

Gaíscíoch

MAGAZINE

Overcoming Adversity

Four Epic Tales of Courage and Perseverance

Lindsey Stirling American McGee Anthony Davis Brett Smrz



ISSUE III

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Benjamin Foley
Founder & Managing Editor
Gaiscioch Magazine
foghladha@gaiscioch.com

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Greetings and welcome to the third edition of the Gaiscioch Magazine. In this issue we will take a look at some extraordinary people, who like yourselves enjoy video games and have had to face the difficulties life throws at us.

For this issue we look at how four people who have faced adversity and overcame it against all odds. These courageous people serve as an inspiration to us all in our darkest hour and give us perspective to the challenges we face.

Whether our challenge is in the form of a dungeon raid, or in a life changing event outside of game, we can look to these stories of perseverance and accomplishment and realize that it's only in our darkest hour that we possess the most potential to shine.

It is my hope, that by the time you complete this issue you will have a new perspective on the challenges you face in your day to day life and find the resolve necessary to overcome them.

In addition we will share with you our findings at the 2014 Elder Scrolls Online Guild Summit as well as provide you with extensive guides, previews, reviews and stories regarding your favorite games. Plus this issue we have expanded our fan favorite recipe section.

I thank you for taking the time to read this magazine, and I hope you enjoy what you see. If you have any comments or questions or would like to publish something, please contact us at: magazine@gaiscioch.com.

Slán Go Foill!

Benjamin Foley

GAISCIOCH MAGAZINE STAFF

Gaiscioch Magazine is a quarterly, volunteer driven, no-profit, digital magazine for game developers and enthusiasts alike.

MANAGING EDITOR & LAYOUT

Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley
<foghladha@gaiscioch.com>

EDITORS / COLUMNISTS:

Althea "Briseadh" Damgaard
<briseadh@gaiscioch.com>

Aoibheann Ní Choileáin
<Aoibheann@gaiscioch.com>

Beth "Jac Onasi" Carlock
<jaeonasi@gaiscioch.com>

Christine "Seacoral" Metz
<seacoral@gaiscioch.com>

Esther "GmaFog" Foley
<humblemisty@gaiscioch.com>

Herb "OldGoat" Townsend
<oldgoat@gaiscioch.com>

Caitlin "Caytlynne of Skye" Martin
<Caytlynne@gaiscioch.com>

Timothy "MrFallenAngel" Beerman
<mrfallenangel@gaiscioch.com>

Wally "Pops" Anderson
<pops@gaiscioch.com>

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Donald "Donaliam" Rush
<donaliam@gaiscioch.com>

Lisa "Prissy" Grant
<prissy@gaiscioch.com>

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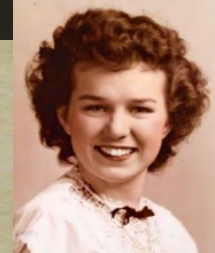
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ABOUT THE GAISCIOCH FAMILY

The Gaiscíoch (pronounced Gosh-Kia) began on November 11th 2001 in the industry pioneering MMORPG “Dark Age of Camelot”. They began on the Nimue roleplaying server with a focus on creating a fun and enjoyable community for players of all ages and skill levels.

The Gaiscíoch takes it's name from an Irish legend found within the “Lebor Gabála Érenn” and “Cath Maige Tuired” which chronicle the first people of Ireland, the Tuatha de Danann. Specifically the First Battle of Moytura where the Tuatha de Danann hand picked the most honorable and loyal warriors to fight alongside the Celtic Gods in a battle against the Fir Bolg. These warriors were known as the Gaiscíoch.

The Gaiscioch are a social gaming community with a relaxed approach toward gaming. They allow

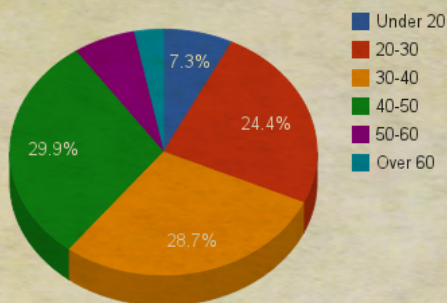
their members to play how they want, when they want, as long as they want and do not constrict them with quotas or requirements.

The overall focus of the Gaiscioch is to support the server communities and real world communities they are part of. They accomplish this by hosting public community events, participating and hosting community forums, interacting with game developers, and providing new players information through our in-game advisers and out-of-game guides, maps, and videos.

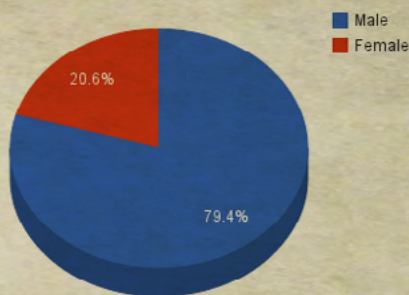
With a strong focus on community our endgame goal is to create memories, friendships, and participate in the overall success of the community. It is through gaming, athletic competition, and social interaction that we forge new friendships and relationships.

Gaiscioch Fall 2014 Demographics

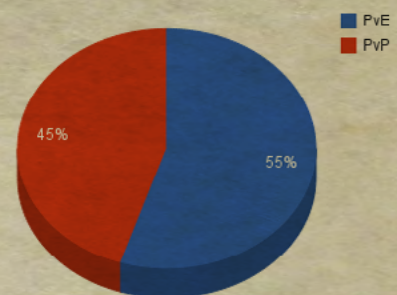
Age



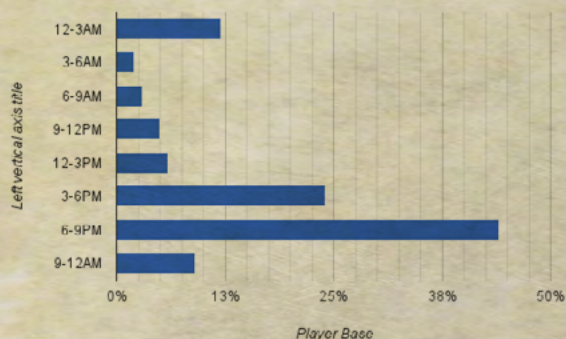
Gender



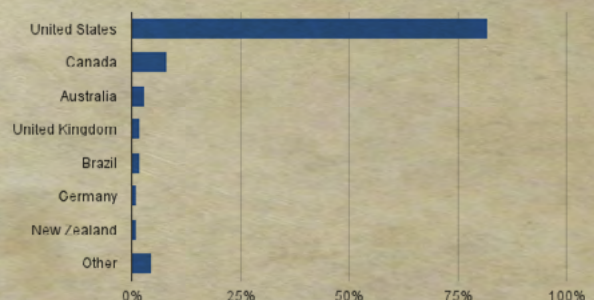
Activity Type



Active Play Times (Pacific)



Locations



Join The
Gaiscloch
School of Epic Adventure



Slay Dragons!



Siege Castles!



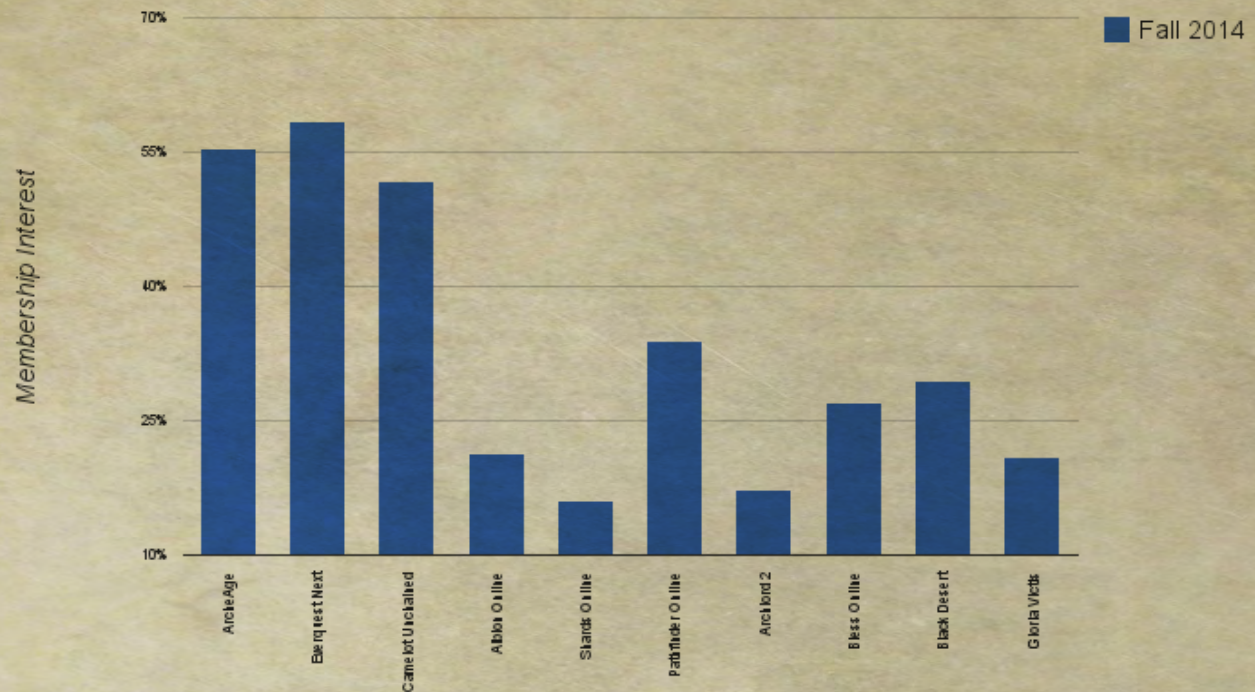
Oooo Shiny!

Creating
Lasting Friendships
& Epic Memories
Since 2001

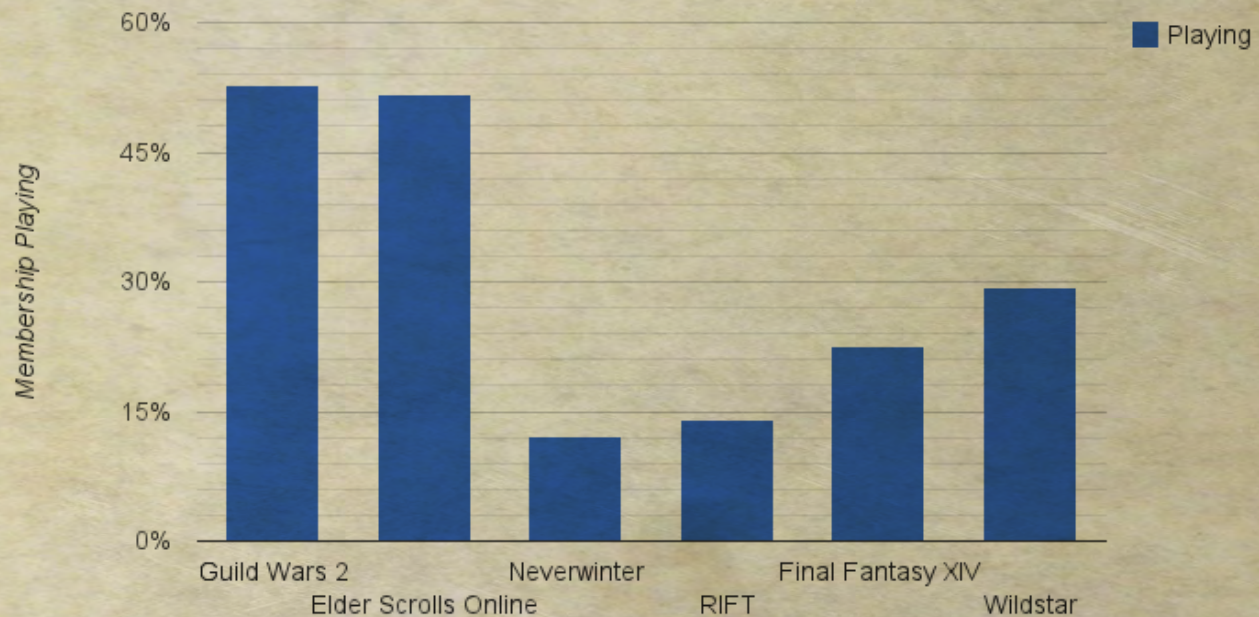
Learn more at: Gaiscloch.com

Gaiscioch 2014 Member Survey Results

Fall 2014 MMORPG Interest Poll

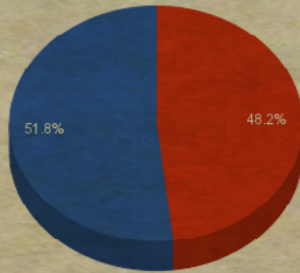


Fall 2014 Current MMO Interests



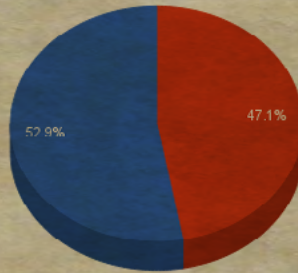
Currently Playing

Elder Scrolls Online



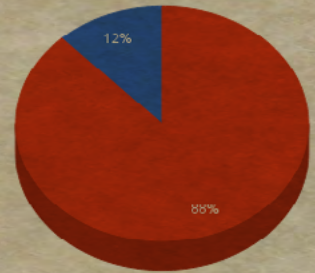
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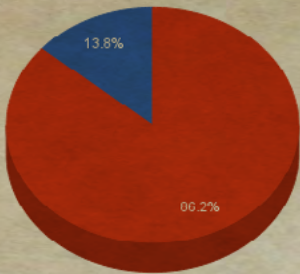
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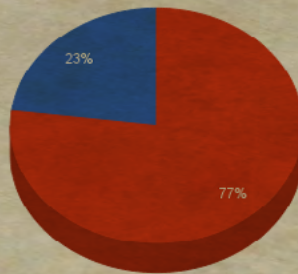
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RIFT



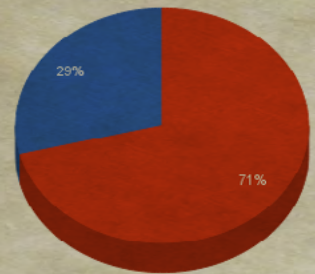
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Final Fantasy XIV



No Longer Playing Playing

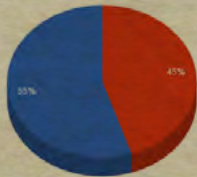
Wildstar



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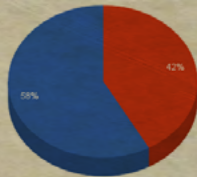
Future Interests

ArcheAge



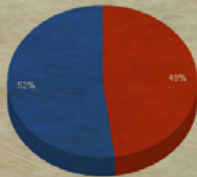
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Everquest Next



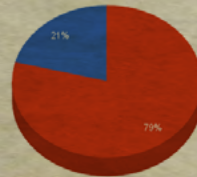
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Camelot Unchained



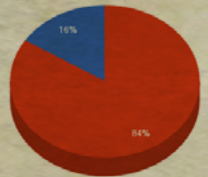
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Albion Online



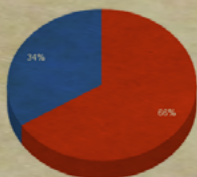
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Shards Online



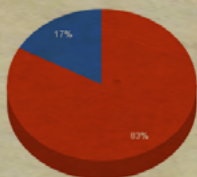
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Pathfinder Online



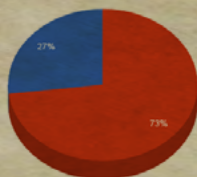
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Archlord 2



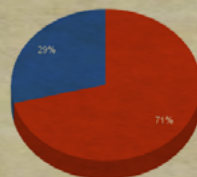
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Bless Online



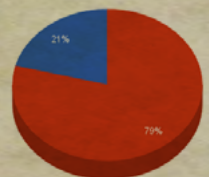
Not Interested Interested

Black Desert



Not Interested Interested

Gloria Victis



Not Interested Interested



Conquering Adversity

By: Benjamin “Foghladha” Foley

In gaming as well as in life, adversity can both enable and cripple us at any moment. Things can seem to be going great, and with the blink of an eye, in comes disaster to ruin our day.

I’ve always had a saying when explaining how people handle adversity.

“You’re either ‘heads’ or ‘tails’. On one side of the coin, you’re looking up and can see adversity as a challenge, a foe to stand against and defeat. On the other side, you accept your fate and wallow in the defeat.”

I encourage you all to take the first option. When someone tells me something is impossible or that I can’t do something, it makes me want to do it that much more.

To do something that is easy or that everyone can do is normal. Nobody looks at it as an achievement. Would you post on Facebook, *“Hey, everyone, I put my shirt on today!”*

That’s not exactly the greatest achievement. However, if you climbed Mt. Everest, well, that would be something to talk about.

We all want acceptance. We all want to be noticed. The only thing that stands in our way is perception. Don’t look at misfortune as a defeat. See it as a challenge and overcome it. Let it be your epic back story. When have you ever heard a legend about a guy who had it all and *still* had it all? You haven’t.

Epic tales are born from moments of strife and despair. The best possible story is one born of extreme hardship and adversity. Each time you find yourself in your worst moment, you are being given the formula to forge a legendary story of your own.

I look back at Asha Catari of RIFT, who lived within the Defiant capital city in the PvP Rewards room. She was the highest health creature in all of RIFT, initially. When I asked on the forums if she was killable, people said it was impossible. They told me it would be a fool's errand to try, and that she wouldn't even take damage. We made it our mission, and after 16 attempts, we actually killed her. For those of us that were there, it's a memory we will never forget. The impossible had just became possible. All of those people who said we would never pull it off just became void. Our perseverance had paid off and we had killed the unkillable Asha Catari.

While this is merely an example of the epic adventures we share every day, we often forget that for this to be epic, we first needed it to be impossible. We needed it to be hard. We needed adversity to enhance the greatness of the task.

Remember, it's only in your darkest hour that you have the greatest potential to do something remarkable. Thrive where others choose to survive. Forge your own destiny.

Today, we have the privilege of sharing with you the stories of four regular, everyday people and avid gamers who were hit with adversity and chose to rise above it.



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Lindsey Stirling had a dream of being a violinist and dancer. Ever since childhood, she loved both. She followed her dream all the way to the grand stage that was *America's Got Talent*. After making it to the finals and performing in front of millions, she was publicly humiliated by the judges who told her she needed a band to succeed and needed to stop all the dancing and flying around. She smiled and said thank you.

She went on to create Crystalize, a performance that now is one of the most viewed on YouTube with over 100 million views. She's currently traveling on her third world tour, and is well known in the gaming world as an icon of epic proportions.

American McGee is a successful entrepreneur and visionary with a dark past, eccentric lifestyle and colorful history. He is a man that refuses to let his past define him. Instead he has chosen to forge a new path and succeed against all odds.

His story comes to life as we sit down with the mastermind behind the cult classic smash hit video game American McGee's *Alice*, and journey down the rabbit hole to discuss the transitions he's had to make to be where he is now.



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Anthony Davis, Gulf War Veteran, US National Rowing Team Member, and quarterback for the Gaiscioch Football team for the past 4 years, was paralyzed after an automobile accident which ejected him from the vehicle and shattered his spine. He faced life in a wheelchair but chose a different path. Today his friend is known as pain. With pain, he has taught himself to walk and even run without being able to feel anything in his legs.



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Brett Smrz, a professional stuntman and racer, knew loss as well. One week after qualifying pole and finishing third in his first professional race in Houston, TX, Brett suffered a serious leg injury on a trampoline. Following ten complex surgeries, he eventually lost his left leg below the knee. Following intense physical therapy, Brett was back in the cockpit only three months later for the San Francisco Formula Ford triple header at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. He celebrated by winning all three races, setting a new class track record, and earning the San Francisco Region Driver of the Year Award. Additionally, he has performed stunts in dozens of Hollywood blockbusters and TV series including *Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol*, *Spider-Man*, and *Knight and Day*.

We all have our own battles to face, challenges to overcome, and opportunities to make greatness happen. Let these stories of people choosing to stand against adversity and create their own fate be an inspiration to you as you go forward in your gaming and real lives. Courage and perseverance only come from the hard times, and epic adventures are born only from moments of strife. Look at them as opportunities, and celebrate your victory over defeat.

“It’s only in your darkest hour that you have the greatest potential to do something remarkable.”

- Benjamin “Foghladha” Foley



Lindsey Stirling

FROM DEVASTATION TO DISNEY PRINCESS

By: Aoibheann Ní Choileáin

Truth be known, when I was asked to write this article, I didn't know who Lindsey Stirling was. Apparently I live under a rock, because in the music world, she is an up-and-coming violinist/ballerina that can *“work the crowd into a frenzy by dropping the beat like a rave fairy.”*

I liked her music, but it wasn't until I watched her videos on YouTube that I truly understood her unique talents. Her videos are wild flights of fancy where she melds music, dance and fantasy. It's what hooked me and apparently millions of her fans who she fondly refers to as Stirlingites.

From humble beginnings, Lindsey at six years old begged her parents for two things: violin lessons and dance lessons. Not being able to give her both, she was told to choose between the two. She chose the violin. They were able to find a violin teacher who was willing to give half lessons, although they were told by instructors, *“a child isn't going to learn how to play ... in 15 minutes a week”*. Oh, how wrong they were.

She never did have the privilege of taking dance lessons, but that didn't slow her down one bit these past two decades.

At age sixteen, Lindsey began losing interest in the violin. She was tired of being told what to play and how to play it. So, she joined a rock band with four friends, called **Stomp on Melvin**. By experimenting with different styles of music and blending her playing with dance elements, she learned to love the violin again.

In 2005, Lindsey wrote and performed a solo violin rock song in the Arizona's Junior Miss competition. She won the title and then went on to win the Spirit Award in the America's Junior Miss Finals Competition.

After high school, Lindsey attended Brigham Young University's (BYU) film school with hopes of becoming a director. She took a break from school from 2008 to 2009 to perform missionary work in New York City (NYC) for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Later, she wrote a story about her experience that was included in



the compilation book entitled: ***Do Not Attempt in Heels: Mission Stories and Advice from Sisters Who've Been There.***

When she returned from NYC, she resumed her studies and changed her major. As of now, she is only missing an internship credit to complete her degree in therapeutic recreation. During this time, she also volunteered her time to work in rehabilitation centers with troubled teens.

In 2007 during college, she uploaded her first viral video, a violin cover and dance to **Pump It** by **The Black-Eyed Peas**. It was this video that attracted the attention of the producers of the television show, *America's Got Talent*. They invited her to tryouts in early 2010.

Due to contractual obligations with the show, from January to August 2010 Lindsey led a secret double life. She still attended her classes at BYU and worked her day job while making excuses to friends and coworkers for her frequent absences in her real life. All the while, she was traveling back and forth to auditions for *America's Got Talent*.

Lindsey did very well with the judges in her audition and was considered a favorite in the Las Vegas round of the competition. It was in Las Vegas that she was categorized as a dance act instead of a musician, but she was excited to be sent on to the Hollywood round.

August 4, 2010 was Lindsey's quarterfinals performance in Hollywood that consisted of dancing and playing the violin to **Break Your Heart** and **Tik Tok**. Piers Morgan buzzed her act, and she received harsh criticism from all three of the judges. The next phase was *America's Vote*. She did not receive enough votes to finish in fifth place, so she was eliminated from the competition.



The following week, she wrote in her blog about the experience,

“Well, I admit that the things that were said to me on live, national TV were extremely hurtful. I was devastated at the results and it was almost surreal that something that had nearly consumed my life for so long was instantaneously gone. Yes it was painful, and a bit humiliating; however, I had to relearn where it was that I drew my strength. Was it from this faulty, fake world of glitz and glam, big hair, make-up and celebrity judges or was it from things that are real? Through heartfelt prayer I reminded myself that I am a daughter of god and that he was proud of me. After publicly being ripped apart, I left the theater and I was embraced by the people that love me. My family and friends had come quite a ways to see me and they were so proud of me. That is what is really important. These people know and love me for who I am and for the love I’ve given them.”

Three weeks later, she blogged, *“I am really excited to announce that I am taking a jump into the dark and I am going to try out the life of a musician.”* With performances booked on her calendar, she took time off of school and went in search of her dreams.

Being voted off America’s Got Talent turned out to be what she considers the best thing that’s ever happened. The rejection simply strengthened her resolve to be herself. The same reasons she was told that she wouldn’t succeed are the reasons people travel hundreds of miles to see her, because she’s different.

Shortly after her performance on America’s Got Talent, she was contacted by cinematographer Devin Graham, who proposed that they make a YouTube video together. She also met with Ryan Wyler, the first manager who was willing to invest time into her talents, as well as Marco G, her first producer.





The start of the collaboration with Graham was the video **Spontaneous Me**. They made several more videos together for her YouTube channel, LindseyStomp, which she created in 2007. Currently, this site has over 5.5 million subscribers and almost 774 million viewers. In 2012 she created a second YouTube channel, LindseyTime, where she posts vlogs (video blogs) and behind-the-scenes content.

Her debut album, the self-titled, **Lindsey Stirling**, was first released September 2012 in conjunction with her North American tour that same month. In December 2012, her song

Crystallize was the number 8 top-viewed video of the year on YouTube with over 42 million views.

Lindsey started her first world tour in January, 2013. In June, 2013 she received her first golden certification for her self-titled album in Germany, followed shortly after in Switzerland and Austria. Her first album was re-released October 2013. That same month she also launched a 60-day fundraiser benefiting the Atlanta Music Project. In November 2013, her cover version of **Radioactive** that she made with **Pentatonix** won Response of the Year in the first YouTube Music Awards.





a seemingly perfect-looking ballerina standing in the middle of a cracked glass globe.

In August 2014, Lindsey made a triumphant return as host on America's Got Talent 2014 and performed her song ***Shatter Me*** with **Lzzy Hale**.

In September 2014, during an interview with Violinist.com, Lindsey commented on her recent return to violin lessons at the Colburn School in Los Angeles. She said that her decision to restart lessons after 10 years makes her feel like she was starting all over again, but that it was a good thing to get back to the basics.

In October 2014 Lindsey joined the Italian tenor, Andrea Bocelli, on his UK and Ireland tours.

Lindsey is well known for taking requests for her music videos and has recorded her unique versions of the theme songs from **The Phantom of the Opera**, **Game of Thrones**, **Lord of the Rings** and **Star Wars**. She has also recorded music from video games, including **The Legend of Zelda**, **Halo**, **Pokemon**, **Skyrim** and **Assassin's Creed**.

On March 12, 2014, Lindsey posted a video to announce her second album, ***Shatter Me***, would be released in May. On March 22nd Lindsey joined **Cirque du Soleil** for the second annual ***One Night for One Drop*** in Las Vegas. On March 25th she officially released her first single, ***Beyond the Veil***, from ***Shatter Me***. In May 2014, her album ***Shatter Me*** peaked at #2 on the Billboard 200. That same month Lindsey started on her second world tour.

In July 2014 in an interview with Good Morning America, Lindsey explained that her song, ***Shatter Me*** was actually the story about overcoming her eating disorder. The album's cover art is a reference to her struggle with anorexia and shows



A gamer herself, in Lindsey's interview with GamerHub.TV, she reminisced about playing her favorite Mario Brothers games growing up and how her parents only allowed her and her sisters to play video games an hour a day.

When asked where she sees herself in the future, Lindsey's reply was,

"That is a very difficult question to answer. Right now I'm taking my life one year at a time. I think it is the goal of every popular musician to become one of those unforgettable artists... the ones like The Beatles or Michael Jackson or Whitney Houston or Elvis Presley. Their music lives on, long after they are gone. But regardless of how my career turns out, my ultimate goal is to stay focused on the most important things, remember who I am and why I am doing this, and one day have a cute little family."

Having recently signed with Disney's Maker Studio, Lindsey quipped *"With this partnership, I am one step closer to becoming a Disney princess!"*

Hmmm, Princess Lindsey...



Learn More About Lindsey Stirling at:

<http://www.lindseystirling.com/>

Listen on Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/artist/378dH6EszOLFShpRzAQkVM>

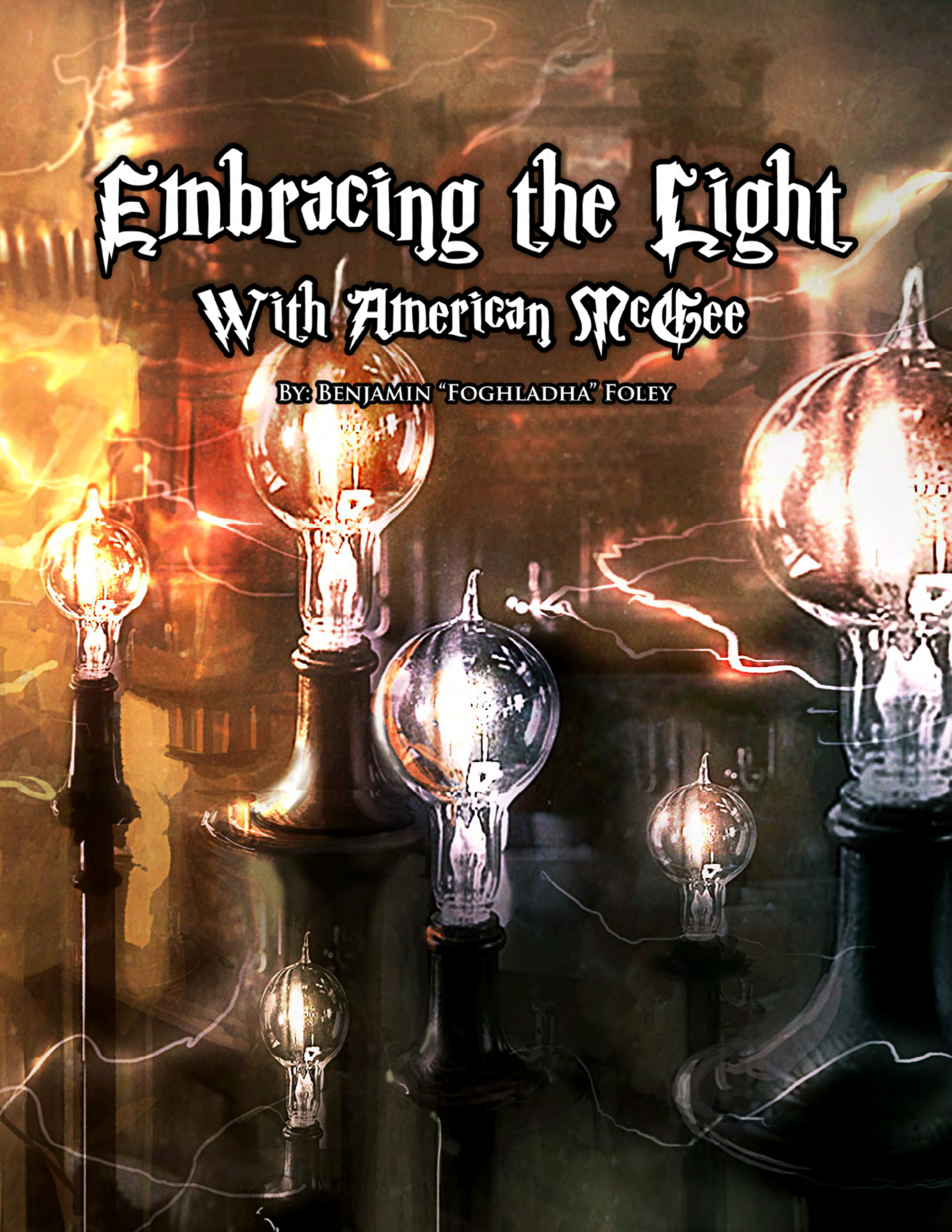




Embracing the Light

With American McGee

BY: BENJAMIN "FOGHLADHA" FOLEY





It's a rare occasion that you receive the opportunity to interview a role model that has been such a huge inspiration in your life. Today we are fortunate enough to sit down with the Tim Burton of gaming, American McGee who has entertained us with his darker versions of our favorite fairy tales.



Gamers may recognize his work from American McGee's Alice, but many may not know that he was also worked on the hit classics Wolfenstein 3D, DOOM, Hexen and Quake. He has gone from simple game tester to a successful entrepreneur over the course of his career.

While American's recent past shines bright with success and accolade, it did not come without it's fair share of adversity. Today we talk to American about his colorful past and how he overcame by finding fuel for creativity and success in the people around him.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. For years you have been bringing some of our favorite fairy tales with a creative spin only you could bring to life. Have fairy tales always been something you wanted

to essentially rewrite and create your own version of how the events played out?

I began to take an interest in adapting fairy tales to games after spending the early part of my career working on games with a sci-fi action theme (DOOM and Quake series). While working on those games, I had a sense that the technology we were building could do much more in terms of presenting story and atmosphere. Later, when I first saw what the Valve guys did with id's tech, I knew I wanted to be involved with building much deeper, more story-driven games. Fairytales interested me because they provide a natural foundation on which to build stories that people immediately recognize - and frequently offer an opportunity for pushing the artistic envelope.

As you know the focus of this issue of Gaiscioch Magazine is on overcoming adversity. After reading various articles over the years and hearing the strife and adversity you've had to overcome, I felt you were perfect for this story. Can you tell us about your early darker years that shaped you into what you are today?

This is a difficult topic for me, first because I don't want people to know me only or what I was or where I've come from. Second, because members of my family, even those who clearly committed some wrong, do not deserve to be put on public trial by whatever response I might give here. Some knowledge about my relationship (or lack thereof) with my natural father has already leaked into the news - the result of a reporter violating trust and printing something he

said would be kept confidential. It bothers me that people would define me based on these dark events - ones that are very much in my past, and that were often out of my control.

What's already out there is this: I did not know my natural father. Various stories have been told about my conception - some quite dark, others just a little dark. The one time I remember meeting my father, he attempted to rape and kill me. He was apprehended, drunk, passed out inside his vehicle, after crashing into a telephone pole. I was 13 when that happened. I never saw him again - and I believe he's dead now.

There's more, but it has so little to do with who I am or what I'm doing now. Either by chance or choice I've built a life thousands of miles removed from those events - inside a culture completely alien to the one I knew growing up in Texas. Perhaps that's how it all shaped me - by giving me an impulse to escape, to move quickly and constantly towards a new world over which I'd have a better sense of involvement and freedom?

After surviving such a traumatizing childhood experience how did you cope with the darkness you would naturally feel and how did you transform it from fear to motivation? Is there a certain moment you can recall that it changed for you?

From when I was 16 until my early 20s I certainly struggled with the impacts of the earlier years. It would be safe to say I was "messed up" in many ways. Some of the greatest help I received came from my uncle and one of his colleagues - they helped send me through various therapies. These were often group sessions where people of varying ages were dealing with life issues in an open and direct fashion. A lot of the therapy was geared towards direct confrontation of very painful issues - and a rebuilding atop areas of the psyche that had been exposed and "cleansed." This got me into a healthier state, but didn't completely address all the scars or related issues.

I know that I am still working through issues and feelings that

are 20, 30 years old. But as I get older it gets easier - one, because there are fewer issues to deal with, and two, because growing older means gaining access to more and better tools for dealing with issues. I continue to study on the subject of happiness and self... and continue to make self improvement and happiness an ongoing goal.

Thing is, that event does not define me as much as things that came later in life...

Interesting. From the articles I read, I came at this all wrong. They did not convey where your true motivation was. I now realize it wasn't the darkness that you overcame that motivated you. It's in the people and moments of kindness that you find your ambition. Can you tell us about your surrogate father and business partner and the greater role he played on mentoring you?

Much of the "damage" done to me in early years was related to "father figures" who were themselves damaged. As a result



it was always difficult for me to build positive relationships with other men - especially with those who might offer any sort of parental or mentor-like relationship. Even when I first met RJ, my business partner, I felt a mix of conflicting feelings. Here was someone I admired, aspired to be like, trusted, and cared for - but at the same time I struggled with feelings of revulsion, suffocation, and anger. Knowing that these negative feelings have their source in the past does nothing to reduce their power in the present. It took a lot of time, patience, and adaptation for me to address the core issues that were driving the negative feelings and then build a healthy relationship with RJ and his wife. They've always been understanding of the challenge. And we've all grown closer and happier over time.

Do you still communicate today and do they continue to be a major part of your life?

Of course! We're still in business together and, though we live on opposite sides of the Pacific ocean, we do try to spend time together whenever possible.

What are the other factors you largely attribute your success and personal development from? Are there any moments that really gave you a nudge in the right direction?

Certainly the largest "nudge" ever was from John Carmack when he hired me into id Software. That put me on a path through the game industry and led to all sorts of interesting twists and turns - including my being in China today. I've also found a lot of therapy in moving around - the further out into the world I travel the more I

feel I understand about myself and other people. Mark Twain is quoted as saying, "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." For me, these are words to live by.

So let's talk about your early years in the industry. Your first major role in the industry was testing and designing levels for some of the greatest games of my childhood including Wolfenstein 3D, DOOM, Hexen, and Quake. What was it like working with the team from ID back in the heyday of the 90's?

When I first arrived at id I felt like a kid let loose inside Disneyland while the park was





closed. There was a sort of magic in the air - amazing things were being built, cool technologies were emerging, and the culture was really fun. We all worked insanely long hours, were crazy about Deathmatch, really enjoyed each other's creativity - and were generally having a blast.

I understand that after ID you went on to work for EA. At this point in your career had you already started to

dream up Alice or did your experience at EA lead to the creation of such a dark heroine?

The idea for Alice was inspired in part by my move to San Francisco (EA's HQ is in Redwood Shores, roughly 20 miles south of the city). After so many years in Texas, I was really inspired by the culture, natural environments, and people of northern California.

During your time at EA you were placed in an role that nobody in their right mind would want. They put you in the role of being a "Hatchet Man". Can you tell us about what lead up to this role change and what this role entailed?

I don't think the idea was that I should be a hatchet man. And I think this idea of my role has been blown out of proportion to some degree (perhaps my own fault?). The original idea was that I visit developers who were struggling with budget/schedule and see what sort of assistance they needed. Several times I reported back that a given project was doomed - with sadly predictable results.

I imagine this took both a professional and emotional toll on you. How did you go from "Hatchet Man" to headliner on the box for Alice. Where did the concept





come from, and who did you pitch it to that changed EA's mind about your role in their company?

That side of the business is as unpleasant as you might imagine. I was happy to transfer away from that to something more creative.

The chance to create Alice came when an EA exec (Rich Hilleman) who had taken a personal interest in my career and projects asked if I'd like to submit a couple of game ideas for consideration. Based on that offer, I then spent some weeks building a pitch that included story and art. I was blessed to work with the aforementioned creative partner (RJ Berg) and a group of truly talented illustrators and concept artists. Together we put together

a package that was impressive enough to get a green light for development.

It's pretty fascinating that one minute you're at your wits end, the next you've got one of the largest publishers in the world sticking your name on a box headlining a new IP and brand. I can only imagine how exciting that transition must have been. Was this something that you always sought after or did it just happen and you were pleasantly surprised?

It certainly wasn't something I sought after. Being a high school dropout, I imagined a bleak future for myself - not one in which I was given freedom to build a game of my own design and then see my name on the

packaging. As with many things from that era, the reality was bittersweet. My name being on the box caused bad feelings among some of the development team, and has "haunted" me in unusual ways ever since. It's also helped to open doors and provided a foundation upon which I've built my independent development studio.

So fast forward to the release of American McGee's Alice, you've got a Game, a toy line that is still popular and selling like hot cakes today, clothing, and a huge cult following. Your little gem from the mind of American created a whole alternate ending to one of the most acclaimed fairytales of all time. What can you tell us about the release of this title

from your perspective?

While I was happy that the title was finished, released, and met with praise, I was less happy with things going on behind the scenes. The developer behind Alice, Rogue Entertainment, went out of business as a result of broken promises from EA. My creative partner on Alice, RJ Berg, was laid off after 15+ years of working at EA. I was left alone, holding this “success,” while all the people responsible for helping to build it were scattered to the winds. It was a bittersweet moment - and all this ultimately led to my deciding to leave EA and go out on my own.

Being you're sharing such personal detail with us I only feel it fair to do the same and give some light that you might not know about how your little dark fairy tale changed my life as well. At the time that this game launched I was at my worst.

I too had a rough upbringing but mine wasn't from my parents. The neighborhood I grew up in was very violent and cruel and being the smallest, lightest kid around made me an easy target. Darkness and resentment filled me and I was in a very bad place mentally. I picked up Alice mainly because I liked the box art, but also because it looked like a game I could go kill stuff endlessly and even have some interesting characters to interact with.

What I found however was a journey of person vs self.



Just as Alice had to find her way out of her own darkness, the same was true for me. The trauma that we often feel as youth sticks with us through life and if we can't find a way out we, like Alice are trapped in our own minds. This game hit very close to home for me and instantly became my favorite game of all time. Perspective is a funny thing. One minute the world looks dark and hopeless, yet the next the tiniest light shines bright and gives you hope.

Thank you for sharing that :)

Your transition from that darkness to what you've become today is inspiring. Do you still draw inspiration from the darkness you

felt or has it become a dull silence of the past and you look to new inspiration for your current ideas?

Working with the things that helped inspire themes and narratives in the Alice projects was emotionally challenging. After building two games upon those foundations I feel ready for new inspirations. At the same time, I am less involved with day to day creative and development activities, and more focused on running the business. I think people working for me are thankful I'm not taking any inspiration from my past to drive thinking on company culture or accounting!

So lets fast forward a bit. It wasn't long after the release of Alice that you decided



to undergo a very life changing decision. What lead up to your decision to leave America and move to China?

There were many small influences that contributed to the idea and the final decision. After leaving EA I moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles and spent some time working on film and TV projects. At the same time, I was traveling over to Hong Kong quite frequently - at first to visit a friend, and later to participate in lectures and events at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. I was looking for an "out" from the US and had been for a while. Asia had fascinated me since my first visit - and life in the US was losing its appeal. The non-stop wars, partisan politics, declining infrastructure and questionable quality of life... all contributed to my disillusion with life in the States. Hong Kong (and then China) just happened to present themselves as an opportunity in the midst of my growing disillusion.

What was the hardest part about leaving the states and starting a new life abroad?

There were two big things - friends and possessions. I think most people understand the pain suffered when you have to move away from well-established friendships. What surprised me (about myself) was just how much of my personal identity was wrapped up in my "stuff," and how much pain was created in leaving that stuff behind. Letting go of a home full of gadgets, a car, and reducing life down to 2 suitcases, a laptop, and a cat...

left me feeling disconnected from my “identity of items.”

Moving away from the US (and to a country where you don’t speak the local language), drives home the fact that we’re constantly surrounded by marketing aimed at defining our self. In the US I’d see “tanning creams” and in Hong Kong I’d see “whitening creams.” Marketing is the art of telling you that everything you are is wrong. So, after suffering a bit of a personality meltdown as a result of the move, I was thankful for having my eyes opened and my future freed from the bombardment of illusions.

Beyond that, I think the challenges were what you’d expect - making new friends, learning a new language, embracing local customs, and so on. Then again, I’ve grown to love these challenges, and particularly the ones specific to

China. It’s an amazingly diverse place. Travel an hour and you’ll find a new (spoken) language, local cuisine, and regional customs.

Anything you miss from your old life?

It’s been over 10 years since I left the US, so the “old life” is simply too far away. I’ve changed too much to think I’d still find aspects of that life as appealing today as I did back then. I do miss the sushi in LA though!

So here you are in a new country and you start your own company called The Mauretania Import Export Company. What projects did you produce in the 4 years that you ran this company?

Actually, TMIEC was started while I was living in Los Angeles. Upon arriving in Hong Kong

I went to work for a company called Enlight. There I produced what’s arguably one of the worst video games ever made - Bad Day LA. It’s terribleness is mainly my fault, as I was the lead writer and designer. That project consumed about 1 year of time, after which I moved to a sparsely populated island near Hong Kong and spent a year writing. At that same time I was traveling to mainland China to help a friend start an art outsourcing business in Shanghai.

After The Mauretania Import Export Company you launched Spicy Horse with a very new idea and innovative idea about the gaming business. Can you discuss some of the concepts you had going into this new company and the things you sought to change from the traditional gaming company?



During my travels to Shanghai I noticed that options for local developers were pretty limited. They could either work for a large-scale Chinese operator (making games for the local, Chinese market) or they could work for an outsource company (making content for Western games). In either case, creative input was pretty limited and work conditions were less than great.

My “big idea” was simply to open a studio with high quality of life for employees and a development focus on unique, original IP for global audiences. My theory was that I’d be able to attract talented local (Chinese) developers and Western developers looking for some adventure in China. Turns out the theory was correct - as soon as the studio was started I’d managed to pull in some really impressive developers - and 8 years later we’re still going strong.

Were there any differences you saw with the eastern way of business and the western way of business?

I used to think there were differences, but more and more I think it’s the same wherever you go in the world. Money talks, success opens doors; the rest is just nuance.

Were your new employees attitudes and work ethics different from what you were used to?

From the start we employed people from all over the world - Chinese, Americans, Belgians, Australians, etc, etc. We actually have a hallway full of flags from all the countries of origins of our employees over the years. As with business, I think the concept of differences is mostly a myth. When it comes to quality developers, they share a similar passion and work ethic, they use the same tools, and they develop games with the same goals in mind.

Was this a pleasant change?

We’ve been fortunate in maintaining a very healthy work culture over the past 8 years. There have been difficult times

- and difficult people - but the core group have survived, along with a shared understanding about work ethic, quality of life, and goals.

So that brings us to Alice: Madness Returns, how did you get the rights to make the game after leaving EA to form your own company? I imagine this was not an easy feat.

It took over a year to complete the contract negotiation before we could begin development. It all started as a simple email from me to a friend at EA: “I have a well-established development pipeline and a desire to make the next Alice game...”

The long awaited and much loved sequel also brought the original American McGee’s Alice to the console world which gave it a second life. How was the reception of this game compared to that of the original? I imagine it brought not only the cult following you had from the classic but also introduced

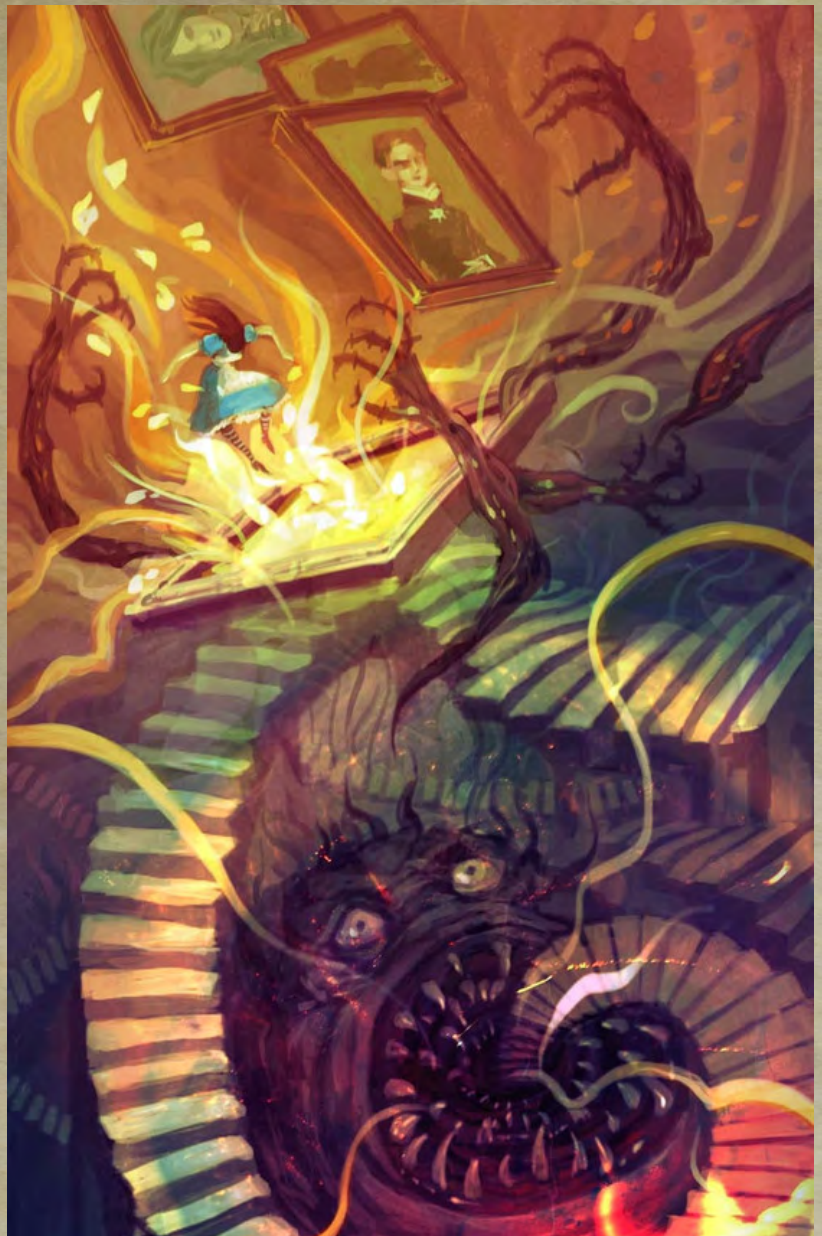


new people to the game series.

The very first published review gave it a “50,” which is pretty terrible. Similar reviews from mainstream sites popped up... all of them complaining about things like pacing and repetitiveness. We understood when we shipped the game that these would be issues - and we lobbied EA to give us more time to tune and polish the game. Unfortunately, we were out of time (and money), so the game went out in a poor state. For the hardcore fans the pacing wasn’t a problem - and many people absolutely love the game. So, the cult following stayed loyal and the press (mostly) hated it. Compared to the original, not much difference in the reaction! I’d guess that’s why the Alice games are called “cult hits.”

I understand that you had a Kickstarter going to bring the conclusion to the Alice trilogy to the big screen in the form of Alice: Otherlands. Part of this included pushing to buy the rights to the Alice brand and secure the voice actors from the original. What can you tell us about this new project and how did the Kickstarter go?

The Kickstarter for Alice: Otherlands went great - we hit our goal and raised a bit beyond that. The option for the film rights



was secured and work on the animations began immediately. We're shooting to have animation production finished before end of year (2014), at which point we'll produce DVD's and art books, and ship those items out to backers.

Let's talk about the basis of the film. I understand the 3rd part explores some of the greatest minds of Victorian London including Jules Verne, Charles Darwin, Ulysses Grant, Mark Twain, and possibly even Jack the Ripper. Stepping into Alice's head was a blast, I can only imagine stepping into the minds of London's finest. I'm sure that we're in for a real treat. Is there anything you can share with us about the story behind this film and what we can look forward to?

There are two animated shorts in production. One visits the mind of Jules Verne and the other travels into the psyche of Richard Wagner. Based on what I've seen so far, they are both on track to turn out great. More details, animation samples, and

production stills can be found on the Kickstarter page for Otherlands.

<http://kickstarter.com/projects/spicyhorse/alice-otherlands>

So looking back over the years, you've made the torment of your youth a minor footnote in your life and found inspiration in the people you surround yourself with. You have risen above all obstacles to create one of the most loved characters in gaming history. Is there anything about this journey that you hold close to heart? A certain turning point where your perspective just changed?

Life has been full of turning points, each of them responsible for some critical movement forward in life. Each new turn is linked to and dependent on the previous turns, such that none feels greater or more important than the rest. I think this is the way of life - a constant moving forward and evolving over time. When that stops, we're done. I'm just looking forward to the next major turn, the next shift in

perspective.

In closing what would you tell someone who is in that dark moment right now, when all seems hopeless, and things just seem to be going the wrong direction?

Sometimes you have to fight through it and keep moving... other times it's best to just lay down and take a break. Everyone is dealing with their own personal narrative, acting as their own hero in a grand adventure. If I had the magic directions to solve another person's problems, I think that would take away their meaning. You could say life is hopeless, that it does tend to go in the wrong direction more often than not - but then that's what gives us our purpose. Making the best out of whatever we're handed.

Thank you so much for discussing your colorful life and career with us today. You have been an inspiration for me in my life and I'm certain others feel the same.



ALICE

IN

THE REALMS





LIFE IN THE FAST LANE WITH BRETT SMRZ

By: Aoibheann Ní Choileáin



Brett Smrz
Professional Stuntman,
Racer and Amputee

At the age of 23, Brett Smrz has dealt with more than his fair share of adversity. He got his start on the track racing Formula 3 and has become a well known stunt driver in major film. At the age of 16, tragedy struck and he lost his left leg below the knee in a freak accident.

Today I had the chance to sit down with Brett and discuss his hobbies, career, and the accident that changed his life.

Good morning Brett, I understand that you are quite a stunt driver. What can you tell me about that?

Stunt driving is a lot of fun. My dad got me into the business when I was 18 years old. He's been in the business since he

was in his 30's. His brother and he moved from Pennsylvania to Los Angeles to pursue a stunt career. They did it successfully, and I decided to jump into that when I was 18 years old. It has been going good ever since.



In what movies have you done stunts?

I was in *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*; *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*; *Mission: Impossible-Ghost Protocol*; and *Mission: Impossible 5*. These are just some of the newer ones that I've been in.

I've done some cool stuff on some of them. In *Mission: Impossible 4* I didn't do anything too crazy, it was mostly just background driving which is when someone else is doing the big stunt while I am in the background making it look like there are actually people on the street.

As far as the *Alexander* movie, with that one I got to drive up on top of a curb, take out some street meters and stop really hard. That one was fun, and sometimes I get to do some really cool things.

I understand that you are also into motorcycles.

Yeah, my dad used to race

motorcycles. I don't race or anything; it's more just for fun. I have a Suzuki DRZ400, a cross trainer that works in the dirt and on the street. It's a nice canyon digger. It just handles really well.

Do you like working on cars?

I do. I have a couple of projects that I am trying to get going right now. I have a 2002 BMW M3 that I am building into a Drift Car right now. I am looking to compete that in a Formula Drift race at some point, probably just local competitions at the beginning and then hopefully moving my way up.

I have been working on that car for a couple of months now, and I have been learning a lot. I am still new to mechanics, and I am trying to learn as much as I can about cars.

What is a Drift Car?

A Drift Car is the one you see sliding around all over the place and the tires smoke. A good

example is the movie *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*. 'Drifting' is a technique where the driver intentionally oversteers, causing loss of traction, while still maintaining control of the car.

Is this a hobby or more stunt work?

It is more stunt work. I would rather be doing road racing stuff. However, drifting is a lot of fun, and it will help further my stunt career, especially learning more car control and all that because it correlates really well with the stunts.

I have been slowly building the BMW. It's still not complete, but I hopefully will have it done by the end of the year. So for now, I am working on it and practicing with it periodically. Hopefully next year at the beginning of the season, I will do some local events.

Stunt shows?

No, it's called Formula Drift.





It's a local series, and there are just a bunch of people that come out and compete. Basically, you have two cars go out side by side and try to slide right next to each other as close as they can. Whoever can hold the line closer to the other car, shows more tire smoke, or is more sideways is the driver who is chosen as the winner.

It is a judging series, and there are 3 stages. You go up against different people every stage until they eventually come up with a winner.

How long does that take?

It usually takes a full day. They also have practice day, so it takes place over a weekend.

I understand that you used to do some rock climbing.

I did some rock climbing for about 4 months straight. I had a lot of fun with that, I used to go climbing every day, and I got

really strong. When I started having some issues with my leg, I stopped going, and I haven't been back since. I should get back into it because I really liked climbing.

I have other hobbies. I like to go with my dad to the range and shoot guns, and I am also really into Photoshop.

So what got you into Photoshop?

There was a friend of mine that I played games with online, and he was making these cool icons. He was really good at it, so I started making some stuff, too. I was horrible. It was just beginner stuff, but I enjoyed Photoshopping, so I kept doing it for fun and progressively got better. Now I can make some decent stuff. I am not going to say I am a pro at it, but I got to design the GoPro Star Mazda Car that was revealed this fall.

Wow, congratulations!

Thank you, that was really cool. When they called me about it, I was pretty excited.

And you designed that in Photoshop?

I did, I designed the templates in Photoshop. Then I opened it up in a video game program called iRacing, which basically renders the designs in 3D. Then, you can move the image around and look at it like it was in the real world. It was really helpful while I was designing the car, making it a lot easier to see what it would really look like.

Do you still play video games?

I do. Right now, I am playing *Chivalry: Medieval Warfare*, and then *Diablo III: Reaper of Souls*. I was into *Call of Duty 2* for a long time. While I have slowed down on the gaming, I do still play.

What do you do with your free time? Do you have any free time?

I have a lot of free time that I use to train and improve my driving skills. Also if I can wrench on anything, whether it is something important or not, I do that to improve my wrenching skills. I have a lot of friends that ask me for help, and I learn along the way with it.

Tell me about your accident

Well, when I was 16 years old I was living in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. I had just gotten back from a horrible race weekend. I had crashed a car. I flew home, and the day after that, I broke my leg. I was at a friend's house, and there was a trampoline there, and my friend decided to go up to a balcony that was right

next to the trampoline. I joined him. Then I decided to go first, so I climbed up on top of the balcony. While I was up there, I decided instead of just doing a jump, I would add in a flip.

The drop was about 12 feet, and I did a front flip with a twist. I made the flip, but I was still twisting and not fully rotated when I landed. It put too much pressure on the leg, and it just snapped. It was a really deep break that pretty much sheared the bone rather than breaking in half cleanly. Also, when the bone broke, it shifted and cut my artery, which caused internal bleeding.

They got me to the hospital where I had immediate surgery. Over the next four days I had four more surgeries. That's when they came in and told me that they were going to amputate my leg,

which I was cool with, it didn't really bother me at all. After that, I had nine more surgeries, then about a month after that I had it refined to make sure everything was good.

Is your amputation above the knee or below the knee?

It is below my left knee. I started out with a Hanger prosthetic on a pin system. Now I have an Ossur prosthetic that uses a sleeveless suction system.

Having an artificial leg doesn't seem to have slowed you down at all.

I don't see it as too much of an issue. Honestly, it works really well.

When I was nine years old, I met Casey Pieretti. He was working



on *Inspector Gadget* with my dad. I saw him with his prosthetic leg on two stilts running down a street. That was the first time I met an amputee, and that really stuck in my brain. So after my accident, I thought that if Casey could do that, then why couldn't I.



Another coincidence was that I had just finished reading a book called [Alex Zanardi: My Sweetest Victory](#). Alex Zanardi was an Italian race car driver who was in a violent accident at the EuroSpeedway Lausitz, and both of his legs were amputated. He got back into racing about a year after his accident. It was a good read, and it made it easier for me to decide to continue on with my life and with racing.

My accident didn't slow me down at all. The first question I asked was, "when can I get back into a car?"

Did they think you were crazy?

Yeah, they thought I was insane, but I was in a car racing about five months after my accident. It was really quick, and I actually

did really well. I raced at the San Francisco Formula Ford triple header at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca. I was just planning on going in there, having a fun time, and getting back into the swing of things. I ended up winning all three races and set a new class track record in the process. It was shocking; I wasn't expecting that at all.

Is there anything you don't do with cars?

There's not much. If I see something that I really want to do, I always try to figure out a way to do it with few or no modifications. The only thing that I need if I am racing on a track is a bracket for my foot to keep it in place so that it doesn't slip off. I have a hard time switching from the clutch pedal to the brake pedal, so I brake





with the right foot and keep my left foot on the clutch pedal. When I go through a corner, my leg will slip off pedal sometimes because of the high G force. The bracket keeps it on.

So what is next for you?

Hopefully, I am going to be racing in the Formula 4 in England in October, 2014. It is an open-wheel race, so it's a car that is on top of a tube that you sit in and the wheels are all exposed. If that goes well, then I am looking to get into some more racing next year.

As far as the stunt driving goes, I pretty much just play that by ear. I get jobs very randomly, so I could get a call right now to work tonight. That is how the business works. So, if I get a call, I just have to be ready to jump on it and do it.

Other than that, I am learning how to wrench, have a good time, and go along with whatever gets thrown at me.

Brett, thank you so much for speaking with me today.

No problem at all, thank you very much. I appreciate you spending your time with me.

For more information about Brett Smrz be sure to visit:

<http://www.brettsmrz.com/>





COMMANDER'S NOTES

By: Caitlin "Caytlynne of Skye" Martin

I am going to depart a bit from the photo rich articles of previous issues and talk about something many commanders ignore, or fail to consider. This has led to more defeats throughout history than any other, at least that I can recall.

WHAT IS IT?

You have to know your team's limitations!

As a field commander you always want to have the best trained, best equipped, and most knowledgeable team on the battlefield. You want this because it helps you to win the close ones. If you forget to consider this one little thing it will defeat you before you can even get started. It will take you by surprise and leave you wondering what just happened.

Does that mean you only want to run with only level 80 or VR12 players? No, certainly not! You should be able to run with players of any skill level. But they should know their characters and how to play them, and know how to react to different situations.

What do I mean? Let's examine some possible situations.

SCENARIO 1

Guild Wars 2

You are commanding in Guild Wars 2. You have a team of 10-15 with you. You have been experiencing great success

taking camps and towers, and begin to feel a bit cocky. You all know the feeling. Hey we can take the whole battlefield. You become so focused on this that you fail to notice the outmanned flag just turned on your skill bar.

You approach the Hills keep from the south and see that the walls and gate are still "paper" or wood. Ah, we can do this! You set up siege and take the gate down quickly. As you are heading up the ramp to the inner gate you see a few of your opponents run into the inner keep. Ah no problem we have this. You set up flame rams on the inner door and begin to take the door down.

Things are going great, it's almost down and then it happens... the dreaded wipe. The zerg just ran over you and you never had a chance.

Could you have avoided this, absolutely! But how you ask, how can I avoid being run over by a zerg?

There are several ways.

1. Station a scout at the north gate towards the enemies spawn point.
2. Drop an arrow cart first to focus fire on the gate area. Go to the outer wall and set up catapults there to take down the wall.
3. Keep an eye on the outmanned buff on your skill bar!

4. Realize it only takes 1-3 minutes for the zerg to reach you and focus on taking smaller objectives until the outmanned buff goes away.

5. Switch Borderlands!

6. Focus on smaller objectives that are more quickly taken

SCENARIO 2

Elder Scrolls Online

You are commanding a squad of approximately 24. Many of your team are still new to AvA, you have a small number of veteran players with you. One VR12 and a sprinkling of other VR's.

Your objective is to take Sejanus outpost. You decide to take down the front gate. So, you instruct your team to take down the guards in the front and have a team member place a ram. Everything is going great the door comes down in a few minutes and you decide to rush the front flag. Not a bad tactic since you have a good sized squad. Things are going well you are all around the flag when it happens.... Wiped! As you are laying there you see the Emperor from AD standing there all by himself smiling.

How could this happen? Been there, done that! It does happen and for a couple of reasons.

1. The current Emperor has the best gear through hours of dedicated play time. The gear is designed to provide

maximum damage and recovery! They play a Dark Knight or Sorcerer and are also a Vampire in many cases!

2. Your team was all bunched up on the flag allowing him to use one of the most destructive attacks in the game – He dropped a Battle Standard and Dragons Claw. The combination holds you in place while the banner does over 1K damage. With lower leveled players this means, in most cases, 1 shot kill.

So how do you avoid this when taking resources and outposts with your team?

1. Realize that the emperor is out there. They dedicate a tremendous amount of time to the game and have almost unlimited resources available to them because of this. I saw an example recently where one former emperor had over 4 million AvA points available to her!
2. Plan accordingly. Most outposts and keeps will not indicate they are being attacked until the health drops significantly anywhere from about 25% - 50%. Use this to your advantage. When the health goes below 25% - 50% send out stealthed scouts with Mage Light on. This will give you advance warning of the approaching player/s.
3. Have defensive oil pots placed to assist you with taking down the guards, and defending against attacking players. Drop them as

soon as you hit the flag, our opponents do, we should get in the habit of this also.

4. Keep spread out and use your ranged attacks. I can't emphasize this enough.... If you are spread out you negate their ability to continually cast with such devastating effect. A high level player like the emperor has the ability to gain 8 ultimate points for each and every player they kill! If they kill a group of 10 that's 80 ultimate in one shot!
5. Drop a negate field down as soon as you hit the banner and keep one up and running until the banner flips.
6. If you had been leading a team of mostly VR12's would this have happened? If you were all bunched up on the flag, possibly, but certainly not through 1 shot kills. Even a squad of VR12's needs to keep spread out! As of this writing the current trend is for Dragon Knights and Sorcerers to run light armor, and destruct/resto staffs. Their gear is designed to provide maximum magicka and stamina return, and in most cases have all of their attribute points into health. By continually casting healing, and blocking they are very difficult to take down. It can be done, but you have to be smart!
7. Have dodge roll set up on your keyboard and use it if you are the recipient of a dragon claw!
8. If you get the black bubble of death, hold your right mouse

button down and spam the left button to help kill the bubble.

Will these suggestions make every assault or defense you command successful? Of course not, but it will keep you from killing your team though inattention, or neglect. If they beat you and you have done all you could do to prevent it.... Keep your head held high! You were simply outplayed on that occasion. You will get them next time.

Oh and for your information.... A group of former emperor's and current emperor can wipe just like everyone else. We have done it! If they get sloppy and inattentive, they die! Additionally as more and more players reach the higher veteran ranks their domination becomes less apparent!

So by planning ahead and using all of your resources you can win the close battles. You will even be able to win many of the not so close battles through knowledge and planning.

Until next time.
See you on the battlefield

Caytlynne of Skye
V12 Sorceress
Ebonhardt Pact

The Elder Scrolls

— O N L I N E —





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AN ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE ADVENTURE

By: Benjamin “Foghladha” Foley

I awoke before the sun rose over the horizon to travel to the far off land of Hunt Valley, Maryland. Nestled within the foothills lay the home base for ZeniMax Online, the studio that brought us the Elder Scrolls Online game. Two days of meeting and presentations lay in my path for the 2014 International Guild Summit. I will share with you some new features that were revealed to me as well as an inside look at ZeniMax Online studios.

Part of what I do as a Community Leader is collaborate with development teams and pitch new ideas that, with any luck, will spur ideas and bring new life to the games we know and love. This trip would be my second to ZeniMax Online, the first of which was in October of 2012. Being reunited with so many of my friends from over the years was an added bonus. The really fascinating thing about the gaming industry is how often people change companies. Matt Firor, Paul Sage, Gina Bruno, Jess Folsom, Brian Wheeler, and Kai Schober all came from different times in Gaiscioch history. Friendships that you make today tend to keep you connected over the years, especially in this industry.

THE MISSION

While I was requested for my guild leadership expertise to sit and brainstorm with developers from the team, I thought it also was a great opportunity to deliver some ideas and creativity

fuel while I was there. I brought with me a 22-page document that I hoped would inspire the developers to help build a more social, friendly and dynamic Elder Scrolls Online. Contained within were ideas, suggestions, and perspectives that would help illuminate the challenges our guild faces as a gaming community.

Often times, feedback comes in one of two unnecessary forms. The first is telling them what they did wrong. The second type comes across as trying to act smarter than the developers are. Either way, that kind of feedback usually falls on deaf ears. Why? People don't enjoy someone tearing down a project into which they've poured the last six years of their lives. They also don't appreciate people with no experience at building games criticizing a process which they don't understand. Both of these approaches are flawed as they demoralize the developers.

Instead, I've taken a different approach, one

taught to me by my professional mentor, Gary Gardner. Sometimes, the best way to encourage change is to pitch an idea that spurs the receiving party to reach the mutually beneficial conclusion you want them to find. While you may think you know how to complete the task, you should never force your ideas on others. What works best for you doesn't always work best for others. You want to preserve their sense of personal accomplishment by allowing them to have a piece of the solution and personal investment in the idea. What you end up with is a functional version of your idea, and if you've led them down the right path, it could be far better than you could have dreamed up. Leadership is not about telling people what to do, it's about inspiring people to strive for greatness.

DAY ONE

On Wednesday morning, we met at the ZeniMax Online Studios office. After a healthy amount of paperwork, we were escorted to the Developers den, where we shared some coffee and refreshments before the day's events. The last time I visited their studio back in October of 2012, it was mostly empty and confined to a couple floors. This time, it was full of people and energy.

Contrary to media reports, I can say ZeniMax Online Studios is not shrinking, it's growing dramatically.

From my first visit to now, I have seen this company mature and grow well beyond what I had imagined. I met several brand new employees, and the team has about 300 developers. The building buzzed with life and energy. We discovered a building full of concept art, memorabilia and fixtures from the Elder Scrolls universe. Visitors were able to wander by and view life size statues, wall sized canvas paintings, and, of course, a real life elder scroll. I wonder how many buffs I would get for returning that one to my castle?

Joining me at the Guild Summit were representatives from many other prominent US and European guilds, as well as my friend from Tamriel Foundry, Atropos. It was great to meet such a diverse community. There were 10 guilds who were high-end min-maxer PvE focused groups that literally had documents and spreadsheets outlining the critical areas where the systems are being exploited and abused. The guild Noore had put together an 80-page document of suggestions, data, and things needing to be fixed. There were several roleplay-focused guilds, 8 PvP-focused guilds, and 2 casual guilds, including Gaiscioch. The mix was great, and we had people from all specialties and backgrounds there. Half of the groups were from Europe and half from the US. I even found three of these guilds play on the Ebonheart Pact side, which was a relief since I



rarely get the chance to meet any of these leaders.

After a short breakfast meeting, we were shown to the presentation room which was a 60-person movie theater. What we would see would likely shape the future of this game and the community that supports it.

COMBAT RESPONSIVENESS

The first presentation of the day showed some new refinements to the movement and combat system to help make the game play smoother and visceral. They have rebuilt most of the animations and have created ways that the animations interact with one another so that when you swing a sword, it looks like you're making contact with your target. Combat speed has been improved as well. Two-handed weapons had the most noticeable improvement, since their lead-in was slow. However, once the momentum kicked in, they were fast and hit hard. The enemy took a substantial blow. The days of swinging a sword and wondering if it hit are over. With this improvement, you will have visual feedback that you smacked the enemy.

All of the weapons received a polish round to make combat feel more lifelike. They have added some alteration in how your character swings its weapon and how it interacts with the enemy. The end goal was to provide the user with more feedback to show the effects that each charged or quick attack has on his or her target.

OPTIMIZING YOUR CLIENT PERFORMANCE

Additionally, the combat responsiveness team gave us some pointers on how to avoid lag and disconnects. Their first suggestion was to make sure to close the launcher. If it is left on, it will consistently ping the server looking for a new version. That can create a 'hitching' effect within the game. The second suggestion was to turn off your web browser's hardware acceleration, since it reserves a portion of the RAM, CPU, and GPU at all times. This happens even when you aren't using the web browser, and it can often lead to slowdown and occasional disconnects. Lastly, they said that the most frequent causes of poor game performance are bad or old drivers. They encouraged us to update them often.



THE CRAFTING SYSTEM

For the next presentation, Phillip Draven spoke with us about game systems. The first part of his presentation was on the improvements coming to crafting. These included many exciting new features:

Crafting Tutorials - These will walk you step by step through each of the parts of the crafting system. By completing them, or skipping them, you will receive your 'crafting credentials', making you an official crafter in Tamriel.

Crafting Writs - The crafting-based quests award you additional experience and gold in exchange for crafting items.

Survey Reports - Similar in function to Treasure Maps, these reports show you the location of large caches of materials that award bonus resources each time you farm a node. These are completely personal so that nobody else can see your cache and loot it while you're gathering. Once you discover its location, you alone can gather the resources.

Nine-Trait Armor Sets - Located in Upper Craglorn, the Twice-Born Star set can be crafted by max-level crafters who have all nine traits unlocked. This set will allow you to benefit from 2 Mundus stone effects at the same time.

Dwemer Crafting Style - Crafters will acquire the style by page or by book. Pages will be frequently found in Dwemer ruins and allow you to learn the crafting style of a single item. Additionally, you may find an extremely rare full collection of these recipes in the form of a Dwemer Crafting Tome. These recipes will require Dwemer parts to be converted into resources.

New Crafting Style - Players will be able to create Xivkyn (Imperial Daedric) sets.

He also gave us a sneak preview of some of the content coming in the future. Some of it was pretty exhilarating.

PROVISIONING REVAMP

The developers will be revamping one of the most material-intensive crafting skills in the game. They will be taking a system that currently uses 150 different materials down to just 50 materials in the new system. The new version creates food and drink on a predictable format that helps ease the recipe component confusion and drastically reduces the number of different materials you need to gather and store. With this revamp, they are also implementing thousands of additional clickable objects including but not limited to apples, bananas and loaves of bread. They also will be implementing a 'see what you get' system

so if you pick up a banana, you will not get goat meat instead. Sacks will provide grain, barrels will give liquids, and boxes will contain additives. Additionally, crafting items will be based on the zone, not your level. This will make lower level items accessible once again to higher level characters.

DOWN THE ROAD

The ZeniMax team has begun to lay the foundation for the all-new Glass weapons and armor, spellcrafting, poisonmaking, mount racing, and jewelry crafting. Most importantly, the Game Systems team showed us a sneak preview of the new collection system they are working on to house all of those miscellaneous items in your bank you have nowhere to place. Costumes, vanity pets, and gimmick reward items will now be stored in the collections tab which can be accessed from your main menu. Anytime you would like to use one, you can pull it out and equip or use it. You can even slot it to a quick slot.





THE IMPERIAL CITY AND AVA

Our next speaker was Brian Wheeler, who gave us our first look of the Imperial City. This is the Elder Scrolls version of Disneyland. To open the city for your faction members to enter, you must control all six of your home keeps. Once you have all of your main homeland keeps, you will be able to enter the city gates where you will find yourself in a PvP Safe Zone. There, you can get an overview of what's going on within the city walls. There are dozens of quests, hundreds of places to explore, and countless bosses to fight. If your realm does not own any of the three key sections of the Imperial City, you will have to exit by one of the three entrances to the sewers. Each sewer entrance will allow you to enter the main city in one of three different places.

The 3 Main Districts

A massive dark anchor looms above the Imperial City. Each of its three anchors serve as a gateway between Cyroil and the Badlands. All forms of beasts and horrifying creatures spew from the portals. Travel into the Badlands and defeat guardians to receive the ability to destroy the three nodes circling each gateway. Once closed, your faction will kick the Draemoric out of the district and then gain access to a wayshrine, crafting tools, and merchants. You can even take over rival factions' districts and lay waste to your foes in this fully PvP-enabled zone. Each district unlocks new quests and pieces of the story for you to explore.

The Arena

The Arena was my personal favorite. What can be better than standing in the arena facing wave after wave of terrifying creatures and then have to fight our opponents at the same time? If you survive the trials of the arena, you will be able to loot a chest

found in the center of the area.

Other items of note:

- No forward camps in the Imperial City
- Increased experience, gear, and gold in the Imperial City
- All new crafting set - Xivkyn
- Content Scaled for two or more players at VR rank 14.
- Close gateways to the Badlands for additional rewards chests
- Six new ruins of the Divines found throughout the city which provide eight hour bonuses.

More Improvements to AvA

There were also a wide range of improvements on their way including:

- Tweaks to how and when forward camps can be used and acquired - They are looking into creative solutions to help reduce the instant reinforcements problem plaguing AvA.
- Improved Experience gains.
- Emperor and Realm bonuses only apply to home campaign. No more gaining buffs from one campaign and using them in another.
- Oil pots will need to travel a certain distance before their AOE will be effective preventing people from using them in ways they were not intended.
- Out-of-bounds boundaries have been added to ensure that players can not go where they're not meant to be.

THE CHAMPION SYSTEM

The last presentation and Q&A session of the day was for the new Championship system. For this system even to be possible, ZeniMax Online Studios has to rebuild most of the skills and traits in the game. Additionally, they are using this as an opportunity to readjust the way caps work by removing soft caps altogether and redistributing the ratios of how we gain stats. Over the course of the next few patches, small changes will begin being deployed, many of which will cause players to say “Huh? Why did they do that?” These micro changes are the preparation for the champion system.

What is the Champion System?

The champion system is a secondary progression system that players will unlock at level 50. It will allow them to distribute points into various constellations based on Health, Magicka, and Stamina. There are a total of nine constellations, each with their own focus. Each constellation contains four player-chosen upgrades and four upgrades you unlock by distributing points into that constellation. New upgrades will unlock at 10, 25, 50, and 100 points that are distributed to each constellation. That’s not all. You will need to spend your points in a clockwise rotation

moving first from the Health Constellation, then to the Stamina Constellation, then the Magicka constellation, and then you can distribute your next point back into the Health Constellation. You can distribute a maximum of 700 Champion Points per constellation, and each point should take around 1 hour to obtain.

Along with this change, the developers will be doing away with veteran points and moving all progression directly to experience. The long term goal is to do away with veteran ranks entirely. Each player will be rewarded for the experience they earned after level 50 when this change comes into effect, giving players a head start on the champion system. Additionally, the Champion system is account wide, so once you’ve unlocked it, every character on your account can begin to benefit from it.

Simply put for those that might be a little confused by this, think back to RIFT and remember Planar Attunement. This system is comparable, and you can expect to see some similar abilities unlock from it. This feature will allow those who have hit the max level to continue progressing and prepare for the future by improving their champion levels.



THE DINNER PARTY

After a long day of presentations and Q&A sessions, we finally got a chance to relax and have casual conversations with many of the developers over some steak and seafood. I managed to sit between Creative Director, Paul Sage and Jason Barnes, one of the masterminds behind the Dragonstar Arena.

Paul told us a wonderful story about driving fast as a young ignorant youth in a computer delivery van. He was on a delivery taking 60 computers to a local business when he realized he was about to miss his turn. He made a hard right turn, but his back tire clipped the curb. The van rolled over four times before it finally stopped. He likely would have been killed if it hadn't been for the pure steel computer cases giving Paul a fantastic roll-cage. Computers quite literally saved his life. As if having his life spared wasn't enough, the computers still worked. Seems things back in the olden days *were* built to last.

Many topics of conversation arose about their pasts and the things they want for the future. As the night progressed, I managed to mingle with a few of the game systems designers and learn about some of the challenges they face. Being able to see the inner workings of a development studio and understand the difficulties they have to overcome was quite interesting, and I am certain that in the future you will see a new series of articles talking about game systems and technology.

DAY TWO

ITEMIZATION AND GAMEPLAY

Day two began with a huge topic of Itemization and Gameplay. The developers started talking about abilities, weapon and armor builds, and how they are changing things in future updates. These changes have come not only from their study of players' use of skills, weapons, armors, and potions but also comments and complaints from players and guild leaders.

Adding to Build Diversity - ZeniMax doesn't want players to feel like they're locked into one specific type of build in order to be successful in a dungeon or in AvA (alliance vs. alliance) play. The developers are going to improve Stamina-based

damage so that it is in line with the Magicka-based weapon damage. This will raise the viability of stamina builds and diversify the types of weapons and builds that players can use and still be just as effective.

Weapon Abilities - The abilities that rely on Stamina will receive a major overhaul, and weapons will restore both Magicka and Stamina with heavy attacks. This will substantially boost Stamina-based damage and bring them in line with their Magicka counterparts.

New AvA Abilities - If you have been frustrated with some aspects of AvA, the developers have heard you. They are looking at solutions to problems and examining ways to make AvA even more fun for those who love this kind of game play. Some of the things they are looking at include adjusting AoE (area of effect) damage, stealth detection, healing debuffs, and adding in Stamina-based heal abilities.

Ultimate Changes - ZeniMax has been examining how abilities generate Ultimate Points for the Ultimate Abilities. The developers want to optimize Ultimate Abilities to make them effective for all styles of play, not just a few.

Class Ability Updates - It's no secret that certain skills are used a lot more often than others. For the next update, the developers are hard at work on balancing lesser-used class abilities to make them more feasible to use in game play. In addition, synergy skills will only appear to players who actually can activate them. This will save players who can't use those skills wasted time trying to activate a skill that they can't use. In a heated AvA combat or tough dungeon fight where every skill firing correctly at the right time is essential, this might turn the tide of battle. ZeniMax is looking at the interplay between class abilities and Stamina builds, with an eye towards improving those so that players who enjoy playing Stamina-heavy classes can be just as effective in PvP and veteran dungeons as other classes.

Some Language Clean-up - The developers are going over all the ability descriptions in order to make them more clear and easier to understand. They will also edit out errors or misspellings in order to prevent confusion.

Blocking and Ability Use - Casting or performing an action while blocking at the same

time will reduce the effect of the ability triggered. Additionally, ZeniMax is looking at giving blocks a limited duration or cost to use.

Area of Effect (AoE) - ZeniMax will be removing AoE damage caps to help spread out groups who stack and take advantage of the current six person AoE limit. Currently, if a large group of players stack in one spot, AoE skills will damage only six of them. If the cap is removed, everyone in the spell's radius will be affected, not just six players. This will encourage players to move out of a small radius. AoE healing will remain limited to six players, however.

NEW ITEM TYPES

Undaunted Monster Helms - These much-sought-after helmets are the beginning of a new system that will reward players for exploring veteran dungeons. Each of the bosses in the veteran dungeon will randomly drop an Undaunted Monster Helmet which will look similar to that boss' head. These helmets, when combined with their shoulder equivalent, gain an ability from that boss that triggers randomly.

Undaunted Monster Shoulders - These can be earned by completing the Undaunted repeatable quests that will be introduced with Update 5.

Future Updates - There are plans to add these to normal dungeons as well. That will come after

Update 5, however.

ADDITIONAL ITEMIZATION PLANS

Improved Gold Drop Rates - Apparently, the enemies of Tamriel have filed a grievance with their union, and they are demanding higher salaries. With Update 5, you will find that humanoid enemies now leave you more than a measly 1 gold. They will drop random amounts of gold within a set range. Additionally, varied rates of gold can be found in the Rewards for the Worthy bags in AvA.

Trait Updates - Several armor and weapon traits have been improved and had their abilities updated. Reinforced, Ornate, and intricate armor traits have been improved to nearly double the reward. This will make armor with these traits much more useful. Exploration, Charged, Weighted, and Sharpened traits will also receive some additional love.

Ability-Altering Weapons - ZeniMax is working to introduce new weapons that are directly related to the monsters you kill. If you'd like a sword, you'll want to look for enemies who wield swords. If you prefer staves, you'll want to attack creatures that use staves. A collection of unique weapon versions will be introduced based on the monsters who wield them. On top of that, these new weapons will now give players certain stats and have special unique effects and abilities.





TRIALS, DUNGEONS, AND ARENAS

Next at the summit, Jason Barnes and the dungeon team took the stage to give us some previews of some of the exciting new changes coming to dungeons. They have targeted three issues they hope to resolve: player incentives, game balance, and play experience.

The first major change is the introduction of dungeon scaling. Dungeon scaling allows a dungeon to increase or decrease to the level of the group leader. So, if you missed Fungal Grotto on your way through Stonefalls, you can return to it and give it a whirl at Veteran Rank 14 and have the dungeon adjust to your current level. This will also update the 'looking for group' tool, so that regardless of the dungeon you choose to enter, the 'looking for group' system will find you a group in your level range for added adventures. This makes many of the favorite lower level dungeons replayable for high level characters.

Next, they are making some of the more popular requested changes to the way dungeon quests work. You can now share quests and also join a group at the point they are at in the quest lines already if you were late to the party.

The second major change is the addition of Undaunted Enclaves. These will be found in each capital city and lead you on quests to explore normal and veteran dungeons. You can earn one of three levels of rewards based on how well you complete the dungeon. Each completed Enclave quest will reward you with a gold, silver, or bronze key which can be used to open the gold, silver, or bronze chest inside the Enclave.

Third, the developers announced that the Veteran City of Ash will be launching in update 5, along with an all-new City of Ash "Undaunted" item set which rewards Stamina / Magicka hybrid builds. In the veteran City of Ash, you will join the Undaunted expedition that is led by Fingaenion to assault the Deadlands, the realm of Daedric Prince Mehrunes.

Further down the ZeniMax time line comes the Imperial City Prison. This new area will take you back to the tutorial zone of Oblivion and see what it looked like before the events in that particular Elder Scrolls campaign. This dungeon is located within Cyrodil, but it will be a single group dungeon instance and not a PvP Dungeon.



THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

By this time in the presentation, we were all excited to see what they had in store for the new Justice System. What we were shown threw me into a total identity crisis. This system came complete with a good ol' fashioned game of cops and robbers. When I first heard about the feature after Quakecon, I thought this would be purely a PvE-based system similar to the one in the Elder Scrolls Series. Little did I know that they planned to add an entire PvP element to the chase.

Players can choose to join the Enforcers or Outlaws for a set amount of coin. By joining one or the other, they are given the ability to commit crimes or solve them. This system brings a whole new cat vs cat mini-game to Elder Scrolls Online. Enforcers can hunt and kill Outlaws, Outlaws can hunt and kill Enforcers. The system is entirely opt-in, and being able to commit crimes will be something you can turn off to prevent the chance that you would accidentally commit one if you click on the wrong person or item.

Outlaws

Outlaws can sneak around pick pocketing locals, steal goods from local merchants, trespass in locked homes, and even commit murder. By doing so, they build a bounty and heat. At different

levels of heat, guards will accost you or even begin searching for you. Furthermore, any Enforcer that witnesses the crime can hunt and kill you, then steal your contraband to return it to Enforcer headquarters just outside the city.

Your goal as an outlaw is to pillage the village and make bacon for the local outlaw den (in the form of one of several entrances located around the city) to pawn off your stolen goods. As you level up your Outlaw rank, you will begin to earn new Outlaw skills. These skills will help you become more proficient in larceny and avoid the local enforcers.

If you are caught by the city guard, you will be required to either run, in which case the price is death, or pay the fine and lose all of the stolen merchandise you are carrying.

You may murder any NPC except for key figures in the story. Quest NPCs and merchants are local to your individual character. This means that if you kill a quest NPC, only you will see him die. However you still will be marked as a murderer to any Enforcers and guards nearby. This is to prevent griefing quest NPCs or impeding on another player's enjoyment of the game.

Enforcers

Enforcers can head to the Enforcer Headquarters located outside of every major city to purchase a license to track down Outlaws. By signing up as an Enforcer, you will be given an Enforcer tabard that you must wear to be able to hunt Outlaws. Upon putting your tabard on, you will be flagged for PvP and killable by any local Outlaw. You can choose either to hunt the local Outlaws or take a mission to discover an Outlaw den and slay a key figure of the Outlaws. These dens are mini-dungeons designed for solo or group play and are discovered through map clues much like the hidden caches. Only Enforcers who have the quest active will be able to enter these dens. Groups of Enforcers can team up for these and raid the place, uncovering contraband and items. Enforcers then can take these items to the Headquarters for a reward. By completing quests and retrieving contraband, you will raise your Enforcer rank. This will unlock new active and passive skills to aid you in catching thieves and murderers on top of retrieving stolen goods.

Additional things of note

- Fast travel is disabled while in possession of contraband or wearing an Enforcer tabard.
- Enforcer tabards take several seconds to apply, and the player may not move while it is being applied.
- You must witness a crime to be able to kill an Outlaw.

- Outlaws and Enforcers will not be available in Cyrodil.
- Counter-griefing measures will be in place to prevent large raiding parties from slaughtering entire towns. All NPCs will respawn, and loot is based on each person.
- You can leave or join anytime for a fee.

This system has me in a complete identity crisis. Both sides seem like a blast, and I can't decide whether to play as an Outlaw or an Enforcer.

After Thoughts

All in all the trip was wonderful. I managed to present my ideas to the developers and get a behind-the-scenes look at the changes coming to Elder Scrolls Online. There's no doubt in anyone's mind that ZeniMax has a lot of work to do to restore ESO into the limelight, but I am confident they are on the right track. They are introducing several key updates that should help a lot of the critical situations and are continuing to fine-tune the game as new bugs and situations appear. Time will tell whether these new features are a hit or not, but at least I can walk away knowing they're doing their best not only to resolve the issues that have been plaguing ESO over the past 5 months, but also to make the game even more fun for more players.

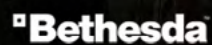
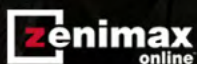


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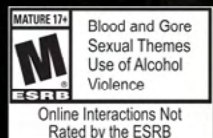


The Elder Scrolls

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PRISSY'S GRAND ADVENTURE IN DESHAAN

By: Lisa "Prissy" Grant

My name is Prissy, and I am of the Clan Roar. I am an explorer and adventurer, and I am soulless. I have died and been returned to the living. Molag Bal has my soul, and I want it back. I am about to leave the land called Shadowfalls and enter a new land called Deshaan. All the events of the last several months are a blur and do not make sense. I have killed, rescued, or collected things for people of Shadowfalls. I have rescued Lyris from Coldharbour, and the Prophet has started a hunt for Sai Sahan. I have met followers of Mannimarco and his second in command, Abnur Tharn. None of it makes sense. Why me? I have been collecting notes, letters and anything paper in my journey, and I think I am going to write about my journey. Maybe that will help me straighten things out so I can figure out who I am. But where to start, at the very beginning or the new beginning in Deshaan?

DAY 1 - A NEW BEGINNING

As I was leaving Stonefalls, I found letters on the ground that talked about a Llados plague, a town called Serkamora, a cure for the plague and Maulborn. What caused the plague? Where is Serkamora? What do you have to do to get the cure? How do you know that you have the plague? Why are the letters on the ground in Stonefalls? Who is Nostrum Breva and what is a Maulborn?

Ponders, do I really want to leave Stonefalls? I think I am crazy walking into an area infected with plague. Do I have a death wish? Wait, I have already died several times, so that can't be it.

As I entered Deshaan, a woman named Aeronia Berendas came running at me. She acted like she knew me or was expecting me. I was not what she expected. She had lost her brother and wanted me to find him. How do you misplace a brother? She also told me a little about the Maulborn, that they had showed up after the plague arrived, set up a quarantine, and now they claimed to have a cure. Aeronia didn't trust them. Aeronia said the people with the plague got sick, turned violent and some even say that they turned into monsters. This didn't sound good. It wasn't too late to turn back. Who was I kidding? I had to know what was going on. This curiosity was going to get me into trouble..

DAY 2 - MEETING THE LOCALS

I spoke to several of the villagers of Serk who had taken the cure, and they did not look so good. One of the people I spoke to had turned into a monster, and I had to kill him. The cure sure did not help him. Something with this cure didn't feel right, and from what they told me, the Maulborn were now withholding the cure and barricaded

themselves in the graveyard area. Nelyne Hlor, the local alchemist, wanted me to get several samples of the cure, since she also didn't think the cure was helping. She wanted to know why no one was getting better.

While Nelyne was looking at the cure potions I brought her, Aerona and I killed two Maulborn guards, stole a key and entered the graveyard. It was not a pretty sight. Undead monsters everywhere, friends, family and even Maulborns. We entered the building in the center of the cemetery and found boxes, bottles and all kinds of notes dealing with the cure.

This was not good. The cure was the cause of the plague! The Maulborn wanted to build an army of undead, but for what reason? We found Aerona's brother, but it was too late. He had the plague, and we didn't have the cure. Aerona's brother was very brave because he had his sister leave him there to

die. Her job now was to save the rest of Serk. While Aerona said goodbye to her brother, something came over me--anger, sadness, revenge. This had to be stopped here and now, so I killed the Maulborn guarding the supplies in the building, I burned the cases of plague and the instructions on how to make the plague. I released as many of the monsters I could to the care of The Three Gods. Who was responsible for this madness? Not the Maulborn here. Who?

Aerona's uncle also had the plague, but the good thing is that Nelyne had made a potion to help slow down the plague's process until she could find the cure. I am going to rest tonight under a tree by the waterfall, figure out what my next move is, and try to forget about some of the horror I saw today and the lives I took. Until tomorrow, may the Three watch over us.





FIRES ON ASH MOUNTAIN

By Althea “Briseadh” Damgaard

I stood gazing up at Ash Mountain pondering the words of Garyn Indoril. Why did Dunmer like biting off more than they could chew and then act like a bunch of milk drinkers when things didn’t go their way? Worse, I felt like I got sucked into all this because Holgunn went along with Garyn’s brother, or some such relation, when they released Balreth. Sure, it destroyed the Covenant attack with ease, but now it was happily wandering free up on the mountain somewhere. I had to go put the genie back in the bottle because Garyn failed.

Thankfully, on the way to help Garyn, I wound up detoured into a Dunmer burial ground full of tombs, by an Argonian, of all things. He was scared of just about anything that moved, and I honestly can’t remember what he really wanted or why I bothered. More than likely, I helped only to have some fun fighting and destroying skeletons. In the end, I learned how this ancient Dunmer, named Mavos, had banished the brother of strife, Balreth, centuries ago. Even dead Dunmers are too full of themselves, but I managed to learn what I needed to know about Balreth and his prior imprisonment in Ash Mountain.

Fully prepped and armed with the knowledge of how to contain Balreth, I started the journey up the mountain, only to find a group cowering not far from the camp. It seemed the scamps were getting overly frisky on the mountain, and the group could not seem to close the caves. I sighed at finding a Nord leader, Sergeant Jagyr, in such a plight, but figured I would give him the benefit of the doubt until I faced these scamps myself. I highly doubt the Prophet expected me to find so

many people needing help when he first told me to go forth from where I awoke after our escape. The thought made me snort as I pulled my greatsword in preparation of my first daedra encounter.

I found two scamps together, and they were no different than the ones I had managed to fight before. The little tricksters love dropping areas of magical fire on me. Needless to say, I got singed trying to dodge them. However, my templar spells and sword proved quite efficient against them. These things weren’t so bad to kill if you rolled out of the fires they made. Even battling two at once seemed like an easy fight for my prowess. Maybe that sergeant needed to grow a backbone. The first two caves closed smoothly.

That’s when I ran into the clannfear. However, I knew how these fought due to dispatching one in Cheesemonger’s Hollow. Mages are all a crazy lot, in my book. These proved no different than the crazy guy’s pet. Okay, I guess I was well blessed in having found ways to prep myself for this adventure in advance. Even better, I did the proverbial ‘kill two birds with one stone’ by destroying scamps and their caves, acquiring their hearts in the process.

Things got a little muddled in the order of events, but I remember reporting to Captain Norra about closing the scamp caves. She seemed to be of solid soldiering stock with a good crew of guards. An Argonian, Walks-in-Ash, helped me to summon the atronachs. In the end, neither was much help to what I had to do on a physical fighting front.



First, I had to summon each atronach, Blaze and Ragebinder, with the daedra hearts I had collected. I'm glad I did not have to summon both at the same time. In the process of summoning them, I had to defeat them. The first one lit me up with fire. I had to quickly throw some heals on myself in the mix of the fight. It felt like my armor would melt into my skin. I'm surprised I got away with my hair. Even with knowing what the first did, I still could not stop being set on fire with the second one. Who needs enemies when you just made allies like these?

Further up the mountain I had to call these atronachs forth again to capture Balreth. Mavos showed up with some sage advice and was actually congenial for a dunmer this time. I went through a portal with some help. At least, I did not have to face Balreth entirely alone. I also had a talisman from Walks-in-Ash that would assist in this fight.

Balreth stood just as big and ugly as when I watched him wipe out the Covenant. Now I had to face him with the assistance of this one mage and a talisman from an Argonian. If Balreth could take out a whole invading crew of Covenant, what were my odds? I probably should have had a few more drinks before jumping through that portal. Alas, here I was. It was time to start this party.

I charged right in first thing casting Dawn's Wrath, and after closing with him, I realized I could activate the talisman. It stunned him in what looked like a mini rainstorm--a rather refreshing thing in this ash-covered battlefield with pools of hot lava. I found myself running out of magicka rather quickly. I resorted to hacking at him with

my greatsword as he started to run for some lava.

Oh, that didn't seem good at all. I bet he liked lava too much, and in my history lesson from Mavos, I did not remember having to beat up on him like this. Just before he hit the lava, the talisman was able to be activated again. Great, I got to beat on him some more before he finally went for some recovery too far out in the pool for me to deal with. Instead, I had to deal with an annoying scamp before I could get by the mage for some blessed magicka recovery.

The dance continued with a couple more scamps and two more dips in the lava by Balreth. I barely managed to gain magicka back enough despite the mage's ability to help me out. I can't express how glad I was to be able to fight with my sword, as well. I'm not sure how many times Balreth singed me, but at least I was not going up in flames like fighting the atronachs.

Finally, he swayed and fell over with one last bellow of defiance. His spirit appeared, and I was able to bring forth the atronachs to seal him in his prison once more. It was a huge relief to watch them imprison him with beams of fire that enveloped him in a ball of bright light. Fire to fight fire. I had to smirk at how this all turned out.

Once back through the portal, I don't remember a lot of fanfair. Maybe I zoned it out. It was time to clean up, rest and drink a lot of mead. I had enough fire for one day.





GUILD WARS



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THOUGHTS FROM A BEGINNER GAMER

By Esther "Humble Misty" Foley

When I started playing Guild Wars 2, I knew nothing about this type of interactive game. I made a copy of the keyboard cues and tried to learn how to run and jump, but had many frustrations on what I "Really" was supposed to be doing. I would randomly hit 1,2,3,4,6 and tried to figure out what powers worked to keep me alive. I finally got the gumption to ask the people in RaidCall - Gaiscioch what to do and what the powers meant. I needed basic knowledge to "Survive" the environment and work on my quests.

The first things that I learned were:

1. How to open map and know what was on it.
2. How to set up options including Evade/Dodge and other movements.
3. How to control the keyboard and mouse at the same time.
4. Knowing your abilities - Some powers will knock the enemy back and other people in your group lose their lock on the enemy.
5. Knowing your terrain before you jump off of things. You can fall off cliffs and die (which will cost you gold to go back to a waypoint).

6. When you are in a large group battle, you need to turn down your graphics.

Ok, let's take these 6 items and get you started on your new adventure.

I am a visual learner, so reading the manual doesn't cut it for me. So I will walk through what others showed me.

1. How to open map and know what was on it.

Press "M" for Map. If you look down the left side you see symbols:

A Heart, Square with a blue center, A tiny square with an orange center, a blue up arrow, 2 red triangles and on the lower right, there are a set of stacked squares. I will proceed with pictures and a short description of each.



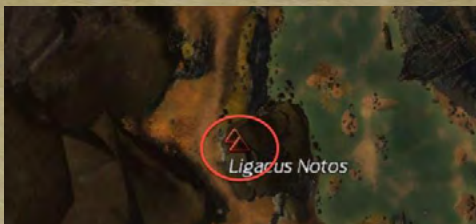
The Hearts - These are mini-tasks to help you grow. A completion of one of these will give you experience points.



A Waypoint - Look at the circled area on the map - you have an empty waypoint symbol and when you have acquired the waypoint, it turns blue. A waypoint is how you travel quickly, from one place to another.



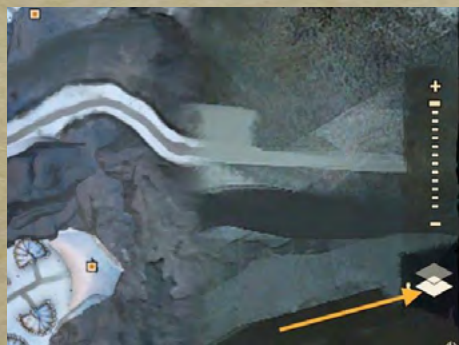
Point of Interest - There is a square encompassing the Point of interest symbol - these little squares are areas that are required for your map completion. They usually are places you might need at certain times in your travels.



A Vista - The picture below has an undiscovered vista (2 empty triangles) and a discovered vista (2 solid red triangles) Each vista when triggered (by pressing “F”) will show the scenic view of the area and you will receive experience points.

The best way I know to get XP in the beginning, is to work on these things. During the process, you will learn to run, fight, and collect items. It’s always good to have a friend to tag along in case you have any problems.

Tiers - There are 2 pictures below showing tier 1 and tier 2. If you look, it gives you different levels in the area. Sometimes you can’t find the point of interest, vista or heart because it is on a different level/tier. By clicking one of the squares, you may view what is on that level.



2. How to set up options, including Evade/Dodge and other movements.

This one, I am still working on. You will see, it is tougher than you think. It all depends on keystrokes and which keys work for you.



Go to the option window by clicking the gear and pressing “options”: Select the mouse, find “Dodge” on mine it is the letter V. You may change it if something works better for you.



3. How to control the keyboard and mouse at the same time.

As you explore this control option page (above), you might want to change a few keystrokes around to work for you. From my experience, the keystrokes they already have there, seem to work the best. Go to low level areas and start fighting and find what works for you.



4. Knowing your abilities - Some will knock the enemy back and other people in your group lose their lock on the enemy.

Scroll over your powers and you get a pop-up window that shows what your power does. Here is an example:

The main key phrase I found was **Push Foes Backward** - Do not use these during a group battle.



5. Knowing your terrain before you jump off of things. You can fall off cliffs and die (which will cost you gold to go back to a waypoint).

Many times, I have found myself running away from a foe. Sometimes, I forget to look or change my view by holding down the right mouse button. You need to do this if you don’t want to go back to a waypoint.

Here is an example of me jumping and having to pay to go to a waypoint:

Can I make it??? Let's try - Jump - Guess not



6. When you are in a large group battle, you need to turn down your graphics.

Some computers are not made for large group gaming, either graphics card, old computer or combination of both. You need to choose Best Performance for Group Battles and when wanting great pictures and the enjoyment of the environment, pick Best Appearance. Choosing either will automatically change

everything below to the correct settings.

Update: Since I started writing this, my dear friends in Gaiscioch, have helped me get my small level 10 Norn Ranger, Humble Misty, to a level 80 in 3 months time. I am only a casual gamer, but once you learn how to maneuver, learning how to use the map, stay alive and dodge made it very helpful to progress.

TOPDRAW
WEDNESDAYS 12PM ON YOUTUBE
A SHOW THAT COVERS EVERYTHING WHEN IT COMES TO ONLINE CARD GAMES



PERSPEXTIVE
MONDAYS 8PM UK
THE TEAM AND GUESTS PLAY GAMES LIVE DISCUSSING THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE EPIC



CONVERGENCE
FRIDAYS 8PM UK
DISCUSSING THE CHANGES IN NCSoft GAMES GUILD WARS, GUILD WARS 2, AND WILDSTAR



MMOBUFF.TV
TWITCH.TV/MMOBUFF



CAMPFIRE
TUESDAYS 8PM UK
A SHOW DESIGNED TO HELP BUILD STRONG GAMING COMMUNITIES



DATAMINE
THURSDAYS 1PM UK
SUPPORT FROM GAME DEVELOPERS FOR GAME DEVELOPERS



BLIZZARDFORECAST
WEDNESDAYS 8PM UK
A SHOW WHERE WE EXPLORE ALL THINGS BLIZZARD



THE ANALYTICAL VOICE OF ONLINE GAMING
CHECK US OUT AS MMOBUFF ON SOCIAL MEDIA





ATTENTION! COMMANDER ON DECK

By: Aoibheann Ní Choileáin

This program was built just for Sanctum of Rall to track progress on the battlefield every 15 minutes. It allows commanders to claim lead on any borderland, eternal battleground, or be listed as a roaming unit.

FOR THE COMMANDERS:

Before you can use this program you need to log into www.sanctumofrall.com, go to the Account Settings and flag yourself as a commander. On this page you can also choose a Primary Guild so that the community can see which guilds their leaders represent - if you don't have that option you'll need to check to make sure you've joined your guild on the site.

Now return to the homepage where the SOR Commanders on Deck bar is located and Claim Lead. You will be directed to the Take Command screen that gives you the option of choosing a scheduled or a pick up event, the zone in which you intend to fight, the length of time for your event (default is 2 hrs please adjust according to your preference), and gives a passcode for your event.

Once you Start Command it directs you to the Confirmation Page where you can copy the chat macro with event information to paste it into Team or Squad chat in game so your followers can claim participation for your event.

All scores are automatically tracked via the Guild Wars 2 API every 15 minutes. Your final score will be calculated 24 hours after the end of your event to allow all of your participants time to claim your event.



FOR THE PARTICIPANTS:

The Commander you choose to follow in battle will provide a six digit code in Team or Squad chat which is good for 24 hours from the end of the event. Once you are logged into the Sanctum of Rall website you can use that code in the Claim Participation Passcode box.

You will be directed to an Event Recap page where you can write a review of the commander and give them a Commander Commendation for their leadership.

FOR ALL:

Leaderboards:

Highlighting the top Commanders and Participants in WvW.

Rewards:

- Weekly raffle for the WvW Commanders, WvW Participants and SOR Members
- Monthly raffle for the WvW commanders and WvW participants.



MAGGIE (PART ONE)

By The Old Goat

Terri was missing. She had gone with Bones and Electra back to the house in Divinity's Reach to pick up the last of their belongings and do a final cleaning. Bones and Electra had gone for lunch, but when they returned, Terri was gone. Her staff was in the corner where she had stood it, and the house looked like it had seen a very big fight. They quickly searched the neighborhood and asked everyone they met if they had seen anything.

A few people recalled a group of five men leaving the house that they thought was part of the moving crew. The men had loaded the trunk on a wagon and rode off in the direction of Rurikton. Bones and Electra jumped in the wagon and drove it as fast as they could to the new house in Shaemoor. As they drove into the yard, they both yelled for Maggie.

Maggie came out of the house and down the stairs on the front porch and grabbed the horse by his bridal. "What's going on? Where's Terri?" she asked.

"Terri's missing. When we came back from lunch the house was in shambles and Terri was gone. We think she was carried off in a chest by some men in a wagon." Bones explained.

Maggie ran back inside and shouted, "Everyone, out in the yard, bring your gear, we're leaving now. Terri's been kidnapped. We'll fill you in on the way."

She came back out in a few minutes wearing her armor, carrying her axes and bow. Harry was right behind her with precious. Mellen was the last to appear. They all jumped into the wagon and Bones turned it around and headed back to Divinity's Reach to search for more clues.

When they arrived at the old house, everyone spread out and searched for clues. It was Mellen who found the first. In one corner of the bedroom there was an Asuran doll laying on a toy gate. Mellen shouted, "Maggie, I've found something!"

Maggie came running up the stairs, "What? What did you find?"

Mellen pointed at the Asuran doll on the gate.

Harry walked in and said, "What's it mean?"

"It means Terri knew where they were going to take her and wanted us to know as well." Mellen answered.

"Which gate, there are several in the city?"

"They took her through the Asura Gate in Rurikton."

Maggie thought for only a moment, "Ebonhawke"

Electra shouted from downstairs, "Maggie, Mellen, come quick. There's someone here."

They ran down the stairs and met Electra and Harry in the hallway. A man, bearded, dressed in rags, sporting a black eye and split lip had a letter in his hand. He offered it to Maggie.

"Who gave this to you, Jacques?" she asked.

He said simply, "I don't know his name, but he gave me copper to deliver it to you. I've been watching from across the street. I was afraid. He told me he would make me suffer if I failed."

"Can you tell us anything about him, or who he was with?" Mellen asked.

"He was tall and only had one eye. He hit me when I tried to talk to Miss Terri. She's always been nice to me. Gave me work in the garden. They had her tied up and were putting her into a chest. I'm sorry Miss Maggie. There were five of them. He told me he'd hurt my family if I told anyone."

Maggie opened the letter. It was simply written. If you wish to see your Terri again, you will convince the Queen to grant me an audience. You have until the end of the week. If you fail or tell anyone, we will deliver your friend to you, ready for burial. I will be in contact at your new house.

Maggie reached into her bag and pulled out some coins and handed them to Jacques. "Take this, use it to get your family to my new house in Shaemoor."

There are jobs for you and your wife and a place for you all to live. Talk to Berry, tell her I sent you. She will get you settled. Speak of this to no one. Now go, quickly."

A quick nod and he left. As he walked away, Maggie turned to her friends and said, "We need a plan. It's a separatist plot to get to the Queen."

Mellen replied, "That's what it looks like. But something is bothering me about this. I can't quite put my finger on it, but something doesn't make sense. Who knows that you know the Queen well enough to ask for an audience?"

"Are you saying someone close to us is behind this? But who?" asked Electra.

"I don't know. I say we follow the clues and learn everything we can."

Maggie voiced her concern, "Won't they kill Terri if we follow them?"

"Perhaps if YOU follow them. For some reason, I don't think they'll be concerned about a raggedy old Charr and an extremely brilliant Asuran selling potions. Maggie, I think it best if you're at the house when this scoundrel tries to contact you."

Bones looked at Maggie, "How well do you know the Queen. Would she keep a secret if you asked her to?"

"I don't know, she's been very good to us."

"How about Logan?"

"He has a tendency to overreact to danger when it involves the Queen." Electra interjected.

"Then I suggest you speak to the Queen. Even if you're watched, it will look like you're trying to get an audience for this son of a harpy outcast. She should be warned."

"Yes, you're right. I'm just so worried about Terri." Maggie said.

"Terri is a lot stronger and smarter than you give her credit for. She was able to leave us a clue, I'd be willing to bet there are more along the way." Electra comforted Maggie.

"Yes, she is smart. Okay, then we have a plan. I will visit the Queen; Mellen and Harry will follow the clues. And we will all be ready at a moment's notice to go wherever we need to."

"Agreed," said Mellen, "Bones and Electra, Harry and I need suitable transportation and bottles of potion for a potion seller. And you all need fast transportation should I send for you. Can you help us with that?"

"Absolutely, we will contact Eir in Hoelbrak immediately. Fast horses, a box wagon full of potions. Anything else?"

"That should do it, thank you. Meet us at the Asura gate in Rurikton. Come on Harry, let's get back to Shaemoor and see about our traveling clothes."

With that, the party split up and each went to their assigned task.

Bones and Electra wasted no time in traveling to the Upper City's Asura Gate. Through the gate to Lion's Arch, then to Peeta's Gate in Hoelbrak. From there, they went immediately to Stonewright's Steading to talk to Eir Stegalkin. Simon and Garm were old friends and after the greeting ceremony they took off running in the field.

Bones got right to the point, "We need five swift horses. Three saddled, and two to pull a box wagon full of potions. They are for Maggie and Mellen."

"I see. I take it this is a matter of some urgency?" asked Eir.

Electra's looked at Eir, "I've known you for most of my life. I trust you to keep this secret."

Her curiosity piqued, Eir replied, "I give you my word, this is between the three of us and no other."

"Terri has been kidnapped. The kidnapper is demanding a private audience with Queen Jennah in return for her safety. Mellen and Harry are following the trail left by 5 men and a chest on a wagon. Maggie is going to warn the Queen. The rest of us will wait until we hear from Mellen, and at that time may need swift horses to assist with the rescue."

"Consider it done. I will give you the necessary papers. Give them to my stabler. In the meantime, you two come with me, I know an artificer who will ask no questions if the gold is shiny."

They left Eir's home and headed towards the center of

Hoelbrak. Hanging from above the door of a small shop was a sign that contained a single potion bottle and the words, Potions, Tonics, Sigils by Balder the Silent.

They stepped inside to find an old man hunched over a table putting stoppers in a handful of bottles. Eir spoke to him loudly, "Balder, I have need of your services."

He looked up at Eir and smiled. Taking a pad of paper and pen, he began writing. When he finished, he showed the pad to Eir. "What can I help you with Noble Ranger?"

"I need enough potions to fill a wagon. Healing potions I believe. Name your price."

He wrote again and held the pad up before Eir. "You take the fun out of bargaining."

Eir smiled back at him, "You wound me more with your bargaining than ever I received in battle."

Grinning back he wrote, "Flattery will get you exactly what you want, my dear. I suggest 200 gallons of strong healing potions in pint jars. I can have it ready within the hour for 10 gold."

Bones opened his money bag and produced the required amount. "We will return in one hour. Thank you Balder."

They left the shop and went back to Eir's home. She spent the next few minutes writing the orders for the horses and wagon. Handing the papers to Bones, she turned to Electra and said, "I

wish there was more I could do to help. How will you contact me should I be needed?"

Electra thought for a moment, then said, "Simon will notify Garm that he is needed. Garm will know where to find us."

Eir nodded. "That will work."

Maggie was in the Upper City on her way to the Royal Palace to warn the Queen. As she walked through the park she saw a group of men resting in the shade. One of them caught her eye. Her step faltered when she realized who he was. She hadn't seen him for nearly a year. At that same moment, he saw her. Gesturing with hand signals, he directed her away from the others. Fighting her tears, she walked towards him. Seeing the look on her face, he reached out and took her in his arms. Her tears would no longer be denied as her father held and tried to comfort her.

"Daddy," was all she could say. "They took her. They took Terri. They're going to kill her. I don't know what to do."

He held her, waiting for her to regain her composure. Holding his only daughter as if she was once again a scared little girl. His own tears threatened, as he said, "We will find her. We will find her and bring her back to you. I promise you that."

And she believed him. This man had kept many promises throughout her lifetime. This man who had raised her by himself after her mother left. This man who taught her she was as good as any boy could be, if not better. As he held her she began to calm. She knew it was

going to be all right.

"I'm sorry dad, don't know what got into me."

He smiled, "It doesn't matter, it needed to come out. Now, tell me what's going on while we wait for the Queen."

Suddenly it dawned on Maggie, her father's uniform showed an officer's rank. "Dad, you're a colonel? You said you'd never be an officer. You swore you'd always be one of the soldiers."

"Well, our Queen had her own ideas about what I was going to be. She ordered a field commission six months ago."

"Six months ago? And I'm only hearing about it now?"

"That's because it's your fault."

"My fault?" Maggie was dumbfounded. "How is it MY fault?"

"The Queen told me she was ordering this commission so that I'd have an office job and you'd be spared the loss of your father."

"But..." Maggie was speechless.

"Yes, I felt very much the same way. But the Queen has a gift. That gift is the ability to make us all see reason. She convinced me to take the job. Although I dare say she's not happy that I changed the rules a bit. I still spend as much time in the field as I do in my office."

Maggie just shook her head and smiled at her father. Her pride was obvious to anyone who could see her face. Maggie soon

told him everything she knew of the kidnap and the note. He took it all in and finally said, "They just want a private audience with the Queen? Something's not right about that. Of all the people with access to the Queen, why you?"

"I don't know, but I have to warn her. She's been good to us. But I'm afraid of her reaction. She may order an investigation. She could get Terri killed."

At that moment a guard walked up to her father and said, "Colonel Lynn, the Queen will see you now."

"We're on our way, come on Maggie, let's go see the Queen."

The guard stood for a moment as if digesting the Colonel's last words, then turned and led them toward the Royal Palace.

Maggie almost didn't hear her father, his whisper was so low. "Don't worry, the Queen will do the right thing. Let me do the talking."

They walked quickly to the palace and entered through the public door. From there, the guard guided them up a short flight of stairs, and into a small room with a barred window. Another door opened and the Queen's secretary entered. "Colonel, Maggie, the Queen will see you in the drawing room."

The drawing room was not a public room, nor was it large enough for more than a handful of people. This audience was meant to be private. Colonel Lynn removed his weapons and placed them on the table. Maggie did the same. The secretary then

led them to the drawing room.

After Maggie and her father bowed, the Queen gestured to the chairs that had been set up, "Good, I have need of both of you."

Harry and Mellen had changed clothes to better fit their roles. Mellen as the seller of potions, Harry as his servant and driver. Upon hearing from Bones, they both left for Hoelbrak to pick up the already loaded wagon and drive it to Rurikton. Once they reached the Asura Gate, Harry pulled the wagon off the road to the side and Mellen began to open the back and started his sales pitch. "Potions ladies and gentlemen. Potions for every condition, hope in a bottle. I have potions for every ailment, just one silver per bottle."

The guards at the gate looked at each other, then went to the guardhouse and used the radio. By the time the Captain of the Guard arrived, there was already a small crowd forming. Mellen had sold six bottles of potions and Harry was delivering them as they were sold. The Captain walked right up to the back of the wagon and said, "You can't do this here."

"And why not?" asked Mellen, "I've got the proper license, I've sold here before, what's the problem?"

"The problem is the crowd will get in the way of traffic."

"I was just trying to make a little money while I waited."

"Well, I'm sorry, but you can't sell here."

"Is it alright if I wait? I won't sell, but I've got to wait for my other wagon, with my trunk."

"How long will you be here?" The captain sounded impatient.

"I'm not sure. I thought they would be here already, but they seem to be late."

"There was a trunk here earlier today," one of the guards spoke up. "It was in a wagon, there were five men."

"That sounds like my trunk, did you happen to catch a name? Just to make sure it's the correct one?"

"Yes, it's in my record book." He replied as he took something from the guardhouse. "Here, his name was Serentine."

"Ahh, wonderful. That's my chest. Where are they?"

"They've already gone through the gate, sir."

"Well then, Come Harry, let us close shop and follow, erm, I mean fetch my trunk.."

Mellen and Harry wasted no time, they pulled in the stage, closed the wagon and started through the gate to Ebonhawke. Once on the other side, Mellen said, "We need to get a message to Maggie. That name might prove important."

"If it's a real name," replied Harry. "How do we send her a message?"

"That's simple, we use Precious to deliver it."

"I don't know if she'll understand and go to the right

place.”

“She understands much more than you give her credit for. Call her, I’ll show you.”

As if she already knew she was needed, precious poked her head out of the back of the wagon and simply said, “rrrr?”

Harry found a place to park the wagon. Mellen climbed into the back and motioned Harry do the same. Once they were inside the wagon’s box, Mellen pulled out a potion. Pouring a tiny bit into a saucer, he then took a drink and offered it to Harry. Harry took a small swallow and waited. After precious lapped up the few drops in the saucer, she jumped into Harry’s lap and he heard her say, “I don’t like that chicken flavor food you get, I like what Terri feeds me better. It tastes like fish.”

“What sorcery is this?” He cried.

“No sorcery, this potion just allows us all to understand each other’s language. Asuran’s have used it for centuries to settle differences with other races. How do you think we learned to speak Charr?”

“But, cat’s don’t talk.”

“Well, for the most part they choose not to. But Precious isn’t just a cat. Precious is a guide. She’s here because she’s chosen you.”

“Yes, I have chosen you.” The cat spoke clearly.

“Now, Harry, we must hurry, we can debate this another time, we need to write a message and

ask Precious to take it to Maggie.”

“Terri is in danger so we must find and save her or I’ll be stuck with your chicken flavor.” Precious surprised Harry with how much she already knew.

“Yes, they can understand us all the time, it’s we who really need the potion.” Mellen said.

“Precious, can you carry a message to Maggie for us?” Mellen asked. “It is of the utmost importance that she gets this message.”

“Nothing will stop me, of course, silly Asuran. In fact, no one will even see me.”

With that Mellen hurriedly printed a note explaining what they had found and where they were going. He tied it around Precious’s neck with a piece of rawhide. “Be careful not to lose this note and I will make sure you are rewarded with some nice fresh fish.”

Suddenly Precious was gone. Invisible, she made her way through the Asura gate and back to Divinity’s Reach. Harry and Mellen jumped back into the front of the wagon and drove into Ebonhawke.

Terri had a headache. She didn’t remember being knocked unconscious, being put into a chest, or traveling to wherever she was now. But, she did remember the men who grabbed and tied her up. They talked amongst themselves while she pretended to be unconscious in the chair. She could tell by the conversation that they weren’t very smart.

“Boss says we’re gonna get paid big time for this one.”

“Don’t be stupid, he says that about every job. We’ll get our same five silver plus another as a bonus.”

“This one’s different, we’re taking her through Ebonhawke. We deserve more than six lousy silver. He’s gonna pay us at least ten. Remember, we have to keep her alive this time. Not like last time. You saw what he did to Felix.”

“Felix had it comin, he was always mouthin’ off, startin’ trouble, fighting with everybody. His short fuse is what got the guy killed.”

Earlier they had left her alone for a few minutes while they brought in the trunk. She spied the Asuran doll Maggie had been working on to give Mellen’s niece. There was also the dollhouse with the pretty picket fence. She scooted the chair she was tied to over to the table. She took the gate with her teeth and moved it to the corner of the table. Then she did the same with the Asuran doll, placing it directly on top of the gate. Suddenly she heard a sound. She quickly scooted her chair back to where they had tied her.

Just then the leader had come into the room. She watched as he walked behind her. That was the last thing she remembered, and now her head hurt even more. She vowed she would extract vengeance for the headache at the earliest opportunity.

Sitting up, she realized she was no longer tied. However it was very dark. Reaching around

blindly, she knocked something over. If only she had a light. She thought for a moment then muttered the cantrip for Cleansing Fire. Suddenly her headache disappeared, her shoulders felt stronger, and her mind cleared. Along with feeling better came a small finger of flame. She lifted her hand and using this as a light source, she was able to see that she was in a cave and the lamp was beside her. Directing the finger of flame to the lamp, she turned the handle to expose the wick and it caught. Soon the room filled with the golden glow of an oil lamp.

The furnishings were sparse but comfortable enough. She may be a prisoner, but someone wanted her to be comfortable. That means someone wants her cooperation. That someone was going to be disappointed. Terri was going to escape instead. Getting up she went immediately to try the door and found it locked. Pounding on it, she shouted, "I want to talk to whoever's in charge and I want him here NOW. If you don't produce him, I will burn this room and anyone guarding it down with flames!"

The door burst open and the two men guarding her looked around. "How'd you light that lamp?" the short one asked.

"That's not all I can do," she answered.

And with that, she once again spoke the cantrip and flame came out of her hand. Pointing it at the taller guard, she set his beard on fire. As he screamed in pain and fear, she darted toward the door, only to run into a much

larger, much stronger man. He immediately put his arms around her and shouted to the guards. "Give her another shot, damn you. This one's dangerous, she must be kept asleep!"

The guard hurried to comply and Terri felt a sudden sting in her arm and immediately began to fall unconscious. As she drifted she heard the bandit say, "I'm telling you Serentine, this one's gonna be impossible to keep!"

Precious maintained her invisibility until she was inside the Royal Palace. She waited until she was well inside and under a table to reappear. She used her nose to find a trace of Maggie. Following the scent, she was soon outside the drawing room. Yowling her loudest meow, she soon got the attention of one of the guards at the door. "Shoo, get away. Suddenly the door opened and Maggie stuck her head out the door asking, "What was that noise?"

Precious ran quickly through the door and waited at Maggie's feet. Bending down, Maggie took the note from around her neck and spoke to the guard as she closed the door, "It's all right Sergeant. This one's with us."

Reading the note quickly, she handed it to her father who had been discussing options with the Queen. He read it out loud, "Maggie, it is as we expected. They've gone through Ebonhawke, where we are now.. The leader used the name Serentine. "

"Serentine." Said the Colonel.

"Yes," agreed the Queen.

"So, is he after you, or is he after me?" Maggie's father spoke bluntly.

"He has reason to want to harm us both."

Maggie asked, "Serentine? Should I know that name?"

"I wish you didn't." her father explained, "He's the man who kidnapped your mother, twenty one years ago."

"Kidnapped? But, but you said, she left. You told me she couldn't stay married any longer. You said she left us!"

"Yes, that's what your father was told to tell you, my dear. Sit down, you have a lot to learn and a very short time to learn it. I will explain it all. Just promise you'll wait until we're finished before you start asking questions."

Maggie knew better than to challenge the Queen when she used that tone of voice. She simply nodded her head, sat down and began to listen.

"Twenty one years ago, when you were just a baby. You lived here at the palace with your father and mother and me. Your parents were known as Lord and Lady Lynn. I was next in line for the throne, but your mother was in line after me."

The stunned look on Maggie's face urged the Queen on.

"Your mother is my half-sister. But, she never wanted anything to do with the throne. She only had eyes for your father. A gallant young soldier with more than just a pretty face. The king trusted him. Trusted him with

the life of his favorite daughter. My father gave his blessing for the marriage, bestowing the title of Lord on your father, and gave him the Township of Claypool."

The Queen paused to let her words sink in, rang her bell, and told the servant who answered to bring tea. Once the tea was served, the Queen sent the servant to tell her secretary she would be seeing no one else today. And then she continued.

"They were married and shortly after your mother announced she was with child. We were all so very happy, and she was overjoyed about becoming a mother. When you were born, and you cried so much and so loudly, except when your parents were near. So, you went everywhere they went. Servants changed you and bathed you, but only your mother could feed you. And only your father could rock you to sleep. We loved it all. Your grandfather adored you. As did I."

The queen noted the stunned look on Maggie's face, took her hand and said, "I know you have questions, but you must hear the rest. As I told you, I was next in line for the throne. But then, as now, there were people who were opposed to my rule. My father heard from them time and again. But he never listened, and he never changed his choice for the heir to the throne. It was always me."

"Then, one day our entourage was attacked on our way to Lion's Arch for a ceremony commemorating the building of the new bridge to Fort Marriner. If your father had not turned his attention away from your

mother, the king would have been killed, however, it gave the attackers just enough time to grab you and your mother. I was able to snatch you away and tried to reach my sister. The attacker struck me hard enough to stun me, but I would not let you go. I heard your mother shouting to your father as she was drug away. She cried out to your father, 'save her, don't let them hurt my baby.' Your father loosed a single arrow that struck one of the men in the eye. We found out later that the man was Serentine, a leader of the separatists who had been hounding my father's troops day and night trying to gain control of the kingdom."

There were tears in the Queen's eyes. Taking her kerchief she dabbed at them before she spoke again. "Your father hesitated to make sure you were unharmed, and in that moment they disappeared with your mother and there has not been a single sign of her until today. This morning your father contacted me telling me he had found her. Now, I know you have questions."

"Why was I never told the truth?" Maggie asked.

"When you were young it was just easier than trying to explain. And we didn't want you to be afraid." Her father answered gently.

"And when you were older? You were so headstrong we were afraid you'd try to find her." The Queen added, then turning to Colonel Lynn, "You said you know where she is now?"

"She's in Highden Cave, not far from Ebonhawke." He answered.

"I received word from the Iron Legion last week."

"And one day we will discuss why I am just hearing about this now." The Queen was obviously miffed, "In the meantime, do you have a plan?"

"We need more information. My company can be there in two days if we leave tonight. But there may be complications. Serentine is back, and this time he's kidnapped Terri."

"My friends Mellen and Harry are following the trail. Terri left a clue for us. The Asura Gate in Rurikton. It goes directly to Ebonhawke." Maggie volunteered.

At that, she called Precious. The cat came immediately to her.

"I need to send a message to Mellen, to watch Highden Cave. They also need to know about my mother."

"If it's the same group, it's possible they are holding Terri in the same place. They likely are going to try to assassinate you and replace you with Frieda. They must have some backing among the nobles." Terri's father sounded angry. "They've held her long enough. They've likely convinced her to do their bidding."

"Don't count her out yet, Willem."

Maggie marveled that the Queen used her father's given name so easily. There was much she wanted to know, but first, there had to be a plan to save her Terri. "I must go, I can't be

away from my house. They are supposed to contact me in the morning."

"Go with her, Willem. I will do my part from here. All will seem normal."

"About the audience they're demanding?"

"Tell him four days. I will grant them a secret audience in my garden at lunch. But it won't be me they find, it will be Logan wearing my robes. Try to find your friend Terri before then."

Taking a pen and pad, Maggie scribbled a quick note to Mellen and Harry. Using the same piece of rawhide, she fastened the note to the cat. Saying their goodbyes, Maggie left with her father and Precious.

Queen Jennah again rang her servant's bell. "Bring Logan Thackeray here immediately."

"Yes your majesty." He bowed and left the room.

Finally alone, the Queen allowed herself to breathe. Her sister, alive...

It was starting to get dark. Mellen had made his sales pitch to a large group of onlookers and sold almost all of the potions for fifteen gold. A tidy profit of five gold for Bones. Minus the ten percent each for Mellen and Harry. And as the Norn potions loosened some tongues, they found out that Serentine was the leader of a group of bandits who had opposed the Queen since before she was a Queen. He had been terrorizing the town for twenty one years.

Harry had found out where Serentine's hideout was rumored to be, Highden Cave. Mellen had taken that information and using his electronic map tool, found the exact location of the entrances to the cave. There was no information showing how large the cave was. However, Mellen questioned a young man who had visited the cave with an uncle, two years before. He was very afraid to talk, but a hefty dose of a free "healing" potion gained them the layout of the cave.

A single "rowwrr" announced the arrival of Precious. Taking the note from around his neck, Mellen quickly read it.

Harry grew impatient, "What does it say?" he asked.

"It says we have the right location and the right culprit. They've come up with the same information from a different source."

"What now?" Harry asked after reading the note himself.

"You saw the note, she wants us to watch the cave. We need to get a message to Bones and Electra to meet us there. Precious, are you up to an overnight trip?"

This time Mellen wrote to Bones and Electra. "I have your payment for the potions. Please meet us in Ebonhawke in the morning. Bring precious back with you."

"Now, go play with your friend Simon. I'll see you tomorrow." Harry touched noses with the cat.

Once again, Precious

disappeared. Harry turned to Mellen. "I am curious, how did you know she could speak?"

"When you were hurt at the Royal Palace. She spoke to me then. She told me what it would take to save you. She was the one who saved your life."

"It wasn't the first time, I'm sure it won't be the last. She's been saving my life since I was a cub."

"We need a reason to travel the countryside so we can watch the cave." Mellen thought out loud.

Harry thought for a moment then said, "We can be buyers looking for goods to make more of our potions with."

"That sounds like a very good idea. It will give us a reason to talk to the locals. Perhaps we can find out more about this Serentine."

Maggie and her father were escorted to the house in Divinity's Reach. Willem dismissed the escort and sent them back to the barracks near the palace. It was growing dark and they sat inside on the floor.

"I don't know if I should stay here or go home to Shaemoor." Maggie spoke quietly.

"I'm sure if it mattered the note would have been more specific"

"Dad, you never remarried, why?"

He smiled at her then, "At first I couldn't believe your mother was really gone. Then I was used to it being just the two of us. I

was happy. You were happy. I wasn't willing to risk that."

"I remember when you were stationed in Ascalon. At night I would sneak out of the camp and look for her among the ghosts."

"I know. We followed you."

Maggie's surprise showed in her eyes. "I never saw or heard you."

"You were twelve years old and very headstrong. You reminded me of your mother. Everyone in the camp watched over you. Brightmane woke me when you left the camp. He tracked you. We hid behind the wall. You spoke to the ghosts and asked them if they had seen your mother. You came back to camp dejected and cried yourself to sleep."

"And the next day you sent me away to school."

"I should have known they could never tame you." He laughed then. The headmistress begged me to take you home. She said you would cause a rebellion among the young ladies."

"That's when you hired the governess."

"Yes, she was supposed to teach you how to be a lady. An impossible task. But she never gave up."

"She found Professor Klaas, and between the two of them they taught me a lot."

"Yes, but you were more interested in learning from Brightmane. He still brags about the fifteen year old girl that gave

him that scar on his snout."

"I was so afraid he'd tell you what I did. I knew if you found out, you'd forbid me to learn the sword and axe."

"He would never have allowed it. He once told me that you were a warrior, and that I was a fool if I thought you'd ever be anything else. He was so proud of you that day."

"He gave me my first axes. I still have them. I sharpened them every single night for a year."

Stifling a yawn, he said, "Come on kiddo let's get you home, it's late and this old man needs to sleep."

Snow was falling in Hoelbrak as Bones and Electra prepared for bed. Simon whined softly and padded to the door. Sniffing at the bottom, he gave a short bark. Bones looked at Electra as he grabbed his hammer and stood at the doorway. Electra grabbed her bow and readied an arrow. Nodding her head, she drew back the string. Bones took the handle and quickly opened the door. At first, neither saw anything. But suddenly Precious was rubbing against Simon's legs. Bones put down his hammer and took the note from around the cat's neck and read it.

"Mellen and Harry are in Ebonhawke. They want us to meet them there in the morning." He spoke quietly.

"Something tells me you'd rather go now." Electra answered.

"Yes, you're right."

"What do you think Simon?"

The Krytan Hound and the little cat both sat looking at her expectantly.

Bones smiled and said, "I guess that settles it. I'll gather our gear."

Electra walked over to him and put her arms around him. "Sometimes it bothers me that you can read me so well. But not tonight my love."

They quickly gathered everything they would need and left on foot for Ebonhawke. To get there, they had to use the Asura Gate to Lion's Arch, then to Divinity's Reach, and finally the Asura Gate to Ebonhawke. The trip took them a few hours and it was midnight before they spied the wagon.

Harry watched them as they walked toward the wagon. Upon seeing him, Precious began running. Simon, not to be outdone, chased the cat and nearly knocked Harry off his seat on the wagon.

The commotion woke Mellen who asked gruffly, "What's going on?"

Harry answered him, "Bones and Electra are here."

The Asuran climbed out of the wagon and greeted the two Norns. "You're early. Good."

Electra asked, "What do we know?"

"We believe Terri is being held in Highden Cave to the East by a group led by a man they call Serentine."

Bones interjected, "That's ogre territory."

"Ogres and harpies." Harry added. "I hate harpies, they throw filth at you."

"Do you think they're in league with this Serentine?" Electra asked pointedly.

Mellen thought for a moment, then replied, "I have my doubts. Ogres generally are too hard to control. Harpies, I'm not sure, but Serentine would have to have something they wanted very badly to stay in their good graces. Perhaps we can use this to our advantage, should we need a diversion."

"Let's not wait till morning. I think we should use the darkness to cover our route." Harry thought out loud.

"Excellent idea, are you sure you're not part Asuran, friend Harry?" Mellen teased.

With that, Bones, Electra and the pets all climbed into the wagon. Harry drove south to Blackwing excavation while Mellen watched to see if anyone was following. As they reached the turnoff, Mellen gave the go ahead sign and Harry turned east. Once they made it through the excavation, the wagon continued east and followed the Ogre Road to Mithric Cliffs. Once there, they agreed that it would be better not to encounter ogres or harpies at night. With Simon and Precious to keep watch under the wagon, the group settled in to get some sleep.

The night was clear and the full moon had made half of the journey across the dark, star

filled sky and illuminated the road to Shaemoor. Maggie and Willem fell into a rhythm of walking and watching. It felt familiar to the father and daughter. It reminded them of hunting trips when Maggie was much younger.

As they passed through the gate, Maggie spied a dark figure leaning against the well outside her new house. Stopping short, she tapped her father's shoulder and pointed. Using their shorthand sign language, he motioned her to go around to the left and approach the figure from behind. He waited for her to disappear around the nearest house, then began walking toward the well.

Maggie worked her way around the houses and quietly slid down the hill. Using trees and bushes for cover, she moved closer and lay behind a tree waiting for her father. Willem made his way along the road and walked past the charr, who stood and stepped out.

"Colonel? When did you start wearing the fancy duds of an officer?" It was the charr speaking now.

Maggie recognized the voice immediately. Smiling, she quietly moved behind the charr and growled, "At ease soldier. That's my old man you're messin with. Nobody messes with the colonel and lives."

The charr turned around and grinned, "Maggie! I heard you coming a mile away. You've forgotten half what I taught you girl."

"No way Brightmane, if you

heard me coming you wouldn't have jumped out of your skin when I snuck up behind you."

The soldier stuttered, "Colonel, I'm sorry, I didn't recognize you."

"You did nothing wrong son. It's your job to guard the house, and you're doing it well. Now, back to your post and I'll see that you have a little extra rum when you get off duty in the morning."

"Yes, sir!" The soldier turned and melted back into the bushes at the side of the house.

Maggie looked at her old friend. She remembered him as having some grey on his snout, but now the gray had taken over his whole head. His left ear still had the half round bite mark she remembered so well. But his face bore scars she hadn't seen before. Some new, some old, they told of battles he had fought in the years since he had been her teacher and friend. Instinctively she hugged him.

Embarrassed he growled, "Watch it, little one. I can still show you a thing or two."

"I'll bet you can." She hugged him again.

Her father said, "Come on, let's get inside. There's a lot we have to talk about."

The three walked up the steps to the porch. As they reached the front door, it was opened by a thin sylvari wearing a beautiful flower like gown. Her pinkish complexion was accentuated by the gowns red and violet highlights. Maggie led the way into the hallway. The sylvari

whispered quietly, "I've kept supper warm."

"Thank you, Berry. You don't need to wait on us, you can go to bed."

"Nonsense Maggie. I don't mind at all." Her smile made it plain she was not going to let them get away without eating.

Maggie led the way into the dining room. As Berry brought food and drink, introductions were made. "Dad, Brightmane this is Berry. She has been a blessing, without her I'd be lost. Berry, this is Lord Lynne, my father and my mentor Brightmane."

Willem corrected her, "Please, just call me Willem. I haven't been a lord for many years. And this is the best I've eaten in a long time. I daresay this fare is better than what the Queen's own chef could prepare."

"Thank you," Berry answered, "and whenever you're ready, I'll prepare rooms for you both. Top of the stairs, first doors on both the left and right."

"Berry, where are Jacques' and his family?" Maggie asked.

"I haven't seen him since the city."

"Well, I told him to bring his family here. He's an excellent stableman and with his help, we can fix up the stable. I think it would be a good idea to have horses available."

"They can have the third floor until he gets the stable ready. There's a nice apartment above that they can live in." Berry

replied.

"That will be perfect. Thank you. I don't know what I would do without you."

Berry put her hand on Maggie's shoulder, "Miss Terri will be okay. You'll find her. I just know you will."

Maggie patted Berry's hand and smiled at her. Berry left them to prepare the rooms.

Brightmane spoke first. "Sir, we think they're planning something. There's been a lot of commotion around the caves."

Maggie looked at him quizzically, "You've been watching them?"

"I've got some of my best at Fangfury Watch. They're keeping me posted."

Maggie just shook her head and said, "Dad, tell me everything."

Her father smiled and explained, "We've been watching Serentine for a week. He's been hiding out in Ebonhawke. It's gotten too dangerous for him there, so he's moved to the caves. Your mother was with them when they moved. She didn't seem to be a prisoner."

The charr added, "I'm still not counting her out as an ally. I don't believe she would turn on her own family."

"I wish I had your confidence in her. I can't help wondering why she doesn't try to escape."

"Perhaps I will have a chance to ask her. They also have my partner. They kidnapped her

and have demanded an audience with Queen Jennah. I'm supposed to hear from them in the morning."

"Now that is starting to make sense. They took Terri to use Maggie to get an audience in order to kill the Queen. And then your mother becomes the new ruler in Kryta." Brightmane stroked his chin.

"It all points to Frieda being part of the plot. Maybe she even planned it herself. She's very intelligent."

"No, something's not right here. I don't believe she would ever knowingly put her child in danger." Brightmane was adamant. "There has to be another explanation."

"I can only hope you're right, old friend." Willem sighed.

"It's late, you should rest." Berry's voice was somehow soothing. "Should I prepare breakfast for the soldiers outside?"

"No, they'll be taking care of themselves. Brightmane and I will breakfast with them."

"What if my contact sees them?" Maggie was worried.

"I'll send them back to the river. Your father and I will join them in the morning." Brightmane said.

"Work out a signal should we need them." Willem spoke quietly.

"Can we at least keep a few guards in the house?"

Maggie frowned, "I don't need to be guarded. You should both know by now that I can take care of myself."

The old charr grinned at her then, "Don't bite my head off, I was thinking about the old man. He's not as quick as he used to be."

"Watch it friend." Willem smiled at both of them.

The sun hadn't come up yet, but it was getting lighter when someone knocked on the door. Maggie, who hadn't slept at all rushed downstairs to answer. When she opened it, Jacques and his family were standing outside. She stepped aside and motioned for them to come in.

"We can't Maggie, we're being watched. My instructions were to speak to you out here, but if I enter, I would regret it."

"Okay, tell him he has what he wants in three days. At lunch, in the Queen's garden."

Jacques and his family started to go back down the stairs when Maggie spoke, "Jacques, your family isn't part of this. They will be safer here and no harm will come to them.. Return when you're finished delivering the message."

"Thank you, I will." His relief was obvious.

Maggie took Jacques wife and three children inside and introduced them to Berry, who immediately took them all to the kitchen for something to eat. Maggie half listened to the

chattering as she waited. Soon, Jacques returned with a final message.

"Miss Terri will be released upon completion of the audience in three days. You will be notified where." He said.

"Thank you." Maggie pointed toward the kitchen, "through that door you'll find Berry. She will explain your new duties and get you all settled for the day."

Willem came down the stairs followed by Brightmane. They looked pointedly at Maggie who gestured they follow her and she led them into the study. When they were all seated, she told them of the message.

"The message has been delivered. They say they'll release Terri after the audience. We have to find her before anyone gets suspicious. Worse yet, I think they're watching the house. If I leave, at the very least I'll be followed."

"Well, maybe you should give them a tour of Shaemoor." Brightmane smiled, "Starting with the Inn."

"You're being cryptic, you know I hate having to guess what you're talking about." Willem said.

"That barmaid at the Inn, she's about Maggie's size. All we need is a redhead wig and a quick change of clothes. Before they realize they've been duped, we'll be long gone."

Maggie added, "I know Gretchen. I'm sure she will help."

No one had noticed Berry had entered the room. "Can I help?" She asked.

"I don't know, do you have a red wig?" The charr almost couldn't contain himself.

"Not at the moment, but I know exactly where to get one. Once the decoy is here, I can create a portal that will take her back to the Inn where she can resume her duties. It will appear to everyone that Maggie came home. And if questioned, she is resting."

"How long will it take to get the wig?"

"Wait here."

Suddenly Berry vanished and then just as suddenly she reappeared at the foot of the stairs with the wig. It was a perfect match for Maggie's red hair. Maggie quickly placed it into her pack.

"You three, can you meet me at the Inn?"

"We'll be waiting there for you." Willem looked expectantly at Berry.

Berry muttered a few words and there was a portal, the three jumped in and were gone. Maggie left by the front door, pack on her back, and walked to the Inn.

Inside the Inn, she spied her father, Berry and the charr talking to Gretchen, the barmaid. Her father reached into his pocket and handed a few coins to the girl. Just as Maggie reached the group, her father said, "You girls go trade clothes

now.”

Quickly the women went upstairs and exchanged clothes. Once they were dressed and Gretchen was wearing the wig, she could fool anyone at a distance. Maggie tucked her own hair up and covered it with a simple hat.

“You know the plan, you will go to my house, walk in as if it’s yours, and then Berry will give you a portal back here. Don’t speak to anyone, please.”

“You can count on me Maggie, you’ve always been good to my brother and me. I won’t let you down.”

Maggie smiled. Gretchen went down the stairs and out the front door. Maggie, wearing her street clothes waited. After a few moments, Berry arrived in the room with her armor and weapons.

“Come on, I’ll get you a portal as far as under the bridge. That should allow the three of you to get away without being seen.”

Maggie stepped out of the room onto the stairs and whistled. Her father and Brightmane quickly joined her and Berry. The Mesmer muttered the words again and a portal appeared. The three stepped in and found themselves under the bridge. Maggie could see Brightmane’s soldiers on the opposite bank of the river. Wading across, the three quickly joined them.

Willem spoke quickly to his friend, “Bright, take Maggie and the third squad through the Eastern Ward of Lion’s Arch, then use the Asura gate to

Divinity’s Reach. I’ll meet you all at the gate to Ebonhawke.”

Brightmane left barking orders to the troops and suddenly everyone was busy picking up the camp. Maggie hugged her father and said, “Be careful.”

“You too, don’t let your temper get you in trouble.” His confident smile bolstered her spirits. She watched as he mounted his horse and rode off.

A young soldier came to her and spoke very respectfully. “Ma’am, we have a mount for you. Whenever you’re ready.”

“Thank you. What’s your name?”

“Private Swift, ma’am.”

“Well, Private, I prefer to be called Maggie.”

She could barely keep from laughing at the look on the young man’s face.

“Yes ma’am. I’ll remember that.”

“Lead the way Private Swift.” Her mock salute did little to calm him.

He turned and she followed him to where the horses were all tied to a rope. Taking one’s reins, the Private put out his hand to help Maggie mount the horse.

Smiling broadly, she told him, “It’s okay, I know how to ride.”

“I was told to look out for you ma’am.”

“What they meant was for you to look out. I bite.” She said over

her shoulder as she rode off.

This time when Terri woke, the lamp was still on and she was not alone. She looked over at the woman sitting across the room and was surprised that she looked incredibly familiar. The woman noticed she was awake and said, “If you try anything Terri, I’ll call the guards and you’ll go right back to sleep.”

Terri nodded, “I understand.”

“My name is Frieda.” The woman spoke calmly, “I want to assure you that you will be returned to your home in a few days.”

“I would prefer to be turned loose today,” Terri watched the other woman carefully.

Smiling, Frieda simply smiled and said, “I’m sure you would.”

“Why am I here?”

“You were brought here to help us reclaim the Krytan throne for my family.

Terri couldn’t help herself, “You look very familiar to me. Almost as if I know you.”

“I’m sure you’ve seen pictures of my sister, Queen Jennah. Had she lived, this wouldn’t be necessary.”

“What do you mean, had she lived?” Terri was shocked.

“You’re too young to remember the day my family was massacred by the Charr.”

“Queen Jennah was not killed by Charr. I’ve spoken with her myself. She presided over my wedding.”

"That's impossible my dear."

As she spoke the door opened and a tall, dark haired man with a scar on his face where his left eye had been entered the room. "Frieda, I told you this woman is too dangerous. You can't be alone with her."

"I can take care of myself."

"Go back to your room. I don't want you wandering around without a guard. We can't lose you now. Not now of all times when we are so close to putting your family back on the throne. Now go, I'll take care of this young lady."

Terri sat quietly thinking, looking for any way to escape. Someone had to warn the queen. As these thoughts ran through her head, the man had stepped closer to her. She felt the familiar poke in her neck, and as the light began to dim, saw Frieda being ushered from the room.

As the sky began to lighten in the east, Electra left the wagon with Simon, and they scouted the trail ahead. The best place to observe Highden Caves is from Fangfury Watch, So that is where they headed. As the two worked their way up the trail, Simon came to a sudden halt in front of her. Crouching was his signal to her that there was danger ahead. Electra left the trail and slowly moved forward at a crouch. Simon stayed with her until she saw his reason for stopping her.

The trail was covered with traps. She inspected the first and immediately recognized it as an Ogre creation. It would take hours to move a short distance

along this trail. Each trap would have to be disarmed manually. The pair moved quietly back to the wagon.

The others were awake and making the day's plans. Electra spoke to them all, "We can't take the trail north."

"Why not?" Mellen asked.

"It's full of Ogre traps. It will take us more than a day if the traps extend the whole length to Fangfury."

Harry spoke up, "What about Warrior's Crown?"

"We only went a short distance, but it seems clear. The Ogres are more interested in stealing from travelers." She answered.

"Well, it's not an easy ride through the hills. We'll probably have to fight our way through some separatist trash." Mellen thought out loud.

Bones asked, "What if we leave the wagon?"

"Eir would never forgive us for losing her wagon and horses." Electra insisted.

"Besides, it's part of our cover story should we run into any of Serentine's gang." Added Harry.

Mellen thought for a moment and then came to a decision, "Well, we'd best be going. I want to get there as soon as we can. Something tells me we need to take a good look at these caves."

With that the group jumped into the wagon and with Harry driving headed toward Warrior's Crown. The ride was uneventful

for a few hours, suddenly they heard gunfire from the north. Grabbing their weapons, Electra, Bones, and Harry jumped off the wagon. With Simon and Precious leading the way, they melted into the underbrush.

It wasn't long before a ragged group approached the wagon. The leader lifted his hand and said simply, "Stop the wagon."

Mellon pulled the reins and the horses obeyed. As the wagon came to a full stop, three men approached. Mellon spoke loudly, "Good day, are you in need of one of my tonics?"

"We don't need your help, we're good at helping ourselves." The leader joked.

As the men drew closer, a single arrow landed between the three and the wagon. Looking back at their leader, the three came to a sudden stop. At that moment, Bones came running out of the brush carrying his hammer shouting a blood curdling war cry. Arrows fell and Precious raced with Simon into the fray. Mellen began muttering under his breath and a shadow fiend appeared next to the leader.

The fight was over in moments. The leader, screaming in fear ran away. Seeing that they had been left behind, the other three separatists followed. Mellen muttered a few more words and the shadow fiend followed them. Bones waved to Electra and Harry to let them know the fight was over. The three made their way back to the wagon, laughing at the four men they could still see running for their lives away from the fiend.

The rest of the journey proved uneventful and shortly before lunch, they drove up the ramp into Warrior's Crown. Once they found a place to park, Harry unhooked the horses and led them to a pasture close to Gillscale Pond. Making sure the pasture was guarded before leaving the horses, Harry brushed them both while they were drinking their fill of water. He then turned them loose and joined the others in the outpost.

As he approached the wagon he couldn't see his friends, but hearing laughter ahead, he continued up the ramp until he saw them and a group of soldiers watching something in the field. Joining them he began to smile. They were watching Simon, Precious, and Garm playing chase me. Precious was outdistancing her friends handily and even climbing up a tree and jumping on them from one of the lower branches. Seeing him, the kitten dodged between Garm's legs and made a beeline for her Ranger. As soon as she was close enough, she jumped and almost knocked him down.

Garm and Simon followed and were immediately adopted by the band of Iron Legion soldiers accepting pats and ear scratches along with the occasional treat. Eir came up right then with a smile and said, "Well Harry, I guess we know which of our pets is the fastest."

Smiling back, Harry spoke to his fellow ranger, "Hello Eir, it's good to see you. I never expected to run into you way out here."

"You've got Garm to thank for that. After Bones and Electa left, he just wouldn't settle down

. Kept asking to go out, kept tugging my sleeve. Finally I just followed him. So, here we are."

"We think Simon called him." Electra was holding her husband's hand, "He senses we're going to need help."

Mellen added, "He's right. I was talking to some of the soldiers and they say it's impossible to watch the caves from any one place. They said they've noticed people at all hours coming and going."

"The Lieutenant here saw Serentine enter the cave last night. No one has seen him since, but there are two other entrances that aren't within view." Bones added.

"We are going to have to split up and watch. There needs to be two of us at each entrance so we can keep each other informed." Mellen thought out loud.

"We can use the pets," said Eir. "They can travel nearly unseen and we can pass notes."

"How do we let Maggie know where we are?" Asked Harry.

"The Lieutenant says he received a dispatch this morning telling him she's being escorted by a company of soldiers out of Queensdale. He can send a runner on horseback to let them know."

"That sounds like a very good idea. So, who watches where?" Harry was ready to get to work.

Maggie ran the horse for a while and then realized she was

getting too far ahead of everyone. Slowing him down she turned and was surprised to find Private Swift very close behind. As he pulled up he said, "Ma'am, your father has asked me to relay a message to you."

Maggie was starting to think she may have underestimated this soldier, "And that message is?"

"There will be an airship waiting for us just outside Beetletun. We're to leave the horses with Captain Lange at the western gate of Minister Caudecus's estate. The Colonel will meet us there before morning. We are to sleep in the airship."

"Well then, don't dawdle." She shouted as she galloped away.

The rest of the ride was uneventful and they soon found themselves in Beetletun. They climbed off the horses and walked them to the western gate. Captain Lange was expecting them and called a stable hand to care for the animals.

"Take care of them, they've had a long day," Maggie told the young woman from the stable.

"Absolutely ma'am," she replied and then smiled. "I was there the day you saved the Queen ma'am, you were wonderful. My father still tells the story about how you saved all the guests at the party."

"Was your father there?" Private Swift asked.

"Yes sir, he works for Minister Caudecus. He's the head chef at the Manor."

Maggie smiled mischievously, "Was he the one who made those wonderful little sweetcakes?"

"Yes ma'am."

"You tell him I have searched the kingdom high and low, no one makes them as good as he does."

The girl smiled proudly, "He'll be so glad to hear you remember him, ma'am."

"If he is ever looking for work, you send him to my house in Shaemoor."

Blushing the girl smiled again and said, "Thank you ma'am. It will mean a lot to him. Things haven't been the same since Minister Caudecus came under suspicion."

Maggie patted her horse one more time and turned to the Captain. "Where can a girl get a bloody steak around here?"

"I'll have one of my soldiers bring you something to the airship ma'am." The Captain replied.

"Thank you Captain, and please make sure they bring enough for the private here. He's had a long day keeping up with me."

With that the pair started toward Beetletun Farms and the airship. As they walked, Private Swift asked, "That girl was quite taken with your rescue of the Queen, ma'am."

"I wasn't alone Private. What is your first name? I am tired of all this formality. My name is Maggie and you are to call me

Maggie from now on."

"I don't know ma'am, you're the Colonel's daughter and Commander Brightmane would have my hide if he thought I was being disrespectful."

"You leave Brightmane to me."

"It's Sanford, ma'am."

"Sanford Swift?" She asked?

"Yes ma'am."

"Okay, I want to hear you say my name."

"I can't ma'am. It would be improper."

"If you don't, I'll tell my father you were overly friendly during our journey."

"B,b,but ma'am."

"Say it."

"Maggie."

"Now that wasn't so hard was it?"

Looking at his red face caused her to have to fight back the laughter that threatened to explode. Luckily, at that moment they arrived at the airship. The crew was busy preparing it for their next flight, so the pair walked up to a very tall Norn woman wearing Captains insignias. Maggie noticed she also had gold wings on her lapel. Her name tag read, Hartmann.

"Captain Hartmann?" Private Swift spoke respectfully.

"Yes, you must be our first passengers. Maggatha Lynn herself, I'm honored to be

chauffeur such a famous young lady." Her smile was genuine.

"Sometimes fame gets in the way of accomplishing things Captain."

"I can only imagine. Erica Hartmann at your service," she extended her hand warmly.

Taking it firmly, Maggie smiled back. "I don't suppose your ship has a bathtub?"

"No, but I think we can find one at the rooming house in the village. I can't imagine anyone not wanting to put up a sign that said Maggie bathed here. Unless you'd rather visit the manor?" The twinkle in her eye was real.

Grinning, Maggie said, "I think I've had my fill of that place."

"Come on, I know the owner. She owes me a favor."

Maggie turned toward the private and said, "Well Sanford, I think you should be able to find a change of clothes at the barracks."

"Yes ma'am."

Maggie and the captain walked northward to the Shire and up a walkway to the boarding house. Erica spoke to the owner and with a big smile the women were led upstairs to a private room with a large tub and a hot stove with a large pot of water nearly boiling. Servants came and helped Maggie take off her armor, promising to have it clean before she finished with her bath. A young girl started to take her Axes, but the Captain stopped her with a single look.

While she was getting undressed, the servants filled the tub. Maggie tested the temperature and found it perfect. She eased into the hot water and sat down to let the day wash off of her. Leaning her head back she closed her eyes.

"I hope you don't mind if I stay," Erica asked.

"Not at all," was Maggie's reply.

"I hope I'm not speaking out of turn, but you looked worried about something."

"Is it that obvious?"

"No, but I am a Guardian and I can read people very well."

"Oh, I am. I just can't let it show. If I let anything out at all, I'll become a quivering mess."

"Somehow, I don't think so. You're too much like your father."

"You know him?" Maggie was surprised.

"He and I served together in a number of campaigns. There's no one I trust more. He and that damned Brightmane. They pulled me out of the wreckage of my airship when we were fighting the Flame Legion a few years ago. They saved my whole regiment. You're like them both. You have heart, but you're strong willed."

Smiling sadly Maggie said, "My father always said he saw the most beautiful part of my mother in me."

Tears started to form and she

coughed to hide the emotion. Erica never let on if she saw. The girls spent the next half hour using small talk to get to know each other. They found they had much in common. Each had lost a parent at an early age. Each had fought other's preconceived notions of what they were supposed to do. By the time the servants returned with Maggie's armor all fully cleaned and smelling nice, they were good friends.

Once she was dressed, they returned to the airship to find Sanford arguing with an older man with a wagon. "No sir, you can't use this area to park your wagon."

"I must, I've been sent here to feed Ms Lynne and I will feed her." The old man shouted.

Maggie recognized the man as the chef from Minister Caudecus's estate. "Hello Mr. Ramsey. Please tell me you brought some of your wonderful sweetcakes?"

"I have brought you much more than that Ms Maggie. I am here to serve you. It's the least I can do to repay you for saving my life."

"You don't have to repay me."

"Nonsense, you risked your life and saved all of us. Now, please tell this young man to get out of my way so I can get started."

"You heard the man, private," Captain Hartmann ordered. "Get out of his way. We'll not be leaving this evening. He can park his wagon wherever he needs to."

With that, the private bowed and let go of the horse and moved out of the way. Chef Ramsey parked the wagon and two servants climbed out the back and unloaded a table and some chairs. Then they climbed back into the wagon and soon there was a feast at the back of the wagon.

"Please ladies, sit down and let us serve you." The chef motioned to the chairs.

Maggie and the Captain sat down and the feast began. The first course was a wonderful salmon salad. Then came the most tender roast beef that they had ever eaten. It was served with tiny red potatoes cooked in their skins, buttered with the lightest hint of dill and a fresh mix of steamed garden vegetables, carrots, peas, and green beans. Finally, it was time for dessert. The chef himself carried the dish. The smell of warm chocolate filled the air as he lifted the cover to present a beautiful soufflé.

Just when Maggie and the Captain thought they could not eat another bite, the chef brought one more item in a soft cloth sack. He opened it and showed Maggie the sweetcakes she loved. Taking one, she took the smallest nibble and was instantly transformed into a little girl. The Captain watched and took her own. A single bite and she understood completely why Maggie was so taken with these sweetcakes. Just the right softness and sweet, with the taste of anise, the cookies were the perfect end to a perfect supper.

"Take the bag with you when you leave. And you have only

to send me a message and I will make a fresh batch whenever you want. My daughter can deliver them to your home." Chef Ramsey offered.

"You're being too good to me. I'll become fat and lazy as an old cow if I keep letting you feed me."

The old man smiled at the compliment. Clapping his hands, he and the servants began putting the dishes back into the wagon. Then came the table and chairs. With a smile and a wave, the chef drove the wagon back toward Beetletun. Maggie thought she could hear him whistle a little tune as they left. She smiled a sad smile.

"You have quite an effect on people." Captain Hartmann said as they climbed up the ramp into the airship.

"He's a very nice man. I remember when we were fighting that awful golem, he stood in front of the other servants with his butcher knife. It took a lot of courage for him to do that. I respect him." Maggie explained.

The Captain turned to Private Swift, "Come on, I'll show you to your bunk. You might as well get some sleep. We're scheduled to leave before daylight."

Private Swift quickly finished the food Chef Ramsey had left for him. He jumped to his feet and joined the ladies on the ramp. Soon he was asleep in a bunk in the engine room. Erica showed Maggie to her quarters on the guest deck. She was out the instant her head hit the pillow. Sometime later, she woke to the feeling of motion.

She could hear the quiet rumble of the engine and was soon back to sleep.

When she woke again it was daylight. She left her room carrying her bag of sweetcakes and made her way to the upper deck. She found her father and Brightmane in a deep discussion with the Captain.

"Hey there Cub, I thought you were gonna sleep away the whole day." Brightmane teased.

"Just for that, you don't get any of these," She threatened.

Captain Hartmann said, "Your loss, you old grump." And took the cookie Maggie offered her.

Shaking his head and smiling, he turned back to his old friend and said, "I think we should land at Hautclare Vale. It's far enough outside of Ebonhawke so we shouldn't be noticed."

"Perhaps, but it's still quite a ride from the caves." The colonel said, stroking his beard.

At that moment an Asuran came running out of the control room. "Captain, we're getting a radio signal from the camp. A runner has arrived from Fangfury Watch, he has some important information for Colonel Lynne's daughter."

"Show her how to use the radio." The Captain ordered.

Maggie's father followed the Asuran to use the radio. While they waited, Maggie relented and gave Brightmane one of her sweetcakes. She and the Captain dipped into the bag and each ate one more. Private Swift came

out on deck holding his stomach.

"I think I may have been poisoned," he moaned.

Captain Hartmann smiled and said, "I'd sooner think you're getting airsick."

Reaching into her pocket, she handed him a vial full of pills. "Take one of these now, and another in an hour. Then take one every hour until we land."

"Thank you, maam." He replied, and left to find a drink of water.

Shortly after he left, Maggie's father came out of the control room. He had a very serious look on his face.

"A runner from Fangfury Watch brought word that Maggie's friends are there watching all three entrances to Highden Cave. Where can we land this thing so it won't be seen but close enough to get us to the watch quickly?"

"Warrior's Crown." The captain said suddenly. "We should be able to find horses."

Maggie asked, "How long before we touch down?"

"Less than an hour." The Captain replied.

"Let's get our gear ready. Where's Private Swift?" Brightmane was all business.

"He is airsick." Maggie replied.

Captain Hartmann grinned, "He'll be fine, I gave him the same medicine I gave you the first time you flew with me."

"Don't remind me. That was horrible." The Charr complained.

Terri woke again. Though groggy, she felt a desperate need to get away. She looked around the room for a something that could be used as a weapon. She wished that there were some way to let Maggie know about her mother. The door opened and Frieda walked in. Putting her finger to her lips, she looked back and made sure no one was watching as she closed the door.

"You'll be released tomorrow and if you don't start any trouble, I will see that they don't put you back to sleep." Frieda whispered.

Terri whispered back, "There's something you need to know."

"If he finds out I'm here, he'll order his men to stay in the room with you. They aren't very nice to prisoners." Frieda answered.

"Your daughter and husband are alive."

Silence immediately filled the room. Frieda looked at her hard in disbelief.

"I don't know what you think you'll get from me, but stop lying." Frieda still wasn't ready to believe.

"I can prove it." Terri challenged.

"How?"

"Maggie has a birthmark on her left hip. It's shaped like a quarter moon. It's deep red."

"You could have found that out from the servants that took care of her when she was a baby."

Frieda wasn't ready to believe.

"She has a tiny Asuran doll that you gave her. She never goes anywhere without it."

"Again, you could have heard that from anyone."

"Her father called you Maria. It's your middle name." Terri tried to remember everything she could. "He never remarried after you were kidnapped. Maggie looks just like you. She has your hair, most of your features. But her eyes are her fathers. Piercing blue eyes."

"Stop, you don't know what you're talking about, I won't help."

"No, I'm not lying. Maggie has a baby blanket. It has her father's and your initials on it. WFL and FML. Willem Franklyn Lynn, Frieda Maria Lynn. The initials are inside a heart embroidered out of gold thread. She made a pillow case out of that blanket. I have heard her cry herself to sleep more than once. She grew up thinking you didn't want her, that you had left her."

Shock drained Frieda's face, "She's alive? My daughter is alive? My husband, my sister? What about my father?"

"Your father died shortly after you left. Your sister Jennah is now the queen. Take me out of here, I can take you to them."

Suddenly they heard voices arguing in the hallway. At least three men were shouting, and the commotion was growing louder.

"Quick, lay down, pretend

you're asleep. He's coming." Frieda pushed Terri back down on the bed.

Just as Terri closed her eyes, she could hear the door burst open. The noise in the hallway was much louder. The sound of men getting ready for battle struck her ears. The man walked into the room and poked at Terri. She feigned unconsciousness.

"We're under attack. I was told to bring you both deeper into the cave."

"Get the cart from the hallway. She's too heavy to carry." Frieda told the man.

As he left the room, Frieda whispered to Terri, "I will help you, so stay alert. What type of weapon can you use?"

"A staff if you have one, or two daggers." She answered.

"When he comes back he'll put you on the cart and move you somewhere safe. I'll meet you there."

Frieda left the room. Soon the man came back with a cart and two other men. The hall had grown quiet as the men rushed to join the fight. They picked Terri up and put her in the cart. Then they pulled the cart out of the room and turned down the hallway. Soon they were at another door. The man knocked three times, then twice and the door opened.

He told the men inside, "We're under attack. Put her inside and join us out front."

"The men did as they were told and Terri was left alone.

The door opened and Frieda entered. Reaching inside her gown, she produced two daggers and handed them to Terri. Terri noticed the daggers did not weigh the same. She took the heaviest one in her left hand, the other in her right. As she got accustomed to the weight of the weapons, she noticed Frieda pull an axe and a dagger from a belt underneath her gown.

"You're a necromancer?" She asked.

"Yes, I'm still not very powerful, but I will do what I can. I will help you escape. Give me your word you'll take me to my daughter."

"I swear that I will."

With Frieda leading the way, they made their way through the hallways. Eventually they came to a door that opened into a very large cave. The sounds of a terrible fight could be heard ahead.. The sounds of weapons, explosions, cries of pain filled the air. Frieda motioned for Terri to be quiet and follow closely. The two women followed the cave wall to a blind corner.

Frieda peeked around it and said, "We're going to have to run through the middle of the fight. Do you have any protective spells?"

"Yes, but you have to stay close to me." Terri answered.

The two stepped around the corner and began to run toward the fight. The fighters were too busy to notice at first. By the time they did, it was too late. Maggie and Frieda were in the middle of the battlefield, running

toward the other side when the explosion knocked them both off their feet. Terri grabbed Frieda's hand just before they both lost consciousness.

As soon as the airship touched down, Colonel Lynne sent Private Swift left to bring the horses. It was shortly before noon when he returned. The party of four left immediately for Fangfury Watch. As they traveled through Gillfarn Plains, Brightmane held up his hand to signal a halt.

"We should split up." He stated, "Each of us showing up alone will be much less suspicious than all of us together."

"You sure you're not just being paranoid?" Asked the Colonel.

"Paranoid has kept us alive more than once." was the grunted reply.

"Sir, if I may?" Private Swift asked.

"Go ahead son."

"Ms Maggie and I could arrive together. It would look like we're a couple. She'd stand out much more alone."

"And why is that Private?" Maggie glared at the young man.

"Ma'am, no disrespect, but you're not just famous in Kryta. Commander Brightmane has been in more than one fight because some drunken Iron Legion fool insulted you."

Maggie raised her eyebrows at Brightmane.

"You could color your hair with that mud over there. They'd

never recognize you then." Brightmane grinned.

"That's not going to happen. I'll just wear my helm and tuck my hair in." She answered.

"Swift's right," the Colonel decided, "You two go on ahead, Bright and I will scout around here and see if we can turn up anything."

With that, Maggie dug her helm out of her backpack and put it on. Tucking her hair up underneath she looked as much like a common mercenary as a beautiful girl could. With Swift leading the way, the two headed towards the outpost. Brightmane headed west around the pond, the Colonel east toward the hills.

As they entered the watch, Maggie looked for her friends. Not seeing them, they made their way around the camp until she spied the wagon. Looking inside, she discovered Bones finishing the dishes.

"Drew the short straw, did we?" She asked.

"No, it was my turn." The Norn smiled, "Glad you made it. Everyone's watching the entrances to the caves. Harry saw Serentine leave this morning. We think he's headed to Divinity's Reach for his audience tomorrow."

"Too bad, I'd like to have him in front of me," Maggie fumed.

"Maybe Logan will let him live long enough to give you that chance," Bones said understandingly.

"This is Private Swift, he's my

babysitter.” Maggie quipped.

Bones, behind Swift bit his lip to keep from laughing out loud at the thought of Maggie needing a babysitter. Maggie looked in his direction and could see a short figure, dressed in black headed their way. It was Mellen. He was in a terrible hurry. Maggie ran out to meet him.

All out of breath, Mellen tried to talk, “I’m a genius,” he blurted.

“You’ve said that before.” Bones was still smiling.

“But this time,” the Asuran said between breaths, “this time I’ve outdone myself.”

“Okay, so tell us what makes you such a genius this time.” Maggie asked pointedly.

“Okay, here’s my idea. The Harpies are restless. If someone dressed up like one of Serentine’s men and stole some eggs, then took them to the cave entrance, dropping a few on the way, the Harpies would follow and create a diversion to allow us to take a look inside.”

“But who could look like one of...” Private Swift suddenly realized that the three were looking directly at him. “Wait a minute, I can’t be out of uniform. They’ll shoot me as a spy if they catch me.”

“Then you best not get caught Private,” Brightmane had quietly come up behind them

“There’s a whole wagon train of supplies headed toward the cave.” Maggie’s father had joined them, “It looks like weapons.

I’ve alerted the Lieutenant, he’s sending a patrol to intercept. We’ve only got a short time to get this show started. What’s the plan?”

The grey haired Charr answered, “Well sir, Private Swift here is going to dress up like a bandit and see if he can ‘scramble’ a bunch of harpies. If we can get them to attack, we can use the confusion to get inside and see about rescuing Terri.”

Mellen sent Bones to call in the rest of their party. Soon, Harry, Eir, and Electra joined them, along with the three pets. The group scrounged clothes for Private Swift to wear and briefed him on what to expect.

“The north entrance is in Tanglerot Hills.” Mellen instructed the private, “Harpies normally don’t go near the caves. It’s brooding season so there are plenty of nests. This time of day, you should be able to find some that are unguarded. Make sure the Harpies can see you with the eggs. Run south to the cave entrance.”

Harry added, “Remember, they’ll be above you screaming. Be ready to duck and roll. Once the shooting starts, hide. We’ll be in as soon as we get a chance.”

Private Swift nervously headed northeast as the others followed at a safe distance. Turning toward the entrance, the group remained unseen. Staying in the underbrush, the group slowly made their way as close to the entrance as they could without arousing suspicion.

Swift did exactly as he was told. He carefully checked each

nest until he found one that was empty except for two eggs. He picked them up and immediately noticed they were warm to the touch. As he stepped out of the nest, he looked skyward and shouted, “Hey look Will, I found some eggs. They’re big enough to feed all of us tomorrow.”

Suddenly he heard a shriek and felt something hit his shoulder. Not stopping to see what he’d been hit with, he began to run. South, around the outcropping, straight toward the cave entrance. Two guards sat talking to each other, only looking up when they heard a chorus of high pitched shouts as the harpies came to the aid of the angry mother. Swift ran up to the guards and cried for help.

“They’re coming after me, help. Stop them, quick. Don’t let them follow.” He yelled.

The two guards immediately began firing. The gunshots drew more guards and more harpies. Soon it was a full fledged battle. The bandits pushed the harpies back further and further until the cave was empty except for Swift. The hidden group jumped out and ran into the caves.

“Get rid of that thing, here’s your rifle,” Brightmane told Swift.

The group immediately fanned out and began to search the cave. They were able to get all the way to the South entrance before they were seen. The fight began immediately. The separatists wasted no time in firing and throwing grenades. Maggie and her friends were driven backwards, out of the main entrance and forced to take

refuge in the rocks. The sounds of the fight drew more bandits from inside the cave.

Suddenly, Maggie looked behind her to see a squad of iron legion soldiers coming to their aid. More bombs were thrown and she became very busy, very fast. More and more bandits poured out of the passageways inside the cave until they outnumbered both Maggie's party and the Iron Legion soldiers. The lieutenant in charge sent a runner to Fangfury Watch to get reinforcements.

The fight went back and forth for a while until the reinforcements came. Then the bandits started to back up. More bombs were thrown. Suddenly, two women were seen running across the space between the combatants. There was an incredibly loud explosion, and Maggie saw her Terri knocked to the ground with the other woman. When the smoke cleared, it was suddenly quiet. A single man stood in the middle of the fight. He had a scar where his right eye should have been.

"Serentine!" The Colonel shouted. "Your life is mine!"

The colonel without thinking jumped out and ran toward the bandits' leader, who began waving his hands in the air. The air began to glow with a golden light. Faster and faster the hands weaved. Maggie jumped out and followed her father. Behind her Private Swift chased her. Simon and Garm began to howl. As the colonel reached Serentine, he was suddenly frozen, unable to move.

"So, you thought you could fool

me by your little masquerade in the courtyard? I have eyes and ears everywhere." Serentine sneered, as he reached out and grabbed the Colonel and Terri's arm. As Frieda woke and stood, Maggie saw an older version of herself. The two stared at each other for what seemed like an eternity.

Suddenly, Frieda shouted, "Let her go!," and hit Serentine in the face. Stunned, he released Terri who fell once again to the ground. Grabbing Frieda's hand instead, he laughed. The three suddenly disappeared.

Maggie screamed, "NO!" as she ran to Terri.

Running forward, she tried to leap through the portal, only to be stopped by the straps of her backpack. Private Swift held on. Seeing the struggle, Bones and Eir jumped in and stood between Maggie and the portal. She fought them with all her might, but they would not let her go. The portal dimmed until nothing remained but the mark left in the sand.

Enraged, she screamed into the portal.. "NO! Damn you. I will hunt you down you bastard! You will pay for this. Mark my words, I will cut out your other eye myself and feed it to you!" She shrieked.

Then Brightmane was holding her tight. He walked her to where Terri lay, picked the still unconscious girl up and brought them both out of the cave. The iron legion erupted once again, driving the bandits back deep inside until only a few remained alive. The survivors surrendered. The party angrily

began the walk back to Fangfury Watch. A single tear trickled down Maggie's cheek.

Eir remained in the cave with Garm, who spent a lot of time sniffing around the remnants of the portal. Finding a single shoe, he picked it up and brought it to her. Taking it from him, she looked at it carefully and put it into her pack. Then she turned and followed the rest of the party out of the cave.

Some time later, back at the wagon, Terri awoke to find Maggie at her side. Terri knew something was wrong. She held Maggie quietly and waited. Finally, Maggie let go.

"He's taken my father and my mother." She told Terri with a dull, exhausted voice. "When we're alone, I want to hear everything you can tell me about her."

"You will. Now we both need to rest. Let's get some sleep, figure out our next step." Terri spoke gently.

"There's no time to rest, I have to find them."

"There will be time for that, cub." Brightmane said quietly.

He was holding his side, his breathing was obviously becoming difficult. Maggie quickly hurried to his side. Pulling his paw away, she saw the blood. Taking his tunic in her hands, she tore it away, then his undershirt to find a gaping wound in his belly.

"Get a medic. Now!" she shouted to Bones.

"There's no need. This won't be fixed. I've seen this kind of wound before." Brightmane sounded unconcerned. "I'm a soldier, I've faced this my entire life. It's time."

Turning to Private Swift he said, "Your last order from the Colonel still stands. Understand me Private?"

"Yes, sir. I'll watch over her." The young soldier said emphatically.

Maggie gently helped Brightmane down on the cot and held his head in her arms. Precious jumped up on his chest and began to purr. Simon and Garm stood guard at the foot of the bed. All was quiet.

Brightmane whispered to Maggie, "I know you'll find them. But be smart about it. Rest up while your friends find them. You'll need your strength to get through this."

With that, the brave soldier closed his eyes, his breathing slowed, then stopped with a final shudder. Precious, Garm, and Simon all howled at the same time. All through the watch, animals could be heard joining in, warning the afterlife that a warrior was entering. Telling the spirits to stand aside, and honor the soul that was about to join them.

Maggie laid his head on the pillow and gently closed his eyes. Turning her eyes to Private

Swift, she said simply, "Can you take care of him?"

"Of course, ma'am."

With that, Maggie stood and left the wagon. As she walked alone into the darkness, her friends started to follow. Eir spoke then, "Wait. Let her go. She needs time alone. We can better help her by finding her parents."

"But where do we start?" Harry asked.

"We start here." Eir took the shoe out of her pack. "We start by finding out where this shoe was made."

To be Continued...



DRAGON AGE INQUISITION

If you have never had the joy of playing a BioWare RPG (role-playing game), it's time to change that. Dragon Age: Inquisition (DA:I) will transport you to the world of Thedas and immerse you in a gaming experience full of fascinating people, gorgeous vistas and dangerous monsters. Four years in the making, DA:I will offer a highly detailed and richly developed single-player game with a multi-player option. The game will be available on PC and both older-generation and newer-generation consoles, including PlayStations 3 and 4 as well as Xbox 360 and One.

BY: BETH "JAE ONASI" CARLOCK





Like all BioWare RPGs, this game is just as story-driven as the others are. Choices you make from the very start can have effects on the very end of the game. You play an Inquisitor in Thedas, ferreting out evil or creating your own. You have to defeat the agents of chaos that are tearing apart the kingdoms of Thedas and pitting the templars against the mages. The skills, race, dialogue, armor, and weapons you choose will drive your character's growth and development. Different characters will join your party along the way to help or maybe even hinder your progress on your quests. Choose wisely to enhance your chances of surviving from one battle to the next.

During your adventures, various party members will join you. They all have their own goals and desires, and their stories are interwoven into your own. You can influence them and develop their undying loyalty or drive them away in disgust. Some characters may even fall in love with you and develop a romance. It's your choice to develop those relationships to their maximum or let them wither. However, since these characters accompany you on your quests and can provide substantial help, it's to your advantage to choose the party members who best augment your unique skills and increase your influence with them so that their skills develop as well as your own. You'll need all the help you can get fighting some of the vicious creatures that will cross your path.

Those who have played the first two Dragon Age games will be happy to know that Morrigan, Leliana, Cassandra and Varric are back. Some of them play an integral part in this story. You'll enjoy comments ranging from the snarky to the sublime with all the new party members that are part of this installment.

Since there are so many possibilities in choosing class, gender, party members, dialogue options, weapon styles, class specializations and so on, the story will never be the same twice. This game will have just as much replay value as previous Dragon Age games. With the addition of four-player multiplayer operations that will be changed weekly, expect DA:I to stay on many players' radars for quite some time.

Character customization has been upgraded significantly from the previous two games. If you want to jump into the game and play, you can select a pre-made character template and get going. If you want to tailor the character to your favorite look, you can spend a lot more time and have fun making the toon your own. You can choose from four races and multiple classes. You'll even have the option to add scars and freckles if that's your thing. Hair, eye, and even tattoo styles and colors can be altered at the start. Players will have the choice of two male and two female voices. Fans of Jon Curry, who was the voice actor for the character Zevran from the first two games, may be



happy to hear he is returning to DA:I as one of the male lead voice actors.

Items can be customized throughout game play, and BioWare has added a substantial crafting system to DA:I. If you want to create a specialized fire axe, you can. If you feel like concocting poison grenades to take down some enemies before wading into battle, you can do that, too. There will be no shortage of materials or loot to find throughout Thedas.

Since the game is using the Frostbite 3 engine, there will be many visual and game mechanic improvements over the previous DA games.

Different areas will have unique, highly detailed art styles and even different weather. You might play in a sunny meadow one day, plow through a snowstorm on another day, and face dust devils yet another time. The graphics of spell and weapon animations and even your character's facial movements will be more defined and detailed than in the previous two games.

Modders might be displeased that BioWare is not releasing any modding tools with this installment of the Dragon Age franchise. One of the greatest advantages of many BioWare games has been the ability to 'mod', or modify, the games. In fact, there are a few thousand mods combined for the first two Dragon Age games. There are still active modding communities even for the 10-year-old-plus BioWare games such as NeverWinter Nights and Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic (SWTOR). Despite the lack of tools from BioWare, some enterprising modders will undoubtedly develop their own from scratch as happened with SWTOR (thanks, Fred Tetra, tk102, Darth333, stoffe, Darth InSidious and many others!). If you are interested in mods at all, consider purchasing the PC version. While it will likely take a while for tools to develop, and mods may be more limited than they were for the previous DA games, the PC version is the easiest to modify of all the platforms. Most mods will be for the single player campaign. Mods that alter the multi-player portion of the game in such a way as to give players an unfair



advantage will get those players banned. Mods that change appearance and offer no advantage typically are allowed with no problem. Since mods for the single player campaign have no bearing on multi-player leaderboards or scores, the sky will be the limit—the only thing holding back any mod will be access to the computer code and the game engine.

Exceptional voice acting has always been a feature of BioWare games, and DA:I is no exception. All dialogue will be fully voiced. In fact, there will be two male and two female voices to choose from for your player character, which should add to player immersion.

The composer for DA:I is Trevor Morris, who has created music for the movie “Olympus Has Fallen” and different TV series including “Vikings”, “The Borgias”, “The Pillars of the Earth”, and “The Tudors”. He won an Emmy Award for ‘Outstanding original main title theme music’ in 2007. He’s also a veteran composer of video game music, having created soundtracks for “Need for Speed: Carbon”, “Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars”, and “Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2”. If you enjoy game music, the DA:I soundtrack will be included as part of the deluxe version of the game.

BioWare has taken pains in interviews to explain that multi-player play will not be required to complete the single player campaign. You also will

not need to complete the single player game in order to access the multi-player feature. The single player part of the game will focus on the story and your character. The multi-player portion of the game will have four-player cooperative play in operations that BioWare states will change weekly to keep the content fresh. Gamers will choose from 12 different classes. These can be further customized with improved armor and weapons from loot drops or purchases.

In addition, while gamers can buy in-game currency with real money in order to purchase multi-player armor, weapons, and skins more quickly, they will still be able to obtain any desired item by simply playing the game. It is not a ‘pay-to-win’ scenario. You will be able to unlock those items either way, although paying with real world money will allow you access to your favorite items more quickly.

“Day-One DLC”, or downloadable content that is available for a separate charge on the same day the game is released, has been controversial. BioWare suffered the wrath of the fan base in 2012 when the company included Day-One DLC in Mass Effect 3. Players learned that some computer code for the DLC had already been included on the game disk and was not a separate download as it had been implied. After further investigation, it turned out the new character featured in the DLC was included but not the quest line associated with



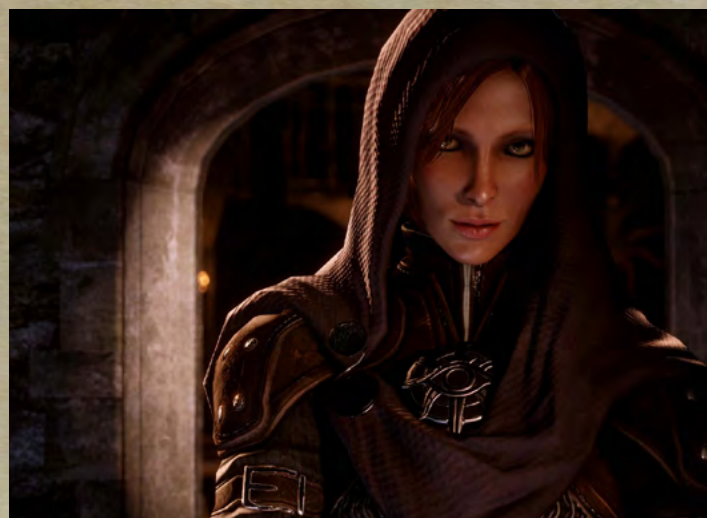
it, but the public relations damage already had been done. Many gamers argue that if the content is already included on the game disk at release, it should be included in the game cost itself rather than paid for separately. This is certainly a valid argument. If it's 'finished enough' to put onto the disk, it's certainly 'finished enough' to go into the main game. It appears that BioWare wants to avoid a similar firestorm of controversy in the DA series, since they have stated that there will be no DLC released at the same time as the main game.

Do expect additional DLC and expansion packs to be released periodically, however, since BioWare has done this for the previous DA games and all of the Mass Effect games. The extra content has typically featured additional characters and quest lines that add to the main campaign storyline. The DLC is never required to complete the main game, but it will extend the game's lifespan and add to the enjoyment.

Dragon Age: Inquisition will be released on November 18th. It is rated M for blood, violence, strong language and some nudity. The game can be pre-ordered from a wide variety of retailers and will be available for the PS3, PS4, Xbox 360, and Xbox One consoles as well as PC. Gamers can pre-order or purchase physical PC copies or buy a downloadable copy through the Origins site. Those

who pre-order a copy of the standard (\$59.99) or deluxe (\$69.99) version will receive the "Flames of the Inquisition Weapons Arsenal". The deluxe version of the game includes the Skyhold Throne, a great-horned Red Hart, the 'ominous Bog Unicorn', and a digital copy of the soundtrack. It will also include the Flames of the Inquisition weapons, armor, and armored mount.

Are you ready to take on the agents of chaos to protect or conquer Thedas? Can you build an alliance and lead battles to protect your friends and destroy your enemies? The fate of Thedas rests in the choices your Inquisitor makes in Dragon Age: Inquisition. Lead them or fall.





— M I D D L E — E A R T H —

SHADOW OF MORDOR

URUKS ARRIVING

By Donald "Donaliam" Rush

Mordor. A land that has seen many battles and turned into wasteland. Sauron was defeated here when his One Ring was cut away by Isildur. The Ring was not destroyed in the Mountain of Fire by Isildur and so Sauron was only defeated not destroyed. Sauron would arise again.



Developed by Monolith Productions and released by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment the game is set between the events of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. *Middle-earth: Shadows of Mordor* takes place near the Black Gate. You assume the role of Talion, a ranger of Gondor assigned to the Black Gate. At the start of your adventure you are teaching your son how to fight when the garrison is attacked by Sauron's Uruk Forces. The Uruk forces led by three Black Numenorean Captains kill both your wife and son as a sacrifice to summon the wraith of an Elf Lord. The Elf Lord is summoned but has lost his memory and therefore merges with Talion saving his life.

From there you begin your quest to avenge the death of your family and discover the Elf Lord's identity.

GAMEPLAY

The game has a pretty good tutorial to get you started. One thing that they don't make clear is that you really have to choose your battles carefully. If you take on too many Uruks you'll be in trouble as they will learn from your attacks, and then overwhelm you. So when the enemy kills you, that specific NPC levels up and gets stronger. This is called the Nemesis System. The interface has a list of Uruk Captains which is where you find the ones that have killed you. The interface will mark the NPC that has killed you with an arrow for revenge. I love this feature because nothing is more satisfying than getting even with those NPCs. This can also be frustrating, because if he kills you again, he gets even stronger. This is where gaining "intelligence" comes in handy.

In the open world where you can run around and

explore, free human slaves, or just kill random Uruks, certain Uruks will have intel on them. To gain the intel, you don't kill them, rather you grab them and enter their mind with some help from the wraith. Then you go to the Sauron's Army screen and select which NPC you want to learn about. From there you will learn their strengths and weaknesses which will help you tremendously in defeating these Uruks.

COMBAT AND WEAPONS

Now let's get into the fighting. You have three weapons: The Lord Elf's Bow (Azkâr), a Dagger (Acharn), and a Longsword (Urfael). First the Bow, which gives you a limited amount of shots but can be upgraded. Using the Bow puts you into Wraith Sight which slows time while you aim. The Bow is great for sniping, and you can also unlock an ability that allows you to pin your enemy in place for a short time. Next is the Dagger, which is primarily used for stealth kills and finishing off your enemy after using the Longsword. Last is the Longsword, which is pretty straight forward, you use it when your enemy knows that you are there. You need to time your attacks, and after a few blows the Sword will stun your opponent which



allows you to kill them. Be careful when you are fighting multiple enemies as they can interrupt your attacks. You can improve the time it takes for the stun kills.

The weapons themselves are upgradeable with runes that you get from successfully killing a captain. Starting you only have 1 slot for runes, but you can upgrade the amount of slots. In addition to your weapons you also have some wraith abilities that allow you to stun or drain your opponent. Same as with the stun kill, you can be interrupted when trying to use your wraith abilities.

LEVELING UP

There are 3 ways of leveling up: standard xp, power, and Mirian currency. Standard xp will give more abilities to use, but in order to use those abilities you need to gain power to unlock higher tiers of abilities. To gain power you have to go kill the captains. There are also missions that grant power as a reward. Mirian currency is used to purchase more rune slots on your weapons, increase health, focus, and more arrows. Mirian currency is also earned through missions, locating artifacts on the map, and completing challenges.



CONCLUSION

Shadows of Mordor is an open world/ sandbox style game. Even though I have only played a short time, I really enjoy it. It is available for the PC, Xbox 360/One and PS3/4. Enjoy!





Take Command of Mordor!





Gaíscíoch FOOTBALL

PORTLAND - OREGON

THE OTHER SIDE OF GAISCIOCH

THE RISE OF GAISCIOCH FOOTBALL

By: Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley

Many do not know this, but most will expect it. The best way to motivate me is by telling me I suck at something or telling me that it's impossible.

Once upon a time, in a land they call San Jose, California a small 65lb 13 year old got his first taste of football in physical education. He was the smallest kid in his class barely meeting the 5'4" mark and as skinny as could be. He had played baseball, was on a swimming team, learned Aikido, and did gymnastics, but football was a new sport and it was pretty fun. But here's the problem: who wants a nerdy 65lb 5'4" kid on their team? You guessed it, nobody. I was often picked last and sometimes wound up benched to only watch the game.

The other kids teased me by calling me dwarf or "sun dial" because I was so much slower than them. Whenever I did get to play I rarely got to catch the ball. Kids told me I sucked and that I should just give up and not play at all.

But that didn't stop me, instead it motivated me. I liked this game and wanted to play more. I didn't care if I ever caught the ball; I wanted to run, I wanted to chase. I loved how 11 people worked together to make it all work, even the guy who wasn't getting the pass was useful and helped make that play successful.



After lots of arm twisting, my mom decided to sign me up for the Police Activities League and I joined the Campbell / Saratoga Raiders tackle football team. The first day I showed up looking like Robocop. Every pad my mom found in the store was on me. I had arm guard, shin guards, neck roll, rib pads, and even one of those giant chin straps.

Looking back I looked rather hilarious and it's no wonder I ended up being the team tackling dummy. At first I was terrified of the physical contact and the ball. But as the season progressed something phenomenal happened. I grew 6 inches, went through 3 pairs of cleats in a single season and gained 50 lbs. By the start of the season I barely made weight and was no longer the smallest kid on the team.

By mid season I was well over the weight limit, at 112 lbs, and my season was over. The team never won a game and in fact we scored our first point in the last game. Our only point came in the form of a 15 yard field goal. It was like winning the super bowl.

The entire team rushed the field and dog piled the poor kicker. Nobody cared that we lost, we finally scored a point.

When seventh grade began, I was no longer the dwarf. I was now a 1% body fat pure muscle machine. I became fascinated with football and it led me to create my first website in 1993, Football Central. This site became an Internet sensation over the next 4 years and would eventually be killed by its own success.

I went on to play football for Prospect High School and became one of their most dependable receivers. I was often running the slant routes across the middle. My coach knew that I would catch the ball even if I took a nasty hit. My coach also began putting me in as a cornerback and safety. During my senior year I led our team in tackles with 68 tackles as a free safety. You can guess how that season went.

After High School I went to San Jose State University where I redshirted for my first



year until the NCAA Clearing house sent me a notice that I was no longer eligible because a teacher I had in high school was proven to be incompetent.

I remember my meeting with Dave Baldwin, head coach from SJSU. It was like life was stolen from me and the only reason I went to college was gone.

I then discovered semi-professional football and played 2 years in San Jose before nearly losing a finger to a freak football accident. Tackle football had become too risky for me at this point, and I knew I had to move on.

Luckily for me some of my friends introduced me to Flag Football. I started playing intramural flag football at SJSU and eventually found some other leagues around the San Jose area. At one point I was playing in 4 different leagues on 4 nights a week.

THE BIRTH OF GAISCIOCH FOOTBALL

In 2001, shortly after forming the Gaiscioch na Anu in Dark Age of Camelot, I decided it would be fun to create my own team, and I created the Gaiscioch flag football team in the San Jose parks and recreation league. A few of my friends from high school joined me as well as a few of the members of the original guild whom I worked with at the time.

We never did anything spectacular, but we had a lot of fun. By this time I was married and had my daughter; my life priorities started to shift. By the time I experienced my first layoff, real life hit me full steam. I had to put personal ambitions aside and do what needed to be done to survive.

Gaiscioch Football would resurface in a new land called Eugene, Oregon with the help of my friend, Don Rush.

The decision to follow this path came after I recently experienced a divorce and had my child moved a thousand miles away. There was a void that needed to be filled. Anger and rage were eating me alive as I was trying to cope with a new life away from everything I knew and loved.

I met my future wife Juliana by looking for support from others going through a divorce. Between her and Donald we came to the conclusion that the best thing for me at the time was Flag Football. Don and I put together an 8-man light contact flag-football team in the Maximus Sports Flag Football League.

This team would go for 2 years before Juliana and I married and later move to Portland, Oregon with a new job opportunity. New horizons bring new opportunities.

GAISCIOCH FOOTBALL MOVES TO PORTLAND

The very first weekend we arrived in Portland I signed up for the Underdog Flag Football league and began looking for players to team up with to reform the Gaiscioch team up north. That's where I met Anthony Davis, a remarkable former Navy rescue swimmer who had been ejected from a car and left paralyzed. His story touched my heart and his arm left marks on my body with his insanely hard passes.

As Don moved north to rejoin the pack we decided to reform the Gaiscioch Football team with Anthony Davis as the team captain. Since then we have played 14 seasons, formed 5-Man, 7-Man, and 8-Person Co-Ed Flag-Football teams and won a league championship.

In September of 2014, the Gaiscioch Football team played in their first regional tournament, 2014 Comcast SportsNet Summer Football



Photo by: Melanie Colleen

Challenge, against teams from all over the Pacific Northwest. With 6 long football games and more than 8 straight hours of standing on a football field in the blazing summer sun we conquered fatigue and took the championship in our first ever tournament victory.

The Gaiscioch Football team has been enjoyed by more than 100 players over the course of the past 13 years and continues to grow as time moves on.

One thing I've taken away from this is that no matter if it's a gaming community or an athletics club, both unite people under recreation and both lead to making epic memories and friendships that last a lifetime.

Looking back, football has played a very important role in my life. It gave me hope when I thought all was lost. It taught me how to take a hit and keep on going. It gave me the wisdom to know that winning isn't always winning and losing isn't always losing. It has been a motivator in my life, an ambition that I followed to the very end.

Today I stand on the doorway to 37 and I still take to the field with the same excitement as I did that cold spring morning where I touched a football for the first time. I still get that rush of adrenaline as soon as I touch the ball.





THE UNSTOPPABLE ANTHONY DAVIS

FROM PARALYSIS TO GAISCIOCH QUARTERBACK,
ANTHONY DAVIS SHARES HIS STORY

By: Aoibheann Ní Choileáin

It's not often that you come across an amazingly talented individual who has overcome the most extreme circumstances to shine bright. Anthony Davis is a Navy Veteran, full time father, member of the US National Rowing Team, coach of a little league baseball team, quarterback for the Men's and Co-ed Gaelsioch Football teams. All the while being legally paralyzed.

I had the opportunity to sit down with Anthony to discuss his colorful history, unquestionable passion for athletics, and life after tragedy.

I understand that you were in the Navy.

Yeah, I joined out of High School when I was 18. I graduated in 2000 & I was discharged in 2006 after I left the VA Hospital.

I was a AW Rescue Swimmer on 3 Carriers the USS Ronald Reagan, USS John C Stennis and the USS Abraham Lincoln. I was on the Abraham Lincoln when President George W Bush came aboard and did the mission accomplished speech in 2003.

I went to war for 18 months on the USS John C Stennis and the USS Abraham Lincoln.

So what made you decide to join the Navy?

I wasn't going to be able to afford college and my family couldn't afford it and so it was either the Navy or the Marines. The Navy said I could travel, go places and they would pay for college and so I thought that was the best option.

Plus they told me that I could jump out of helicopters into the ocean and I thought that was pretty awesome.

Did you get to go to school after the Navy?

I took some classes at Clark College and actually took up Journalism. I wanted to go into the Navy as a photojournalist, but they didn't have any openings so I could either go in as a Gunner's Mate or a Rescue Swimmer, so I went as a Rescue Swimmer. But what I actually like is photography and journalism.



I wrote for the Clark College State newspaper, I've had three articles published and I made the front cover picture on one of the articles about Handicap Sports.

So I did take some classes, and Journalism was really fun, but I live in pain. And the better I get, and the better I get at walking, and the stronger I get, the more pain I have to deal with. So I have a hard time sitting in that position behind a desk because my feet would hurt and I would spasm a lot, so I found school really difficult, and so I haven't really been back to school.

That's understandable. Can you tell us about how you got hurt?

I got hurt August 25th 2005 driving on I-5 in California. I was in the back seat sleeping when the Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo that I was in rolled 4 times on the freeway and my seat belt broke and I was ejected out the window. I landed on my spine and broke it at T12 to L1, my spine is fused at T10 to L3. I also broke both sides of my rib cage and I can still feel spots where I am missing bone chunks. When I went

out the window my shoulder was separated from my collarbone and my sternum popped out about a 1/4 inch.

You've certainly come a long way since your accident.

Yeah, considering I wasn't supposed to walk and I can stand and walk, and I can play football, I can play sports. I coach a lot of sports, kid's sports and so I can be out there throwing a ball with them, hitting and doing all this other stuff with them. It is better than not being able to walk or being in my chair or being in a bed.

I am big into sports and athletics, I like animals





a lot too, so If I could work for National Geographic that would be my ideal job. Or Sports Illustrated, that was what I was going for when I came out of High School.

How did you start being able to walk again? What was your inspiration for pushing forward?

My inspirations to walk again were many but the biggest one was my son. My main goal was to be able to stand in the yard and play catch with my son. That motivated me more than anything. The fact that my son could see me and see that you can do anything you want as long as you give it everything you got all the time.

When I started to learn to walk again it was about the same time that my son was learning. I used to watch him walk and watch how his feet moved with his legs and hips. I used to try and imitate what he was doing to teach myself to walk again.



My son is a big part of my life and my journey that I am on. He has motivated me to get to this point and he still motivates me to be even better than I already am.

So you coach Baseball and Football?

I coached Football to start with. After I got hurt I volunteered at the High School that I graduated from. It was good physical therapy just being out on the field walking around, then I found out that I liked coaching and that I was good at it.

I did that for three years and then I went and did adaptive rowing. In July 2011 I took first in the county and ninth in the world in Adaptive Rowing. I stopped coaching to do that, but now that I am not doing the rowing as much anymore I started coaching Baseball.

My son was in little league and I volunteered as a coach, they said I did a good job and the president of the league wanted me to coach with him, so I did and this last year we coached Youth Babe Ruth Team and we took third in regionals.

Wow, that is very impressive.

It was a lot of fun, I love coaching. I have been doing it since I was 24.

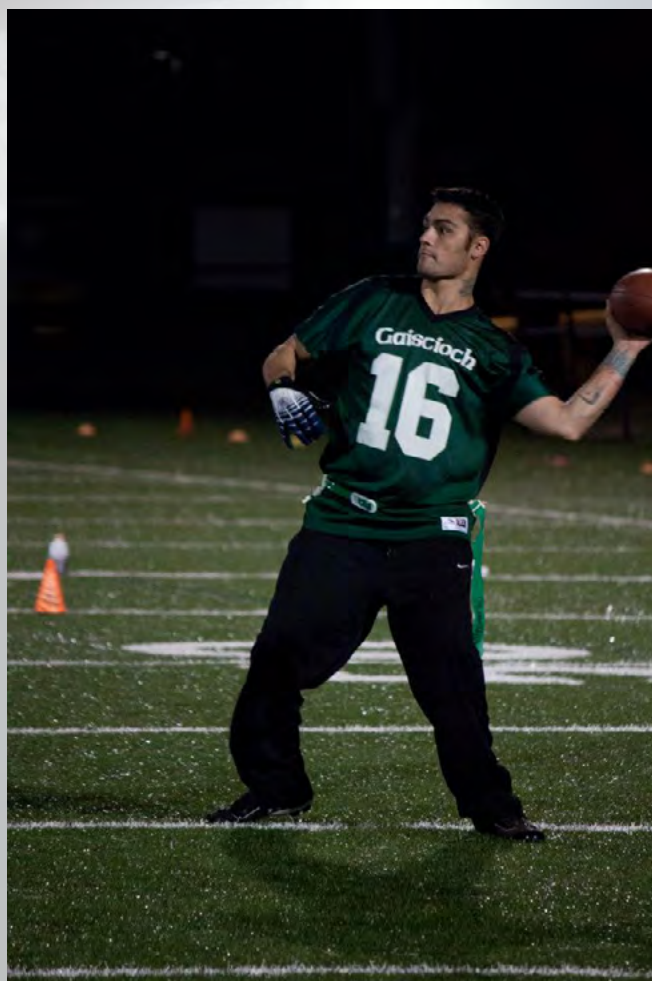
And you are how old now?

32

Tell me more about rowing.

I row with my upper body, I don't use my legs obviously because I am a paraplegic, but I am an adaptive rower. So adaptive rowing is like a small part of rowing where we only have four categories. In my category there is only one boat that goes to the world championship of the Paralympics.

It's tough because in order for me to compete internationally or competitively I have to have a female rowing partner and there is not a lot of female rowing partners that fit into my category and that want to compete and train, especially



here in the Northwest. If they open my category up so there are more boats or even make it an individual race then I am looking at the Paralympics next year, 2016, that is my goal.

I am really competitive at rowing, but coaching is my passion, it is what I do for fun.

What has kept you going through all of this?

The thought that someday I am going to end up back in my wheelchair, and that my spine is still broken. I am young, which is the reason that I wasn't more severely injured, even though I am 100% disabled. I was 23 when I got hurt, but they said it could have been worse & I was supposed to die, my youth saved me. I am still young, but someday I am going to be old and I am not going to be able to do all these things. When I get old, I don't know if I will still be able to walk or have to be in my chair, so I want to go till I can't go any more.

I think you have to experience waking up in a hospital bed without the use of your legs in order to understand how important it is to be able to use them. It is really hard to explain, but before I got hurt, I had no idea what this was like; I'd never even sat in a wheelchair before.

It is amazing to me just how far you have come. As a nurse, I have seen others in your circumstance and most of them accept their fate, but you didn't, you moved forward against all odds, and have accomplished great things.

Thank you. I can't stop. If I stop or sit still, that is when the pain hits me the most, so I just can't stop.

I feel that people should be able to accomplish pretty much anything if they can focus everything that they've got towards what they want, they should be able to achieve it.

I shouldn't be able to walk, and I do. I shouldn't be able to stand on a football field and play football with people that don't have any disabilities, but I do. I worked really hard.

This is very inspirational. Can I ask what you do for pain management?

For a while I was getting medications from the VA, pain pills, but they are bad. They work to a point, but I have so much pain and so many different types of pain that I can't take enough pills to get rid of all that. So it came to a point where it was doing more damage than good, so

I have stopped taking medications. Instead I do a lot of stretching, a lot of exercise, and I try to eat better.

Did you go through any depression when you were dealing with all of this?

Yes, for the first couple of years it was really difficult to go out as a handicap person. It was hard to hang out with my friends at bars or go places because I always had to take my wheelchair, in crowd of people, sometimes they wouldn't pay attention and fall over me. So it was one of my goals to not be so dependent on my wheel chair.

So, for a while I was depressed, and then there are still the memories sometimes... I don't really know.

Tell me about your family life.

I have a son from a previous marriage who is 8, he will be nine next March. His mom and I share custody, but my son lives with me now. Since then, I've been happily remarried.

We met at the airport in Portland, I was coming back from a race in Boston and she was coming back from Virginia. We were on the same flight from Chicago to Portland, and I saw her on the airplane, she was sitting up front and I was in the very back of the plane. When we got off in Portland she was waiting at the top of the walkway, and as she started walking I asked her if she lived in Portland and she said no, but I go to school here. So I just walked with her and we



talked, then we sat down to wait for my ride to show up and talked some more. I gave her a ride home that day and we have been together ever since.

I have a lot of stories to tell my grandkids.

So what is the next part of the story?

I am going to try to be the fastest male rower in the world. That is another goal in my life and I have to be strong enough to do that by next year.

So how did you get involved with Ben Foley and Gaiscioch?

I signed up with Underdog Sports to play flag football on an independent team. I showed up the first day and there was a bunch of guys just standing around, they didn't match, but they looked like they were in a huddle talking to each other, so I just walked up and said "Hey, I signed up with this team" and it turned out to be them.

The reason I did it was because it was outside of my box, I needed to do something outside of my comfort zone, so I went out there and said, "Hey, my name is Tony and I can only play quarterback, I am disabled, but I would like to play football." So they let me play on their team. Ben was their quarterback, but he didn't have a problem with it, so he became the center, and he is a really good center. We have been playing together now since 2010.

I have gotten so much better physically, playing flag football, better than anything else I have done. I owe a lot to Ben and the fact that he kept me playing football.

What has your experience been like playing football with the Gaiscioch?

The Gaiscioch football team had been a really big important part to my recovery and getting not only physically better but mentally better. Physically being on the football field is great for me and what I want to do in life. Mentally being on the football field with the Gaiscioch team helps me out a lot.

I was diagnosed with PTSD after I spent 18

months at war, and then I got into a car accident on my way home. So my mind is a little different than others, and being on the field with other men who are not disabled and I can not only play on the team but I can compete with them helps me.

We won a tournament against other able bodied mens teams, things like that help me get confidence in myself and show me that I can keep up and what I am doing and all the pain and things I have to fight through are all worth it. Needless to say I plan on playing football until I can't play football anymore.

Looking back can you offer any words of encouragement to anyone who has been knocked down by life?

I don't know if I have any words of encouragement, but I do have things to say. First, is that if something in life is hard it probably means it's worth it.

Don't ever give up ever.
The little things in life matter.
Happiness is important

And for me most of all "For what it's worth, it was worth all the while."

I want to thank you for speaking with me today Tony, it has been a pleasure.

Thank you.





GAISCIOCH FOOTBALL WINS FIRST EVER REGIONAL FLAG-FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT!

By: Esther "GmaFog" Foley

In the dead heat of summer, with a whopping 98 degrees Fahrenheit ... ok who's laughing. I hear you in the back there... pipe down for us pacific northwest folks that's pretty bloody hot.

Anyway, 12 brave Gaiscioch players came to put their skills to the test for the first time as a team. Led by Quarterback Anthony Davis, they took to the field and played the game conservatively, testing out the quarterback's arm and with short passes, slowly getting down the field for touchdowns. The game went back and forth but the team scores were always on top. It was a relief to win the first game.

After the game, the day was getting warmer and they already had 2 injured players that were out. With about a 20

minute break, luckily others arrived to help.

In the second game, Gaiscioch were down to only 10 players. It was a One point game and it looked like a victory for Gaiscioch until the last 6 seconds. There was a penalty that would place their opponent on the four yard line. This meant a touchdown for the other team and a loss for Gaiscioch.

The team had another short break. Everyone was hot and tired, but came together to have a bite of food and water/ Gatorade. The team brushed it off and went on to win their next 2 games, entering them in the final round.

The next game had lots of defense batting the ball away and running to the end zones.

By this time, Gaiscioch was down to 9 players for this 7-on-7 team, with 3 of our members out of the game due to injuries.

By the start of the championship game, they had played 4 games straight in the overwhelming heat. Heat exhaustion was setting in and they were all tired and sore. In this final game of the day, they intercepted the ball, blocked throws and ran for touchdowns. The team won by a score of 34 to 29.

This is the first time Gaiscioch Football has ever entered a tournament and they managed to pull out a victory on their first try. Gaiscioch Football plans to continue their tournament play and will be participating in the Rain Bowl this winter.

Learn more at:

<http://www.gaisciochfootball.com/>

Gaíscíoch Football

2014



Micah Moran



Anthony Davis
Team Captain



Benjamin Foley
Founder



Don Rush
Co-Founder



Jasper Wong



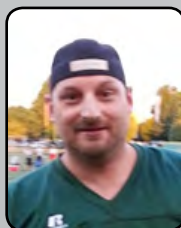
Kainoa Moe



Sheldon Johnson



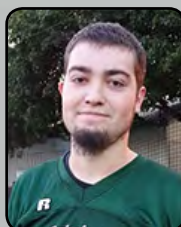
Byron Whitmore



Charles Kuchulis



Danny DiChiara



Cody Burkett



Skip Disbrow



Geoffrey Hazelett



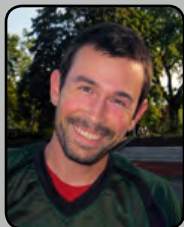
Thomas Davis



Jamaal Galloway



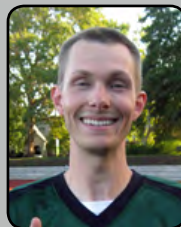
Alison Clark



Bryant Royal



Natalie Royal



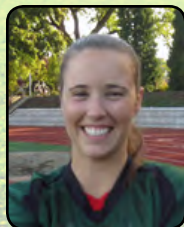
Bryan Foley



Coral Hurley



Jason Chapman



Meghan Sampson



Jennifer Johnson



Carla Bennett



Rob Bach

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Gaiscioch Tavern

Menu

Tina's Famous Cinnamon Rolls

Sourdough Starter

Sourdough English Muffins

Taco Salad

Chocolate Zucchini Bread

Irish Shepherd's Pie

Bacon Crackers





Grandma Tina's Famous Cinnamon Rolls

BREAD DOUGH:

Step #1:

1/2 Cup Starter
1 Cup Undiluted Evaporated Milk
2 Cups unsifted Flour

Step #2:

1/4 Cup Soft Butter
3 Tbsp. Sugar
1 egg
1 1/2 cups Unsifted Flour (more)
1/2 tsp. Baking soda
1 tsp. Baking Powder
1 tsp salt

CENTER OF ROLLS:

Step #3:

2 tbsp melted butter
1/4 cup Brown Sugar
1 1/2 tsp Cinnamon
1/4 cup raisins (Optional)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Combine starter, evaporated milk & 2 cups of flour in large bowl. Cover and leave at room temperature overnight.

The next morning, beat together butter, sugar & egg. Blend into sourdough mixture. Combine the 1 1/2 Cups of flour, soda, baking powder and salt. Mix with other mixture and turn onto a floured board. Knead until the surface is satiny and doesn't stick to the board (add flour if necessary).

Place Ball in the center of the board and roll out to a rectangle 8 inches x 16 inches. Brush surface with melted butter and sprinkle with a mixture of brown sugar & cinnamon (raisins if you wish). Roll up dough, starting on one of the long sides. Cut into 9 equal sections.

Dip bottom and top of roll in melted butter. Place in 9 inch square pan. Cover loosely & let rise about 1 hour or 'till doubled. Bake in hot oven 375 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes or till golden brown. Makes 9 large rolls.



How to Make and Maintain Sourdough Starter

By Beth “Jae Onasi” Carlock

There are some wonderful sourdough recipes in this issue of the magazine. You can purchase sourdough starter from a variety of sources. My first starter came from a site called Breadtopia.com. I have no affiliation with them, but the site owner has some outstanding resources, items, and recipes, including some fabulous no-knead bread recipes. I’ve made the no-knead sourdough bread, and it is phenomenal.

I thought I would share with you how to make your own sourdough starter, adapted from

Breadtopia. This recipe contains pineapple juice and wheat for those who are allergic to these items.

INGREDIENTS:

- Unsweetened pineapple juice (fresh or canned, no sugar added)
- Flour (you can use white, whole wheat, or rye, depending on what kind of starter you would like to make).
- Purified water (I keep a gallon jug of water used to mix baby formula that you pick up

in the beverage section of grocery store)

- A large jar or other container with a loose lid (a tight lid will prevent the sourdough bacteria and yeast from getting enough oxygen). I sometimes use just plastic wrap on top of the jar.

DAY ONE:

1. Mix 3 ½ tablespoons of flour with ¼ cup unsweetened pineapple juice.
2. Cover and set aside for 48 hours at room temperature.
3. Stir vigorously (a whisk

helps) 2 or 3 times a day. You may not see bubbling for awhile.

DAY THREE:

1. Add to the above mix 2 more tablespoons of flour and 2 tablespoons pineapple juice.
2. Cover and set aside for another one to two days.
3. Stir vigorously 2 or 3 times a day. You should see some fermentation (bubbling) by the end of day five.

DAY FIVE:

If you do not see bubbling:

1. Toss it out and start over.

If you do see bubbling:

1. Add 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ tablespoons flour and 3 tablespoons purified water and mix well.
2. Cover and set aside for 24 more hours.

DAY SIX:

1. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of flour and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of purified water.

Your sourdough should be nice

and healthy now. At this point, you may start using it. If you are not going to feed your sourdough daily, store it covered in the refrigerator.

To maintain your starter:

You need to feed your starter regularly. If you keep it at room temperature, feed it daily to prevent mold growth. If you keep it in the refrigerator, weekly feedings work well. I usually feed mine in the morning when I know I'm going to start some dough later in the day. That gets the fermentation really moving along.

When you feed your starter, it needs the same weight, rather than volume, of flour and water. That means you'll use about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of purified water for every cup of flour.

Ideally, you want to double the amount of starter you have currently. So, if you have $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of starter, the most flour you'll want to add is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water). If you have 1 cup of

starter, add 1 cup of flour and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water. Now, if you already have 2 cups of starter, you might not want to double that to 4 cups if you don't need that much. In that case, mix up the starter you already have, pour off 1 cup into the sink and keep 1 cup in the jar, and then feed the starter with 1 cup of flour and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of purified water.

If your starter has been sitting in the refrigerator for a while, you'll notice some liquid on top. That's the 'hooch', or alcohol, created by your starter. Mix it right on into the starter before you feed it. I do not recommend drinking it!

Enjoy your starter in pancakes, bread, waffles, English muffins, cinnamon rolls, and any other place where you might use yeast. Usually, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of starter can be used in place of a package or 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons of dry yeast. You'll need to give your sourdough extra time to rise—overnight works best much of the time. Have fun experimenting!





Sourdough English Muffins

By: Beth “Jae Onasi” Carlock

This is a great recipe if you have a lot of extra sourdough starter and you just can't bear to throw it away. I cook up a large batch on the weekends and then put the extra muffins in the freezer. You can thaw them in the microwave or toaster later in the week for a delicious breakfast.

Makes about 24

- 1 cup sourdough starter (mine is a 100% hydration white flour starter)
- 2 cups milk
- 5 1/2 cups all purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- Semolina or cornmeal, for dusting

Combine starter, 4 cups of flour and milk in a large bowl. Do NOT add the salt, sugar, or

baking soda at this point. Those are added after this first rise. Stir to combine, cover with plastic wrap, and leave out for 8 hours or overnight.

After the overnight rest, add remaining flour, sugar, salt and baking soda and mix well. Turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 4-5 minutes (this can also be done in a heavy duty stand mixer). Roll out to 3/4" and cut with a biscuit cutter into rounds. I bought English muffin molds to cut these a little larger. If you use a standard 3-inch biscuit cutter, they turn out just as tasty, but the larger ones let you make breakfast sandwiches more easily since they're larger and hold a fried egg better. You can reroll the dough scraps, but you may need to let the dough rest before cutting more muffins

from them. Place muffins on a piece of parchment paper dusted with cornmeal or semolina and let rest in a warm place for about 45 minutes.

Spray a griddle or skillet lightly with cooking spray oil. Heat to medium and cook muffins for about 6-8 minutes on each side, or until browned on the top and bottom and cooked through. These have great 'griddle spring' and rise quite a bit during the "baking".

Split with a fork and enjoy with your favorite topping! I don't even toast them if I want to eat them right off the griddle--they don't have that raw taste that store-bought English muffins have.

Enjoy!

Easy Taco Salad

By: Esther "GmaFog" Foley

THE TOPPING:

1 lb Ground Beef or Ground Turkey
One Large Bell Pepper and Onion, chopped
1 - tbsp of Taco Seasoning

SALAD FIXIN'S:

6 cups Shredded Lettuce
1 cup tortilla chips [For low carb - substitute ¼ c. sliced almonds]
1 cup Grated cheese of your choice
Catalina Dressing

DIRECTIONS:

1. Cook the bell pepper and onion with a little oil in a frying pan.
2. Add the ground meat and cook until browned, then stir in the taco seasoning.
3. Drain and discard excess oil.
4. On a plate layer lettuce, cheese, the meat mixture, chips or almonds and top with dressing.

ADDITIONAL TOPPINGS:

- olives
- tomato
- guacamole
- sour cream to taste.

4 - 6 Servings.





Chocolate Zucchini Bread

From the recipe box of Thelma Hart, shared by: Beth “Jae Onasi” Carlock

GOT ZUCCHINI?

My grandma, Thelma Hart, passed away this summer at the venerable age of 88. She absolutely adored chocolate. A couple summers ago when I had a mountain of zucchini taking over my garden, she gave me this recipe. I baked up a couple loaves and took some down to Arkansas to share with her when we visited with her on vacation. We scarfed it down while talking and playing Uno. Even people who say they don't like zucchini will love this bread.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups shredded raw zucchini (about 1 lb)
- 2 cup flour
- 1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder (not Dutch-processed)
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 cup canola oil
- 1 cup granulated white sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 1/2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray two 9x5 loaf pans with cooking spray.

Mix together flour, cocoa, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, allspice in a bowl, and set aside. Mix together sugar, brown sugar, eggs, oil, and extracts until well blended and light yellow. Stir the flour mixture into the egg mixture, and mix until just combined. Stir in zucchini and chocolate chips. Spread batter into the pans. Bake about 55-65 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in pan for about 10 minutes, and then remove from the pan, cool completely before serving.

Irish Sheppard's Pie

By: Jairone

I first did this for an Irish themed potluck at work. Since then I decide it sounds really good every once in a while, and I whip up a batch.

First, you need potatoes! You may use whatever kind you prefer. You can even use boxed if you really want, although fresh homemade will be just that little bit better!

Second, you need veggies! I use corn, peas, carrots, and leek.

You need meats! This is where I deviate from a more traditional Sheppard's pie. For this version, you will want Ham, Sausage, Bacon, and Beef. You may use a pre-prepared version of the ham, or bake your own. I generally prefer black forest deli ham, or home roasted with maple syrup, cloves, garlic, savory, and molasses to glaze.

Finally, you need cheese! You may alter this per your own preferences, but I like to use a mix of Mozzarella, Monterey Jack, and Muenster.

Meats should be prepared first, and cooked at least medium-rare. The potatoes may be boiled and mashed, the carrots and leek chopped, and the cheese grated if in blocks while your meats are cooking. Mix the

meats into the mashed potatoes first. Follow with the vegetables, and the cheese last. This allows the flavor from the meats the best chance to mix into the dish, while keeping your vegetables from mushing and your cheese from melting before you mix.

Bake at 350 in a casserole dish for 20 minutes, to melt cheeses and finish any cooking. If meats and veggies have all been cooked well, you may reduce this to 10 minutes. You may also make this with well cooked meats and veggies in a large stovetop pot, and serve directly from there.

Serve warm, may be refrigerated and reheated. Let anyone not in on the nature of the dish know the pink meat is ham, so they do not freak out!



INGREDIENTS

- 12-16 medium potatoes, if using smaller or larger potatoes simply adjust a little.
- 1/2 lb. ground beef or roast, whichever you want to use.
- 1/2 lb. ham.
- 6 sausage links, or 4 patties... I tend to use links.
- 2 cups corn, off the cob.
- 2 cups peas.
- ~8 medium carrots, diced or chopped into half-rounds.
- 2-3 leeks, chopped thick (~3/4-1 inch sections.)
- 1 cup each of the cheeses mixed in, plus a little extra thrown on top if desired. *If you love cheese, feel free to add more!*

Cooking and playing chess at the same time didn't work out so well. What movement pattern does Bell Pepper have? And is the cheese on this burger black?



Bacon crackers

By: Mealla

These bacon crackers will leave your party guests oohing, ahing, and asking what are these tasty little bites?

They are always a huge request and rightfully so, we like to call them the crack crackers!

Joking of course, but they are just that addicting.

Prep Time: 15 min

INGREDIENTS

- Townhouse butter crackers
- 1 package of bacon
- Brown sugar
- Cayenne pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the oven to 350°F.
2. Place crackers end to end on a wire rack set into a rimmed cookie sheet.
3. Slice the bacon into thirds.
4. Place a sliver of the cut bacon lengthwise on each cracker,
5. Sprinkle a generous amount of brown sugar onto the bacon topped crackers.
6. Then lightly sprinkle with cayenne pepper (be careful!!! Gets HOT quick!!)
7. Bake until the sugar begins to melt & the bacon becomes crisp.
8. Remove from the oven and allow to cool on the rack before eating.

These go quick!!!

Best to make a double or even three batches!!

ALWAYS A HIT AT ANY PARTY OR AT HOME WITH A NICE CRISP SALAD!!

ENJOY!!!

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“SISSY”

This is a true story. The names have been changed at the request of those who lived it.

Corporal Frank Mitchell didn't remember exactly what had happened. He was out on patrol, he felt a sudden burning in his lower back, and he fell down. He was unable to move his legs. All around him he realized there was gunfire and explosions. At first he thought he was screaming but then realized it was someone else very close to him. He heard and felt a loud bang and the screaming stopped.

Hands grabbed his wrists and ankles and he was placed on a stretcher. The gunfire was still exploding all around him. The burning in his back became much harder to bear, and he heard himself moaning with the pain. A calm voice said, "It'll be okay, Frank. We're gonna get you someplace safe and the docs will be able to fix you up. You might even get to see the new nurse, Roberta."

Another voice said, "Here, this'll take the edge off."

He felt a sharp jab in his arm and in a few minutes began to feel sleepy. The rest of the trip was a blur. They put his stretcher on a chopper. As the chopper lifted off he drifted off to sleep. They landed at a field hospital, all tents and muddy roads. Frank woke up as they took him off the chopper and carried him into the nearest tent. As he was carried in, he heard someone say, "He's never going to walk again. They should just send him home. This surgery never succeeds."

His heart sank. The only thing he wanted in life was to play hockey. Nothing else mattered. And now he wasn't even going to be able to walk. They moved him from the stretcher to a bed and hooked up some IV's. A nurse barked orders as people rushed around and got him prepared to go into surgery. He lay silent, immersed in self pity. He was never going to skate again, he was never going to walk again. His life was over.

After his surgery, he was placed in a ward filled with more wounded. Some missing an arm or a leg, some with bandages on their heads. Some could talk, some lay silent, some even joked and sang. Frank lay in his bed and smoked. A pretty nurse came by every so often to check on him, he never spoke a word to her. After a few weeks, he was transferred to a normal hospital and placed in the rehabilitation ward.

He learned to climb out of his bed and into a wheelchair. He learned to use the wheelchair to take him outside when it wasn't

raining, or to the TV room when it was. He spent his days sitting and smoking, staring off into space, wishing he could just die. Whenever someone came in and tried to get him to do some exercises to get his legs working again, he refused. "What's the point? The doctor already said I was never going to walk again. I heard him myself. Just leave me alone and send me home."

After he'd been in the ward for a little over a month, everyone was called into the TV room for an announcement. As the chatter died down, a short, pretty Lieutenant came into the center of the room and said, "Hi. My name is Lieutenant Deborah Lietz. My friends call me Lieutenant Debbie. I'll be your physical therapist from now on. I expect each and every one of you to give me a hundred and ten percent effort. And I will give you a hundred and ten percent of my effort. Together, we are going to get this place rockin and rollin."

She then worked her way around the room and introduced herself to each and every patient. Finally, she reached Frank. "Hi there. I hear you're the biggest sissy in the building. You can call me Lieutenant Lietz."

Frank was dumbfounded. He couldn't find a single word to say and the Lieutenant moved on. Every single day, when he came out of his room in his wheelchair, she announced his arrival. "Hey everybody, there's the biggest sissy in he building."

Every time she passed him in the hallway, "Hi there sissy."

Every meeting, every

opportunity she had, she called him a sissy. And he started to get angry. His anger grew and grew. He complained to the head nurse who simply told him, "She outranks me, Frank, nothing I can do about it."

Finally his anger reached it's peak. It was Sunday morning and he had just finished breakfast. He turned his wheelchair to go out of the dining room and ran into the Lieutenant. "Hi there sissy, you got some egg on your chin. Need help washing up?"

"You shut up!" he replied.

"You gonna make me, sissy boy?"

"You're damn right!" and Frank started to stand up.

He was so angry, he took two steps before he fell. As he hit the floor months of sadness poured out of him. His lost dreams, his feelings of hopelessness, his sorrow exploded with tears. He sobbed and cried as she ran to him, sat on the floor, and cradled his head in her lap and said through tears of her own, "Well now, I guess you're not such a sissy after all."

And that was the day that Frank Mitchell began to walk again. Skating took him a few more years, and he never did become a professional hockey player. But he did join a group of guys who played hockey three nights a week just for fun. And he taught his wife to skate, too. By then she was a Captain, Captain Deborah Mitchell.



LEARNING TO OVERCOME

By: Althea “Briseadh” Damgaard

We all face many trials in life. There are no answers with rose-colored-glasses view to life, because we live in an imperfect world where things happen unexpectedly. Multiple Sclerosis happened to me and it has changed my life. One day I was able to do martial arts and live action role play where one of the characters I played was in armor wielding a sword and shield and the next I'm trying to figure out why my left arm doesn't work correctly.

There are many ways to cope with crazy situations like this, but a lot of them do not work. You don't have the luxury of denial when your whole left side has a weird combo of numbness and tingling going on. Ranting at the world at how unfair it is

definitely will not fix it either. Faith in something bigger and that things will get better will help. This was not my first trial in life by far, but I can say I am glad I accepted Jesus and had that faith to hang onto before this happened to me. Whether I have MS the rest of my life or get cured of it by a miracle or some solution medicine comes up with in the future, I'm still able to live a good life.

My left side was semi-numb from the shoulder down and was not properly diagnosed. The neurologist didn't know what was going on and I was told that it was thoracic outlet syndrome since the left arm never fully recuperated. I actually got back into martial arts, but had to watch the arm. I returned to the live action game, but resorted to

playing a caster type because I could not carry the light padded weapons, let alone a shield. Things went well for a few years before I started having more issues.

I finally reached the point where I could not do my job testing on the factory floor for eight hours at a time. I became surly at work because I have very high expectations for myself and I couldn't do my job the way I know it should've been done. I was frustrated about not being able to do my job and my negative attitude was interfering with my Christian ideals.

I wound up on disability for a month, saw a new neurologist, one that I liked, who did some physical therapy with me and then returned me to work.

However, by the end of the year I had to throw my hands up and say I'm done with this. I called my neurologist again and was able to get in the next day. I didn't have any more sick days to use, and despite the fact that taking more time off could further damage my track record at work, I went to the doctor. He scheduled another MRI, but told me to keep on working. I did return to work right after the New Year weekend, I lasted four hours and realized that I couldn't do it anymore.

I had two and half years of dealing with disability insurance people, but it worked out that my long term disability insurance that I received through my old job included paying for an organization to do all my paperwork for social security disability. That was a God send in of itself because the paperwork you have to fill out multiple times is horrendous. In the end I was paid on long term for two years after the short term of six months ended and had my SSDI approved before the two years of insurance ran out.

I cannot go back to work full time. I still have to watch what I do with my hands, especially the left. Gripping things makes that hand cramp up in ways you would expect after a hefty day of hard labor and can be triggered by holding a piece of paper too long. All of this is due to the MS and the lesions that it causes in the brain as the immune system decides it should attack the myelin that protects your axons (nerve fibers). My sense of humor uses the analogy of my immune system becoming a zombie and wanting brains to

explain it.

Through it all, I have kept my faith in God and knew something would work out. It really has. I have been blessed with family, my real life one as well as my church and gaming friends. Gaiscioch is definitely not just some group of people playing games, we are a family that goes beyond the games. I have made a lot of great friends and tons of acquaintances through my online gaming. Gaming has given me something that I can enjoy doing, despite my disabilities.

My disability and my connections combine have led to some great opportunities. I have been able to test several games to see how they work for people with use of only one hand. The game I am playing now is the one that has given me the most issues. Elder Scrolls Online is definitely a two handed game no matter how you try to set up your mouse and keyboard. I don't have a fancy gaming mouse with lots of buttons, but even then after months of testing I figured out it was just better to find a happy medium of using both hands. One thing that helps me most is the G13 I got from a friend. I can put that in my lap and relax the left arm far more than having it up on the keyboard. It makes for a good option for shifting around how I sit and play games. I am so glad I learned touch typing a long time ago in high school because that really does help me keep going with a computer even on days when my left fingers are not feeling much.

Another thing that worked out is that I finally have a part time

job that I can do and works with my current benefits. I work from home on my computer where I spend a lot of time playing games and writing things anyway. Even a part time job really helped me to feel useful. Some days I cannot even manage housework unless I can figure out how to do it one handed.

Of course, there is my awesome church where I volunteer my time. This past year I got to participate in the weekly art classes for our fifth and sixth graders at the academy that the church runs. This year the program was expanded and I have 6 returning students as well and 3 new ones. I am a social person, so I like to stay active and get out to socialize with people, so I help out where I can.

So even if I am disabled, there is still plenty of things for me to do to keep myself active. Even better is that my disability, despite it initially hitting the entire left side from the shoulder down, has left my legs pretty much in good shape. I find that I really need to walk a lot to stay active enough in order for my body not to have more issues than what the MS already causes. I don't need my hands to walk and I like to joke that I am handicapped not feeticapped. I just have a left hand that doesn't work the way I want it to, but it has to come along for the ride anyway.

The best advice I can give to anyone dealing with adversity is to keep a positive attitude and find your faith in something greater than yourself.



REMEMBERING MARTINA FOLEY

By: Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley



When we're children, we are selfish beings. Through years of patience, perseverance, and love by our parents and grandparents we are shown that the greatest rewards in life come not from self gratification but in the gratification of others.

In my youth I was bullied. Looking back, it could have been partly because of my choice in sports teams, the Cincinnati Bengals, which in hindsight might not have been the best choice for someone living in between Niner Nation and Raider Territory.

Starting out in 7th grade I was the smallest kid in the class, even though I had repeated the 4th grade. I weighed a whopping 65 lbs on my first day. The kids were brutal to me, and my school days were a constant battle of survival from being dunked in toilets, locked in lockers, tossed in trash cans, endless beatings, and even doused in gasoline once. As you can imagine, anger, hate, and rage started to consume me.

But this story is not about my darkness, it's about the light

of one angel that God was kind enough to send my way. This was my grandmother, Martina Foley. Who, no matter how deep my despair or my self loathing, even when the world was against me, always encouraged me, always dusted me off and sent me out with my best foot forward to try again. There were even times when I just wished I could die,





but she managed to talk me away from the ledge. She was a true miracle worker and always had the right words at the right time for me.

My grandmother was able to channel my anger into art, literature, and even sports. Thankfully I found football as a sport, and with the football came body mass, height, speed and most of all a growth spurt. These things helped put an end to the days of torment in school and brought me into the socially acceptable world of my peers. My Grandmother and my Mother (GmaFog) were my biggest fans. They encouraged me to pursue my dreams and cheered me on every step of the way.

My life completely turned around and Hate was replaced with Love, Fear replaced with Courage, Vengeance replaced with Forgiveness. My Grandmother taught me how love, not just as man should love his wife, but the kind of love God intended us to

feel. Agape as the Bible mentions is the greatest form of love. For anyone that has been a parent, you should know this love. It is unconditional, undying, and eternal love. My grandmother loved me to such extent that no matter how bad or malicious or evil I behaved, I was her priority, and she always brought me back with her love.

The lessons she taught me not only made me a better man, they prepared me to be a better father, better lover, and better leader. She taught me that greatness only comes from moments of strife, and legends are written about people who overcome the very darkness I had faced. She was my role model and mentor.

She was also my inspiration and encouragement behind the decision to create and lead the Gaiscioch family. It was my way of passing on the torch to others and providing a light to them in their darkest times. I targeted the “un-elite” and the “outcasts” from within the

gaming world, because I too knew what it was like to be discarded. I united these people to become something powerful and meaningful. Proving that no matter your skill or ability or level you can make a difference.

Unfortunately, just after I started the Gaiscioch, my grandmother had her first stroke, and soon after the second stroke that would slowly take away my grandmother’s ability to speak and move. Over the next 6 years she lost the ability to use 70% of her body. But in her final days she cried tears of joy upon seeing her great grandchildren and the rest of the family. Even though she couldn’t speak, you could tell she had so much more to say. In the end, she was tormented by her life and the only escape was in her passing.

On August 17th, 2014 my grandmother and my hero left our world to join God in heaven, finally escaping from the prison of her helpless body. She left behind her husband of 65 years,



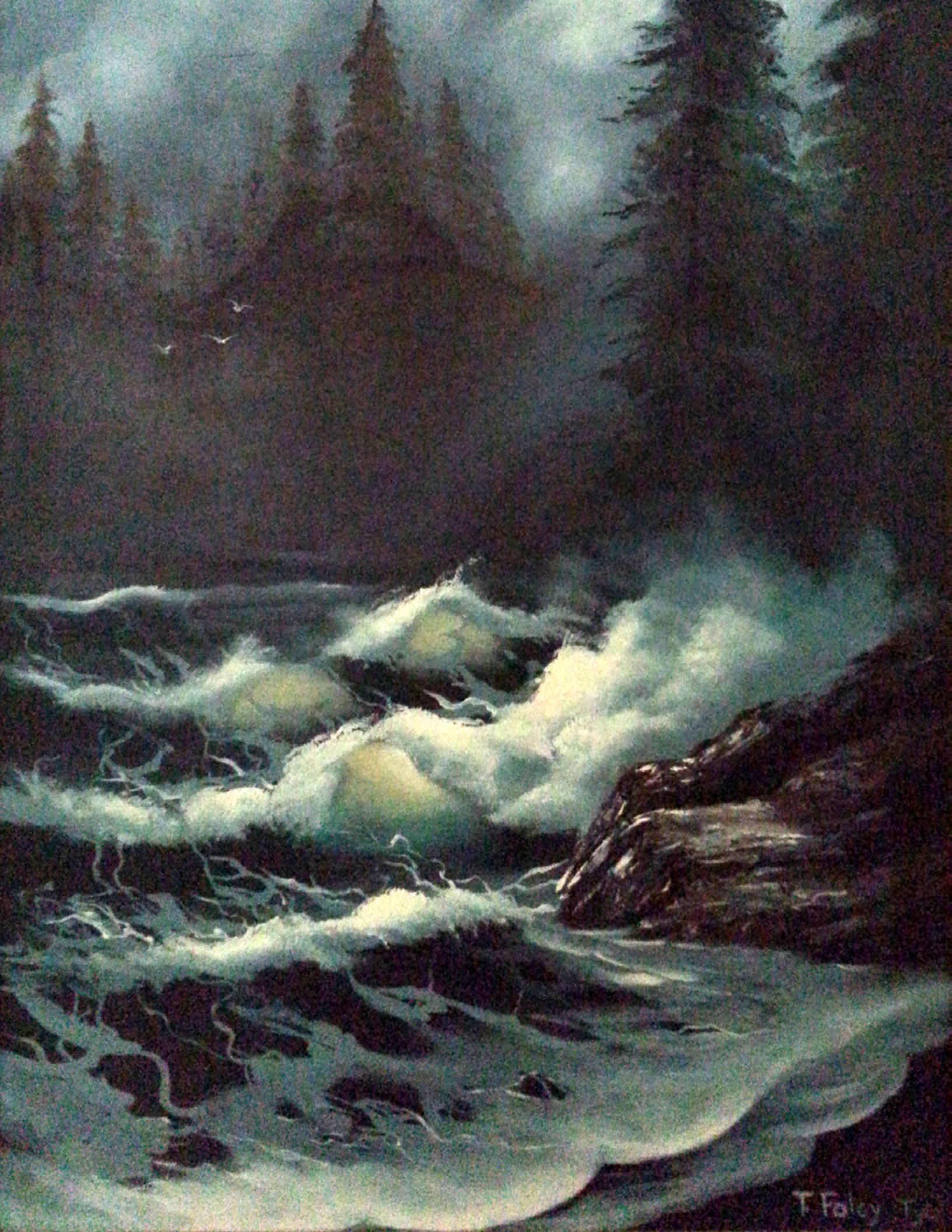
3 sons, and an army of grandchildren and great grandchildren. We now rejoice her life, her achievements, her dedication to God and her family. She was the rock of the Foley family and she inspired us all to be better people.

Without her in my life, I am certain things would have turned out very differently for me and most likely my story would have been cut short and forgotten. I am thankful for her belief in me when I couldn't believe in myself, for giving me courage to face my fears and for the motivation to chase my dreams.

Thank you, Martina Foley. For your body may not be among us but your spirit and love will live on through us all.







T. Foley T.





T. Foley '85



GAISCIOCH CHARITY CORNER

By: Aoibheann Ní Choileáin

The Gaiscioch Social Gaming Community in itself is not a charitable organization. Instead Gaiscioch works with several non-profit charities that benefit children and their families in times of crisis.



CANDLELIGHTERS FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER

Support - Education - Advocacy - HOPE
...because kids can't fight cancer alone!

The organization, Candlelighters For Children With Cancer, provides support to children with cancer, survivors of childhood cancer, the parents of children who are being or have been treated for cancer, bereaved families, health care professionals, and educators. Their mission to the community and to the families affected by childhood cancer covers four essential areas: support, education, advocacy and hope.

SUPPORTING THOSE IN NEED

Candlelighters provides frontline assistance to families of cancer patients, ages 0-21, as they battle the emotional stresses of their experiences. The connections made with other members who have been through it all and know how to help is tremendously supportive. Meetings, personal assistance and activities for families provide the outlets needed to share the fear and frustrations caused by childhood cancer.

EDUCATION FOR INFORMED CHOICES

Quarterly meetings and educational forums,

including speakers from the medical field, keep members up to date on the research programs, medical information and pediatric care. This helps families better understand the treatment choices for their children as well as the difficulties associated with side effects and survivorship.

ADVOCACY FOR TODAY AND FOR THE FUTURE

Candlelighters For Children With Cancer supports families whose children have or have had cancer. We work through all the stages: discovery, diagnosis, treatment and remission. We can also help with other issues, such as those that arise when a child dies. Our motto is, "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."

Candlelighters For Children With Cancer is a federal non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation .

Learn More At:
<http://www.4kidswithcancer.org/>





Project Night Night

Project Night Night donates over 25,000 Night Night Packages each year, free of charge, to homeless children who need childhood essentials to feel secure, significant, cozy, and ready to learn. Each Night Night Package contains a new security blanket, an age-appropriate children's book, and a stuffed animal -- all nestled inside of a new canvas tote bag. By providing objects of reliable comfort, Project Night Night reduces trauma and advances the emotional and cognitive well-being of the children we serve.

Every child who receives one of these Night Night Packages leaves the shelter owning a book, which encourages reading and family bonding, a security blanket which can be cuddled, and a stuffed animal which can become a cherished friend. The group has one objective – to deliver our Night Night Packages to every homeless child in the country who needs one.

Project Night Night is a tax exempt charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code. We work with over 10,000 volunteers each year, and we are the leading provider of nighttime comforts for homeless children.

Learn More At:
<http://www.projectnightnight.org/>



Project Smile's mission is to help comfort children involved in traumatic situations. The organization donates stuffed animals, coloring books and crayons, as well as reading books to police and fire departments for individual officers, firefighters and paramedics to give to children.

The goal is to ensure that every emergency responder in New England has immediate access to comfort items for children involved in traumatic situations. Many of the children who receive items were:

- Witnesses of domestic violence or other crimes
- Victims of child abuse
- Victims of sexual assault
- Sick or injured
- Coping with the loss or serious injury of a loved one.
- Victims of house fires

Project Smile also partners with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families and donates stuffed animals, books and coloring books and crayons for children entering foster care. Additionally, Project Smile partners with homeless shelters to provide these important comfort items to children residing in Massachusetts shelters.

Project Smile is federally tax-exempt non-profit organization

Learn More At:
<http://www.projectsmile.org/>

Gaíscíoch

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The Gaíscíoch Family extends far beyond the game. Our members have a very broad professional background extending from teachers to CEO's. Our members are involved in the businesses, organizations, and government agencies below. We are very proud of our diverse community and support our members in all of their real life accomplishments.

3M	Bernard Simulacao Gerencial	CW Technology	Franchising.com
ABB Inc. - Robotics	Bethel School District #403	Dallas Center - Grimes CSD	Freeport Welding & Fabrication, Inc.
ACE Network Consulting	Bishop Investment Services	Dane Massage	Fry Productions
Addtech Controls	Black Nova Digital	Decoy's Dork Decor	Fujitsu
Aditya Birla Minacs	BNP Paribas	Dell, Inc.	Geek Squad/Notre Dame
ADP Dealer Services	Bollinger's services	Department of Defense	General Mills
advantage metal Products	Boondocks PC Repair	DFW Honda	Gerald Blakemore, CPA P.C.
Advent International Corp	Bowman Consulting Group	Diebold Inc.	Global Exposition Services
Air Transport International	Box Home Loans	DJO Global	Government of Canada
Alachua County BOCC	BP	Documatik Limited	GPC Company
All Smiles Orthodontics	BreakAway Ltd.	Duke Energy	Great Wolf Lodge
Allied Arts	Brilliant Bees LLC	DuPont Spruance	Harris Caprock
Amercian Coalition of Healthcare Recruiters	Buchanan First United Methodist Church	Easter Seals	Harris Siding & Windows
American Express	Bypass Mobile	eBay Enterprise	Hawk Paranormal Scientific Investigations
American Red Cross	Calumet Park School District 132	Edict Systems	Hawt Websites
Ankara State Hospital	Campus Crusade for Christ	Edward Jones Investments	HCL Axon/Fortis BC
Apples & Arrows	Cardomain Inc	EFFIIS	HDD Broker Inc.
Appticity	CareFusion	Eley Guild Hardy Architects	Hillsouth
ArenaNet LLC	CEB	EMC	Home Trust Company
Arizona Supreme Court	Cerner Corporation	Exterran	HP/Vertica
Army	Chinook Pharmacy	Facebook	Humana Cares
Asialink Realty Pte Ltd	City of Elizabethtown	Faellin Angels Realm LP	Hunton & Williams
AT&T	ClarkBetty.com	Firestone Building Products	I.B.E.W.
Atlantic Bay Mortgage	Cogeco Cable Inc.	Fitzgibbon Hospital	IBEW Local 1141
Atwater Aloha Floral	Collateral Intelligence	Flagstar Bank	IBM
Barclays	Comcast	FLASH	IGT
Barrister Global Network	Coram Deo Academy	Florida Cancer Specialists and Research Institute	Indie group with friends
Baylor University	CSG International	Flypaper Studio, Inc	Infor
Beck et al. Services	Cubic Corporation	Food and Drug Admin	Insero Corporation
Becton Dickinson	Culinary Institute Virginia	Franchise Update Media	Insitu

International Paper	Nova Engineering	Self Employed (NS Vine)	UC Davis Childrens Hospital
Isolation Equipment Services	Nova Engineering, Inc.	Sep	Unique Useables
ITI INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION INC.	NYPD	Shaw Inc.	United BioSource Corporation
Jasmine-Dragon	Odessa College	Siemens	United Parcel Service
Johnson Surveillance, LLC	Office Essentials	Signature Transcription Services	United States Army
Kazmarek Technology Solutions	Ohio EPA	Signs Manufacturing Corporation	University of Akron
Kenedy's Cakes and Donuts Inc.	Oklahoma Military Dept: Construction and Facilities Maintenance Office	Simply Floors	University of Central Florida
Kingsley Associates	One Point Home Health and Hospice	Skyline Construction & Restoration	University of Florida
Konecranes	Panasonic Avionics Corporation	Smithbucklin	University of North Carolina Charlotte
Kroger	Panther Energy Company	SoftFile DCS	University of Utah
L'Anse Creuse Public Schools	PCM Inc.	SolutionSource	US Army
Leslie's Pool Supply	Pender County Schools	Sony Online Entertainment	US EPA
Lightyear Network Solutions	Pink Zebra Home	Southwest Airlines	US NAVY
Lincoln Loop	Placer SO	Spectra Tech Inc @ ORNL	USAF
Logic Technolgy Inc.	Polaris	Spencer Gifts	Vantiv
Looking for one	Premiere Inc	SplitZero Designs	Verizon Conferencing Verizon Business
Los Angeles DHS	Professional Medical Writers	Staples	Video Game Auctions.com
Lowe's	Promise Keepers Canaa	State Farm	Vishay Intertechnology
M&S Technologies	Proteus Europe	Steris Corporation	Waelwulfas dotOrg
Made Men Inc.	Quantum Security & Innovations	Steve's Computer Rescue	Walmart
Magnolia ISD	QuikTrip	Stevens Transport	Washington State Dept. of Early Learning
McDonald's	Radio Shack	Stevens-Henager Online	Washoe County School District
Media Bridges	Ref-Chem	Stewart Lender Services	Waterbury Public Schools
Mercedes Morgan Photography	Regional Manager for UPS	Stewart's Market place	Wayne Russell Search Consultants
Micro Center	Reid Hospital and Health Care Services	Sutton Creative Studios	We Do Windows Computer Services
Microsoft	Reinsurance Group of America	Talaria Press	Weibel Services
Mind Wrack	RescueTime, Inc.	Target	Welcome Home Design
Mississippi Museum of Natural Science	ResolveIT Computers	Technicolor and Throw the Gauntlet Productions	Wellcare
Missouri State University	Retired	Techpath	Westmark Industry
Mobile Fire-Rescue	Robot Entertainment	Techtell inc	Whole Foods Market
Mobile Sports Chiropractic	Rogue Community College	Tellepsen Builders	William S. Frates II P.A.
Montana State University College of Nursing	Rogue Photos	Texas A&M University	Williams Buick GMC
Moran sheetmetal	Romine CPAs & Associated	The Boeing Company	Wireless Advocates
Muler Pasific Labelindo	Round Table Media LLC	The Last Frontier & New Phoenix Casinos	WIS International
National Aviation Academy	SanMar Corp.	The McGraw-Hill Companies	Wizards of the Coast
National Title Network	Scentsy	The Mirage	WSP
Nav Canada	Scentsy, Inc.	The North West Company	www.SKLURB.com
Navy Federal Credit Union	Schlumberger	The Sawmill Ltd	Xerox
New Life Church	Schneider Electric	The Ultimate Software Group, Inc.	Xyvid Inc.
Nextek, inc	SDL	Theres's No Box	Yellowknife direct charge coop
Nine Dots Studio	Seagate	Tool Using Monkeys	Zappos
Nokia Siemens Networks	Seagate Technology	triumph	
Norfolk Southern Railroad	Self Employed	Tweddle Group Technologies	
Notnat Technology Services			

"It's only in your darkest hour,
that you have the most potential
to do something remarkable."

- BENJAMIN "FOGHLADHA" FOLEY