mentioned in the 2013 Espirits d'Orr interview with Angel McCoy that some younger spellcasters now believe that the four schools are obsolete.

As a result, the versatility of the various spellcasting professions has significantly broadened. Along with the loss of knowledge and contact with Cantha when Lion's Arch flooded, this explains why ritualists have largely disappeared, as their methods have largely become obsolete as explained in 2RP's lore interview in 2014.

This concludes the review over the history of magic. Later in this issue, we will present a companion piece which discusses how magic appears to work in Tyria's present.



WINTERSDAY COOKING WITH KASMEER

BY Aurora Peachy

PEPPERMINT OMNOMBERRY BAR



Hello Tyrians and welcome to Cooking with Kasmeer! I'm here with some simple ideas to spice up your favorite treats for the holidays and impress your friends this Wintersday. Whether you have a taste for sugar cookies, brownies with peppermint, or classic cheesecake, I've got a recipe that you'll love!

Results not tested on asura. Smiles and words of thanks not guaranteed.

Here's a super easy idea to fancy-up those regular chocolate brownies for the holidays!

INGREDIENTS

Ingredients for your favorite brownie recipe
1 jar of peppermint frosting
1 bag of York Peppermint Patties
Optional: replace peppermint patties with omnomberries, if you're brave enough to venture to Orr to pick them!
Red or green sprinkles
1 bag of peppermint candies

METHOD

1. Find your favorite brownie recipe, whether that be from scratch or a boxed mix, and follow the instructions to make your brownie batter.
2. Set aside about 1/4th of the batter in a separate bowl.
3. Grease up your pan then pour the larger portion of batter into the pan.
4. Carefully arrange the peppermint patties in a single layer on top of the batter.
5. Pour the remaining batter on top of the patties, then stick it all in the oven to bake. It might take a little longer than usual because of the peppermints, but watch it carefully, if left in for too long the mints will ooze out the top!
6. Once the brownies have cooled, spread the peppermint icing on top in an even layer.
7. Carefully cut into serving-sized squares and place on a festive platter.
8. Add a light dusting of sprinkles to the top of the brownies.
9. Place 1 hard peppermint candy in the center of each square, standing upright so your guests don't try to bite into it!



WINTERSDAY SWIRL COOKIES

For those with a slightly higher rank in cooking and a little more prep time, here's a yummy Wintersday cookie recipe that's sure to please in both taste and presentation!

INGREDIENTS

4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 1/3 cups butter (softened)
1 3/4 cup white sugar
2 eggs, beaten
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
Red and green food coloring
Optional: ½ teaspoon peppermint extract

METHOD

1. Sift flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt into a bowl.
2. Beat butter and sugar in a separate mixing bowl until light and fluffy.
3. To the butter and sugar mix, beat in eggs and vanilla until smooth.
4. Gradually stir in the flour mixture until evenly blended.
5. Divide the dough into two equal parts and place in separate bowls.
6. Gradually add small amounts of red food coloring to one bowl of dough and mix until the color is even throughout and you have the desired richness of colour. Optional: add peppermint extract for a little extra Wintersday flavor!
7. Repeat with the other half of your dough with the green food coloring (or keep it out!).
8. Set out some wax paper and set the red dough on it. Then use a rolling pin to flatten out the dough to 1/4 inch (5mm) thickness. Do the same with the green dough. If the dough is sticky or hard to work with, place a second sheet of wax paper on top, or refrigerate the dough for 15 minutes then try again.
9. Carefully flip the green dough and place it on top of the red dough, then remove the wax paper.
10. Beginning on one edge, roll the two doughs into a log so the two colors spiral together. Wrap the log in wax paper, then in a clean cotton towel, and freeze for 1 hour.
11. Preheat oven to 400° F (200° C). Lightly grease two baking sheets.
12. Unwrap the dough and place on a clean, lightly floured surface. Cut the log into 1/8 inch (3 mm) thick slices (try using a cheese slicer if you have one). Place on baking sheets.
13. Place cookies in oven and bake for around 8 minutes. Watch carefully to prevent edges from browning! Remove from oven and cool on racks.



HOMEMADE CHEESECAKE

Here's a more classic recipe that everyone will love! This homemade cheesecake is easy to make, and you don't even need one of those fancy cheesecake pans! Did you even know there were fancy cheesecake pans?!

INGREDIENTS

2 cups graham cracker crumbs
½ cup butter
2 lbs cream cheese (sit out well in advance to soften)
¾ cup sugar
1 tsp lemon juice
1 tsp vanilla
8 eggs
1 pint sour cream
3 tsp sugar

METHOD

1. Crush up graham crackers into crumbs and put into a bowl. Tip: Use a rolling pin to crush the graham crackers inside a sealable ziplock bag.
2. Put butter into a microwave safe bowl and very slowly melt the butter until it's a liquid. Use the lowest power setting on your microwave!
3. Pour the melted butter into the bowl with graham cracker crumbs and mix with a wooden spoon until blended evenly.
4. Put crumbs into a 13"x9" cake pan. Press them firmly onto the bottom of the pan, distributing evenly. This will be your bottom crust.
5. Preheat oven to 350° F (175° C).
6. Put softened cream cheese into a mixing bowl. Add ¾ cups of sugar and mix until fluffy and fully blended.
7. Add lemon juice and vanilla.
8. Add eggs one by one while mixing. The mixture will become thin at this point.
9. Pour the mixture on top of the graham cracker crust.
10. Put in the oven and bake for 35 minutes.
11. Remove from oven and let cool completely. The cake will sink and may crack - don't worry about it!
12. In a bowl, mix the sour cream and sugar until combined.
13. Spread the mix on top of the cooled cheesecake.
14. Serve with strawberries or cherries and enjoy!

AN INTERVIEW WITH VASBURG



This year's amazing cover art was produced by Vasburg - a renowned artist with a passion for the *Guild Wars* franchise. He's the person behind creations such as the Call of Cantha, plus previous GuildMag covers and various other pieces of art used by content creators. We decided to sit down and learn more about the man behind the name.

Two years ago, we interviewed you for our special Wintersday 2014 issue. How much has changed since then regarding your inspirations, your skills, or even your process and tools?

Oh, how time passes; just as last time it has been a blast to work with you guys and girls!

My tools have changed very little. I work primarily in Photoshop but have been trying out 3D a bit recently. In my spare time I like to explore experimental techniques and have been trying out things in the field of traditional art, robotics, paper-engineering and kaleidoscopes. My inspirations, as my skills, have hopefully broadened.

Many people know you as the artist behind Call of Cantha. What is it about that region that you're drawn to above Tyria and Elona? How do the artistic aesthetics differ between the regions?

Cantha is, in my opinion, very rich and fruitful in innovation. Many games that reach out for an eastern-themed environment tend to look very similar in comparison. *Factions*, however, introduced the Echovald Forest and the Jade Sea, along with interesting lore and well thought-out residents that made the content feel believable instead of just being unique for the sake of being unique. I can answer the "what" question, but not the "why" in regards to Elona and Tyria. I know this might sound a bit crazy, but every time I stumble upon the old soundtracks I simply feel at home.

You have a very unique art style - what do you think makes good concept art for video games?

My opinion on that has changed over the years actually. I still see concept art as something very objective, as it is a very specialized tool to solve visual problems. Often times it's also very technical, speaking of orthographic paintings for later use in 3D; style is, in this case, not important. Every painting obeys the rules of design principles and color theory and can be taken apart and planned through that. Personally, though, and probably the worst thing you can say in a job interview, is that I find that really good concept art simply has soul.

Are there other game, film, or TV universes that influence your work?

Very little in the realm of visuals, especially games, because I simply don't have the time nowadays. I recently discovered listening to audiobooks while I work though, and have been enjoying H.P. Lovecraft quite a bit. It's really nice, but I can't help but wonder why everything in his universe is cyclopean. Ancient folklores (especially African) are also super interesting. The TV comes to use rarely and I usually choose it as company during meals and watch SpongeBob.

How much of a role do self and peer critiques play in how you approach or reiterate your work?

It is fundamental! Critique has a bad image because many see this as a personal matter, but it truly is not. Critique let's you see your own mistakes and really only helps you to make something look better, so I appreciate every critique I can get. I sometimes think, "No respect for the painting." If it doesn't work, take it apart again and rearrange it. Never get stuck in thinking things like "but

I already rendered this object for an hour; I can't put something in front of it now."

Which artists do you feel have been inspirations for your own work or areas of study?

Oh man, there are so many amazing artists out there, but my favorites are probably (in no specific order) Richard Anderson, Theo Prins, Naomi Baker, Ruan Jia and Thomas Scholes to name a few. Daniel Dociu, however, is to me what Superman was to many kids.

While art interpretation is subjective to the perspectives and experiences of the viewer, can you give us a couple of thoughts on some of the themes and emotions you wanted to convey with this issue's cover art?

I wanted to shoot into a rather grim direction from the beginning; since two dragons are now active, things are getting more tense and I really wanted to incorporate that. The composition is actually just a big hourglass. The characters make the illustration very heavy on the bottom so I wanted to balance it out on the top. There was a mid version in which we experimented with orange and blue, but given that the change also incorporated complementary colors and a cold-warm contrast, it made the cover look too smooth and appear friendly. I therefore went with blue and red to make it look ruthless. Braham is the focal point and has piercing eyes, because he still has a bone to pick with somebody.

Have you been tempted to paint Aurene yet? She's quite cute.

Ah, yes, she's sweet, but unfortunately cute things aren't really my *métier*; if possible, I intend to make my works appear very serious. However, there are tons of amazing artists in the *Guild Wars 2* community and I bet that we get flooded with great illustrations of Aurene one way or another.

You currently do a lot of freelance work; have you ever considered applying to ArenaNet as a concept artist?

To be very blunt, yes; I'd love to work alongside my childhood heroes. However, I immensely respect the work of the art direction and find that ArenaNet has established one of the most powerful art departments around. I'm in no position to judge if I am ready or good enough to be a valuable asset to this company. It's a childhood dream, but if they can manage to always find artists that surpass my skill, it's for the better of everyone, although this might mean that my dreams never come true.



I'm luckily no longer in the position of struggling with how to begin a project or having to spend too much time with trial and error. Things like orthographic paintings, vanishing points, foreshortening became easier with time, which isn't to say that there are not a lot of things still to learn. Thankfully, I have been able to gather many valuable experiences within the gaming industry and I'm looking forward to the years to come.



THE WORKINGS OF MODERN MAGIC

BY DRAXYNNIC

Earlier in this issue, we discussed the history of magic, and how it has influenced the course of events in Tyria and been changed by those events in turn. Now, we look at the present day. However it may have worked in the past, what rules does it seem to be following now?

MORTAL USE OF MAGIC

How magic is used by mortals is something that appears to have changed quite significantly over the course of Tyria's history. Prior to the unlocking of the bloodstone, all magic would likely have been ritualistic in nature – calling on spirits and other supernatural entities to wield power on the caller's behalf. Such rituals still exist, although it is likely that only the most powerful spirits can work spells that are beyond that of a skilled practitioner. It's also possible that some primitive races (such as grawl) are actually using true magic when they believe they are calling on an external source. This trap could be particularly easy to fall into with guardian-style magic: we have been told their magical ability is augmented by the wielder's faith, with no requirement that what the user has faith in is actually real.

During the period of *Guild Wars 1*, magic appeared to have a relatively limited availability, and mortals needed to gather it (presumably drawing from the bloodstone) before it could be used. This would be the foundation of the original game's energy resource, with spellcasters developing a number of skills to increase the rate at which they can gain energy and/or deny it to their enemies.

Presently, though, it seems that ambient magic has become so abundant that it is literally there for the taking, removing energy as a limitation for modern spellcasters. Because of this, only extremely strong forms of energy denial (such as the draining effect of bloodstone shards) are effective against modern spellcasters. Use of receptacles, artifacts and foci can augment these abilities, but most users no

longer have a limited energy supply that needs to be built up after it is exhausted. Revenants are a clear exception to this rule, as the power that fuels their magic is drawn from the Mists, not from Tyria's ambient magic. Fortunately for them, with magic manipulation effects having become obsolete, they don't need to fear being energy-denied by mesmers as could happen in *Guild Wars 1*.

Finally, the magic bound up in life force is still available. Necromancers seem to have largely ceased using their own vitality to power spells, although this may be the source of the conditions generated when using Corruption skills. They are still quite happy to harvest it from enemies, although this still seems to be a fairly inefficient process. The powers generated by a necromancer through tapping an enemy's life force are minor compared to the effects historically attributed to a spellcaster sacrificing their own life even in times when energy was less abundant - such as Koro Sagewind, Empress Tahmu, and Naku in Tahnnakai Temple.

The process by which spellcasters are able to burn themselves out in this fashion is unclear. It's obviously not something that anyone can do, otherwise every magic-user that is defeated in battle would do so. One limitation appears to be skill – in order to generate truly powerful effects, it seems that the would-be martyr must already be an experienced practitioner. The other common factor seems to be a desire to protect (or at least avenge) others - Koro burned herself out to protect the settlers of what would become Ebonhawke; Tahmu to save her city from naga; and Naku sought to avenge the people of his destroyed hometown. A spellcaster cannot simply burn themselves out as an act of spite to turn a personal defeat into a blast of mutually assured destruction – such acts have only been achieved when something bigger was at stake than the spellcaster's own desires, something powerful enough to overcome the individual's instincts of self-preservation.

As has been previously discussed, it's unclear to what extent the bloodstones continue to influence mortal use of magic. When asked, ArenaNet has generally used the analogy of starting with one science degree and then taking up another as the reason why spellcasters are limited to their profession. However, this is possible in real life, particularly when fields overlap, or somebody's area of interest is partly in one field and partly in another and they focus only on the subjects of each field that they consider relevant. Moreover, it was known to happen in *Guild Wars 1* – this was essentially what secondary professions were.





Some of the current elite specialisations do have a 'secondary profession'-type feel, so this may become more common in *Guild Wars 2* going forward - and it's possible that the increased abundance of magic will itself lead to the rise of new elite specialisations empowered by the magic that is steadily growing wilder in Tyria.

It's possible that the bloodstones do continue to exert some influence, making it easier for someone to, say, become a mesmer or a necromancer than it is to straddle the line between the two, even if the student focuses on areas that the two professions have in common (such as boon and condition manipulation). Alternatively, it's possible that those asura are right, and the only reason the magical professions remain split as they are is the passing on of traditions that were formed when the bloodstones were more important; nowadays, magic is more of a continuous spectrum and the opportunity is there for new professions to arise through combining different fields of magical study (although the 2013 Esprits d'Orr interview indicates that there is the potential for explosions to result from attempting to combine different types of energy). We probably won't see it until *Guild Wars* 2 gives way to a sequel, but it will be interesting to see if the destruction of the Maguuma bloodstone has any influence on the practice of magic.

Alternatively, it's possible that magic does still come in specific flavours. According to Ela Makkay in Hidden Arcana, each dragon has two spheres of influence (some of which have not yet been identified), while according to Taimi, it seems that the spectrum is composed of these spheres - meaning that magic is likely composed of twelve different domains. Interestingly, however, apart from necromancers and Zhaitan, none of the professions clearly line up to a dragon (elemental powers, for instance, seem to be split between the four remaining dragons), and the plant domain is largely missing from the professions. This discrepancy may be a result of how the gods went about dividing the bloodstones.

> " It's possible that the bloodstones do continue to extert some influence

THE COLOURS OF MAGIC?

While it may be extending the metaphor a little too far, Taimi's metaphor of magic being a spectrum (in Season 3, Episode 2) raises the possibility that the colours associated with the various magical professions may not be arbitrary, but may in fact be an indication of where that profession falls on the magical spectrum. Necromancers, guardians, and mesmers are associated with effects that are green, blue and purple

respectively (unless the effect manipulates a physical substance with its own colour, such as necromancers siphoning blood). This may indicate that guardian (and monk) energies fall between necromancer and mesmer in the spectrum. Elementalist magic is obscured by the colours of the elements conjured, but arcane spells (which are the most likely to represent "pure" elementalist magic that has not manifested an element) typically appear white with a greenish yellow tinge - similar, albeit paler, to the spirit animals conjured by rangers for some of their attacks.

If this is true, then the tendency of many healing skills to have blue effects even if the profession is normally associated with a different colour might be evidence of other professions drawing from the "blue" portion of the magical spectrum (associated with monks and guardians) in their healing spells. Furthermore, it may be that the colours associated with the effects of less magical professions - such as the aforementioned ranger spirit animals, or the indigo trails of thief skills - may be a hint as to which forms of magic are being used by these professions.

> " Guardian energies fall between necromancer and mesmer in the spectrum

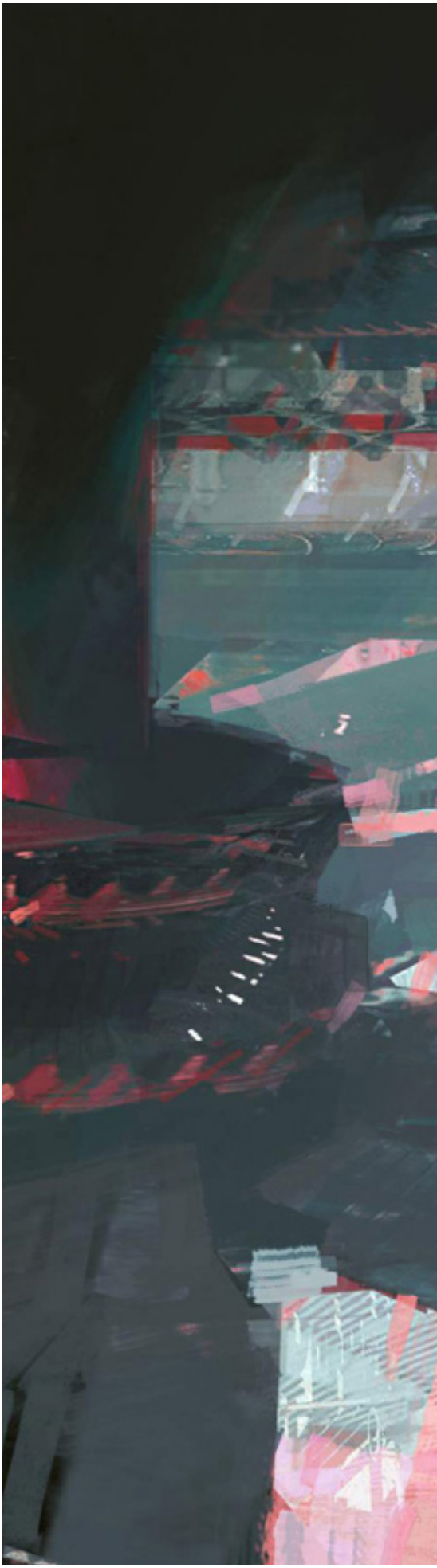
AMBIENT MAGIC AND THE LEY LINES

One other thing that came up in Episode 52 of the GuildMag Podcast was the concept of ley lines. What are they, and could the ley lines be 'stopped' in order to prevent the dragons from feeding?

The short answer to the second question is that, unless carefully planned, it would be a very bad idea.

The analogy I would make is to think of Tyria and the atmosphere surrounding it as being like a body of soil in a zero-gravity environment (since magic can flow both ways rather than having a 'downhill' direction in which it tends to flow). Within the soil, there are a set of porous pipes or other channels through which water can easily flow. Magic is the water in this analogy – it can seep its way through the soil, but a more efficient means for it to flow from one place to another is through the pipes (the ley lines, which for reasons unknown are places where magic can travel more freely and easily).

Generally speaking, then, the ley lines effectively act as a 'safety valve' for Tyria's magic. They carry power from places where the concentration and pressure is high (such as a dying dragon or an exploding bloodstone) to places where the pressure is lower or even negative (such





as a hungry dragon or magic collection device like an intact bloodstone).

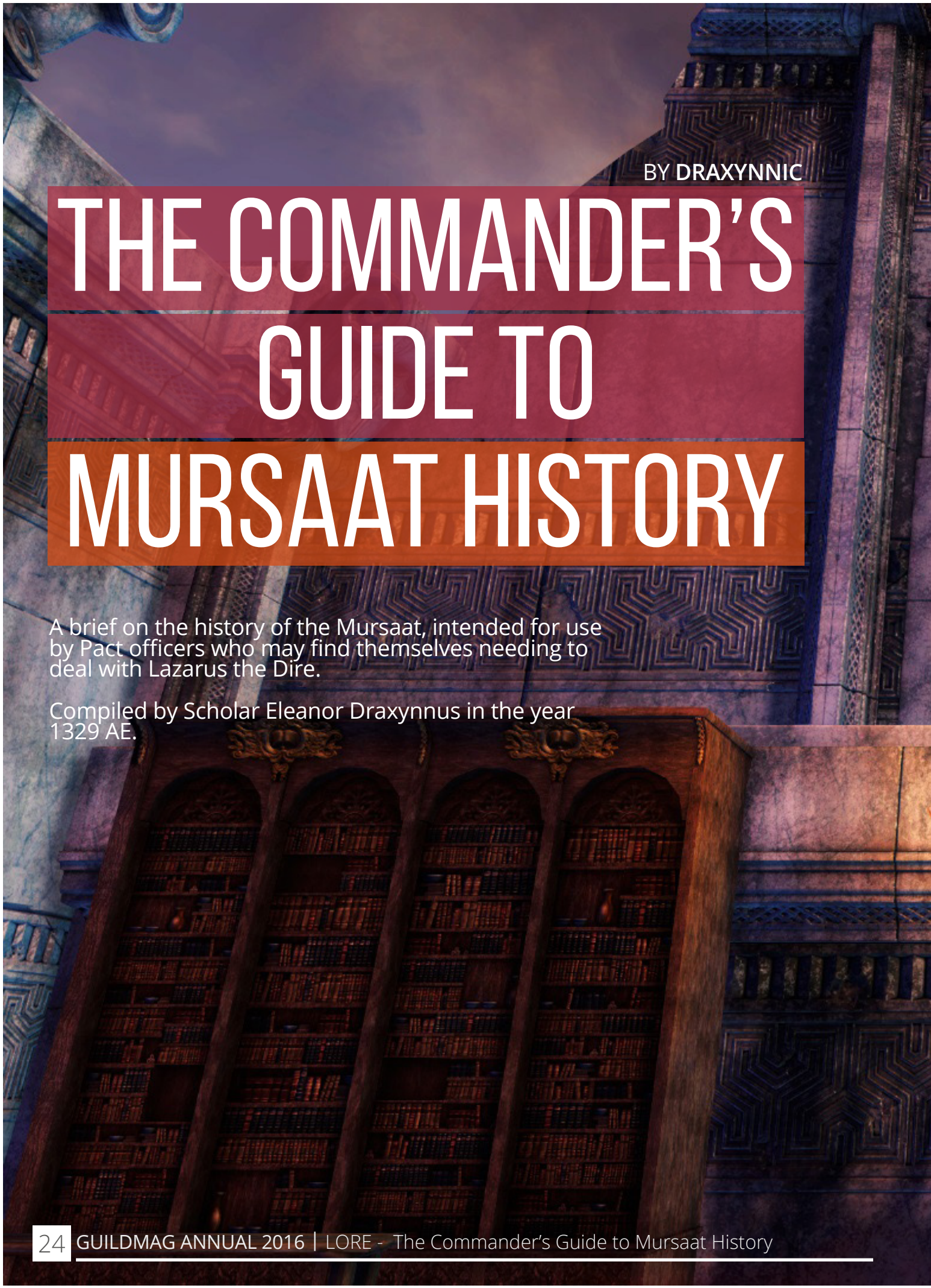
Blocking a leyline would then have the result of stopping one of these safety valves; that energy still has to go somewhere. One possibility for that 'somewhere' is that the magic is released at the point of the blockage, flooding the surrounding area - an event that would probably be unpleasant for those nearby (probably not quite to the extent of an exploding bloodstone, but certainly enough to reshape the landscape in inconvenient ways, including forming into hostile elementals). The alternative, however, is that the magic could rebound up a blocked leyline and find an alternate route to a low-pressure area.

> "The ley lines effectively act as a 'safety valve' for Tyria's magic

It was probably exactly this that led to the awakening of Mordremoth – the Breachmaker disrupted a ley line confluence and redirected magic to Mordremoth that would otherwise have gone elsewhere.

As a result, if one was to map the behaviour of the ley lines as extensively as Scarlet did – and Taimi may well have ambitions to do exactly that – it is possible that selective disruptions of the ley lines could be a weapon that is useful against the dragons. Planned carefully, magic that would otherwise flow to one of the Elder Dragons could be redirected elsewhere. However, anyone enacting such a plan would have to ensure that the 'elsewhere' is a receptacle or other location capable of handling it – otherwise, the magic will likely either find another path to a dragon, or be released into the environment as an additional contribution to Tyria's growing magic overload problems.

This concludes my thoughts on the nature of Tyrian magic! As has been previously noted, much of this has been speculation and filling in the gaps in the official lore - however, hopefully this article has provided some enlightenment on what may be going on behind the scenes with magic in Tyria and possibly provide some feed material for sparking off further discussions!

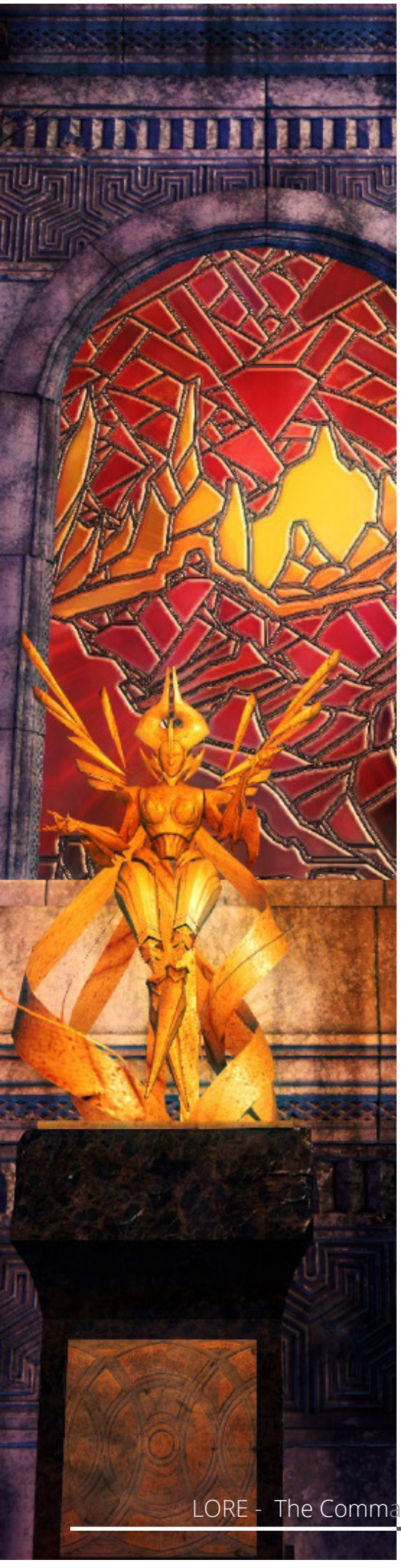


BY **DRAXYNNIC**

THE COMMANDER'S GUIDE TO MURSAAT HISTORY

A brief on the history of the Mursaat, intended for use by Pact officers who may find themselves needing to deal with Lazarus the Dire.

Compiled by Scholar Eleanor Draxynnus in the year 1329 AE.



Since the fall of Mordremoth, the unveiling of the White Mantle and the apparent resurrection of one of the ancient mursaat have turned this elder race from an academic interest of Priory historians to a topic that may be of urgent relevance to the Pact's future operations. While many among the Priory will likely be familiar with much of the known history of the mursaat, I have prepared this document in order to provide an overview of what is known about mursaat history. Readers requiring more specific information are directed to the relevant sections of the Priory archives.

> "The oldest history we know of the mursaat actually comes from one of the most recent finds - the historical tablets found around the mursaat ruins

ANCIENT HISTORY

The oldest history we know of the mursaat actually comes from one of the most recent finds - the historical tablets found around the mursaat ruins on the west side of the island now called Ember Bay. While these tablets were written by the mursaat themselves in relatively recent times, they provide an insight - albeit, possibly, a biased one - into the nature of the alliance of the elder races, and the reason for its collapse.

The tablets speak of a disagreement among the elder races on how to respond to the dragons. According to the tablets, only two races chose to go on the offensive. Both being races that exclusively trained in magic rather than the more physical aspects of warfare, the mursaat and Forgotten designed constructs to act as their front line - likely early models of the Jade constructs and the Enchanted that can now be found among mursaat ruins and in Tarir, respectively.

With these artificial soldiers, the mursaat and Forgotten launched an attack on Zhaitan, likely commanding the constructs and supporting them with magic from behind. Where the Pact - combining as it did the strengths of the five major races and several of the minor races - succeeded, however, the mursaat and Forgotten failed with great loss of life. Had the elder races all committed to a single strategy as we did, perhaps the outcome would have been different - certainly, the mursaat seemed to think so, as they blamed the "desertion" of the other elder races for their defeat and the losses incurred in the attempt.

While the Forgotten were then, apparently, willing to accede to the plan of the Seers to seal and hide magic from the dragons in the original bloodstone, the mursaat were not. Instead, they enacted a plan to escape the dragons and keep their magic by slipping into a side-reality that the dragons could not access, abandoning their former allies to the dragons. The other elder races viewed this as a betrayal, with the Seers going to war against the mursaat. However, the Seers were decisively beaten by the mursaat use of Spectral Agony. Although the Seers were able to develop a countermeasure using the essence of magic-eating eidolons and their natural immunity to Spectral Agony, this came too late to prevent the devastation of the Seers or the escape of the mursaat.

Curiously, this war goes unmentioned in the mursaat tablets found at Ember Bay.

THE RETURN OF THE MURSAAT

It's not clear just when the mursaat returned to Tyria. The tablets discovered in Ember Bay suggest that they returned after the Exodus, as they describe the world as it was after the gods left – although the mursaat appear to have assumed that it was the Seers who returned magic to the world and not the Six Gods. In the same tablet, the mursaat speak of wars breaking out over



control of magic – which may be a reference to the Guild Wars.

It is clear, however, that the mursaat soon became aware of the Flameseeker Prophecies, which predicted their demise through Ascended human heroes releasing the titans to destroy the mursaat. This motivated them to fortify the Fire Islands, building obsidian walls and gates defended by their jade constructs and magic-draining Ether Seals to prevent access to the Door of Komalie. However, there was another aspect to their strategy.

It's possible that the mursaat had been keeping an eye out for a potential patsy to act as their mouthpiece in a human kingdom or it could be that Saul d'Alessio's exile was simply an opportunity for them, but in either case, it was one they didn't pass up. Was the city of towers Saul saw in the forest, and of which we've never seen evidence, real, or an illusion created for his benefit? We may never know the answers to these questions, but we do know that when Saul returned, he did so as the prophet of a new religion worshipping the mursaat as the Unseen Gods, and wearing the white mantle that would come to symbolise this new order.

However, the mursaat had a sinister purpose for the new religion, one which, according to magical research performed by the Priory's founder, Saul may not have been aware. Through the Tests of the Chosen administered by the

> " The tablets discovered in Ember Bay suggest that [the mursaat] returned after the Exodus, as they describe the world as it was after the gods left



mysterious Eye of Janthir, those with the potential to Ascend were identified. These "Chosen" were told that they were to be trained in powerful magic – instead, though, they were taken to be sacrificed on one of the bloodstones. This allowed the mursaat to kill two birds with one stone – they eliminated those who could present a threat to them, while gathering power from the sacrifices that they used to reinforce the defences of the Fire Islands, including placing a soul-powered lock on the Door of Komalie itself.

The events surrounding the Flameseeker Prophecies and the White Mantle takeover of Kryta are well recorded in human histories, as they ultimately led to Kormir's apotheosis. To summarise, the discovery that the Chosen were being murdered led to the formation of the Shining Blade, a revolution against the White Mantle and their mursaat patrons. When the Shining Blade seemed broken through the treachery of one of their own, a group of Ascended human heroes, accompanied by a contingent of Deldrimor dwarves, a survivor of the Seers and the undead Vizier of Orr, captured a mursaat portal device and used it to launch an assault on the mursaat fortresses in the Ring of Fire Island chain. Those mursaat that were not slain in the assault were wiped out by the titans released by Vizier Khilbron ... or so the heroes believed at the time.

ESCAPING EXTINCTION AND THE KRYTAN CIVIL WAR

While the conclusion of the Flameseeker Prophecies left the White Mantle in control of Kryta, the elimination of their leaders, both humans and mursaat, gave the Shining Blade the opportunity to regroup and reform, fighting the White Mantle on a more even footing in what would become a protracted civil war.

The first sign that the mursaat were not completely extinct came six years later. A high-ranking White Mantle officer, Justiciar Naveed, came to agents allied to the Shining Blade seeking help.



THE MYSTERY OF JANTHIR

The story behind the Eye of Janthir has inconsistencies – the Mantle's history claims that Saul visited the Isle of Janthir and brought the Eye back with him, but that history also states that Saul travelled south to do so, while Janthir actually lies to the north. It's possible that the truth behind this apparent discrepancy is that Saul initially travelled south, and then passed through a mursaat gate to Janthir.

All that is known about the inhabitants of Janthir is that they "possessed the gift of True Sight". A number of theories have been raised as to their identity, such as a population of Ascended humans, Seers, Forgotten, or a second mursaat outpost. Also unclear is the question of just how Saul acquired the Eye – was it gifted freely, or taken by force?

A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY?

An astute student of history will note that the downfall of the mursaat came about from their own actions, taken in an attempt to prevent the Flameseeker Prophecies from coming to pass. Were it not for the sacrifices of the Chosen, the Ascalonian refugees and the people of Kryta may have accepted the White Mantle as Kryta's new noble class, and the Shining Blade rebellion may never have happened.

So, did the Flameseeker Prophecies only come to pass because people, including the mursaat, knew about them? Or would something similar have happened anyway? From investigation of the ruins of the Vizier's tower outside of the Lasciate Gateway in Orr, it appears that Khilbron had a pre-existing grudge against the mursaat, and a connection to Abaddon that may have pushed him to open the Door regardless. Therefore, it may be that the unleashing of the titans against the mursaat was going to happen anyway. The mursaat defences, however, meant that the Vizier had to recruit powerful allies to penetrate them, allies who were in a position to take him down when his true intentions were revealed.

Lazarus the Dire, one of the mursaat leaders that had been present at Saul's disappearance, had found a way to hide from the titans by dividing his essence among his followers, to be reclaimed at a later time. Unfortunately for his followers, the procedure by which Lazarus reclaimed the divided parts of his being were fatal to the bearers. Deciding that his wish to live was greater than his loyalty to the Unseen, the Justiciar sought a way to remove the aspect so that Lazarus would no longer be able to track him. Even with an asura's aid to analyse the aspect, however, Naveed was unable to remove it, though his attempts did have the effect of somehow poisoning it. When Lazarus came to reclaim the aspect, doing so caused his own power to turn on himself, leaving him in a crippled state from which he would take centuries to recover. Fleeing the scene, Lazarus swore that "countless generations" would suffer for the injury that had been done to him.

A year later, as the Krytan Civil War reached its height, seven more mursaat emerged. It's not clear whether these mursaat had survived using the same method as Lazarus or whether they simply happened to be embedded in Kryta at the time the titans were unleashed, and therefore the failure of the titan assaults on Kryta also meant their failure to destroy these particular mursaat.

Regardless of how they survived, when Salma was proclaimed Queen by the Lionguard, these remaining mursaat threw their power behind the White Mantle, reinforcing the Mantle's defenses with their magic-draining ether seals and augmenting their armies with jade constructs. In response, the Shining Blade issued bounties on those mursaat they were able to locate, and on three who were hunted down and slain before the surviving four struck back at Lion's Arch.

This first Battle of Lion's Arch was the last effort of the mursaat and the White Mantle to regain control of Kryta. Refusing to allow the battle to become a drawn-out siege, Queen Salma opened the gates and invited the White Mantle and the mursaat into a killing zone, where the Lionguard and

> " The first Battle of Lion's Arch was the last effort of the mursaat and the White Mantle to regain control of Kryta

the Shining Blade were reinforced by powerful heroes from Ascalon and abroad, and protected against Spectral Agony by a device designed by the rogue asura Zinn and Blimm. The last known healthy mursaat in the world charged blindly into the jaws of this trap and were slain.

In the aftermath of the battle, some members of the White Mantle abandoned the cause, claiming to have had their eyes opened by the revelation of what the White Mantle had truly been doing. Others retreated into the jungle, from which they would spend the next two and a half centuries trying to destabilise and discredit the Krytan crown in hopes of toppling it once again so they could sweep back to power. With the mursaat absent, parts of the White Mantle would grow to become more of a political organisation for enemies of the Crown than a religious one, although the cult of the Unseen would forever remain part of its identity.



THE RETURN OF LAZARUS

That was, however, until recently.

With the magic released by the deaths of Zhaitan and Mordremoth, those White Mantle who still believed in the Unseen saw the opportunity to reconstitute their god. We may have had no warning of this had they not seen fit to ambush and kidnap a Pact patrol. An elite Pact squad was formed to rescue them, and in doing so, the squad discovered that the area was not simply another bandit camp. Instead, there was a White Mantle fortress nearby, where magic from bloodstones and innocents sacrificed to the bloodstones

was being collected for… something. The squad then turned its attentions to the citadel, whose mistress, High Inquisitor Xera, let slip that the purpose was to achieve Lazarus' resurrection. However, the squad was unable to reach the resurrection chamber in time to find more than an empty stasis chamber.

And then the bloodstone exploded – an event which would have been cataclysmic for all of western Tyria if Lazarus hadn't sucked the magic back in to restore himself. Surprisingly, though, his first act was to strike against the new Confessor of the White Mantle, rescuing the former Pact Commander from a potentially sticky situation and declaring that he sought more virtuous pursuits than control of Kryta before making his exit.

Since then, rumours have come from the Tarir delegation that Lazarus was present during the destroyer attack on the city, fighting against the destroyers and promising his aid against the dragons. The question is, could a being who presided over the slaughter of thousands have really turned a new leaf? The dragons were the first enemy of the mursaat, so is it possible that Lazarus is genuine about wanting to defeat the dragons … even if he might return to the goal of world domination (as laid out in one of the Ember Bay tablets) once the greater enemy is defeated? Alternatively, though, this facade may simply be part of his plans for revenge – if we are to entertain the possibility that he may be an ally, we must be vigilant against the possibility that he simply seeks to reach a position where he can undermine Tyria's efforts against the dragons at a critical moment.

> "With the magic released by the deaths of Zhaitan and Mordremoth, those White Mantle who still believed in the Unseen saw the opportunity to reconstitute their god

After all, the mursaat were able to slip between worlds to escape the dragons once before: we cannot discount the possibility that like his people did before, Lazarus plans to leave the world to be destroyed by the dragons while he hides safely in an alternate dimension until the dragons return to their slumber.







INKS ON RAIDING

MMOINKS takes a retrospective look at raids in *Guild Wars 2* and what the future may hold.

Raiding in MMORPGs has been the core of end-game content for a very long time, and yet *Guild Wars 2*, until the release of *Heart of Thorns*, had nothing like this in the game. Sure there were world bosses, the most difficult being Triple Trouble Wurm, and there were fractals, which do increase in difficulty, but nothing that was like raiding. So naturally when raiding was announced for *Heart of Thorns*, it was met with mixed reactions - though mostly positive excitement. I certainly fall into the category of positive excitement having raided in one form or another in every other MMORPG I've ever played. There is something very fun and special about raiding; the draw for me is difficult larger-group instanced encounters that you can learn and refine. Killing these bosses and clearing the instance for the first time is very exciting no matter what level you play on, and there is a real sense of accomplishment and progression that you get from raiding. Having said all this, I was both excited and worried about what raiding would do and mean for *Guild Wars 2*.

As details started to slowly emerge about what we as players could expect from raids, much of my worry started to fade. But how difficult would it really be? Before *Heart of Thorns*, the game wasn't known for overly difficult content. Granted, there were some small pockets of difficulty here and there but, on the whole, the game was targeted towards more casual play. I wanted raiding to be difficult. I wanted a real challenge, and I wanted to be stuck on bosses with my group. I wanted the joy of learning the tactics needed to succeed and then refining those tactics to be more and more consistent - to really experiment with, and refine, the party composition. To max out my characters and really push my own







abilities to the limits.

We knew we would get several bosses over a couple of wings mixed with some events. In other MMORPGs, it's fairly common to see trash enemies leading up to the boss which can often bog down the pacing of the raid. I was hoping that *Guild Wars 2* would find a good solution to this, as trash is often seen as a waste of time when the real prize is fighting the bosses themselves. My expectations were fairly high for what I wanted raids to be in *Guild Wars 2* but, at the same time, I tried to temper myself to not set the initial bar too high. After all, this would be ArenaNet's first real foray into raiding.

There was some concern with how often we would see new encounters. We knew going into *Heart of Thorns* that the first of the 3-wing raid would be slightly delayed after release, which would give players time to prepare, and to play Heart of Thorns without rushing through that content. I've seen other games in recent years do this as well and I think this is certainly the right approach to take. You want your players to play the expansion at a reasonable pace before opening even more content; raiders will often rush to experience the new challenge and not always take their time with other aspects of the expansion. Wing 1 aside, the real question was about the pacing of the subsequent wing releases. Looking back, I think the pacing really worked out well for these wings. The player base had a good amount of time between these releases to experience, learn and refine the encounters, without



leaving too much of the raiding community behind. Certainly this experience will vary from player to player and group to group but, on the whole, I think the pacing worked out really well. I played with two very different groups between wings 1, 2, and then 3 and I didn't experience a problem clearing that content in time for the next. I also never really felt like I was waiting too long.



So *Heart of Thorns* had released and the raid's first wing was finally open. How did ArenaNet do? Really well, actually. Overall, it met my expectations. The events or trash mobs that exist in wing 1 are there to teach players a few of the boss mechanics they are about to encounter, and in that way ArenaNet did a fairly good job. The events can get slightly annoying months down the road, but for wing 1 at least, these events aren't too bad. There could be an interesting idea down the road where, after clearing the raid a number of times, you could skip some of these events, but I haven't seen anything like this suggested too often and ArenaNet seems pretty content about how these events currently work. It's something I'd like to see but I am not sure it's on the table.

> "The player base had a good amount of time between these releases to experience, learn and refine the encounters

Difficulty-wise, I felt like the first wing was right where it needed to be for the raiding community. The achievements included with wing 1 weren't too difficult and, therefore, have room for improvement, especially with things like the title achievement The Eternal. While you need to kill every boss without anyone dying, you can do this in batches; you can even fail several attempts as long as when you do kill the boss no one in your party dies. I feel like this should have been that not only do you have no one in the party die, but that you need to successfully kill all the bosses on your first attempt. Certainly by now there are many groups doing this without too much trouble and it means that this title would have had a little more meaning in terms of prestige.

As it currently stands, it doesn't mean very much. As I am not sure how likely it is that we'll see a hardmode, the achievements really need to carry the weight of extra difficulty.

With the release of wing 2, I was really hoping we'd see the difficulty ramp up a little. For wing 1, and for ArenaNet's first time doing raids, the difficulty was fairly good. But now that I and other players were more experienced with raids in *Guild Wars 2*, I wanted more. I wanted it to be an even greater challenge, and in some ways wing 2 did deliver this. Both Slothasor and Matthias are great fights and, while there is some debate in the community, I feel as though it might be the most difficult of all three wings currently. Even the achievement Slippery Slubling is probably the most difficult of the raid achievements currently available. The problem with wing 2, then, is that there aren't really three bosses but

two, with a large boss-ish event in the middle. While interesting, the bandit trio event isn't overly engaging, and the longer you play and continue to clear wing 2, the more this becomes a rather annoying encounter. At the release of wing 2, players spent some time on Slothasor as he provided a nice challenge, but then most teams rolled right through the Prison Camp and onto the final boss. While Matthias is a fantastic encounter, the wing ended up feeling a little short overall because of that. Additionally, the loot you receive from the bandit trio lags behind other encounters, just like the event-y nature of its gameplay, which makes it even less interesting and enticing (and certainly a little more annoying) when it comes to clearing months later. That being said, wing 2 was still very enjoyable and, overall, I do think it was a little more difficult without some huge ramp up, which is something I like and appreciate.

This leads us up to wing 3, and like last time I wanted and expected a little more difficulty - just a slight bump in challenge from wing 1 or wing 2, nothing huge or earth shattering. Sadly this didn't come to fruition as wing 3 was more or less on par with the other wings. As a whole, the raids themselves were being generally well-received within the raiding community, despite bandit trio's lukewarm reception.

Unfortunately, the raids came at a time where the game itself was lacking other new PvE content and it would be some time yet before we would see Living World story return. On top of this, there had been excitement building around what was going to happen with the legendary armor we'd started building in wing 1. Would we be able to finish it? What were we going to need? Or would we find out that legendary armor would still be a distant goal? The latter turned out to be true and there was some disappointment from this, but wing 3 also suffered from other problems.

First, there seemed to be a lot more bugs within the wing itself. Wing 3 suffers like wing 2 in that there are only two bosses and a middle event that players either seem to love or get annoyed with fairly quickly over time.

> " Like last time, I wanted and expected a little more difficulty - just a slight bump

But it did start with a bang in that there is an escort event that ends with a mini boss. This was really well received and a lot of fun - certainly something we'd not seen before in raids. But like a lot of the events over time, this one has become a little tedious. The good news is that this event is fairly easier than the starting bosses players would encounter in wings 1 and 2 and it does



reward a legendary insight that players need if they are pursuing the armor. Because of this, you'll sometimes see raiding groups jump into wing 3 just to quickly complete this encounter and then move back to the other wings.

Still, the bosses that are in wing 3 are a lot of fun. Both Keep Construct and Xera are visually appealing and have some unique mechanics to deal with. On Keep Construct there is an orb pushing phase that increases the amount of damage you do depending on how many you are able to sink into rifts, while the Xera fight interweaves ley-line gliding with a number of phases that split the raid group into two before they meet again on the final platform. They aren't really any more difficult than the bosses of wing 2, and perhaps it's a little foolish to think that every wing will be more and more difficult, but I did expect that the last boss on the entirety of the raid would be the most difficult. This opinion will vary from player to player but, for me, Xera wasn't as difficult as I would have liked her to be and her mechanics, while interesting and fun, aren't that hard to deal with. Besides positioning and moving Xera herself, the most difficult part for players seems to fall on their ability to leyline glide from platform to platform. Add to this that Xera is also a boss that has suffered (and still does suffer) from a number of bugs, and it's tarnished further for me. By now players are fairly used to what they can expect from raiding in *Guild Wars 2*, such that wing 3 in general was cleared very quickly in relation to the other 2 wings. And while I did very much enjoy wing 3, I felt like the difficulty was lacking overall.

> " Both Keep Construct and Xera are visually appealing and have some unique mechanics to deal with

Well that's all fantastic isn't it? Raiding sounds fun and somewhat challenging. But how easy is it for the average player to get involved in raids and what should you expect? Raiding is content that is more difficult than anything else in *Guild Wars 2* and it's meant to be. You might be asked to make concessions depending on your play style,





your group's composition and so forth, but the good news here is that there are a wide array of group compositions and profession builds that work. Browsing sites like *qtfy.enjin.com/builds* can be a great resource in understanding what other players are using and why.

It can be difficult to associate raids with other types of content in *Guild Wars 2*



because other group instanced content only allows five players and lacks the same type of challenge. However, as of this year, Fractals of the Mists has started to see an overhaul that is making some of those encounters more raid-like. While fractals themselves aren't a direct comparison to raiding, this is probably the best example of what you can expect to see from raid encounters, albeit smaller and with fewer mechanics to deal with.

Have patience, not only in yourself but in your team mates. Rome wasn't built in a day and you might not kill all the bosses in a day either. But that is part of the joy in all of it: spending time with like-minded players tackling difficult content.

While it doesn't fit into the scope of this article, there are a number of other things to consider and some barriers to hurdle past in order to properly prepare for raids. Often, finding a guild that is willing to offer guidance is one of the most helpful things you can do as a player. All guilds are not for all players so find a group of players you are comfortable with and enjoy playing the game with; sometimes this takes time.

With all that being said, I have seen some suggestions from the community on how to make raids even more accessible, including having an easy mode and a hard mode for those looking for an even greater challenge.

> "While fractals themselves aren't a direct comparison to raiding, this is probably the best example of what you can expect to see from raid encounters

Not only would this make it easier for players to get involved, but there is a narrative in the raid that many players want to experience but either don't have the time or, sometimes, not quite the skill yet. I can appreciate that this is a controversial subject without an easy plug and play fix, but I do think there is merit in the idea of separate easy and hard modes for players who want to experience the story and lore.

I'd like to end this article on a wishlist of 5 things I hope to see in future sets of raids:

1

Base difficulty increase - nothing crazy, mind you, but

something slightly beyond that of wing 2, which was the most difficult of Forsaken Thicket, in my opinion.

2

Hard Mode

3

Total completion achievement - sometime during wing 1 there was a Soul River Glider added to the Gem Store, and not having this be a raid reward for clearing all wings and achievements was a missed opportunity. It would have added a nice goal for players, and doesn't have to be legendary by any means - just a clear indication that you've cleared all the content. It's a nice carrot on a stick.

4

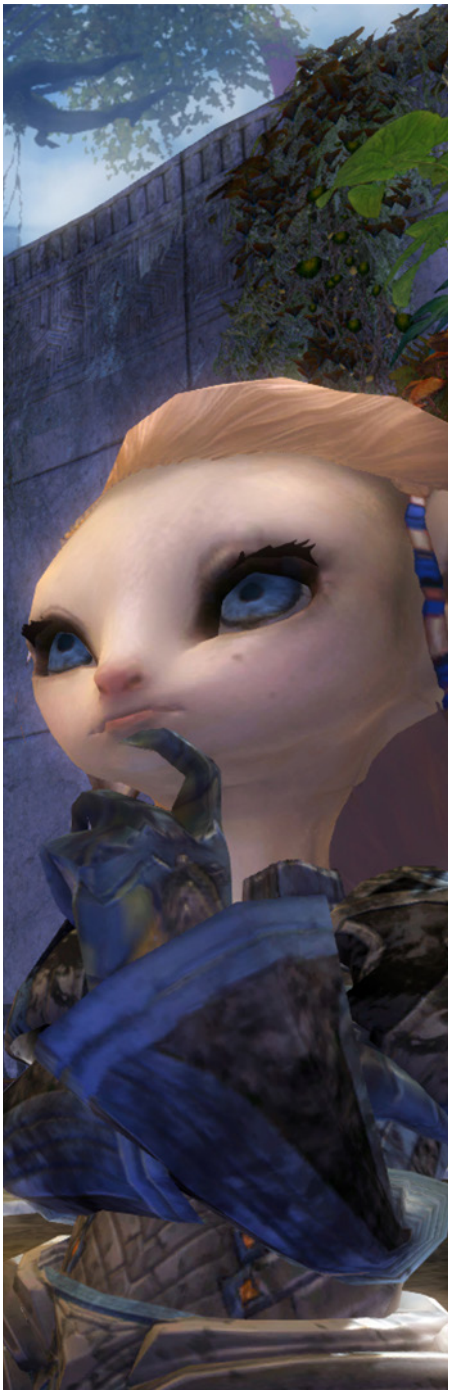
More encounters - three solid ones minimum, unless this time they end up making a 1-raid mega boss as an "in and out" kind of raid. I've seen this style work well in other MMORPGs.

5

Shortened / skippable events - I like events but I want them to be fairly short; show me some mechanics without being too complicated or long-winded. It would be great if, after clearing the raid a number of times, you could simply skip these events as they no longer serve the purpose of teaching and now simply fills time.

So far I am very happy with raids. I am very excited for the future and what that holds, and even now as I write this, we've seen the next raid portal appear. And while it's still locked, I am very excited to get my hands on it to see what lies beyond.







LEGENDARY DEFORESTATION

How many actual trees would be needed to create some of the legendary weapons that we can now craft? Anthonz and Star paused a moment in their logging to do some calculations.

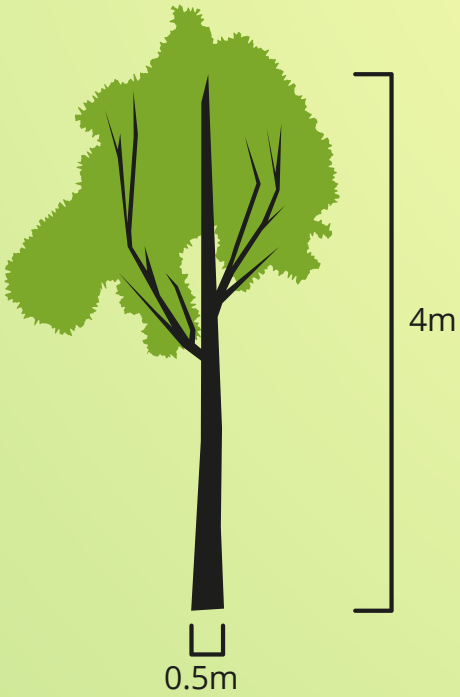
CHUKA AND CHAMPAWAT

BY ANTHONZ

Collecting short bow skins is an odd hobby of mine. After I saw the new Legendary weapon journey for a new shortbow, I realized that if I was going to craft any legendary in the game it would be Chuka and Champawat.

The first chapter is relatively straightforward: follow the tiger trail, do some events, and craft a short bow. After getting stopped by the first "crafting gate" of only being able to make one ascended crafting item per day, I decided to look into what I would need to stock up on for the rest of my journey.

It turns out I need a LOT of wood. Like, a virtual forest of wood. I understand that the developers want to make the Legendary special and unique, but it seems like each step beyond that first tiger tracking quest involves crafting something out of wood. This led me towards a new journey of figuring out how many trees, in real life, would be needed to create the Chuka and Champawat.



Before we get started, we need to set a scale of our Tyrian logs to those in the real world. To do that, I measured saplings in the game and estimated their size in the real world. In the real world the saplings are on average about 4 meters tall, and 0.5 meters in diameter. This gives us about 1 cubic meter of wood per sapling. Given in-game averages of 3 logs per sapling, this means in-game logs are about 0.33m^3 in volume.

So, how many logs would we need to create Chuka and Champawat? In the collection achievements for "The Hunt", and "The Ambush," we need to make various pieces to hone our skills before crafting the final Legendary short bow. By the end of all that, this is the wood we will consume:

- Green Logs 120
- Soft Logs 1,300
- Seasoned Logs 1,740
- Hard Logs 2,610
- Elder Logs 10,695
- Ancient Logs 1,086

That totals to 17,551 logs, bringing us to about 5,792m^3 of wood. For comparison, we can look at one of the largest trees known, the 83.8m tall sequoia named "General Sherman," which consists of an estimated 1,487m^3 of wood. This means it would take nearly four General Shermans' worth of wood to complete our Legendary Quest of crafting Chuka and Champawat. That amount of chopping wood surely gives a weapon legendary status.

RODGORT'S FLAME

BY **STARCONSPIRATOR**

Chuka and Champawat isn't the only legendary leading to deforestation, though it may be the greatest. While Anthonz has been working toward his prized shortbow skin, for the last several months I have been steadily chopping wood. My goal: Rodgort. I have a thing for fire. When I set out on the first stage of the scavenger hunt, it all seemed so innocent. I ran around the map killing fire monsters, setting other things on fire and gleefully satisfying my inner arsonist. Eventually, I reached the point where I could begin crafting the items needed to make the precursor - and that was where the burning ended and the chopping began.

To craft Rodgort's Flame, first I needed to prove my torch-crafting skills. This required five of every non-ascended torch handle available and one spiritwood torch handle.

After crafting all the torch handles, this is the amount of wood I needed:

- Green Logs 30
- Soft Logs 570
- Seasoned Logs 300
- Hard Logs 570
- Elder Logs 1500
- Ancient Logs 30

This totals nearly one and a half General Sherman sequoias... that's a whole lot of wood for just a torch!

With all this chopping and proof-of-concept crafting done, I was ready to build my precursor. With farming guides and a permanent logging tool in hand, I persevered, clearing the forests across Tyria.

The precursor required the crafting component Fuel for the Fire:

- Elder Logs 240
- Soft Logs 60
- Seasoned Logs 30
- Hard Logs 60

It's safe to say that these 390 logs could be taken from what was left over from the previous sequoias. At last, with the precursor triumphantly in hand, I was ready to craft my legendary! ...Until I discovered that I would need even more wood. The Gift of Rodgort, one of the ingredients of the legendary, requires a Gift of Wood; as seen above, this Gift requires just one more General Sherman:

Gift of Wood Logs

- Seasoned Logs 750
- Hard Logs 750
- Elder Logs 750
- Ancient Logs 750

What's one more small forest? Crafting legendaries should be a monumental task, and while I have not necessarily enjoyed farming logs in various maps across Tyria, it has provided me with a long-term goal and a sense of accomplishment as each stage was completed. Just as it should be, I think!

WINTERSDAY AND WAR

BY STARCONSPIRATOR

A history of the holiday from *Guild Wars* to present.

Wintersday festivities are a long tradition throughout the lands of Tyria. Marked by gift giving, camaraderie, and special events, the holiday celebrates the coming of the New Year. Today, Wintersday is marked by the arrival of the asuran toymaker, Tixx, and his amazing workshop the Infinirarium. Those who venture into the Infinirarium will aid the great toymaker in his struggle to thwart the plans of stowaway skritt and to keep haywire toys from wreaking havoc; all while Toxx, Tixx's golem helper, occasionally goes berserk and has to be reprogrammed. The citizens of Tyria can also take part in the famous bell choir or the infamous Winter Wonderland jumping puzzle. Centuries ago, however, the gods themselves took part in the festivities, and Wintersday marked a real struggle between the forces of light and dark, led by Dwayna and Grenth.

In the ancient past, Dwayna, goddess of life, found herself facing Grenth, the god of death, fighting over the coming of spring and the end of winter after the New Year. The first Wintersday celebration on record was held in Lion's Arch in 1072 AE; at that time, Dwayna's and Grenth's avatars approached the people of Tyria and competed for their favor.

> "The first Wintersday celebration on record was held in Lion's Arch in 1072 AE

In the days leading up to the avatars' visit, the gods' forces could be found throughout Tyria: Dwayna's snowmen spreading good cheer and Grenth's grentches working to keep the season somber.

It is said that the necromancer Vehemus created the first grentch potion during this early Wintersday. Made of termites, gunk, unwashed socks, and garlic, this potion shrunk a human's heart by three sizes, turning them into a grentch: a cruel and heartless servant of Grenth. Dwayna's snowmen, the brrrls, fought against these grentches, hoping to keep the people's spirits up during the cold days of late winter. The heroes of Tyria could help the children build snowmen of their own or work to increase the number of grentches and help them destroy the gifts.

For several years, the celebration of Wintersday spread from Lion's Arch and Kryta to other areas. Kamadan, in Istan, began hosting the avatars, and the citizens of Tyria saw the war between them escalate. That first year in Elona, Grenth's forces stole innumerable presents and took them to the underworld to hoard them. However, Dwayna's champions fought their way through the grentches in order to return the presents to the children of Tyria. Also at this time, the people of Istan worked to present Dwayna with a small herd of reindeer. The deer became a regular part of the celebration and even today they make an occasional appearance. Stories suggest



that the reindeer of old were able to find gifts that the grentches had stolen and hidden away and many in Tyria joined in the quest to return the presents to the children.

Once the Eye of the North opened, the struggle over who would win the war between the gods spread northward. There, Grenth's forces discovered where Dwayna's servants, the brrrl, dwelt, and attacked the Lair of the Snowmen. Tyrians who supported Dwayna once again thwarted them and returned the cheer of Wintersday to their fellow citizens. There in the Eye of the North, the snowball fight events began and the tradition has continued through to the present. Previously, the goal was to simply win a snowball fight, while today's contests involve collecting gifts for your team. For the first year in the Eye of the North, the Ebon Vanguard made a special effort to invite the norn to their festivities, although the frivolity was interrupted by a band of charr. The following year, the Eye of the North also played host to several Wintersday events and quests that focused on the burgeoning relationship between Keiran Thackeray and Gwen.





Stuck on guard duty during the festivities, Lieutenant Thackeray realized that his fellow Ebon Vanguard, Gwen, was glum and he wanted to provide her with some holiday cheer. He recruited a group of heroes and asked them to visit the nearby norn and collect a pendant for Gwen that depicted her family's crest. The heroes did so, but the norn felt that the pendant required more and sent them to have it imbued with the spirit essence of Gwen's mother, who was tragically killed in the Searing. The heroes returned and presented the gift to Gwen; Keiran thanked them for their help and from this beginning, his relationship with Gwen continued to grow.

As time passed, the Priests of Balthazar joined with Grenth in the yearly struggle, tired of frivolity and convinced that humanity needed to prepare for a coming darkness.

> " Priests of Balthazar joined with Grenth in the yearly struggle, tired of frivolity

The heroes of Tyria were able to join either this team or that of Dwayna and the Priestesses of Melandru, who still fought for joy even though they also felt that something lurked in the future. It can be assumed that they sensed the coming War in Kryta, which saw Salma ascend to the throne in Kryta, and the Winds of Change that blew across Cantha, giving rise to the Ministry of Purity. Although these wars interrupted much of the merriment, the festivities of Wintersday continued, growing from an ever-escalating war to a pitched battle between the avatars.

For several years, this pattern continued. However, as the Elder Dragons grew in power, the gods' avatars no longer visited the world. Into this void entered the asura Toymaker Tixx. In his airship toy factory, he flies across Tyria spreading good cheer. The first year of his visit, when Zhaitan threatened the world, Tixx stopped at every major city across the land. At each stop, players were allowed into his workshop, the Infinirarium, but what they found was the special chaos at which asuran geniuses are best. Tixx' golem Toxx was malfunctioning, and his workshop was overrun by skritt stowaways. If people wanted toys for Wintersday, they were forced to make their own. Recipes and ingredients were handy though and the citizens were able to build one of five miniatures.

However, the following year, as the war with the Elder Dragons escalated, Tixx' journey was hampered and recently he has limited his holiday stop to Divinity's Reach. In exchange, though, his toys no longer need to be built from scratch ... although his workshop is still overrun by skritt and Toxx is woefully prone to violent assault. Now that we face two Elder Dragons at once, we need Wintersday cheer more than ever. The ringing of bells and collecting of candies, gifts, and toys is just the break we need from the troubles that have plagued our land. A few weeks of merriment will lift our spirits and strengthen us, just as the festivals did in years past.







BY **STARCONSPIRATOR**

TWO DRAGONS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE

SEASON 3 RECAP

Season 3 begins on a sad note with a memorial to Eir Stegalkin who died in the fight against Mordremoth. For first-timers or those who have been away from the game, this first instance provides a recap of Eir's story in the jungle, some options for revisiting her story, and a retelling of the formation of Destiny's Edge. Since one of the points of these early stories is the reformation of a guild to take the place of Destiny's Edge, Skald Alfhildr's retelling of the guild's formation offers the player a chance to find their place in the history of the world, which I felt was a nice touch. Other NPCs, Eir's friends, will also speak with the player regarding her death.



During the memorial, we learn that Braham has retreated to the mountains, and Logan and Zojja are still recovering from their wounds. Rytlock takes a moment to discuss the new guild with the player and the two of them decide on the name Dragon's Watch, the guild name that the community voted for previously. In the midst of the festivities, Rox returns and brings Eir's companion Garm home. The wolf is a welcome sight and attempting to feed him with a rabbit brings a touch of mirth to the otherwise weighty proceedings ... or is it just me who finds it hilarious that the game won't allow you to do so? Rox agrees to stay at the steading and wait for Garm to heal. Afterwards, she plans to join Braham. This leaves Rytlock and myself to continue preparation for the next dragon on our own.

RESEARCH IN RATA NOVUS

As the memorial festivities continue, we receive a letter from Taimi, bragging that she has discovered something new. As everyone else in the newly forming guild is busy, Rytlock and I head to Rata Novus alone. Rytlock also hints that there is something he needs to attend to but he chooses to see Taimi instead. A special gate has been set up in Rata Sum that will take players to a chamber in Rata Novus. There, we meet Taimi and discover that she has hidden much of her intriguing research from Phlunt. Honestly, I can't blame her. One of her pet projects is a chak organ that she harvested. As part of the chak's digestive system, the organ absorbs ley energy and changes it, although she can't say yet how it changes. She has also been using the Rata Novan technology to track the dragon energy as it dissipated through the system since Mordremoth's death, and her map shows the northern bloodstone suddenly flaring up with power.

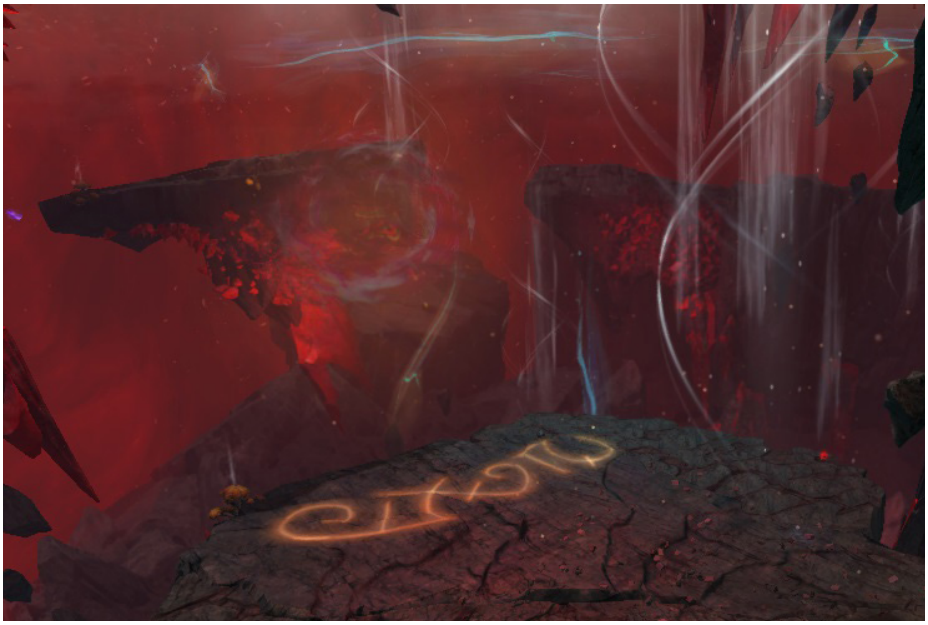
> " Braham has retreated to the mountains, and Logan and Zojja are still recovering from their wounds

The banter between Taimi and her nemesis/mentor Councillor Phlunt is enjoyable, while the chak fights seem superfluous. Taking time to explore the hidden lab will yield more information regarding Taimi and lab politics, a hint about the rise of the White Mantle, and a suggestion that General Almorra Soulkeeper, leader of the Vigil, has journeyed to Rata Novus. Upon exiting the lab, we learn from Almorra that the Pact is "hanging on by a thread" without Trahearne's leadership and she offers



me the position of Marshal, describing the position as a desk job. She lost me at "desk job" and I declined the position. The General also has a letter for Rytlock, which he seemingly throws away without reading, and the sylvari Canach's entrance interrupts our conversation. The sylvari has been sent in search of Caudecus, who left protective custody and travelled north toward the bloodstone. Speaking to Canach before exiting the instance will provide players with some background lore on the White Mantle. While those who played *Guild Wars Prophecies* need no introduction to the White Mantle and the mursaat, Canach explains that the White Mantle are experimenting with the bloodstone and attempting to resurrect one of the mursaat. He believes the White Mantle have waited until this moment to do so because the sylvari and the Pact are in disarray and he is certain Caudecus has something to do with the increased White Mantle activity.

Concerned that the former minister is in league with the White Mantle, I order Rytlock to find the rest of our fledgling guild. He and Canach agree to meet at the bloodstone and Almorra offers me a ride on her airship. When the airship reaches the bloodstone, we are just in time to witness a massive explosion that sends out an enormous wave of magical energy. Luckily, just as the magic is about to engulf the airship, it is withdrawn into the center of a large crater. All around, the landscape breaks apart, and the bloodstone shatters.



BLOODSTONE FEN

From here, the player is able to spend time exploring the new zone, Bloodstone Fen. Four tasks must be completed in the map before the story can progress. These tasks enrich the experience, and players willing to take their time searching for survivors and exploring the ruined landscape learn of the bloodstone explosion and the sickness that has infected those who survived the blast. They also hear tales of Jade Constructs that cause never-before-seen magical damage. Of course, it is also possible to simply navigate to the four

starbursts on the map, clear them, and move on without spending too much time on these open world story steps. This is a nice improvement to the gated story steps in *Heart of Thorns*, in which players had to grind for Mastery points before being able to move on; players can now choose how quickly they progress and how much time they want to invest in "flavor text." Before travelling deeper into the new map, it is a good idea to master Counter Magic, the first Ancient Magics Mastery tier, in order to defend against the Jade Constructs that lurk in the crater. There are so many enemies and encounters in Bloodstone Fen that this is quickly accomplished.

After exploring the ruined fen and discovering the Pact survivors and Squad Leader Bennett, who debriefed me regarding some of the story behind the Forsaken Thicket raids, I reported back to General Soulkeeper, who was working to repair her airship. I explained to her that the White Mantle and Pact soldiers who were caught in the blast had become crazed with hunger for bloodstone magic. This discovery led me to follow the afflicted White Mantle and learn where they were taking the bloodstone shards that they were harvesting.

> "The White Mantle and Pact soliders who were caught in the blast had become crazed

At the bottom of the crater, I discovered magical scorch marks that led to a floating room housing a pedestal that seems to be the nexus of the blast. Surprised, I also find Caithe there. She claims to be conducting her own investigation into the explosion but I am reticent to trust her and I make it a point to confront her. Despite my hostility, she joins in search of more bloodstone shards in order to power up the pedestal and replay the events from before the explosion. Through the search, we discussed her previous actions and settled on an uneasy truce of sorts - still not trusting the sylvari but willing to give her a chance. After collecting the bloodstone and returning to the floating room to power up the pedestal, we witnessed a being exploding in the center of the room, vaporizing the White Mantle who had been present. Assuming that the person responsible for this was Caudecus, I went in search of Canach to warn him that Caudecus had absorbed a bloodstone's worth of magic, leaving Caithe to her own devices.



We found Canach near the remnants of an ancient coliseum and he informed us that Caudecus was inside. Rytlock and Marjory joined us as we tracked down the former minister, battling past a number of White Mantle. When we reached Caudecus at the top of the coliseum, he refused to return to Divinity's Reach and threatened to take over Kryta with the help of the White Mantle. Triumphantly revealing his secret weapon, a subjugated Jade Construct, he attacked our party.

After defeating the construct but before Caudecus could do anything more, the mursaat Lazarus the Dire appeared. Lazarus claimed he had returned with more virtuous pursuits in mind than toppling Queen Jenna. Although he then killed nearly all of the White Mantle present, he shielded us from his magic! Before we could do anything with this new information, Lazarus departed and Caudecus managed to slip away with

the help of the mesmer Lady Valette Wi. Discovering Lazarus the Dire at the end of this episode signalled the return of a potentially dangerous foe to Tyria, although his actions left us wondering if the mursaat could be a potential ally. While contemplating Lazarus' return, Taimi contacted us and announced that Primordus, the fire dragon, was now active.



TAIMI'S GAME

Returning to Rata Novus with Rytlock in tow, I learned that Taimi and the asura Moto (of Super Adventure Box fame) had been working on a special piece of technology that would simulate Primordus' minions and help prepare us for the upcoming battles. During the simulation, Taimi informed us that not only was Primordus active but so was Jormag. Additionally, Taimi and Phlunt had both sent asura scouts to the Fire Islands. Finally, Taimi also revealed that magic is composed of all the realms of dragon magic, such as death, mind, and plant. With Zhaitan and Mordremoth dead, their magic was now free for use by other dragons and Primordus' minions had changed. Before we can take an asura gate to the Fire Islands and investigate, two charr confronted Rytlock. He had been ignoring orders to return to the Black Citadel and answer questions about his time in the Mists and his journey to becoming a revenant. Making it clear that he was choosing to return on his own, Rytlock - now stripped of his rank - agreed to accompany the charr back to the Black Citadel. We could only hope he wouldn't be long and that he would be able to return to the fight in the near future. Alone, I journeyed to Ember Bay hoping to collect a sample of the newly changed destroyers in order to confirm the stories and Taimi's findings.



WELCOME TO THE FIRE ISLANDS

Ember Bay, as the second map of Living World Season Three, is a craggy and molten landscape based on the original Fire Islands of the first *Guild Wars* game. Players will find a scattered handful of outposts, including a castaway circus and a skritt pirate crew. The water surrounding the Fire Islands teems with life, most of it neutral, allowing for some relief from the assault on land. A new Mastery tier can be trained upon entering the new map: Thermal Propulsion. This allows characters to travel between lava tubes scattered across the map similar to Nuhoch wallows. Unlike the previous Mastery tiers found in *Heart of Thorns*, it is not necessary to unlock it before completing the story. Instead, as players traverse the map, they will discover that they need to complete various daily repeatable Renown Heart tasks to help the asura and locals before being able



to move forward to the next story step.

After finding a sample for Taimi, an earthquake - perhaps caused by Primordus - rocked the islands and I set out to explore the area. While exploring, I came across a band of skritt that said they were the Champions of Rock Face. The skritt claim that a strange, ancient device has something to do with the seismic activity and, after befriending them, I meet Rock Face, an actual rock face ... what's left of the dwarf Rhoban! Rhoban explained that the devices mentioned by the skritt help to keep the island stable but they haven't been maintained and need to be turned on before the volcanoes erupt and spew out magical energy and lava. Taking the dwarf's thumb, I was able to easily turn on three of the four machines. The final machine, however, lay inside the mursaat fortress, guarded by a phalanx of Jade Constructs. At the base of the fortress, I met the ghost of Captain Grumby who explained that only mursaat could enter. By finding a set of mursaat armor, I was able to disguise myself as a mursaat and pass through the fortress' defences to reach the final device. With all four devices activated, the volcanic activity subsided and I returned to Rhoban. However, my visit with the dwarf was interrupted by a vision showing Glint's egg being attacked!

DRAGON VIGIL

I rushed to Tarir to check on the egg. There, I learned that the egg was about to hatch! Caithe and Marjory rejoined me but I was the only one allowed to enter the egg chamber. Just as the baby dragon emerges, Tarir's defenses falter and Primordus' minions attacked the hatchling. While the Luminate, the leader of the Exalted, worked to rebuild the defensive shield, I tried to hold off the minions. But there were so many of them! Just as I was being overwhelmed, Lazarus appeared and helped defend the hatchling from the Destroyer of Hope. Once the destroyers were gone and the Luminate had rebuilt the shield, Lazarus explained that he was looking to aid us in the fight against the dragons and wished to use the White Mantle as another army against them. Of course, nobody believed him or trusted that his intentions were good. However, despite my stern warning, Marjory agreed to look into his claims and investigate him. He agreed to this and the two of them left. Trusting Caithe to protect the newly-hatched dragon, Aurene, I returned to adventuring.

After a time, a vision of Aurene visited me and I hurried to Tarir to see what it could mean. The Luminate informed me that the baby dragon had been calling for me and that the Exalted wanted me to use the bond that exists between us to begin training the dragon. To that end, the Exalted set up a series of tests for the dragon and I helped her complete them. These taught the hatchling charity, valor, strength and dedication. The final challenge offered her some early fighting practice as well. All of these trials are games to the young dragon and she is adorable throughout, but they do teach her important lessons - especially for a baby dragon, given how most dragons interact with the races of Tyria - and strengthen the bond between herself and the player. It is worth noting that, for those players who need extra adorable dragonling in their lives, one can return to play with Aurene using the Exalted Portal Stone they acquire from completing this story step.

After the trials, Taimi contacted me again to discuss the conclusions of her research on the destroyer samples retrieved from Ember Bay. As she suspected, the dragons were absorbing the power of those killed before them. She also discovered that another type of magic could counter Primordus and she believed Jormag's ice magic would do so. She concluded that there might be a way to isolate Jormag's magic using the chak organ. Doing this rather than attempting another frontal assault, like that tried against Mordremoth, could save countless lives.

> " Lazarus explained that he was looking to aid us in the fight against the dragons and wished to use the White Mantle as another army against them



BITTERFROST FRONTIER

Taimi asked me to find an icebrood sample that had been tainted with Mordremoth's and Zhaitan's influence in order to test her theory in the lab. While in the Shiverpeaks, I decided to catch up with Braham as well. Stopping at Hoelbrak for news on recent icebrood activity, I learned that Braham was looking for a magic scroll in the far north and that Rox, along with Garm, left the day before to catch up to her friend. There were also rumors that a strange icebrood had been spotted in the far north, in the most dangerous area of the Shiverpeaks. Although it seems at first to be an odd sidenote, taking a moment to discuss norn legends, players learn that young norn hunters believe they can prove their strength in battle by chipping Jormag's fang. However, it is also revealed that this is merely a story the older hunters use to slow down those too eager to test their skills and keep the young, untrained hunters from rushing to their deaths. I felt this extra norn lore, while interesting, was a bit forced and players may see it as either obvious foreshadowing or an unnecessary distraction. After listening to the lore, I continued to Frostgorge Sound in search of both Braham and Taimi's sample.

> " Stopping at Hoelbrak... I learned that Braham was looking for a magic scroll in the far north

In the northern reaches of Frostgorge Sound, players find the kodan and Koda's Flame, a magical fire that would break through the icy barrier separating Frostgorge Sound from the Bitterfrost Frontier. In the new map, players are able to learn a new mastery tier, Koda's Flame, which provides fire magic for use in the bitter cold regions of the far north. This map also contains several features that players have encountered before, including bouncing mushrooms, unbound magic, and thermal tubes. Ley-line gliding and updrafts can also be found here. The map's meta event involves lighting brazier's and defending the kodan from Jormag's minions.

> " In the northern reaches of Frostgorge Sound, players find the kodan and Koda's Flame

Through participation in this meta event and map exploration, it is easy enough to unlock the Koda's Flame Mastery, which may make fighting the icy foes easier. However, as with Bloodstone Fen, unlocking the Mastery is not necessary to enjoy the map or progress the story.

Far to the north, I discovered Sorrow's Eclipse Sanctuary. The sanctuary acts as a line of defense against the Svanir, keeping them from the heart of Tyria. There I spoke with the kodan Deep Water and the quaggan Varonos Flubbert, leaders of the sanctuary. They explained that an icebrood abomination had been seen further north but they advised against going there. None who had gone to investigate had yet returned and the leaders of





the sanctuary believed either they had succumbed to the bitter cold or the Svanir had killed them. However, that sounded exactly where I needed to go so the leaders told me to consult with Shaman MeeMee regarding staying warm in the north. MeeMee told me the Svanir knew how to survive and I should ask them. This then led to a quest to collect Svanir armor as a disguise, similar to the quest for mursaat armor.

SURVIVING THE BITTER COLD

After collecting the disguise and infiltrating the Svanir Hive, I discovered the recipe for making a thaw elixir. I gathered the ingredients quickly - overfilling my inventory as I did so - and brewed the elixir in the Dragon's Teeth Hot Spring. Protected, I went in search of the abomination and found it in a cave behind a frozen waterfall. Once behind the waterfall, I discovered some jungle and undead larva, confirming the presence of Zhaitan's and Mordremoth's energies. Then I found the Unstable Abomination surrounded by more larva. Using the plant and death magic to attack the abomination, I was able to defeat it and collect Taimi's sample. I returned to Sorrow's Eclipse Sanctuary with this sample and learned that the Svanir had been torturing quaggan! The Svanir were convinced Braham had been the one who tricked them out of the thaw elixir. Dismayed, I sent the sample on to Taimi and went after Braham to try and sort out the confusion and help him with the Svanir who were now after him.

BRAHAM AND ROX

Tracking Braham led me to a cave near Frostgorge Sound. Inside, I found him and Rox fighting off a horde of Svanir. Once they were safe, I debriefed them on all that had happened, including why the Svanir were hunting them, Lazarus' return, and Taimi's news that two Elder Dragons were active. Rox mentions during our conversation that Canach believed Minister Caudecus was heading toward the Isles of Janthir. Braham was dismissive of the news, focused solely on finding the magic scroll that he wished to add to Eir's bow. Braham crafting a longbow in this way, along with his single-minded focus on killing the Elder Dragons, provides the lore for the rise of the dragonhunter elite specialization. This joins the tale of Marjory learning to wield a greatsword and becoming the first reaper and I'm left wondering how the other elite specializations will arise through the story. Will Rox become a druid and Kasmeer a chronomancer?

Breaking through the cavern, we found a dark chamber where a number of creatures appeared to be powering a series of stones. As we approached, a giant minotaur spirit appeared and began charging around the room. As it rampaged, it destroyed the creatures and stones until the scroll Braham was searching for was revealed. We retrieved the scroll and Braham used it to enchant Eir's bow and defeat the rampaging ice beast. This new bow convinced Braham that he was strong enough to rally the norn and face Jormag.

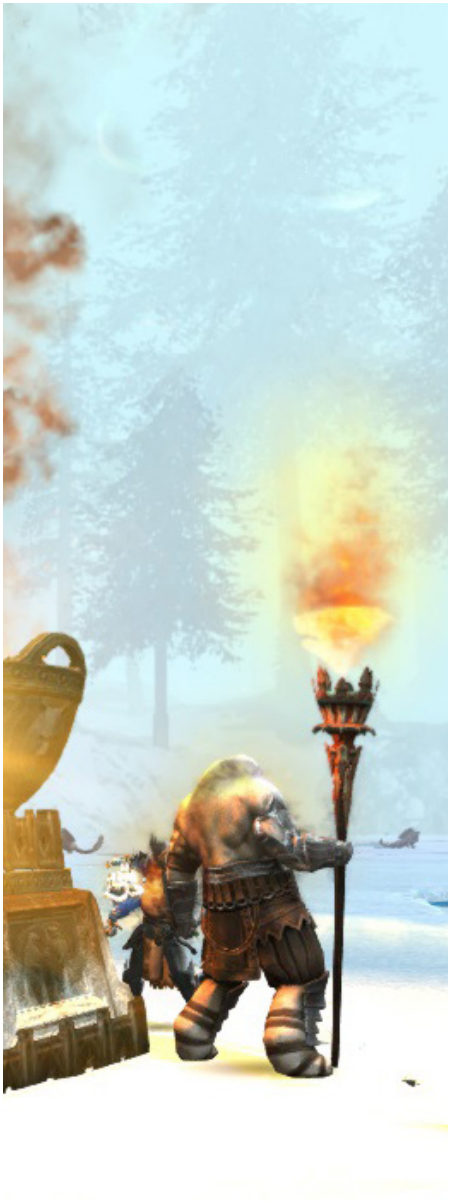
> " Canach believed Minister Caudecus was heading towards the Isles of Janthir

Despite my argument to wait for Taimi's research, Braham refused to wait and



returned to Hoelbrak. At a loss, I agreed to let Rox follow Braham in the hopes that cooler heads would prevail. However, with his new weapon, Braham was able to damage the Fang of Jormag and signal that he had the strength to fight the Elder Dragon. This leaves the impression that the next Living World release will find the norn rallying against Jormag and we can only hope that Taimi's research will yield something capable of saving the norn.

Overall, this is a satisfying story arc. It moves quickly from one element to the next and grants access to a few new maps with max-level content. The meta events and repeatable Renown Hearts found in these maps should keep many players engaged as we await the next chapter. The Mastery system is also a welcome improvement over the gated content found in the *Heart of Thorns* expansion in that players no longer have to grind through Mastery points in order to experience the next section of the story. This same philosophy can be seen in the use of the exploration masteries - bouncing mushrooms, ley line gliding - in the newest map Bitterfrost Frontier. While the skills are good for map exploration and may be necessary to reach all corners of the area, they are not required for any of the story steps. Of course it's easier to glide everywhere or take the thermal tubes, for example, but players can just as easily walk. Let's hope the next story chapter is just as engaging.







GUILD SPOTLIGHT

ROCK, PAPER, SIGNET

Ever find yourself looking for something fun to do in game but none of your friends are online or logged in? Meet Rock, Paper, Signet [RPS], a casual and open guild that their leader Tweetiti says "dabbles into everything really: WvW, PvP, but mainly PvE." As an EU guild based mainly on Gunnar's Hold, [RPS] is best known for the in-game events they began to hold in 2013. Seen as a way to bring the community together to revisit open world end-game zones and bosses, their events are now themed and are most recognizable because of guild officer Duke's mesmer, Duke Witherheart. The events bring the community together to roam around PvE Tyria, taking players and guild members around for fun, prizes, and general mayhem against enemies.

Begun at *Guild Wars 2*'s launch, Duke tells us the guild was at first "a small place for members of the Rock, Paper, Shotgun community to hang out and play together." Things evolved from there. Since the guild initially grew out of an existing community, the guild officers had the advantage of knowing each other previously, though Tweetiti says they "weren't real life friends at the beginning." This came about as they spent time together and as some met in real life too. "We are therefore more a guild of friends and we include all our new members



BY MIKO

Rock, Paper, Signet [RPS]

Leader: Tweetiti
Size: 365+ members

Preferred game mode: Best known for PvE; weekly sPvP; occasional WvW.

In-game contact: Tweetiti.4905

www.tinyurl.com/rpssignup

that way," she tells us proudly.

New members are added to the guild regularly and organically. Though they don't actively advertise their guild, [RPS] do advertise their events, sharing who they are, and how players can join them or find more information. Instead of "spamming mapchat or stalking forums to get our name across," guild officer Vlupius says they are active on "Twitter, Reddit and the

like, and when people think we're a fun bunch to hang around, they are welcome to ask for an invite (which we'll gladly send). Often people message us first, asking if they can join, and then we send them to our forum to sign up." Because they are so active, this recruitment style works best for them and has allowed [RPS] to grow to its present-day size of over 365 players.

With such a large roster, one might think that guild

drama would be a factor yet Tweetiti assures us this is not the case. They have one simple rule that they ask everyone to adhere to: "Be excellent to each other." Because of this, they have been fortunate enough not to have any major issues. "We had the occasional person not following the rule, but they quickly found out that we wouldn't indulge them in their behaviour and left by themselves," Tweetiti says. Instead, Duke adds, the biggest problem is usually

"finding the time to organise and coordinate all the cool things we've wanted to do." Some would call that a fortunate problem indeed!



Their events run the full spectrum that *Guild Wars 2* offers, from Living World and in-game festivals to raids, Fractals, sPvP and WvW. What they're most known for, though, are organized PvE mega-events. The goal: "take a whole lot of players on a walk through Tyria and complete any event we come across, all the while accompanied by bad music and worse jokes," Vlupius teases. The events themselves are broadly advertised and open to everyone playing on EU servers, attracting many players from outside the guild as well. On event days, [RPS] also encourages everyone to join the conversation on their Discord server, sharing links for temporary access at these times. Their events have been quite successful, and though they've become increasingly elaborate, Vlupius is proud of the fact that these have not lost their laid-back atmosphere.

> " Events run the full spectrum that *Guild Wars 2* offers, from Living World and in-game festivals to raids, Fractals, sPvP and WvW

Their events typically start with a simple idea, for example doing something around the three in-game Orders; doing something for new players; or visiting an area with interesting events they haven't seen in a while. Then they choose a route across Tyria and give it a title "that ideally has something of a pun or silly joke in it," Vlupius adds. Some examples are their "March for Mount Maelstrom" where they travelled south from Hoelbrak to slay the Megadestroyer; "The Orrian Express" when they liberated all the temples in Orr; and "Battle of the Five Armies" when they set out from all five major cities simultaneously with five racial armies and eventually met up in Sparkfly Fen to kill Tequatl – twice!

"Lately, we've also been experimenting with role-playing and storytelling, by moving along the journey according to a storyline," Vlupius continues, thanks to guildie RebelMaren, "who's been a central part of this thanks to his writing abilities and large number of characters!" [RPS] takes care, though, not to plan too much so that there's plenty of room for silly antics and having fun with the guild and the rest of the community who joins in.

In between such popular mega-events, it's clear these guys love being part of their guild. "We have a great sense of humour, and we love having a joke and a pun while playing together," Tweetiti says. Duke agrees: "The people really make [RPS]. The collaboration and teamwork are great. The shared sense of victory and accomplishment from a lot of what we do together is something I've never really seen before." Vlupius elaborates, "There's simply so much fun in the daily interactions with the guild members that it's spilled out of *Guild Wars 2* and into other games and even real life. If it weren't for the great people who make up our guild members and my fellow officers, I would have quit *Guild Wars 2* long ago; yet I still return now and then when there's something



interesting going on." This sense of friendship and community has allowed [RPS] to have a fully upgraded guild hall, despite not requiring 100% representation, and has made organizing real-life meet-ups or joining in Rock, Paper, Shotgun events in other games feel like a natural extension of their time in *Guild Wars 2*.

The guild is also committed to helping its members achieve their own personal goals. Duke believes 90% of his jumping puzzle achievements are thanks to help from the guild, and they have also helped him complete Twilight Arbor's Aetherblade path and Arah's explorable paths. Generally, Tweetiti says, someone is always happy to help out. All you have to do is "just shout in guild chat what you need and we will try to come and help you, show you the ropes, or help make up the necessary numbers." Duke feels sure that these smaller moments are then supplemented by their bigger events, enabling [RPS] to take on bigger challenges together.

> " Duke believes 90% of his jumping puzzle achievements are thanks to help from the guild, and they have also helped him complete Twilight Arbor's Aetherblade path

Their recipe for fun and success is something Tweetiti feels can work for other guilds that have a good sense of humor and are genuinely willing to put the effort into helping others have a good time. Having a small pool of officers who are all equal and willing to be active in the game and help collaborate with regular and ad hoc events also helps. And while their original Rock, Paper, Shotgun community allows them to passively attract new members, sharing their joy with the community lets [RPS] draw players who may not at first be interested in the game see what they do and then want to get involved. "We just hope you are a social and friendly person that will enjoy playing with us."





QUAGGAN TREE DECORATIONS

BY MIKO & BEX

Wintersday wouldn't be the same in Tyria without a family of quaggan to ooOOoo their way into our hearts. With their third person speech and their sweet voices (when not in rage mode), Tyrians agree we all need more quaggan in our lives.

Since we would never advocate decorating for Wintersday with quaggan taxidermy, here are some quick and easy knit and crochet patterns to quickly make your own flippered friends to hang on your tree. The knit and crochet patterns are also a great way to use up scrap yarn from your stash. Both patterns are suitable for beginner to intermediate yarn crafters, and if you've never ventured into the world of knit or crochet before, we have some excellent learning resources on page 64!

BY MIKO / INKYSTICKS

KNIT PATTERN

This version of the quaggan ornament is knit in the round (body and arms) while the stomach patch is knit flat. Accessories are knit flat (scarf) and in the round (hat).

YOU'LL NEED

Needles: US 6 (4mm) dpns (5") OR 16" circ needles

Gauge: 6 sts = 1" on US 6

Yarn: Worsted or Aran weight yarn scraps; 100% cotton or 100% wool work well

Colors: turquoise (or preferred body color); white or ivory for stomach patch; red for accessories (or preferred colors)

Safety eyes or black embroidery floss



ABBREVIATIONS

k2tog = knit 2 together
inc = increase, use preferred method either kf&b (knit front and back) or m1 (make 1)
dec - decrease
CO = cast on
BO = bind off
sts = stitches; **st** = stitch
dpns = double pointed needles
circ = circular needle
pm = place marker
sm = slip marker
rnd = round
rem = remain/remaining
k = knit
p = purl
sl st = slip st; **sl sts** = slip stitches
St st = Stockinette (or stocking) stitch
***** is used to denote repeats in pattern. Repeat all instructions within * marks.

THE BODY

With desired body color yarn, CO 8 sts

If using dpns, divide across two other needles (3 needles total); join ends being careful not to twist sts, pm. (With dpns, place a split ring marker on the row below the live sts to mark Needle 1 where rnd begins, moving it up every few rnds so you don't lose track of it. This marker will come in handy when you're ready to place and attach the quaggan's eyes.)

If using circ, join ends being careful not to twist sts, pm. A split ring marker can also be placed as described above either now at the beginning or near the end of the body section to prepare for eye placement.

Rnd 1: k all sts
Rnd 2: *k, inc 1, k* around (12 sts)

Rnd 3: k all sts
Rnd 4: *k, inc 1, k* around (18 sts)
Rnd 5: k all sts
Rnd 6: *k, inc 1, k* around (27 sts)
Rnd 7: k all sts
Rnd 8: *k, inc 1, k* around (13 times), k (40 sts)

If using dpns, you may find it easier to divide the sts across 4 needles at this point, 10 sts per needle.

Rnds 9-21: k around

Rnd 22: *k2tog, k*, k2 (13 sts dec) (27 sts)
Rnd 23: k around
Rnd 24: *k2tog, k* around (9 sts dec) (18 sts)
Rnd 25: k around
Begin stuffing body with poly-fill until nearly full, stuffing body firmly.

Rnd 26: *k2tog, k* around (6 sts dec) (12 sts)
Rnd 27: k around
Finish stuffing with more poly-fill until full and ensure that the body remains firm

Rnd 28: *k2tog* around (6 sts rem)
Do not bind off. Cut a 12-inch tail.

Finishing
Thread tail in a yarn needle and draw the tail through rem sts, pulling ball closed. Weave yarn through or around closure to firm it, then push the needle through the center of the closure, through the ball and firm up the closure along the cast on circle, if need be, to close it fully as well.

Follow the desired final steps below, depending on which accessory you want for your quaggan.

For quaggan with hat: Weave end of tail into ball to hide it and anchor it with the stuffing. Remove yarn needle.

For quaggan with scarf (or without accessory): Push the needle through again back to the top closure and create a loop to hang on the tree. Anchor the loop in the closure by weaving the end of the tail into the ball to hide it. Secure with a knot that can be hidden in the ball. Cut yarn and trim or tuck any yarn ends in the ball. (The stuffing should grab onto the yarn end and ensure that it remains hidden.)

Making the face
Sew on two safety eyes in the center top of the ball along the row where dec began. If you choose to create eyes with black embroidery floss instead, mark where you wish to place these, and use the floss to "sew" these on to create whatever eye shape you'd like. You'll then cut the floss and tuck in any ends using your knitting needle end. Stubborn ends can be trimmed off.

STOMACH PATCH

The stomach patch is knit flat and will be sewn onto the body using the yarn tail after binding off.
With white yarn, CO 8 sts
Row 1: p across
Row 2: *k, inc 1, k* to end (12 sts)

Rows 3-11 will maintain St st, p across on odd rows, k across on even rows
Row 12: k2tog, k8, K2tog (10 sts)
Row 13: p across (10 sts)
Row 14: k2tog, k6, k2tog (8 sts)

Finishing
BO off all 8 sts purl-wise. Cut the yarn leaving a 12-inch tail for sewing. Arrange and pin the stomach patch to the front of the quaggan just



under the eyes. Sew on with yarn tail.

ARMS

These are knit in the round to match the St st of the body. With same yarn color as body, CO 12 sts.

If using dpns, divide evenly across 2 needles and join ends, being careful not to twist sts. Pm along edge of live sts to mark Needle 1. If using circ, join ends, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnds 1-5: k around
Rnd 6: k2tog, k8, k2tog (10 sts)
Rnd 7: k2tog, k6, k2tog (8 sts)
Rnd 8: k2tog, k4, k2tog (6 sts)
Arrange rem sts across two needles and graft sts together using Kitchener Stitch (as like for sock toe - see page 64), cutting yarn long enough to graft sts and have at least a 6-inch length of yarn for the finishing. Weave in end after final st. Push yarn needle through hand and back up towards the open tube end of the arm.

Finishing

Using this length of yarn, sew open end of arm tube onto body, closing the end of the tube as you go. Tack down and hide the finishing knot of your sewing in the underarm seam.

ACCESSORIES

Scarf

You can get as creative as you like with this scarf, knitting a plain 1x1 rib scarf (over 5 sts), 2x2 rib scarf (over 6 sts), garter st scarf (over 5 or 6 sts), or even a striped scarf!

If you choose to try a striped scarf, I'd recommend a vertical stripe pattern instead of horizontal to make color changes a bit more manageable. When finished, the scarf should measure 12 inches from the cast on edge. For a vertical striped yarn, CO as many sts as needed to reach 12 inches according to gauge. If you're using pattern gauge, CO 72 sts and knit 5 or 6 rows in your preferred stitch pattern.

Wrap the scarf around the quaggan's neck. Using a scrap of your chosen scarf color's yarn, secure it against the quaggan's body.

Hat

This will be a basic Santa hat knit in the round in red yarn with a white trim.

CO 42 sts with white yarn.
If using dpns, divide evenly across 4 needles. Join ends—be careful not to twist sts. If using circ, join ends being careful not to twist sts.
Pm as previously to mark the start of the round.

Rnds 1-2: k around

Change to red yarn
Rnd 3: k around
Rnd 4: *k2tog, k5* around (36 sts)
Rnd 5: k around
Rnd 6: *k2tog, k4* around (30 sts)
Rnd 7: k around
Rnd 8: *k2tog, k3* around (24 sts)
Rnd 9: k around
Rnd 10:*k2tog, k2* around (18 sts)
Rnd 11: k around
Rnd 12: *k2tog, k* around (12 sts)
Rnd 13: k around
Rnd 14: *k2tog* around (6 sts rem)
Do not bind off. Cut a 12-inch tail.



Finishing

Thread tail in a yarn needle and draw the tail through rem sts. Pull hat crown closed. Weave yarn through or around closure to firm it, then push the needle through the center of the closure, then back to the top closure and create a loop to hang on the tree. Anchor the loop in the closure by weaving the end of the tail into the inside of the hat to hide it. Secure with a knot and cut yarn.

With white yarn, secure the hat onto the quaggan's head and sew in place.

Hang on tree and enjoy!

LEARN TO KNIT & CROCHET

These resources will help you to learn the art of crochet and knitting:

KnittingHelp.com, also found on their YouTube channel
www.youtube.com/user/knittinghelp

Expression Fiber Arts' Knitting and Crochet Tutorial videos
www.youtube.com/user/ExpressionFiberArts

For help with Kitchener Stitch
www.youtu.be/TXJCllmgYjc

CROCHET PATTERN

BY **BEX / REBECCA HASSING**

YOU'LL NEED

Hook: 2.5 mm crochet hook. 2.75 mm or 3 mm will work if 2.5 is unavailable in your area.

Yarn: Scraps of light blue, broken white and red. Weight type 4-ply, 100% cotton. Some super chunky white wool for the Christmas hat.

1 set of small safety eyes

ABBREVIATIONS

R = round
MR = magic ring
SC = single crochet
2 in next = increase
2 tog = decrease
F/O = finish off
SS = slip stitch



THE BODY

Use light blue and work in a spiral.

R1: MR6
R2: 2 sc in ea (12)
R3: 1 sc, 2 in next (18)
R4: 2 sc, 2 in next (24)
R5: 3 sc, 2 in next (30)
R6: sc in all (30)
R7: 4 sc, 2 in next (36)
R8: sc in all (36)
R9: 5 sc, 2 in next (42)
R10: sc in all (42)
R11: sc in all (42)
R12: 5 sc, 2 tog (36)
R13: sc in all (36)
R14: 4 sc, 2 tog (30)
R15: sc in all (30)
R16: sc in all (30)
R17: sc in all (30)
R18: sc in all (30)
R19: sc in all (30)
R20: sc in all (30) F/O with ss.

STOMACH PATCH

Use broken white.

R1: Chain (14)
R2: sc in all (13) turn
R3: sc in all (13) turn
R4: sc in all (13) turn

R5: sc in all (13) turn
R6: sc in all (13) turn
R7: sc in all (13) turn
R8: sc in all (13) turn
R9: 12 sc, F/O with ss.

Attach the safety eyes after sewing on the stomach patch.

ARMS

Use lightblue.

R1: MR4
R2: 2 in ea (8)
R3: 1 sc, 2 in next (12)
R4: 2 sc, 2 in next (16)
R5: sc in all (16) F/O with ss.

THE HAT

Start with red.

R1: MR (4)
R2: 2 in ea (8)
R3: 3 sc, 2 in next (10)
R4: 4 sc, 2 in next (12)
R5: 5 sc, 2 in next (14)
R6: sc in all (14)
R7: 6 sc, 2 in next (16)
R8: sc in all (16)
R9: 15 sc, 2 in next (17)
R10: 16 sc, 2 in next (18)

Change colour, use a white chunky fluffy wool type. Use some power while pulling the yarn through, as it is really difficult to get through the single crochets.

R11: sc in all (18) F/O with ss.

Before you sew all parts together, make sure to create a small loop that goes through the back of the Christmas hat so you can hang the little quaggan on the Christmas tree.

You can also make different variants of this pattern. Why not grab some pink wool and give your quaggan Poowulpi the Persnicketous as a companion? Or a whale quaggan with a scarf?

I hope you guys will enjoy this Christmas decoration as much as I do!



WONDROUS WINTER WEARS

Need a new outfit for winter?
We've got you covered, no matter the budget!

HEAD: Seer Mask
Exotic Loot Drop, Map Completion Reward, Personal Story Reward
One of the five pieces that you won't have to drop gems for and it's not too hard to get. They can be bought off of the Trading Post for a small amount of silver, or earned through completing map exploration in Orr or leveling a light-armored character through the game.

SHOULDERS: None/Hidden
No shoulders required, but if you feel like you can add to the outfit with a shoulder piece, go forth and improve on the design.

CHEST: Phoenix Vest
800 Gems for the full set or just above 210 gold on the exchange
One of the main reasons I was able to run with this top was that it didn't clash too badly with the Incarnate Leggings. As it turns out, this top and the Incarnate Leggings mix and match poorly with most other sets so for them to work out together was something of a miracle, but a very costly one. To make this set will cost the player 1600 gems or over 400 gold, which is a little absurd, but if it's a goal, no one can/should judge you for the investment. I also happen to like the necklace that comes with it, but that's not exactly a deal-breaker.

HANDS: Incarnate Gloves
800 Gems for the full set or just above 210 gold on the exchange
Gloves with the appropriate amount of flair and dyeable detail. I like light armor sets that work in metal trinkets and add jewelry accents that can be dyed without affecting the rest of the armor piece, and the Incarnate set pulls this off in spades.

LEGS: Incarnate Pants
800 Gems for the full set or just above 210 gold on the exchange
When I wanted a set that conveyed elegance with great battle functionality, the Incarnate Pants really met my needs in that regard. No long flowing or bellowing dress or skirt, no skimpy design around the … hip region. She has a stylish peplum, but also pants and two elegant fire-patterned loops. Like I also mentioned above, they happened to fit well enough with the Phoenix Vest, which was almost reason enough for me to jump for them.

FEET: Incarnate Shoes
800 Gems for the full set or just above 210 gold on the exchange
Simple, fancy, and functional all in one. These boots were an easy selling point for me because they felt like they weren't so dressed up that they couldn't be worn into battle. They even look like they provide some protection for the knees. The little metal wings around the ankles are a subtle but telling detail that I felt really played to my character's noble status.

Sometimes, the price of fashion can be high and in a game like *Guild Wars 2* it can mean shelling out a bunch of tokens, gold, or gems for a desired look. The experience brings with it a mixture of fleeting shame and hopefully a sense of fulfillment as you put together an outfit that you truly believe helps to define your character.

I'd been through several cheaper and easier-to-acquire outfits (and spent hours in the wardrobe) before investing in this mash-up. The original color scheme is dark, very necromancer-y for obvious reasons, but I thought I'd brighten things up for Wintersday with this divinely dazzling ensemble.

DWAYNA'S FURY

BY KENT BENSON

HEAD

SB

S SB



CHEST

S B

E E



HANDS

B

E S



LEGS

E

B S



FEET

B

B S



SHY BLUE (SB)

SAND (S)

BLUE TINT (B)

ENAMELED SKY (E)



The dye color scheme is pretty straightforward. As this is meant to be representation of Dwayna's own icy fury, I paired an off semi-rich blue with an icy blue tint, with a golden color for the metal and feathered pieces. Above most things, I wanted the flame pattern on the leggings to stand out to push the look of freezing flames.

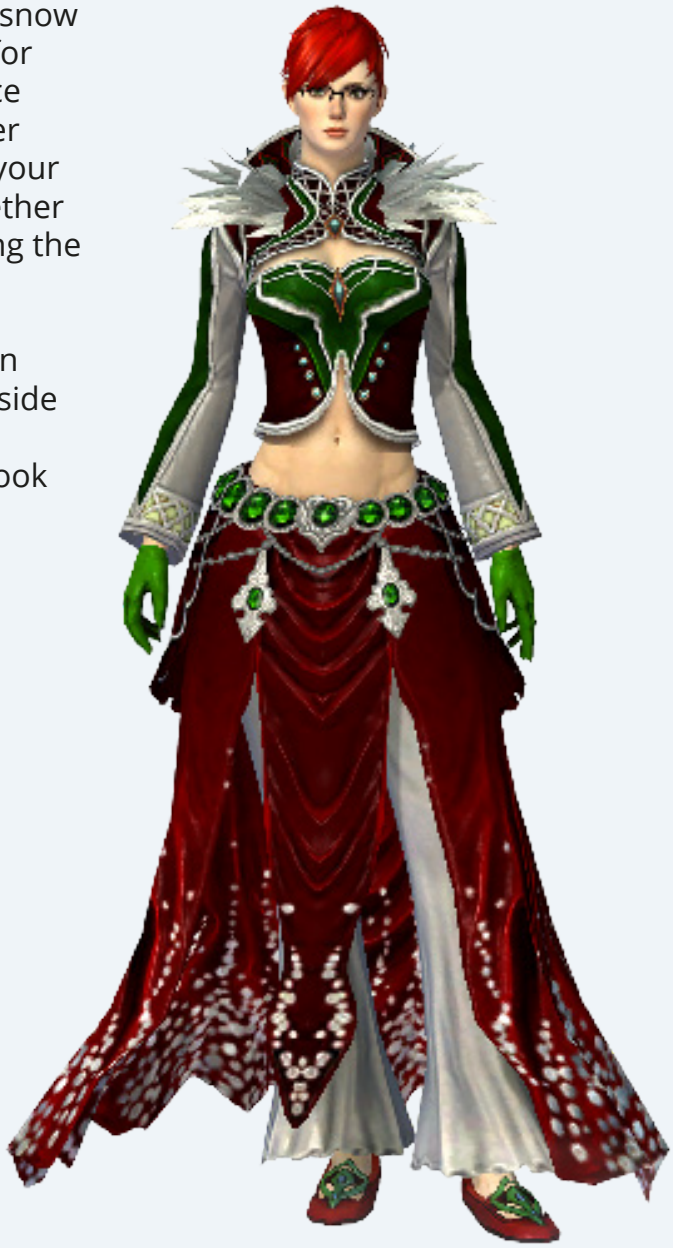
FRUGAL YULE OUTFIT

BY ANTHONZ

Fashion can come at a high price, it's true; but it doesn't have to be. Does your wishlist this year include an extremely affordable holiday outfit? Then look no further!

As the norn have the closest association to ice, snow and festive merriment, they are my go-to race for celebrating Wintersday this year. They are a race that does not mind the cold, allowing for a wider selection of winter outfit styles other than just your average parka. This Wintersday, I have put together an outfit that will deck the halls without breaking the bank. This is the Frugal Yule Outfit.

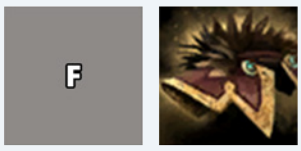
In creating this outfit I primarily drew inspiration from the Festival Merchant who still stands outside the Crown Pavilion, with some deviations. The armor pieces are for light armor females, and look best on norn and human characters.



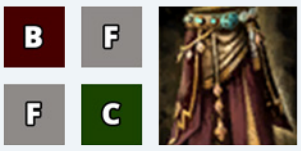
HANDS



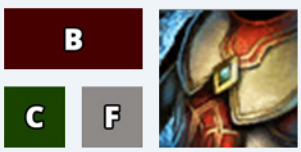
SHOULDERS



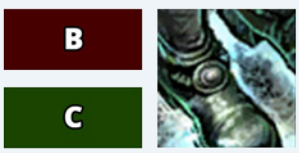
LEGS



CHEST



FEET



While there are many red, green and white dyes that can work with this outfit, these are the three that I've found work best without having to pay much at all. All dyes can be acquired on the Trading Post; Cucumber for 5s, Brick for 5s and Fog for 9s.

HEAD: None/Hidden
Instead of covering the face with a mask, I felt it was best to let your character's inherent beauty shine through this outfit. My norn mesmer (pictured), for example, is very short-sighted and needs glasses. But the blank head piece allows you to take advantage of seasonal Gem Store helms such as the Earmuffs or Festive Hat without clashing with the feel of the complete outfit.

SHOULDERS: Conjurer Mantle
TP ~25s, Personal Story Reward, Loot Drop
The Conjurer Mantle is ornamented with feathers, giving that fluffy, white-trimmed parka feel to an otherwise lighter outfit. It integrates well with the collar of the chest piece, without being too distracting. You can receive the skin as part of the personal story reward for light armor classes, or when you reach level 55 on an elementalist character. It is also a fairly common drop from mobs throughout all of Tyria, and can be purchased on the Trading Post for about 25s.

CHEST: Stately Garb
420 karma
The chest piece is part of the Stately Garb karma armor set, offering nice detail around the neckline. The collar combines with the Conjurer Mantle nicely, and doesn't overlap with the decorative dress. You can unlock the skin by purchasing the Light Steeleye Chestpiece from Engineer Burlage Firestoker for 420 karma, after completing his Renown Heart in Blazeridge Steppes.

HANDS: Aurora Gloves
42,000 karma
Adding gloves to the outfit makes it feel more appropriate for Wintersday. The Aurora Gloves are short and don't clip awkwardly with the Stately Garb. They can be purchased from any of the Orrian Temple karma vendors for 42,000 karma.

LEGS: Conjurer Pants
TP ~20s, Loot Drop
The Conjurer Pants are a great example of inexpensive leg armor that have some very interesting dye interaction. The dot pattern on the bottom of the pants give the festive feel of snow. Conjurer Pants are a common drop from mobs, but they can also be purchased on the Trading Post for about 20s.

FEET: Aurora Shoes
42,000 karma
The Aurora Shoes are decorative, but without being too flashy. The two dye slots for this foot armor allow for a nice decoration of the whole outfit from head to toe. They can be purchased from any of the Orrian Temple karma vendors for 42,000 karma.

If you're looking for weapons to match, I'd recommend the Wintersday Toy Weapons Collection. They are very easy to get while playing Wintersday festivities, and are very cheap to come by on the Trading Post.

That does it for our Wondrous Winter Wears! With the Frugal Yule Outfit, you can be as generous as you want this season without having to sacrifice your style, whilst Dwayna's Fury will clad your character in wintry elegance - with a price tag to match!



TAKING THE HOUSE

A collaborative story from Chronicles of Tyria

"This is not how I envisioned my skills to be used," Angel complained. The norn looked down at Nienna, towering over the human woman by at least four feet, with the hilt of her greatsword sitting up about another foot beyond. Her knee-length blonde hair was gathered and pulled back with sections pleated into intricate braids in traditional norn fashion. "This is boring."

Nienna craned her neck up at Angel. Even though the norn towered over the human necromancer with ease, it only unnerved Nienna slightly. Being of short stature, she was used to others' lofty heights, but Angel was one of the tallest norn she had ever met. She certainly was one of the strongest as evidenced by her muscular physique. "Good, it should be right now."

"Shouldn't there be at least a little opposition off the bat? Surely they deserve a good beating for working under that thieving bastard," Angel argued, keeping her voice low so as not to draw unwanted attention. She firmly placed her hands on her hips.

"It's a simple job, Angel, with a simple plan," Nienna pointed out. "No distractions right now. You'll get to hit something later."

"But-"

"Fighting is a distraction," Nienna replied simply and then turned back to the hallway to resume her watch. Nervously, she scratched the back of her head, tousling the long strands of dark red hair pulled back from her face with a silver clasp.

Angel uttered a low, throaty growl. "What a way to spend a Wintersday eve," she muttered.

Nienna tried her best to ignore the rest of Angel's grumbles about the lack of action. Her stress levels were already teetering on the high side from the unusual introduction of the job, and she didn't need the additional worry of keeping a brawl-happy norn in line.

Careful not to bump the pouch hanging on her belt, Nienna rested one hand on the hilt of her axe and one on the hilt of her dagger and began rhythmically tapping her fingernails on them. Their employer wasn't exactly known for her charity, so Nienna thought it had been odd to be hired on as part of a team stealing from a thieving noble. It was a job she would normally turn down, however once the orphans involved were mentioned, she'd had a hard time saying no.

* * *

Slim yawned as he twirled his pistol on his fingers. The asura watched the human as she planted the explosives against the gilded vault, smiling at her while combing a hand through his blond hair.

"You're doing wonderfully, Akemi," he said, not even offering to help. She scowled.

"Of course I am," said the human, brushing a long, stray lock of silken black hair behind her ear as she placed the final charge. "No thanks to you."

"My mind is controlling several clones at once, love," said the asura as he slumped against a wall with another yawn. "It's more taxing than one would think." Akemi lifted the goggles away from her face, leaving a greasy black outline on her otherwise pale skin, and rolled her lilac eyes. Meanwhile, Slim focused on moving all of his clones, making a few of them relay information back to the team and having one in particular scour the upper floor. So far, so good. Suddenly, he was brought out of his concentration by a set of fingers snapping at his face.

"Back up!" said Akemi, lowering the goggles and grinning. The two walked far away enough to not be affected by the blast. "Gods, but I love this part." She grinned, readying the detonator. Once at a safe distance, Slim covered his ears and returned to focusing on his clones.

"Commander dear," said Slim out loud while

BY **ALUCARDALINA CLAIRE, CHASE ISHERWOOD, REBECCA BERGQUIST & RAVEN "VARR" VAN DIJK**

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at the same time making his miniature clone speak his words. “Bombs are set, please stand by.” Slim took a hold of his ears and pressed them downwards against the sides of his head. He braced for the explosion.

* * *

A blast rattled the walls around Nienna and Angel as well as the floor underneath their feet, and was quickly followed by a high-pitched siren. Angel immediately covered her ears and doubled over, her features distorted. With her jaw clenched, Nienna shot a nervous glance to the stairs behind them leading down to the vault.

“Gods,” Nienna anxiously muttered. Reaching into the pouch next to her axe, she pulled out a small pink asura phantasm in the exact semblance of Slim. “Slim! Akemi! How are things lookin’ down there?”

* * *

“Well, doesn’t that just beat all?”

“What is it now?” Slim asked in frustration. He turned to see Akemi, arms crossed, looking at the charred but still very much intact vault door. “Oh.”

“Indeed,” she said with a sigh. “Son of a-” The blaring of a high pitched alarm sounded, cutting her off mid-sentence.

* * *

“Here they come,” Angel whispered as she looked down at her partner, who was busy putting the phantasm back into the pouch. The sound of armored boots on polished marble announced the last moments for battle preparations.

The noble’s guards rounded the corner, each of them running to see what, or who, the explosion was caused by. Two swordsmen charged forward with two riflemen not far behind.

Angel carried forward, unhooking her greatsword from her back. The instant it was fully drawn, she smashed the pommel against the head of the first swordsman. “We aren’t supposed to kill them, huh?”

“Those were the orders,” Nienna responded as she drew the blade of her axe upwards, sending necrotic claws across a rifleman’s chest. He fell to the floor with a shriek.

“A real Wintersday miracle, huh?” Angel scoffed as she used her arm to drive the remaining swordsman into the wall and he slumped to the ground.

The gunman found his aim but Nienna was on him before he could fire; a well placed foot tripped him before she knocked him senseless with the pommel of her dagger. Her boot cracked against the first rifleman’s skull and he too lay still.

“More are coming.” A cacophony of thunderous heartbeats filled Nienna’s ears as she gave her axe an anxious twirl. “You ready?”

Angel nodded as she tightened her grip on her greatsword’s hilt.

Flashes of silver and gold, indicative of Seraph armor, mixed with Morthomme’s guards and immediately she knew they were in for a good fight. A Seraph knelt and lined up a shot with her rifle but before she could pull back the hammer, Nienna put her open hand to her lips and blew. A dark cloud of insects swarmed towards the Seraph and guards, clouding their vision and giving enough time for Angel to rush into the fray and knock the rifle out of her hands.

Angel’s long, blonde hair whipped about her wildly as she brawled with the oncoming opposition. Careful not to use the sharp edges of her greatsword, the norn used her fists and sword’s pommel to knock away weapons and subdue their owners. Staying back, Nienna carefully assessed the fight as she targeted the Seraph and remaining guards one at a time, making sure not to deal a final blow on any.

More Seraph poured into the hallway as Angel fought her way deeper into the skirmish, but it was clear that they were coming in too fast. Fearing the fight was nearing its end, Nienna concentrated, calling on power within. Pushing her hands out to her sides, she released a dark energy that spilled out in all directions. It washed over the guards and Seraph, crippling their movement down the hallway and buying a little more time for herself and Angel. The effects didn’t last long, and before they knew it, the Seraph had maneuvered their way into the end of the hallway to surround Angel and Nienna.

“I suggest you stand down,” a tall Seraph in elaborate armor said, sword held ready as she watched them with sharp, dark eyes. “Throw down your weapons.” The two hesitated. “*Now.*” Outnumbered and with nowhere to go, Nienna and Angel begrudgingly complied.

Before the Seraph could even shackle their prisoners, a young noble dressed in ostentatious clothing rushed towards them. Lord Ezra Morthomme kicked aside one of the unconscious guards in his haste while muttering under his breath. He pushed back a lock of hair from his face and brushed off his vest, as if he were presenting himself to his fellow nobles and not criminals.

The Seraph lieutenant, not paying any mind to the thoughtless noble, started reading out

the rights of the team. “For trespassing and attempted burglary, we’re placing you all under arrest. When we-”

“If this is how slowly the Seraph respond to emergencies,” Morthomme butted in without care. “I’ll find a way to make sure my taxes…” He trailed off, hurrying down the stairs to his basement, the concerned lieutenant following closely behind.

Slim and Akemi were standing with their hands up, three of Morthomme’s guards holding rifles aimed their way, but the noble paid none of them any mind as he ran to his scorched vault door.

“If any of it is missing, I’ll make sure you don’t make it out of your cells for the rest of your lives.” After inserting a key into the lock and turning a few dials, he pulled the heavy metal door open and stepped inside. He sighed in relief, looking left and right at the countless stacks of coins.

Apparently content, Lord Morthomme sealed the door and wrinkled his nose in disgust at the scorch marks. “Why isn’t someone cleaning this up already!?”

He was still cursing the incompetence of his underlings by the time he’d reached the top of the stairs, where he rounded on the Seraph lieutenant. “And you! Why did-”

“Lieutenant Ackerhart, *my lord*,” she interjected coolly, sheathing her sword. “We’ll take it from here, I promise they’ll all get what’s coming to them.”

“Good, yes,” he stammered, briefly taken aback by the lieutenant’s tone, but then gathered himself and gestured imperiously. “Take them away!”

Though her squad surrounded them, Lieutenant Ackerhart herself walked ahead of her captives without so much as a glance at them. She led the procession through the crisp night air of Manor Hill, passing the fine homes of Divinity’s Reach’s upper class. It wasn’t until they had passed into the slightly less extravagant section of the Salma District and moved through a deserted alley that she finally spoke.

“Far enough,” the lieutenant said, without turning, and the column came to a sudden halt. “It’d be a pity to walk you all the way like that.”

Ackerhart’s face, her armor, the entire surface of her seemed to crack and start to fall away like shards of violet glass, exposing pale skin and dark silks beneath. Dark eyes went milky white before they were hidden beneath a black blindfold, tied in place by slender fingers.

“Everything go according to plan, Commander Valar?” Lady Kaede Varr asked, leaning heavily on the silver-topped cane that materialised in her other hand, no longer hidden behind the mesmer’s illusion.

“More or less,” she answered, and Lady Varr gave a small smile. “No problems.”

“Glad to see you remembered at least *some* of your training,” she said, and Nienna’s jaw worked beneath her cheek, eyes narrowing in displeasure. “Glad to hear the team performed. I had my concerns about those two.” She pointed vaguely at Angel and Akemi. The norn merely snorted, but Akemi opened her mouth, about to berate her elder sister when Kaede

waved her to silence and kept speaking. “Come along now, Valar, the rendezvous isn’t far.”
She began walking, cane clicking against the cobbles as she made a lackadaisical gesture with her free hand, turning the Seraph into wisps of purple light that melted into nothingness. Almost visibly biting back a harsh retort, the necromancer fell into step with her employer. “Slim is probably already waiting for us in the vault.”

“And to think you doubted me, Lady Varr. I’m a block down, on your left,” the asura said with a grin, his voice ringing as though it came down a metal tube, and Kaede gave a small, condescending smile.

“He could be worse, I suppose,” she conceded, grudging approval in her voice, and the asuran clone dissolved into purple light.

Slim was waiting, leaning against the alley wall around the next corner, as promised. The ground at his feet shimmered, and through the portal the shadowy interior of the vault was faintly visible.

The little asura spun a shiny new coin in his hand. “Figured I’d get us started.” He grinned. “Shall we?”





COMMUNITY ART

BY KENT BENSON

In Tyria, the theme of winter is bittersweet. While Wintersday brings joy and cheer to almost every race, the Elder Dragon of Ice, Jormag, twists and turns those that call the snowy lands their homes into icy horrors to carry out its will. The same duality can be said of the theme of flame. Where fires bring warmth to the hearths of norn lodges and those that gather within, it is also the element associated with Primordus, the Elder Dragon of Fire, and the sinister charr faction, the Flame Legion.

This issue, I shine the spotlight on pieces old and new that focus on one or both of these elemental themes. 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.



"STARLIT SNOW" BY TSYLORE

This piece by Tsylore has a great illustrative quality that makes it much more than just a gorgeous landscape of the Shiverpeaks. The scene sits on the cusp of a story about to unfold, and not a particularly happy one at that.

The details of the town are dark but soft, despite the rigid spires and generally sharper architecture. The smoke and small specks of soft exterior and interior lights invoke the images of soldiers and families already in their beds. Even with the approach of the dragon minion, there's a believable visual silence. Through the lack of stirred up snow or by viewing the angle in which the smoke is rising from the chimneys, we discern that there isn't much wind in the area.

The travelers on the small road leaving the town don't seem to notice the threat nearby. No doubt this can be attributed to the artist's clear understanding of natural lighting and the power of silhouettes and shadow blending. The dragon minion rises from the darker background and appears as part of the terrain itself. It's a solid contrast from illuminated snow in the foreground, a good example of lighting transition between a landscape's foreground and background. Thematically, it's also a reminder that the Elder Dragons and their very magic are, as far as we know, a facet of Tyria's natural world and it's cycle of magic, a detail Tsylore may or may not have been aware of, but depicts well all the same. It's very reminiscent of the concept and scenic artwork from before *Guild Wars 2*'s launch, when Arenanet was still figuring out what the Elder Dragons and their minions were visually. Ultimately, this piece also fills my head with the same awe and wonder that the old art and designs had.



"BLAZE" BY H1FEY

"NORN GLORY" BY MANLIMA COSPLAY

photo by Bluemoon Photography

Like the first of h1fey's pieces I've covered, the artist has a great sense of action and visual speed. The blurring and blending really bring out the intensity of the combat depicted. Not only that, but h1fey uses these techniques to compartmentalize the viewer's focus on details and characters he feels are most important. This is also done through polarizing the foci of the piece with colors of opposite temperature (represented quite literally in this case). On either side, we can see the two primary colors present in the terrain, with the glow of the fire on the rocky terrain and the icy blue sky behind the dragon minion.

I also like that the artist populated the scene with a few other characters that are less descript and more neutral in color, but detailed enough to know what they are and that they're very much a part of the action. This adds an element of believability to the painting as many players familiar with The Claw of Jormag fight in game know that defeating it is a team effort. Adding other participants to the scene changes the visual narrative. It might take a little away from the focal characters, but it benefits the scene as a whole.

As a first observation, I made note of the individual outfit components. One is the female variant of Braham's armor set while the other is the male variant of the norn light cultural armor, also known as the "Havroun" set, topped off by the Stag Helmet. Additionally, the female cosplayer is also wielding Braham's mace in all of its etched and carved glory. The level of accuracy for these costumes is staggering and the cosplayers definitely fit the roles well, especially the one with the beard. What a beard! The female cosplayer easily makes up for the lack of facial hair with the boldest expression. That smirk (at least, I think she's smirking) is so norn. It says "Oh. You want me to kill that giant frost wurm? That's cute. I'll be back in ten."

If I had to choose which details are my favorite, it would definitely be the smaller pieces: the bracers, the helmets (LOOK AT THOSE HORNS), and that mace. The helmets are specifically impressive because horns and antlers are such fickle objects as they often curve and warp in different directions or sprout off in smaller pathways. As a 2D artist, they are a massive pain to draw from anything other than a straight on frontal. I also have to give the costume maker props for keeping a color scheme that reflects natural leathers, furs, and metal. While I have nothing specific against bright and colorful outfits, I happen to appreciate outfits that remain grounded in natural leather and metallic colors.

Finally, I want to make note of the camera angle that puts the scene on a tilt. Of course, the world hasn't suddenly made a sharp bank to the right (that's not how gravity works), but I like that it accents the piece's personality and "energy flow," if that makes any sense.





"FIRE CHAIN ISLAND" BY NYRA119





Those who watched WoodenPotatoes' older videos that covered the lore of the original *Guild Wars* games may remember that they featured a number of art pieces that were not official *Guild Wars* art. I rediscovered this little beauty following the release of the second episode of the Living World's third season, which takes players back to the Fire Island Chain.

In over 250 years, not a lot has changed visually on the volcanic islands. There's still a lot of a lava, a lot of black rock, and, somehow, a whole lot of old mursaat defenses. The painting above, while a depiction of the the first time the heroes of Tyria stormed the island, is still an accurate representation of the islands today. Even so, the artist really captures the chaotic and destructive atmosphere that anybody who's been there would understand (you can swap out hydra for karka all day and it won't matter; they're both awful). Specifically, the fluidity and volatility of the lava in its various stages of movement perpetuates a constant notion of danger. The river provides a winding visual guide up to the erupting caldera or vice versa. I also commend the artist's ground texturing. They have a solid understanding of how cooled volcanic rock looks, how it folders and layers in sheets, and how it can vary between smoother, globular forms to sharper, more rigid slabs.

When regarding the color palette, the variations in black, brown, and orange are skillfully applied in that the artist uses a good range of color values to keep areas of the terrain from blending into one another. Everything is distinct, and everything has a discernable and plausible visual distance from the viewer's perspective. A great detail is lightening the area in front and back of the wall with a smoky heated haze that allows the wall's obsidian spires to stand out from the surrounding terrain, even though it's all likely about as dark. It's imposing, it's foreboding, and it's dangerous.

Between Elder Dragons and harsh climates, it can be nice to take a break after fighting for so long. For the people of Tyria, holidays are the best times for heroes to kick up their feet and, for a few days, not have to worry about the troubles threatening the world. This piece goes to show that even the most determined heroes take time to slow down and relax.

The subject is Rox. A charr, free agent, ranger, and lover of strays, Rox is spending a cold Wintersday evening with Frostbite, her chittery pet devourer, sharing a small snack around a warm fire. The setting isn't super descript with its snow-covered floor and background of blanketed pines, but no doubt it is to keep the viewer's focus on the charr.

The artist really captures several of Rox's better personality traits, such as her loyalty, thoughtfulness, and nurturing characteristics. From her doting smile to the wag of her tail, the picture reads as genuine to her character. Of course, there's also the visual accuracy, apparent from the details of Rox's armor down to her fur patterns and hair ornaments. Don't think that I didn't notice that scarf, because I like it and it is super on-point for the setting.

The piece is also successful in its combined emotional and physical warmth. Even though I can see that the two are sitting in the snow at evening time, there's nothing particularly cold about the piece with the exception of the setting, held at bay by the campfire. At the same time, I can't help but feel like there's this subtle and underlying vulnerability that goes back to Tyrian heroes taking time to unwind around their annual festivities. There's a tangible unease to holidays where people let their guard down and quite often, nothing goes wrong, but that's not always true. In the end, I feel the greatest comfort comes from the observation that Rox doesn't appear to be worried, and by extension, this piece invites us not to be as well.







"WINTERSDAY" BY JAYELLEANDERSON



SCREENSHOT CONTEST

Competition time! We're **giving away 800 gems** to one lucky winner - and all you have to do is submit a screenshot!

2017 will be the year that Season 3 of the Living World ramps up - and to celebrate this, we're looking for **screenshots that embody the theme of fire and ice.** Show us what your experience of the Living World looks like, whether that's the icy plains of Bitterfrost Frontier; the scorching reaches of Ember Bay or anywhere else you can think of! We're looking for beautiful scenery, challenging monsters and characters in epic battles - something that truly sums up this season's story so far, and the threat that Jormag and Primordus pose.

RULES

- Each individual may submit only **ONE** screenshot.
- The screenshot should be of ***Guild Wars 2*** **(including *Heart of Thorns*) ONLY**.
- The screenshot should not show any UI elements or player names.
- The screenshot may not be enhanced in any way from the base game, including: post-processing effects (SweetFX, GEMFX etc); image modification; any other changes from what's visible in-game.
- The image submitted may not contain obscene or offensive material. Any images deemed unsuitable for publication will be immediately discarded.

HOW TO ENTER

To enter, send your screenshot, along with your in-game account name, to **contest@guildmag.com** no later than **28th February 2017**. Entries sent after this date will not be accepted into the competition. Good luck!

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DESIGNER

It's a lot of work to make each issue look as good as possible. We strive for bold ways to show off our content, and our designers are the people that bring the magazine to life. You don't need a qualification in graphic design - just show us what you can do!

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