

Gáiscíoch

MAGAZINE



New Beginnings

Life Lessons from Mark Jacobs,
Ivan Torrent, and Derek Brinkmann

Issue IV

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Greeting and welcome to our fourth issue of Gaiscioch Magazine. This issue marks the end of our first year of publication. Since launch, we've shared our articles, previews, guides, reviews and recipes with over 10,000 readers.

I must admit when we started this idea, we thought wouldn't it be cool if we put together a magazine? We never expected to have the opportunity to interview such an amazing crowd of people and reach an audience this vast.

Thank you for making our little fan made, no profit magazine a huge success. Over the next year we hope to expand our publication and reach beyond gaming into all aspects of the gamers life. Exploring games, music, food, and life in all its epicness.

This issue we have a special treat in the form of interviews for one of the godfathers of MMORPGs, Mark Jacobs; epic music composer Ivan Torrent; David Brinkmann of Shards Online; an in depth look at Warhorse Studios crowd funded title Kingdom Come: Deliverance; and the embrace the wonderful art of Carlos Quevedo.

From cover to cover, your in for a real treat as we explore New Beginnings.

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.

Slan Go Foill!

Benjamin Foley

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

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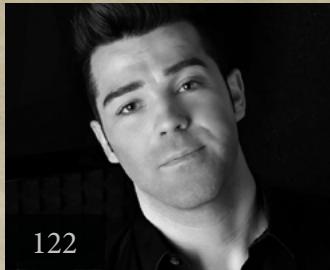
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ABOUT THE GAISCIODH FAMILY

The Gaisciodh (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 Gaisciodh 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 Moyturna 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 Gaisciodh.

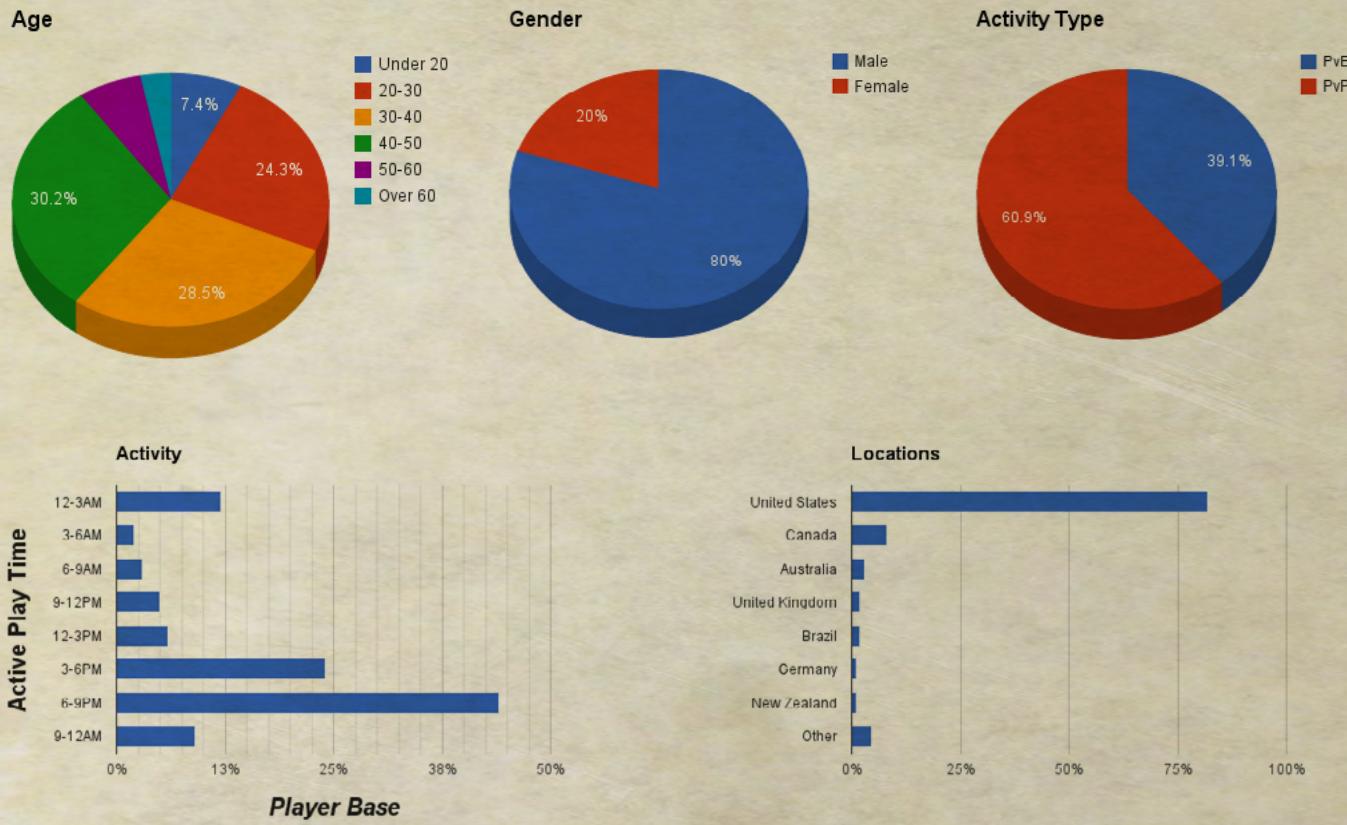
The Gaisciodh are a social gaming community with a relaxed approach toward gaming. They allow

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 Gaisciodh 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.

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New Beginnings

MARK JACOBS RETURNS TO CAMELOT

By: Mark Jacobs and Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley



If you told me 13 years ago that I would be interviewing Mark Jacobs for a Magazine I was producing, I would have laughed and said you were crazy. I never would have expected that today I would have the chance to go one on one with such an influential person in the industry.

Many of you will know Mark Jacobs as the mastermind behind the MMORPG classic *Dark Age of Camelot*. He has been creating games since 1983, and was one of the first to pioneer the MUD (Multi-User Dungeon) with *Aradath* (as part of his first company Adventures Unlimited Software Inc.) in 1986. He then created *Dragon's Gate* (1989-2006), which today is still one of the longest running pay-to-play online games. He went on to form Interworld Productions (later renamed Mythic Entertainment), by merging A.U.S.I. with Rob Denton's company ISI (at the time made up of Denton, Matt Firor, Don Campbell and Roger Shropshire). Rob and Matt continued with the new company when it was formed in Fairfax, VA, in 1995.

In March of 2011, Mark co-founded City State Entertainment™ with Andrew Meggs (Bethesda Softworks™, Mythic Entertainment™, and Troika™ games) to produce, among other things, the next great expedition into Camelot.



Thank you for joining us today. Your career has been filled with ups and downs, strife and success, and the rare chance to reimagine one of your greatest creations. When we talk about new beginnings I can think of no one that can match your story. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your career so far?

Sure! Happy to be here. It's been a very interesting career, as my life has taken me from starting my first company (Adventures Unlimited Software Inc.) and creating my first commercial game while I was in law school, to creating one of the world's first true MUDs (*Aradath*). That led to the halcyon days on GENie (General Electric Network for Information Exchange) with my games *Galaxy* and *Dragon's Gate*, to Interworld/Mythic in 1995. Then after creating about

one dozen online games, we came near to bankruptcy in 1999, before I arranged the funding for *Dark Age of Camelot* and we enjoyed its amazing success. After that, there were a number of expansion packs, *Imperator*, and then the sale to EA (which was the company that almost put us under back in 1999) and my subsequent departure from Mythic (and contemplation of retirement) in 2009. I almost set up a company in Singapore (which is where the name City State Entertainment came from), which led to the company's founding with Andrew Meggs, which in turn led to a highly successful Kickstarter for *Camelot Unchained™*.

It certainly has been a really interesting 30 years in gaming. And to think, it all started back in high school, with a broken Fortran Monrobot.



As one of the Co-Founders of Mythic Entertainment you played a massive part in the creation of Dark Age of Camelot, a game particularly special to the Gaiscioch and I. What was your role in the creation of this historical MMORPG?

I had three main roles in the creation of *Dark Age of Camelot*. First, as Lead Designer of Dark Age of Camelot, including the name of the game, was my idea. Mythic was on the verge of shutting down due to the loss of revenue from our games on AOL, after EA bought the AOL Games Channel. Every game we had up there but one were shuttered (including games that were in the pipeline), so EA could bring (or try to bring) their “higher-end” games there. We weren’t alone, as most companies who were doing business with AOL had their games removed from the AOL Game Channel.

We needed to find something else to keep the company going, and I decided to try to

get the funding (again) for an MMORPG, due to the success of *Meridian 59*, *Ultima Online*, and *Everquest*. One of the games I had put forward was an MMORPG based on our *Darkness Falls* IP. I loved the concept, but I thought we could do even better if we found the right idea. Then one day I was in the shower, thinking about IPs that we could use, and the idea to use Camelot and call it *Dark Age of Camelot* came to me.

I went into Mythic and pitched it to Denton, but he said no, he wanted to do *Darkness Falls*, since he figured the *Darkness Falls* IP would be more popular than Camelot (and he was worried about how we could protect it IP-wise), and because the *Darkness Falls* game had its origin in his *Tempest* game. We argued about it, and eventually he said that if I could convince the team, he’d go along with it. My first stop was Matt Firor (who was one of Rob’s close friends even way before Interworld/Mythic), and Matt was enthusiastic about it. I went to a few other

people (all of whom were Rob's friends too) and they loved it. I then went back to Rob's office and said that all his buddies - especially Matt - loved it, at which point he said he was fine with it. Keep in mind, even though I was CEO/President, for most of our years at Mythic Denton and I worked as a team, and I always wanted him onboard with my ideas. I didn't want to "rule by fiat."

My second role with Dark Age was as lead designer. While the overall vision of the game was mine, folks like Matt, Brian, Lori, and others not only had a huge role in shaping the game, but the IP as well, even though it wasn't always their primary job. Most of the key people at Mythic had multiple roles (just like here at CSE), because the budget was tight. Matt was officially the producer, but he was also a writer and designer. Matt's overall contribution to *Dark Age of Camelot*, from

the earliest days of development to post-launch, was awesome. On the creative side of my end, I did everything from writing the occasional "white paper" to throwing out ideas for things, playtesting, and helping to balance the economy (most of the heavy lifting on the economy was done by Dave Rickey), etc.

My third role with Dark Age and Mythic was on the business and legal side. I would handle everything from being CEO/President, to taking the first pass on our legal affairs to save us money, signing my life away with loan guarantees for equipment, PR, and press, until the great Sanya Thomas (now Sanya Weathers) came on board.

I had other roles and responsibilities as well, but these three are a good start.



Albion

From the rolling hills of Camelot to the mountainous peaks of Snowdonia, Albion is through and through the land of Arthur. Forged from his iron will, paid for by the blood of Knights and commoner alike, Albion encompasses the ideals, the laws, and the heritage of its most famous King. The people of Albion are a mostly homogenous lot - sturdy Britons, hulking Highlanders, graceful swift Saracens, and the tall intelligent Avalonians. The small, mysterious Inconnu along with the bestial Half-Ogres add a dash of the exotic to the Realm.



Hibernia

Hibernia, closest to nature and magic of all the Realms, brings a potent ability to channel forces of magic and unleash its destructive force on their enemies. Human Celts and the almost-giant Firbolg live in close harmony with forest, glen, and all nature's creations. The Otherworldly beautiful Elves, small mischievous Lurikeen, and sleek magical Sylvan harness the power of primal magic. The malevolent Shar have an uneasy alliance with the other races of Hibernia, and bring an undercurrent of evil to the emerald hills.



Midgard

From the snowy lands of glacier and fjord come the legions of the Norse, heeding the call to once and for all establish the rule of Midgard upon all the Realms. Midgard, land of lakes and wide slow rivers full of snow-melt, is home to six of the most diverse races found in the three Realms. These races are the Norsemen (the humans who make themselves at home in these snowy wastes), short yet resilient and tenacious Dwarves, huge lumbering trolls, lithe dexterous Kobolds, shadowy, mysterious Frostalfs, and the primitive and proud Valkyn.

Mythic Entertainment really took a huge chance on Dark Age of Camelot, it being the first to pioneer siege warfare. What was going through your mind on launch day? Did you ever imagine that it would be such a huge success, and inspire a whole new genre of MMORPGs?

LOL, no. We were all just praying that the game wouldn't blow up at launch, and that we would sell enough copies to keep the company going. I knew we had a good game on our hands, and thanks to the rigorous testing we did I was reasonably confident that we would launch well. During development, I pushed the concept of "eliminating possible points of failure" from the client/backend side, and we even hired a talented and experienced guy by the name of Spyke Alexander (he had just come from Sony) to help analyze our approach and make sure we weren't doing the dumb.

I also asked for some other outside help to verify that what we had built was smart and should, in theory, work. Fortunately,

the great back end work we had done on other games and for Dark Age did its job beautifully, and that is testimony to the technical efforts led by Denton. However, you can never predict how the paying public will perceive your game, so we were all still very nervous about the game's chances for success. Our partner, Vivendi Universal Games, loved what they saw, but their estimates were only about 40K initial sales, so none of us were sanguine about our chances for the game becoming the hit that it did.

What was one of your favorite memories about the early days of Camelot?

Launch day! I went to all the stores that sold our game, and saw that most of them were sold out. At one point, Eugene Evans and I went to Best Buy, and when people weren't looking, we rearranged some of the shelves so our game was out in front.

At the time that you departed Mythic Entertainment, what was running through your head?



It was a total disaster for me on every level. I was furious at how I was treated by people that I had trusted and protected over the years, as well as some of the people at EA. This was devastating, since I was the one person who thought that WAR wasn't ready for launch, and said to EA that I didn't believe we should launch against WoW's expansion. Unfortunately, nobody on the team would say that they agreed with my assessment, so I couldn't even tell EA that my team backed me up.

I was truly caught between a rock and a hard place. The worst part of it was that I knew that I was right, but when your partner says "I know you don't trust 'XXXX' but you can trust me", and he's been your partner for more than a decade, well, most people would usually agree, and I did. What a mistake that was.

When EA and I parted ways I wanted to say goodbye to the team, and EA said sure, that was fine with them. However, the "senior leadership at Mythic" said I couldn't. Nice, right? Put it this way, when

one of those same "senior leadership guys" asked me after we parted ways "What can I (they) do to help?" and I said "Just make sure I get what I was entitled to from EA" this guy said to me, "I don't want to get between you and EA."

Wow. I had spent the last three years at EA refusing to put any blame on him, talking him up (as well as a few other folks), putting it all on my shoulders since I was CEO, and then the one time I wanted his help he just essentially told me to "eff off". Can you imagine how I felt then? Like the stupidest guy in the world.

How did you take such a huge sense of loss and turn it into momentum for a new idea?

I know this must all sound a little bit bitter, and frankly, when it comes to a few select individuals, that will never change. I'm not very good at the whole forgive-and-forget thing, especially when other people's lives/careers were affected by some less-than-perfect actions - including mine. I needed to be smarter/better than I was.



And that last bit is really important. I've never shied away from admitting my failings, and I never will.

After what happened to me with EA/Mythic, I really wasn't sure that I wanted to have anything to do with games and the industry again. But as I found out more and more by talking to people, I started getting angry. And well, anger doesn't always lead to the dark side. I decided that I wasn't ready to retire, and that I wanted to go back to making games. However, I knew the type of people I didn't want to work with again.

The co-founder of City State Entertainment™, Andrew Meggs, is a brilliant dude, an incredibly talented programmer, and best of all, a real human being. When I was able to convince him to start the studio with me, I knew that we had the opportunity to do some great things together. We then had to surround ourselves with an outstanding bunch of guys and gals, which we did. We are in the midst of creating a really fun game, and I

never have to see or interact with certain people again, so it's all good! It's been a hell of a ride so far, and it's only going to get better from here.

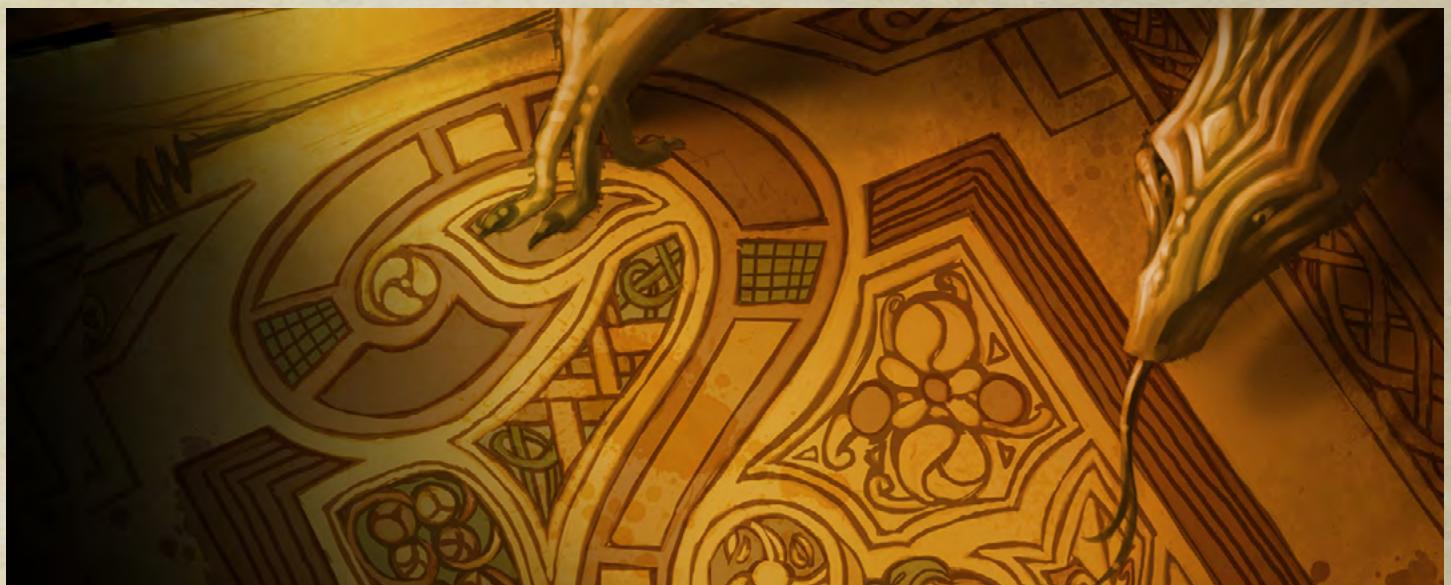
What lessons did you walk away with when you departed your flagship company?

Lesson one: To quote a film, as I like to do, it's always the punch that you don't see coming that puts you down.

Lesson two: EA isn't always the root of all evil, there are worse people in the industry, and they don't always work at EA. Though it took me a few years to find out everything that was going on behind my back (like the stuff that EA Louse guy said), I did eventually. I'm persistent that way.

Lesson three: Some people are just broken inside.

Lesson four: That even though I believe in the words gratitude, loyalty, and integrity, they are still foreign words to some people. After what happened, they mean even





CAMELOT UNCHAINED

more to me. I always need to push myself to be even better at what I do, whether as a designer or as studio President.

I must admit, before *Dark Age of Camelot* I completely ruled out ever playing an MMORPG. But then I beta tested *Dark Age of Camelot* and realized it gave me a chance to share a story taught to me by my family in a setting with the Tuatha de Danann. This is one of the biggest reasons I'm looking forward to your next great title *Camelot Unchained*™. What can you tell us about your newest project?

Wow, there is so much to tell about this game and I've written so extensively about it, even before the Kickstarter began, that I don't know where to start. I'll simply list three things that we believe will make *Camelot Unchained*™ a great game:

We are focusing on RvR. You can't level your skills by killing NPCs (but there are plenty of NPCs guarding areas, creatures to skin, etc.) and all leveling and skills are 100% based around their effect on RvR. So our Backers and future players will not have to worry if their skills are being diluted because they make killing NPCs too easy, or if the majority of players would rather kill ten rats than kill ten enemy players. Basically, it's RvR – first, foremost, and forever.

We are willing to take chances with the game's mechanics, systems, and races etc. If you want another WoW-clone, this game isn't for you. But if you are looking for a game that will draw ideas from all the MMORPGs (as well as some RPGs), including *Dark Age of Camelot*, *Star Wars: Galaxies*™ and other great MMORPGS that have gone before, and at the same



time willing to take chances with new ideas, you might like our game. Please check out the BSC (Bat Shit Crazy) presentations we have made, for things like A.I.R. (a system where all spells and abilities actually interact with each other) so that when a fireball hits an icewall, the icewall could melt and/or be turned into steam, or islands that move together, or creating your own spells and abilities. We're also willing to create dark, dank, and even quite explicit places like The Depths™. But most importantly, we are trying to create a game that our players feel invested in, and not just because they spent money on the Kickstarter, box game, or subscription, but rather because they have spent time building the world and their own little slice of heaven.

We will have a dedicated crafter class which isn't required to go into RvR to level, gather all their materials, etc. OTOH, none

of the other classes can craft/gather/mine/etc. as well as the pure crafter. The crafting systems have been heavily influenced by older games, including my *Dragon's Gate*, but with a few interesting, modern twists thrown in as well. The bottom line here is that if you are a crafter, we are giving you more control of the items you create than in any other MMORPG I've been a part of, and we are doing this through real-world properties and some mechanics. The system also ensures that there is no way for people to create crafter alts that can simply be fed materials by friends, guild, etc. and quickly level through the skill sets. We believe this will be exciting to people who might not have been interested in *Camelot Unchained* before, as well as to people who want to play full-time crafters, but are worried that their time and effort can easily be bested by "feeding the crafter mats" situations.

Camelot Unchained has been one of the more public crowdfunding projects to date. What can you tell us about why you decided to crowdfund Camelot Unchained over seeking traditional venture capital funding?

Firstly, I'm putting 2M of my own money into this game, as is one of the former investors at Mythic. Secondly, I didn't want to go down the VC route, because it would have taken a lot of time and we would have been under pressure to make the game "better," or more profitable from the perspective of the VCs. This time, I wanted to make a great game for a very niche market. This is the way we can do it, since our Backers are the ones who truly believe in RvR, old-school thinking, etc.

Have the advances in technology over the past decade made creating a game like Camelot Unchained easier or more difficult than its predecessor *Dark Age of Camelot*?

Both. Technology has improved, but budgets and expectations have as well.

I understand that *Camelot Unchained* is going to be focused on the realm war genre, however I noticed while browsing concept art that there's a whole lot of pictures of various dragons. Can we look forward to facing off with these massive beasts? How are you going to work these creatures into the game so they are meaningful and feared?

The role of dragons in this game is not going to be like the very trope-ish dragons in most games. The reveal is going to be interesting.

Talking about PvE elements of *Camelot Unchained*, what other creatures can we look forward to encountering besides the typical guards and lords? Will these creatures simply be an environmental accent, or will they have a larger part of the





story and gameplay mechanics? I would imagine that you might be using these creatures for generating currency through hides, pelts, treasures to help fund the war and crafting side of the game.

Exactly! The creatures in the game will be there to service the economy more than to service a leveling curve.

In the realm war how is looting corpses handled? A lot of times in great battles there's no time to loot corpses. How will *Camelot Unchained* handle this aspect?

What we've said to date (during the BSC Daze) is that our loot system is going to be very different than any other MMORPG, and closer to how some RPGs handle it. Gone is the "Kill ten rats. Get ten drops of crap" system, to be replaced with the

concept of a set time period (24 hours right now), during which your activities will be recorded by the server, and then the King will reward you the next day. So while some things may be obtainable right away (skins, mining), other items will be sent to you the next day, once the success of the entire Realm is determined.

What type of objectives will players encounter in the realm war?

Sorry, not ready to talk about this yet. Other than saying that one of the main objectives is to physically put the world's map back together again.

Being a leader of a large guild, I have to ask, has there been a lot of thought put into the Guild Systems yet? What type of features can guilds look forward to?

Yes, we plan on doing a lot with the guilds.

No, we haven't spent any time on them yet. Think about the Living Guild system in WAR, and you can get some ideas about what I would love to do here, if we have the time and budget.

Will there be guild progression in Camelot Unchained? Perhaps a public viewable herald of accomplishments for guilds displaying their accomplishments to the world?

Unsurprisingly, we will have a robust Herald-like system for this game. Both because I believe in it, but even more importantly, because we had a Stretch Goal for it.

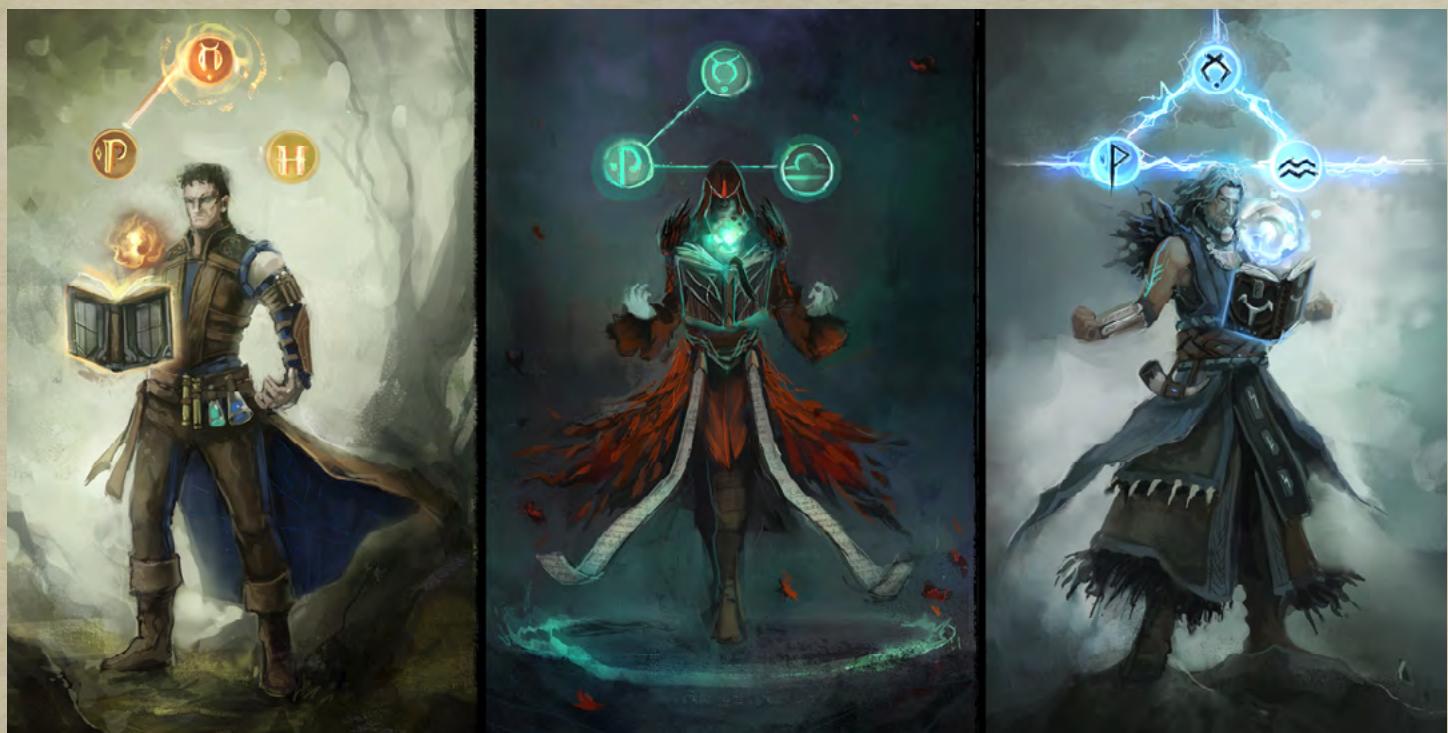
In Dark Age of Camelot there was an incredibly useful XML based data feed of critical Guild and Player information. This unicorn has since disappeared from the MMORPG world. Will it be making a comeback with Camelot Unchained in the form

of XML or JSON feed?

What we have now is even better. We are building our entire UI out of Chrome, and players have already begun building addons/mods for it. It's going to be incredibly easy to do a lot of interesting things that we could only dream of back in 1999.

Has there been any discussion on the maximum size of guilds? Will Guilds like Gaiscioch be forced to split into separate guilds to play together, or will there be a high enough cap where a thousand players can play together as they have for over a decade?

Undetermined, and frankly, undiscussed as of yet. This is going to be one of the subjects that we will discuss with our Backers, just as we have done everything from the BSC Daze to t-shirt design, the Drengr, and soon the crafting system. As our surveys and behavior on the Forums





have shown, we meant it when we said we were going to be very communicative with our Backers. And by communicative, I don't mean talking at our Backers but talking *with* them and getting their feedback. That is something reasonably unique, even for Kickstarters.

Are there plans to create an Alliance system to link like minded guilds together and provide them with means of communication such as *Dark Age of Camelot* did?

Yes.

Are there plans to make data accessible to mobile devices such as interactive real time war maps, leaderboards, etc?

Not plans exactly, but we want to be able to do some interesting things on the mobile side. Everything depends on

budget, however. OTOH, because we are being so open about addons/mods, we expect players to set up a lot of these types of things on their own. BTW, that's already happening, even in IT.

Games can be wonderful learning tools to help teach mythology to the youth of today. How much are you leveraging real historical mythology this time? I know in *Dark Age of Camelot* the Hibernian mythos was a bit off particularly, such as making the epic quest line for nature path Hibernians need to kill Bran the Giant, who in folklore was the Sea God's bastard son. Are you distancing the game from the actual mythos, or are you trying to make this version more in sync with the actual mythology?

Both. *Camelot Unchained* takes place in a post-apocalyptic world. Some of what we have already created is based heavily

on lore/mythology, and some of our other stuff is not.

Will there be housing in *Camelot Unchained* for players and guilds to display their achievements?

Yes, housing is confirmed, and we have already had players begin to play around with the first pass of our building system. In terms of ways for players and guilds to display their achievements, absolutely! That is part of the plan, with everything from merely upgraded building materials to being able to get trophies, rewards, etc. for your actions as players and guilds in the game.

Will there be small scale arenas or battlegrounds for structured PvP?

Not in the traditional sense. We've been very clear that we are going to create an almost exclusively open world (I've said it can't be 100%, due to some items listed here), that will have three safe starting cities, and that we reserve the right to have a starting area Battleground-like mechanism

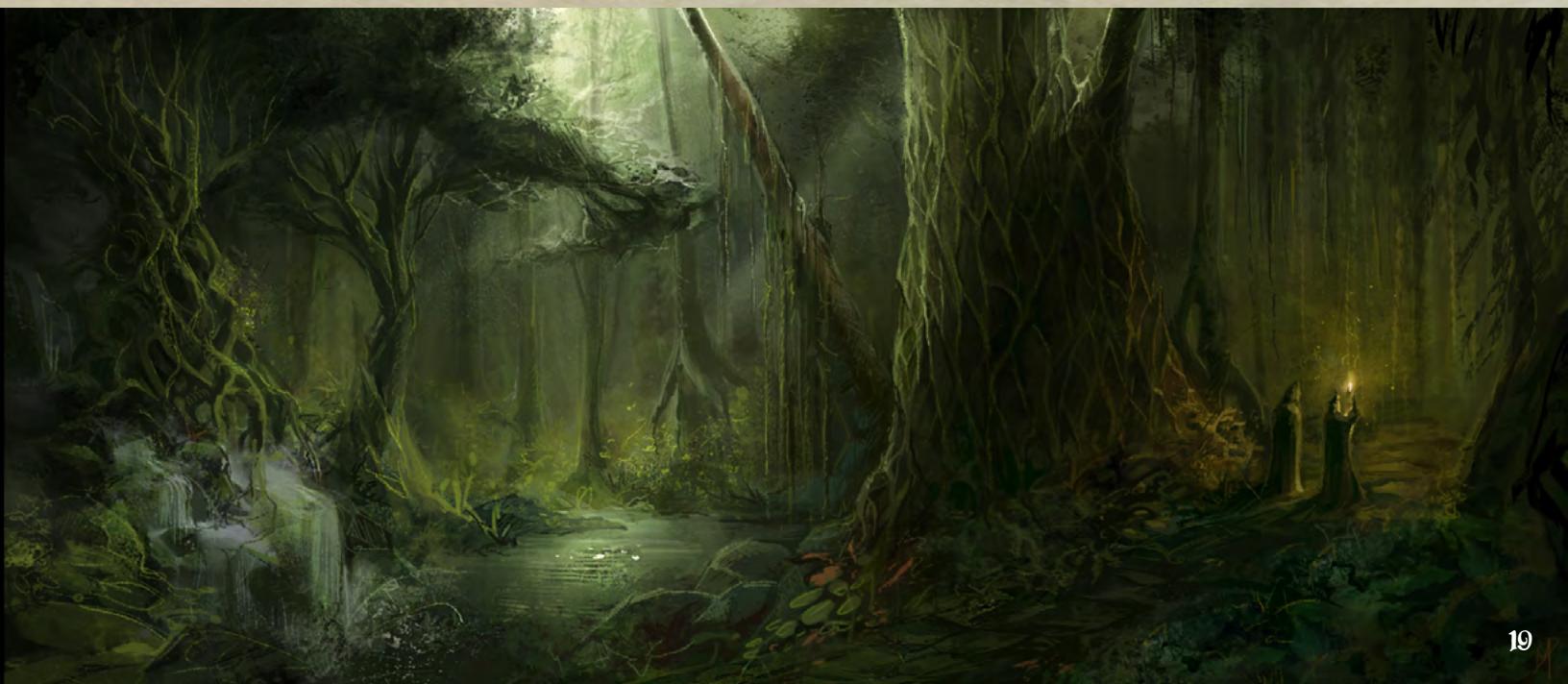
for new players to learn how to play the game. Other than that, there won't be other BGs or BG-like places.

How do you plan to introduce players to Siege Warfare if they join the game months after launch? Will there be a new player friendly siege area for learning?

Exactly! As per above.

What types of Siege Weapons can we expect?

In truth, we haven't even begun talking about traditional siege weapons yet. What we have been talking about are some of the types of spells that our mage-types will get, which are designed for use in sieges. Some of these spells might also be useful in PvP combat, but some will not be. So players should think of siege engines as being the players themselves, as well as the more typical catapults (or in our case, luchapults).



“Embrace the best of your best, learn from your failures, and don’t be afraid to do something different.”

- Mark Jacobs

In the long term plan for *Camelot Unchained* how do you plan to grow the game to keep it from growing stale? Most games introduce expansions and patches with new PvE content and storylines. With *Camelot Unchained* I imagine that's going to be a bit more challenging with a Siege focus. Have you started planning for the long term post launch introduction of fresh new content?

Nope, we need to focus on making our current game great, without worrying about what comes afterward. If we don't make a great game before launch, any specific plans that we had for post-launch would be moot. So we need to focus on being great at launch, and worry about the future as we get closer to that day.

In the end what is the Unicorn that players will chase for years on end? What do you have in store to motivate people to keep playing?

Sorry, there are no Unicorns in our game, they didn't survive the first of the Veilstorms. As to what players are going to keep chasing, well, besides each other's castles, keeps, mines, forests, etc., there will be ongoing extender packs and expansion

of areas like The Depths™. We also plan on adding new classes and races, depending on how launch goes of course, as per above.

Do you have any final inspiring words for someone currently at that point where they have a chance to create a new beginning?

Embrace the best of your best, learn from your failures, and don't be afraid to do something different.



BUILD, CONQUER, DEFEND. FORGE YOUR FATE.



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SHARDS ONLINE: EMPOWERING CREATIVITY

By: Derek Brinkmann & Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley

Conce in a long while we find a trailblazer willing to risk everything to explore the road less traveled. Derek Brinkmann, Citadel Studios Founder & CEO, has poured his life into his latest creation Shards Online which is set to revolutionize the way we look at MMORPG's.

Derek has worked with MMORPG's for the past decade and served as the Lead Software Engineer on EA/Mythic's Ultima Online for 5 years. He takes his experience working with the forefathers of MMORPG's to play his hand at the creation of a fresh innovative new concept.

Shards Online offers some very unique features that place the power of creation in the player's hands. Today, we talk with Derek on his career in the gaming industry and what we have to look forward to in his latest title Shards Online.

Greetings Derek! Thank you for joining us today. Before we dive into this massive new concept, I'd like to ask you to introduce yourself and the work you've done over the past decade.

Well, I'm co-founder and project lead for Citadel Studios. I got my start in the industry way back in 2003 when I got hired as an intern at EA to help with Madden 2004. After graduating, I came back to work full-time and in 2006, I jumped on the opportunity to head over to San Francisco to work on Ultima Online, the grandfather of MMOs. About a year later, the project was moved to Mythic Entertainment in Fairfax, Virginia and I took over as lead engineer. We had a blast working on expansion packs like Stygian Abyss and High Seas. I'll tell ya, the first time you shut down those live servers for a patch is quite a rush. Just knowing that there are 3000 or so people

out their behind their keyboards that see a disconnected message just because you hit one button! I know EA tends to have a bad wrap in the industry, but I really did enjoy the 10 years that I worked there and I learned a ton about what it takes to go from a game concept to a finished product.

I understand many of your team come from the Mythic studio and have worked on projects such as Warhammer Online and Dark Age of Camelot. What inspired you to break away and form your own studio?

It was always part of my master plan to start my own studio. The time I spent in the game industry prior to forming Citadel Studios was me essentially hoarding knowledge and cash so I could one day pull this off. When I got together with Tim Cotten,

our creative director, on Ultima Online, we knew almost instantly that one day we would create our own game together. Our brains just complement each other really well, ya know? Anyways, we were always impressed with the level of freedom designers had while creating content for Ultima Online and we were determined to give that same freedom to the players one day.

From your experience to date, what have you learned about the differences in working for someone else vs being your own boss? Have there been any noticeable differences?

Working for someone else is much easier. You know exactly what your expectations are. When you are expected to show up for





work, etc. When you are your own boss you have to rely on yourself to stay motivated. That is still pretty easy for me however because I have a such a strong passion for the game we are creating. Of course, I miss the steady guaranteed paychecks that I had back when I was working for the man.

So lets crack open this box and take a look inside your next title Shards Online? What is the general overall premise behind this game?

If Ultima Online and Neverwinter Nights had a love child, Shards Online would be the result. By combining the persistent virtual world of Ultima Online with the freedom of community run servers and the ability to act as a god (like a dungeon master) in Neverwinter Nights, we are creating a paradise for roleplayers where you are no longer constrained by the rules handed to you by the development team.

For regular players it means there is no limit to the content they will be able to experience since modders will be constantly creating new stories, meta-games and live events. For the admins, it means they will finally have a platform where they can host and moderate a virtual world with the potential to support thousands of players.

What is uniquely different about your title over every other title out there?

I can point to two key concepts that set Shards Online apart. First, is our focus on creating a living breathing world. What this means is we created an engine that at its core is a true world simulation and the designers build the game on top of that. Unlike other games where the engine is specifically designed to suit the experiences the designers want you to have. This philosophy encourages “emergent gameplay” which is a fancy way to say that

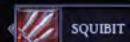
players will create their own experiences, often unintended by the designers, that are completely unique to them.

The other key concept is this ability to not only run and moderate your own game worlds but also completely change everything about the game right down to the core rules and stories on your server. With years of experience developing for MMOs we have figured out how to simplify the server architecture so just about anyone with a little technical ability can run their own server.

Will these Shards be housed internally or will they rely on players to house their own Shard?

It's important to understand the distinction between a single shard and a complete Shards Online server (we call them

SERVER SELECTION				
OFFICIAL	COMMUNITY	RULESET	PLAYERS	PING
High Fantasy - RF Only	Standard	100/640	36	
PvP Arena Cluster - Newb Friendly	Arena	128/128	40	
XYZ Gaming Community - ACTIVE GODS	Standard	1261/3200	18	
Hardcore Rules - Anything Goes	Hardcore	1149/1152	18	
Survival Cluster - 2x Resource	Survival	63/64	24	
Bugasi Cluster - Live Event Today!	Standard	128/128	63	
Hardcore Perma-death 3x Skill	Hardcore	255/256	18	
Super Rapid Fire, No cooldowns	Custom	310/512	5	



SQUIBIT

SERVER:

PvP Arena Cluster - Newb Friendly

RATING: 4/5

DESCRIPTION:

All characters start

fully templated.

Earn titles and

gold by defeating

other players in

the Coliseum. The

gods are watching

and poor

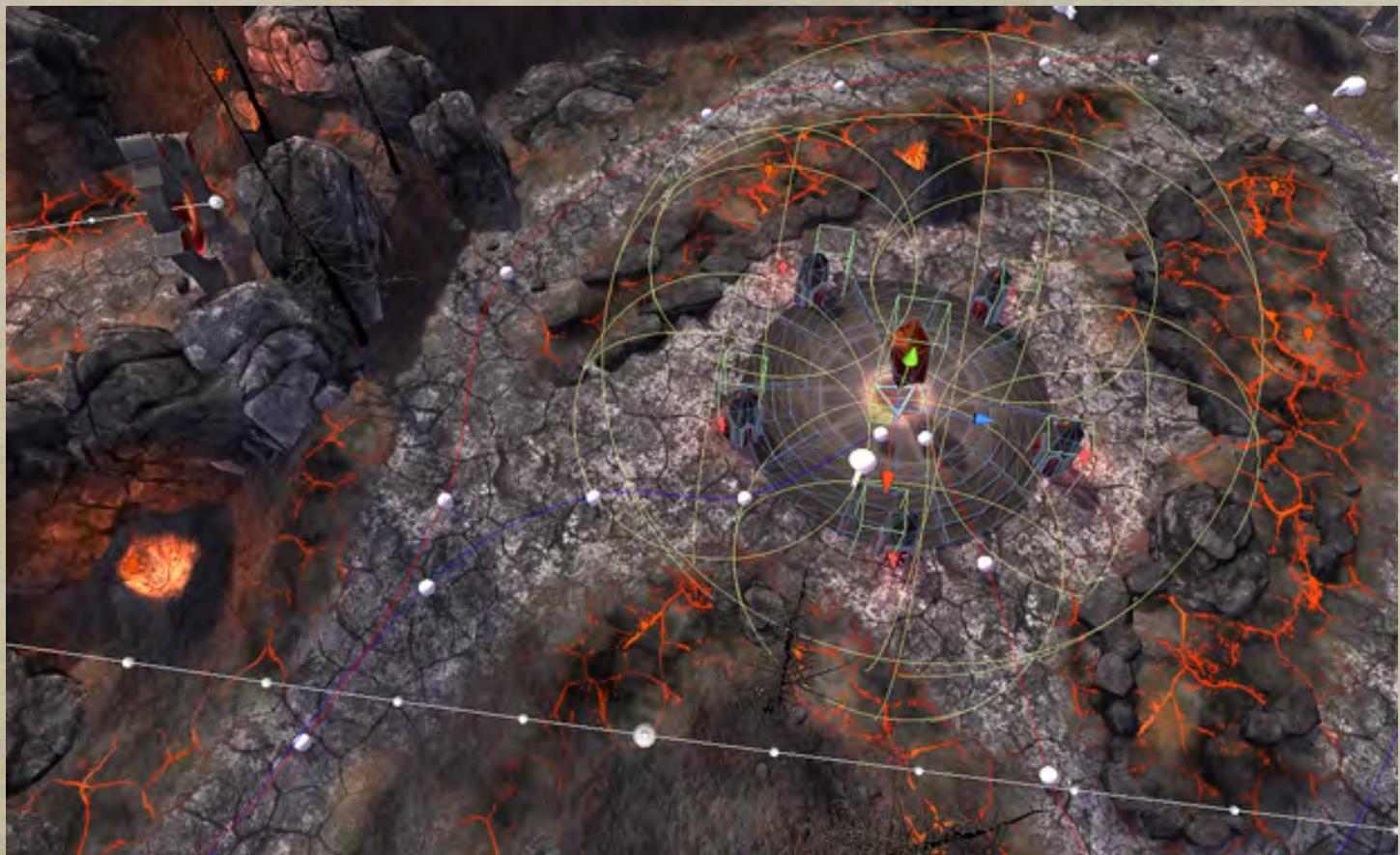
sportsmanship will

not be tolerated

on our clusters!

Launch

clusters). A single 'shard' is like a zone or region in other online games. The 'cluster' is our secret sauce that connects 'shards' together, enforces the rules, and allows travel between them. We host the 'clusters', you host the 'shards' however you want. The simplest way to run a 'shard' would be directly on your home computer, but you can also run them through a cloud service or third party server hosting company. We are currently exploring partnerships with third party hosting companies to make it





as easy as possible to get a ‘shard’ up and running quickly without taxing your home computer.

What type of things can a Shard Owner do with their world?

The easiest thing to do is set some initial settings, whitelist a few people as admins (gods) and fire it up with one of the official rulesets provided to you by Citadel Studios. The whole process won’t take more than 20 minutes or so. With a ‘shard’ running in standalone mode, anyone will be able to connect to it via IP address and play there. You will be able to use the built in god commands like possession, and creature/item spawning to create unique content for your players on the fly.

If you want to host more than a single ‘shard’, you will rent a ‘cluster’ server from Citadel Studios and use our simple web

interface to connect your ‘shards’ together. Now you are running a true MMO where the only limit on the number of players connected to your server is your resources and number of shards you choose to connect. ‘Clusters’ also have the innate ability to be listed on the official in-game server list. This makes it much easier for players to find your server.





Are there any caps to how many players can be on a Shard at a time?

As we optimize the server, the number of players that can connect to a single shard will be constantly increasing. By the time we hit beta, we plan for a single ‘shard’ (or zone) to support 128 players, provided the hardware you are running it on is powerful enough. Don’t expect to support 128 players on the “smart toaster” in your kitchen. As we go beyond beta we will continue to work on this hard limit to get it beyond 128 players. Remember, a ‘shard’ is just a single game zone on your server and you will be able to support numbers much larger than 128 (even up to the thousands) by connecting them together in a ‘cluster’.

When we talk about having the ability to create your own game world, where is the line drawn in the sand? How much freedom do we have? Can

we program new features? Import custom models? Is there some sort of approval process for player created content?

The freedom to modify the game on your servers will increase as we progress through development. We are starting with the gameplay, content and rules. At alpha, you will be able to change how the game plays, things like skills, abilities, monster AI and item drops, npc dialog and stories.

As we work through the stages of alpha we will be adding support for custom assets. These are art assets that get pushed down to the users when they connect. This will be things like new models, textures, particle effects and even eventually entire maps. We can not wait to see what people come up with. It’s the most exciting thing about what we are doing with Shards Online.

What types of restrictions can Shard Owners place on their worlds? How will you prevent players from creating powerlevel worlds to gear up their characters to the max so they can tip the scales in their favor on other worlds?

All ‘shards’ (zones) connected together in a single ‘cluster’ (server) run the same rules and that is enforced by the central ‘cluster’ server. Admins, can place restrictions on their servers by either changing the settings that come with the default rules or digging into the Lua behaviors to write custom rules.

With as much talent as you have coming from RvR based games, will there be Siege warfare available for content creators to build RvR style battles? Will there be siege warfare in the out of box game worlds?

We aren’t planning for any siege warfare in the initial release of the game, but we will be doing regular content packs that add additional content and features to the game post-release. This sounds like a great candidate for one of those packs.



Is there crafting planned for Shards Online and how will it work?

No online RPG would be complete without the ability to craft your own items. Our lead designer, Logrus, has tons of awesome plans for the crafting system. Check out a video Q&A with him [here](#).

What about Guilds, I haven’t seen a whole lot about what’s store for communities like Gaiscioch who decide to play Shards Online. Is there anything you can share with us about your plans for guilds in Shards Online?

Just like crafting, guilds is a must have part of any online RPG. We will provide a bunch of systems to help guilds get together, communicate and work together. Of course, guild halls will be built into the game and we have talked about ways we can allow for sanctioned guild vs. guild wars where the guards will stay out of the way. The open ended nature of Shards Online means that guilds will find their own ways to create experiences for their members, for example maybe you will have a group of builders in your guild who assist members with getting their homes and other structures built. Maybe your guild is based in an area out of the protection of guards and you will need to establish regular patrols to keep your members protected and feeling secure.

For larger gaming communities, we are excited to see that many of them are already planning to run their own servers. These large communities have the greatest potential to run much larger servers since

they can pool their resources together.

Lets talk about story. What is the general background story to the out of box experience?

We have an amazing, and completely insane, story that doesn't only explain the game world, but it explains the existence of the game itself. The overarching story focuses on two creator gods Lili and Eve (they manifest themselves as cute little fraternal twin sisters) who run experiments creating universes hoping to find an intelligent race that can eventually ascend and surpass them in power.

Is there a forecast release date planned for Shards Online?

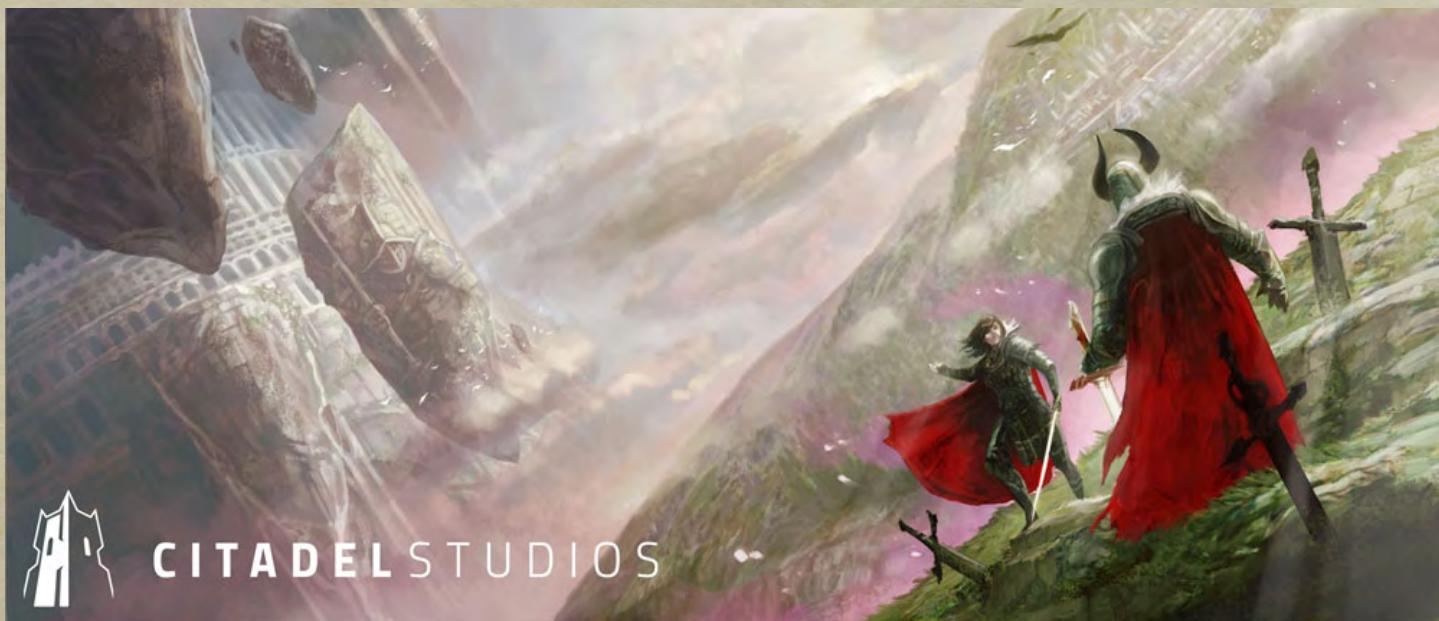
We have a highly detailed development roadmap on our product page. Of course, nothing in game development is ever set in stone and almost everything is subject to change. But it gives you a pretty good idea of how we plan to get to Beta (in the world of online games, they are essentially released when they reach Beta) in early 2016.

Lastly, would you be willing to share one experience that you can remember, where you were forced to step back to square one to advance your vision?

Well, my co-founder Tim Cotten and I did a great bit of planning before we even began development. Luckily, the vision is working and we haven't had to change much. The vision of Citadel Studios and Shards Online will never change and that is that we strive to create living breathing game worlds, where the gamers and their communities have the ultimate power.

I want to thank you for taking the time to discuss your newest title with us and we look forward to seeing what you have in store next.

Thank you! I'm looking forward to seeing a Gaiscioch 'cluster' popping up on the Shards Online server list real soon!



CITADEL STUDIOS



GUILDWARS



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THE RUINED CITY OF ARAH

Victory or Death!

By: Herb "OldGoat" Townsend

Che final major event in your personal story, and the Arah dungeon Story Mode, are one in the same. You can complete this dungeon at any time, but in order to get credit for completing your personal story, you must be at Victory or Death.

I would suggest you bring five level 80 adventurers for the most efficient run. (You can try with lower levels, however that will most likely result in a much longer dungeon run.) The

average completion time with a group of level 80 players is around an hour, so let's begin now.

One of the first things I want to know about a dungeon is where the repair anvil is; in Arah Story Mode, the anvil is right by the waypoint at the beginning of the dungeon. When you first appear in the dungeon, turn right to see it. It's important to be fully repaired when you fight any of the early bosses to help decrease kill time and increase your chance of success.

Once we get our bearings, we head immediately toward the encampment. Be careful, the bridge is very narrow. Don't panic if you fall off, it's easy to just continue moving along the path to the right and it will bring you right out near the camp.





The Camp

Once you've found the camp, someone has to talk to Caithe. You'll find her surrounded by the survivor's of Destiny's Edge. During your personal story, you've helped them all get past their differences and they've come to fight the dragon together, with your help of course.



While you're in the camp, there will be attacks by various groups of undead. None of them are really dangerous, and the NPC's in the camp will take care of most of them. There are a number of cutscenes that will occur while this is all going on, eventually you will be given three locations to retrieve power cores to enable the airship to take off.

There is a specific order of power cores; the first power core is behind a door to the north with two sparkling platforms. One person has to stand on each while the party fights off the attackers until the door opens.



Once you've got the door open, finish off any remaining attackers before going inside, you don't want them following you and adding to the fight while you're playing with the first boss. Speaking of the first boss, let me introduce you to the Champion Risen Lich.



We range most of the fights here. This guy has quite an array of skills. But he's not really hard to beat if you work together and use members of Destiny's Edge to stand behind as a shield. He will steal health and inflict chill and blind. His Unshakable and Defiance boons will make him seem tougher than he is. Just keep on hitting him with everything you have.

He will place Unholy Attunement on you and then send out blue orbs in all directions. If they hit you when you have the debuff, he will steal life from you. I always stand behind someone like Eir to keep them from hitting me. You can also dodge. There is a rumor that if you dodge

directly into the blue orbs, they will bounce harmlessly. We have NEVER been able to get this to work for us.

We defeat this guy by staying out of his Life Transfer Circle and ranging him. Keep moving, keep hitting and soon you'll finish him off. His most annoying ability is teleport which will sometimes take him out of range and give him a chance to heal up a bit. Just keep at it and you'll beat him.

Once he's downed, search the wreckage for a power core. Once it's found the boss chest will appear. Now, if you need to repair, it won't cause any delay to teleport back to the beginning and meet the party back at the encampment. Once you're all together again, head south.



The next door is protected by two obelisks and a bunch of grubs.

Stack on each obelisk, focus fire and use AOE to take care of both the obelisk and the spawning grubs. Once both obelisks are destroyed clear out the remaining grubs before entering to fight the Champion Bloated Creeper.



This guy eats grubs to gain health and a buff that could easily overpower you if he eats too many. Range him! Focus on him until he spawns grubs, then kill all the grubs before he eats them. He spawns them wherever his enemies are standing. You

can make this a lot easier by all standing close to each other and far enough away from the creeper, so the grubs will spawn close to you, then switch focus to the grubs or use AOE to kill them. Again, we range this fight to keep the grubs from spawning right next to him.

Just stay together, keep the grubs away from him, and you'll defeat him in just a few minutes. Once again, pick up the power core. If any of you need repair, waypoint back to the beginning and meet your party at the encampment.

The final power core will be found up some stairs to the east and you'll see waterfalls on either side of the door. This door will open automatically once everyone is there. (Including Destiny's Edge.)

Once it's open, you'll see a number of red circles and Orrian Eyes. The Eyes will kill you almost instantly if you get within range.



Luckily, you can fight them without being very close by using your ranged attacks. Once you've killed the first Eye, carefully avoid the circles and get a little closer to attack the second Eye. You'll know if you get too close, you'll most likely be dead. Continue avoiding the circles and killing each Eye until you get to the end of the path and meet the Champion Risen Knight.



The Champion Risen Knight will spawn Risen Plague Carriers as well as Necromancer Marks. The annoying part of this fight is his evades. The spawns don't last long and you just need to keep fighting the Knight. We always range this boss. If you do melee, jump in and hit him, then jump right back out.

Once you pick up the final power core, head back to the camp for a cinematic. Once the cinematic has completed, you'll find yourself on an airship. I can't emphasize too much the need to get your bearings on the airship. Find the doors, the steps, and the repair anvil before you start another fight. If you die while on the airship or on the plateau that follows, you will spawn at the waypoint on the ship.

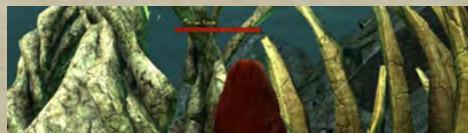




The ship will take you to the Valley of the Giants. Three of you will have to take the cannons on the right, the other two will keep the deck clear of spawned mobs. The cannoneers will use the 2 key only. When the giants reach down to grab some goo out of the swamp, use the 2 key to put up a shield. The goo will bounce off the shield and hit the giants.

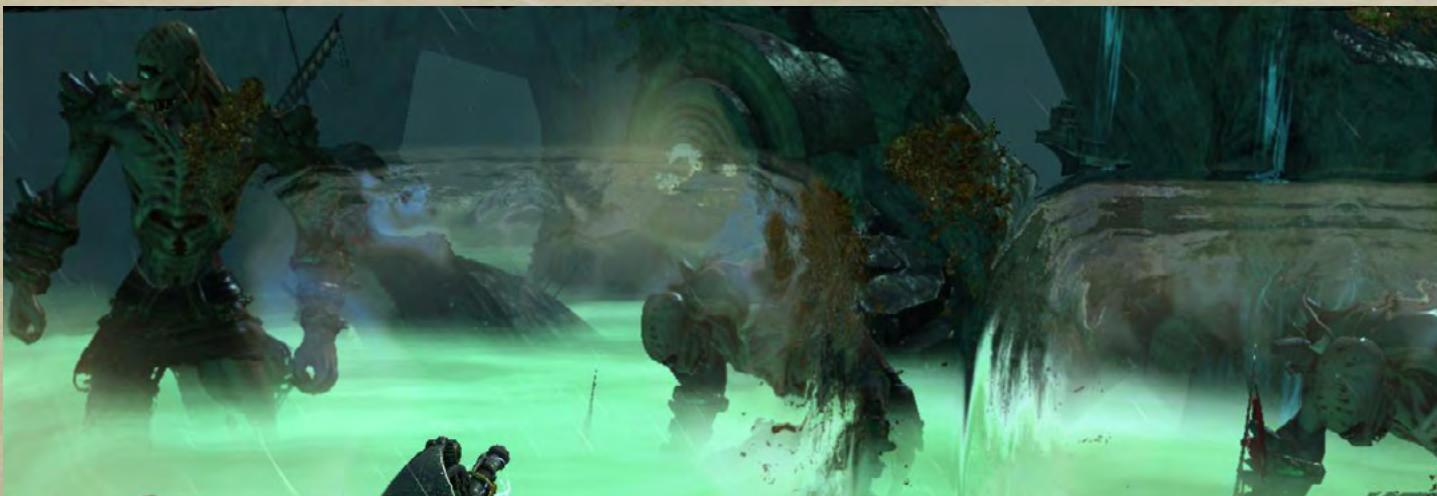
Once all five giants are dead, you will be given an opportunity to climb into a helicopter on the bow of the airship. This helicopter

will take you to the top of a plateau with three “towers” that need to be knocked down. Each tower is guarded by a different group of mobs. One is guarded by gorilla’s and eyes. Kill the eyes, then four of you attack the gorillas while someone with a lot of damage starts beating on the tower. While the tower is up, the gorilla’s will keep respawning. Once it’s down, finish the gorillas and move on.



The second group we hit are the Orrian Spectral Weapons. Same plan applies here. Four people go after the mobs, the fifth knocks down the tower then helps clean up the mobs.

The easiest tower is the one protected by the oozes. Everyone should focus on taking down the tower. Once the tower is down, all the oozes die. We save this one for last because we don’t want any wandering mobs to get in the way of the boss fight here.



The Mouth of Zhaitan will appear once the third tower is down. He will throw out fiery stones. We use these to stop his whirlpool mouth attack. As soon as the mouth starts the whirlpool, throw one of the stones at him. This will prevent him from sucking you all in and doing massive damage. Keep using those fiery stones to stop his whirlpool, and keep hitting him as well. Once he's finished, a cut scene showing troops coming in to open the big door to the next section.

Once back on the airship,

you'll divide again between three cannons and two deck clearers. (Don't forget to look for the chest.) There will be some deck clearing as you go until finally you get to meet your first dragon. You won't know which side of the airship to fight him on until he attacks the first time. If he hits you on the left, that's the side you'll use. Just keep firing at him with the 1 key and use the shield with the 2 key to minimize the incidence of mobs on the deck. It will likely take two or more of his attacks to kill him.

Once he's dead, you will be meeting two dragons. Again, you won't know which side each of them will be on until they attack. The first attack will be a single dragon. After that they will both attack. Either both on the left, one on each side, or both on the right. You'll have to figure as you go how to best handle this fight. If they come up on the same side, it's a matter of targeting one then the other. If they switch sides, be prepared to fight one on one side, drop off the cannon, move to the other side and hit that one



a while. Once one of them is down, you just have to finish the second one.

Once these two dragons are done, you'll have to switch ships to get on the biggest one. This is the final part of the dungeon. Again you'll go to the bow. Wait until the larger ship is beneath you before you jump. If you jump too early, you run the risk of a very long fall. Notice the cannons and the control panels on the new ship. Also, you'll find a chest behind the controls on the deck.

You'll be using the cannons on the right side later, but for now you'll have to keep the deck clear

while Zojja takes her sweet time configuring the big gun. You'll run through a number of simple mobs that die very easily. Eventually the Eye's of Zhaitan (the big ones) will appear at the consoles Zojja was working on. Once they are dead, everyone grab a cannon, use the aiming arrows to get as close to Zhaitan as you can, and proceed to fire.

During this part of the fight, the only danger will be the occasional poison cloud at your feet. If you notice your health going down, drop off the cannon, get back away from the poison till it dissipates (condition removal only works when you're not on the cannon)

and then get back on and continue firing.

Once the dragon is dead, we sometimes find it fun to all jump off the ship. If you try this, you will die, but you will still get credit for killing the dragon.

After the dragon is killed and all the cutscenes are done, go to Fort Trinity and talk to Trahearne to finish up your story.

Note: You do not need to be at "Victory or Death" in your personal story to participate in the story mode dungeon, but you will not get credit for the dungeon in your story until you've done it after reaching "Victory or Death."





TEQUATL THE SUNLESS

By: Amanda “Soren” Carr

Tequatl the Sunless is one of Zhaitan’s champions. Tequatl, whose name means “the one in darkness” in the language of the hylek (thus, with hylek calling Risen “the Sunless” his name roughly translates into “risen one in the darkness”), has long plagued the Splintered Coast of Sparkfly Fen, opposed by the Vigil, the sylvari of Caer Brier, the asura of the United Arcanist Lab, the quaggans of Brooloonu, and the local hylek tribes.

Recently, Vigil tacticians have reported that Tequatl seems to have “evolved” and its attacks have become more elaborate, and it has become more difficult to fight. Warmaster Narru who was dispatched by General Almorra Soulkeeper to investigate the reports theorizes that it may be a response to the Pact offensive in Orr; though whether this is the case remains to be seen. At a similar time to Narru’s assignment, Rylock Brimstone had sent Rox to track and kill Tequatl the Sunless.



FOOD & CONSUMABLES

Food:

- Zerg and Defense Teams: Feast of Orrian Steak Frites -> +100 Power / +70 Vitality
- Turret Operators: Tray of Mango Pies -> +70 Vitality / Gain 85 health every second
- *Most commanders will drop plates of each food and a Heroes Banner.*

Consumables:

- Mortar Seed Turret (Caledon Forest)
- Deployable Mortar Kit (Fireheart Rise)
- Fire Elemental Powder (Fireheart Rise)
- Ogre Pet Whistle (Iron Marches)

THINGS TO NOTE

- Defense Teams the first mobs spawn with 14:00 minutes left on the clock and then every 90 seconds.
- Do not party up unless you are in a defense team, turret party, or the ERT. This allows us to spread out buffs to the most people.
- Make sure that once defenses are set, everyone not on a turret or in the defense teams needs to be in the zerg or they will scale mobs
- Teq **can't** be crit! Warriors this means *Banner of Discipline* will not work! Don't throw it.
- If at anytime you become dead it is very important that you **waypoint to Brooloonu Waypoint [&BNEBAAA=]**. We will not stop to rez the dead

TURRETS

Turret groups are divided into 2 teams, one in the South (1, 2, 3) & one in the North defense (4, 5, 6). All turret operators have access to the following skills when they hop

on a turret:

Skill 1 is mainly used during the burn phases. Each turret operator should target Tequatl's head and spam skill 1 to do upwards of 9-10k damage on Teq each hit. Skill 2 is used mainly by the North turret team as they are responsible for watching Teq's hardened scales. To knock down scales each of the turrets must target Tequatl's head as scale penetration will not work if targeting his feet. Skill 3, or your cleanse, is used on the zerg and fellow turrets when Teq spawns his fingers. Look for the green poison clouds and aim your shot at them. Skills 4 and 5 can be used at any time as they are there to buff the zerg.

South Turrets: Your job is to primarily cleanse and buff the zerg every chance you get using skills 3, 4, & 5. You will also be cleansing yourselves and your fellow south turrets as needed. If North runs into trouble there is a chance you will also be using your skill 2 to knock down scales.

North Turrets: Your primary job is to take out Tequatl's scales by targeting Teq's head and spamming your skill 2. If scales reach 20 a bone wall will appear and Teq will go invulnerable until it is destroyed.

Skill			Description
1		Stake Thrower	0 1 Fires a stake at a target.
2		Scale Penetration	0 12 Does no damage, but artillery pierces Tequatl's hardened scales.
3		Poison Cleanse	0 5 Cleanse the poison created by Tequatl's fingers.
4		Hylek Elixir	0 15 Dispense hylek elixirs to buff your allies.
5		Hylek Salve	0 15 Dispense hylek salve to buff your allies.

When skill 2 is on cooldown feel free to use skill 1 to help the zerg with extra dps. Cleanse yourself and your fellow North turrets as needed.

DEFENSE TEAMS

In order to ensure a smooth and successful Teq run Defenses are key to keeping our turret operators alive and the zerg buffed. Defenses are broken down into 2 groups called the North & South defenses and each defense consists of a 5 man boat and 5 man hills team.

North/South Boats: The boat team is responsible for keeping mobs that spawn in the boat from getting to our turrets. It is important that the boat team fights only in the boat unless they are kiting mobs away from Turret 1/6 or they are running back from the waypoint.

North/South Hills: The hills teams are responsible for taking out mobs and fingers as they appear with the priority always on fingers that spawn between turret 2 & 3, in front of turret 3, between turret 5 & 6, & in front of turret 6. Note: It is advisable for North Hills to range the far finger in front of turret 6 to avoid aggroing mobs into turret 6.

THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM AKA "ERT"

The ERT consists of one 5 man party

that essentially are there to save the day if something goes wrong at one of the defenses. For the most part the ERT will stay with the zerg unless needed elsewhere. They will also stay behind during the battery phase and clear fingers that spawn on the beach.

THE ZERG

The Zergs job is to bring the party and dps to the fight. It is highly encouraged that you stick on your zerg commanders tag to benefit from the buffs the turrets will be throwing. Most zerg commanders will fight melee though if you need to hang back in ranged that is fine as well.

Warriors should always be dropping banners if they have them when they see lots of the zerg go down to failed dodging of the waves or Teq's ground stomp. Elementalists should drop Icebows and Fiery Greatswords every chance they get for added dps. All zergers should pick up any Ele weapons they see and use them, particularly skill 4 on both. Keep an eye out for the double number spot and if you find it call out in say chat so everyone can see the bubble.

If at anytime you become dead it is very important that you waypoint to Brooloonu Waypoint [&BNEBAAA=]. We will not stop to rez the dead as we need all available dps on the dragon.



BATTERY PHASE

After the zerg beats on teq for a while (get Teq's health to 75%) Tequatl will become invulnerable and fly off. This is the start of the battery phase. At this time the ERT will stay back to clear fingers while everyone else will spread out to defend the 4 batteries.

Remember to push/pull/kite/hug/scare mobs off the battery. At no point should the defenders ever fight on the battery.

Megalaser: As soon as the champion Krait pops up it needs to be dealt with asap. Rangers this is your time to shine with *entangle*! Any kind of pull or stun works good here. Champ krait spawns just behind the North Turrets.

East Battery: East needs to kill and snare Risen Abominations (A-bombs) before they ever get close to the battery. If they reach a certain range they will explode and do massive amounts of damage. A-bombs should always be first priority

West Battery: West need to take out fingers by using feedback/reflect skills. Take out the fingers first then kill regular mobs.

North Battery: North you have one mission in life and that is to camp out on and stomp every grub hole that spawns! Grub holes must always be the first priority. If they are left alone they will spawn risen grubs and those grubs can decimate the battery in mere seconds. If a grub spawns it needs to be taken out asap.

BURN PHASE

With *30 sec* left in the battery phase you commander will call out for all turret operators to head back to their designated turrets. When Teq lands all turrets will spam skill one while targeting his head.

Depending on how the batteries are faring the call to run back will be around the *20 sec* mark. At this time everyone including the defense teams need to head in and stack on you commander. Watch for calls on when to drop fire fields and

blasts as well as might buffs. When Teq lands burn baby burn! With luck the zerg will do enough dps to push Teq right into the next battery phase. If dps is lacking, defenses will be told to head back to protect the turrets and the zerg will remain in melee range until the next phase happens or the dragon is defeated. Watch for calls for consumables and as a general rule of thumb save them until the very last burn or unless told otherwise.





MAGGIE PART II

By: Herb “OldGoat” Townsend

Harry was worried. They had been home three days and Maggie hadn't come out of her room. Both Precious and Simon stood guard at her door and would let no one pass. Now, it wasn't that they would bite or attack anyone. But, if anyone came to the door, they would immediately step in front of the door to block it.

Berry had brought trays of food and left them on a small table outside the door. Knocking and speaking loudly she announced it was time to eat. When she returned, the food had remained untouched.

Terri had tried without success to convince Maggie to open the door and let her in. Bones and Electra were also met with silence.

Mellen told them all to wait. Maggie would come out when she was ready to face the challenge of finding and rescuing her parents. But for now, she was mourning the loss of her mentor and friend.

In the meantime, Eir had taken the only clue back to Hoelbrak to see if she could find out where the shoe was made. Travelling

throughout the city, asking every merchant and craftsman she met if they had ever seen this type of shoe before. No one could tell her where it was made. No one until she stepped into Vheratha's Tavern for breakfast on the third day.

As she stepped in, she traded insults with Vheratha and went directly to the Stammtisch and sat in her usual chair. Throwing the shoe on the table, she then banged and shouted, "I'll have my usual, and some bacon for Garm please."

When the waitress came over to deliver their lunch, she immediately commented on the shoe. "That looks a bit small for you, Eir."

"That shoe has become the bane of my existence. I have been trying for three days to find out where it was made. Nobody in this whole city can answer me."

"I know where it was made." The waitress exclaimed, "My brother gave my daughter a pair last Wintersday."

"Did he tell you where he got it?"

"Yes, let me send for him. He can probably tell you everything you want to know. He travels quite a lot. He's a cartographer. I'll bet he's even got a map to show you where he got it."

With that, the waitress stepped outside the tavern and shouted for one of the children playing in the snow to go find his uncle. The child ran quickly away and the waitress returned to Eir.

"He should be here shortly. It's good you came today, he is leaving to map the Cursed Shore in the morning," she said as she went back to work.

Eir sipped her kaffe and toyed with the shoe as she waited. It was early in the day and the tavern was nearly empty except for the staff. Soon, she saw the child return and whisper to the waitress.

"He's on his way. He is called Vask the Lost. But don't tell him I told you that." The waitress smiled as she walked by Eir's table.

Soon a large burly Norn with a bright red beard came in and looked over the room to find his sister.

The waitress waved to him and he walked to her. She spoke to him quietly and pointed at Eir. He joined the ranger at her table and the waitress brought him a large steaming mug of kaffe. As is the Norn custom, no one spoke until he had finished half the mug.

"So, you wish to know where that shoe comes from?" He asked.

"Yes, it's very important." Eir spoke seriously. "Any assistance you can give us will be rewarded."

"You wound me Eir, I need no reward to assist the leader of Destiny's Edge."

"I thank you Vask."

"This shoe was made in the style of the Ossan's. I bought a pair for my niece from a merchant in Divinity's Reach. He gave me a map of the Elon River Basin. That's where he bought them. Wait here."

Vask left in a hurry. Eir finished her lunch and ordered more kaffe for them both. While she waited, she gave a sharp two tone whistle and Garm appeared. Taking his place at her feet,

he lay down and closed his eyes.

Vask returned with a long paper tube. Sitting down, he opened the end and pulled out a large map and clearing the table laid it out. Taking a quill in hand, he began to write in the lower left corner of the map. “The merchant that I purchased the shoes from is in the Ossan Quarter of Divinity’s Reach. They are almost identical to this shoe except for the size and color of the fancy art. Let me think, yes, his name is Chandran. He told me the shoes came from a small village in Elona. This is its location on the map”

“But the barricade, how does he get past that? That pathway has been blocked for a century?”

“He told me he has family in the Order of Whispers.” Vask replied.

“Thank you.” Eir spoke quietly now, “Should you ever need anything, call upon me.”

“It is my pleasure, Eir.”

With that, Eir paid the waitress, leaving a large tip. Garm led the way as they left

the tavern. Eir quickly took wolf form and the two of them hurried to Stonewright Steading. As soon as they arrived, Eir spoke to Garm, “You must call to Simon. Everyone must meet us at Stonewright’s Steading, immediately!”

Simon stood suddenly and began to bark and scratch



on Maggie’s door. Precious joined him, howling in that annoying way that only cats can. The first to reach the top of the stairs was Terri, followed closely by Mellen and Harry. Moments later, Bones, Electra, Berry joined them.

Mellen reached into his robe and pulled out an eyedropper full of liquid. He kneeled by Precious and placed three drops on his tongue. The cat shook his head and began to speak.

“We must go. Maggie must come with us. Eir’s nest.

Eir knows where the shoe came from.”

At that moment the door burst open and they were shocked by Maggie’s appearance. Her face had the look of pure anger that she only used in battle. She reeked of alcohol as she spoke, “What in Grenth’s name is all this cursed noise?”

“Eir’s found out where the shoe came from, we must meet her in Hoelbrak.” Electra couldn’t hide the concern in her voice.

Terri spoke then, “Come on, let’s get you cleaned up and ready to go.”

Taking Maggie by the hand, she led her to the bathroom with Berry following closely behind. As they left, Terri spoke to Harry over her shoulder, “Harry, can you get Maggie’s pack and weapons? They should still be in the front closet. And get the wagon ready too, please?”

“Of course. Come on Precious, we’ve got work to do.”

Everyone began a mad rush to prepare for the trip.

Mellen shouted orders to everyone as they filled the wagon with everything they might need. Soon the wagon was ready and everyone stood expectantly at the front door waiting for Maggie and Terri.

The door opened and although she still had a murderous look on her face, it was obvious the girls had been able to get her cleaned up and somewhat sober. As she began down the steps, Terri and Berry began to follow her. Stopping, Maggie turned to Terri and said, "No, I can't lose you too, you stay here."

Taking Maggie's face in her hands, Terri spoke with great passion, "You're going to need me on this journey. There's nothing you can say that will keep me home. We take care of each other, just like any other time."

Maggie then turned to Bones, "You will protect her above all else, is that clear?"

"Yes it is. She will be safe as long as I breathe."

Electra added, "We will all watch over each other."

With that, they boarded

the wagon and Harry spoke to the horses and they began their trip to Divinity's Reach. Suddenly, out of the brush Private Swift ran and jumped at the wagon. It never slowed, and Bones had to reach out and grab him by the jacket to pull him in.

"You're not leaving without me. Where are we going?" He asked.

"Hoelbrak." Bones answered simply.

As they travelled silently, Precious climbed into Maggie's lap and began to purr. Simon lay at her feet. Maggie's face began to soften and she scratched the cat behind his ears. Not to be left out, Simon softly whined and was rewarded with the same treatment.

The old man stood in the



freezing rain watching the trail. Able to shield himself from most of the wind by leaning into an outcrop of stone, the guardian cast

healing spells on himself to stay awake. He looked much larger than he was. His face was covered as much by a full long beard as by his helm. Handmade, the hat held the horns of a wild goat from the mountains of his homeland.

The birds noticed it first. Their sudden flurry of escape got his attention and he kneeled to stay hidden. He had the perfect vantage point on a small rise just north of the gate. the brush was waist high and he could see through the bottom of the plants. He recognized Serentine immediately, but the couple with him took a minute. Suddenly he realized it was Frieda and Colonel Lynn.

This was important. Getting a message to his superiors in the Order of Whispers was imperative. He carefully slid back around the outcrop and headed north to the cavern. On his way he changed into his chef's uniform. Serentine was going to need his lunch.

As he entered the kitchen he called to a young woman cutting potatoes, "Get help

Tonia, we're going to have company, you'll need more potatoes peeled. Serentine's back."

The young dark skinned girl smiled at her father and called to her brother and sister upstairs. They came down as children do, laughing and tumbling over one another. Having heard their father, they immediately donned aprons and began peeling potatoes. Tonia grabbed a very large iron pot and carried it by the handle to the hand pump by the sink. Grabbing the handle, she began to pump. Soon water began pouring out of the spout into the pot.

As the children continued to prepare lunch, the old man stepped outside the back door and opened the cage fastened to the wall. Reaching in, he pulled out a pretty silvergray miniature griffin and began whispering into its ear. "This is farm 184. Serentine has arrived. He has two prisoners. Instructions needed."

He whispered the message twice before letting the creature fly away into the darkness. He then stepped back inside and helped

the children prepare the meal. The meal was nearly complete when a large bell sounded at the door. With a quick "be silent" look at the children, the old man continued his work.

Sounds from the front room of the large house told them the visitors had been admitted into the large living room. Muffled sounds of greetings came through the kitchen door. Suddenly the door opened and Mrs. Karimi's panic stricken face appeared. "We have guests, five of them, how long will it take for lunch?"

Looking at his oldest daughter Tonia, the old man smiled and said, "See sweetheart, I told you. You can never have too many potatoes."

Turning to Mrs. Karimi he said simply, "We'll be fine and on time, Maam."

"What would we do without you, Mr. Ziegen?" The door closed just as suddenly and they continued making lunch for the family and the guests.



The griffin flew straight. Maybe straighter than a crow, because it landed at the Order of Whispers Headquarters Tree in Lornars Pass before lunch was served. Once it landed on the third branch from the bottom, it was picked up by a pretty light blue Sylvani female who immediately kissed it on the nose. Waving her hand above it's head she mumbled an incantation and the griffin began to speak. Word for word, it repeated the old man's message perfectly.

Taking it inside the open door at the base of the huge tree, she placed it into a bin with food and water. Climbing the stairs she tapped on the door at the top. The door opened and closed behind her. In a few moments, the door opened again and she moved back down the stairs to the griffin. Above the bin with the food and water, there was a cage containing more griffins. Reaching in, she grabbed the closest creature and began to whisper, "Farm 184, Serentine has arrived, Ziegen has visual, instructions needed."

Turning him loose, she

then grabbed the arrival and whispered, "Message to HQ, continue monitor. Determine status of all targets," and released it back to the wind. It immediately circled the tree and then flew off in the direction of Ziegen.

The other message was already in Lornar's Pass heading straight for Guutra's. Noticing an eagle in the sky ahead, the griffin ducked beneath some branches. Soon the predator had moved on and the brave little creature continued its journey. It was nearly time for the evening meal when he landed at Guutra's. The bell rang when he landed and soon he was repeating his message to the door guard.

An inside door opened and up the stairs came the Creator. The messenger was prompted once again to repeat. The Creator immediately turned to the door keeper and spoke, "Riel Darkwater asked to be kept informed of the whereabouts of Serentine. Radio Lion's Arch immediately."

Within the hour, the Creator had heard from Riel,

"Prepare the portal. Assets will be arriving soon."



The wagon had entered Divinity's Reach through the Plaza of Dwayna and then headed up Dwayna High Road. Maggie had drifted into a half sleep. Mellen was sitting next to Harry who was driving the wagon. Private Swift was watching out the back. Bones, Electra, and Terri were whispering quietly when the explosion rocked them all.

Harry fought desperately to keep the horses from bolting. Private Swift fell out of the back. Maggie grabbed her bow and followed him. As they exited the wagon, the group formed a circle around it facing outward.

Looking North, Harry shouted, "The bank, the explosion was at the bank!"

They immediately began to run toward the bank to try to thwart the robbery they were sure they would find. But, when they reached the

scene, they were shocked. The bank had not been the target. Instead, the explosion was on the Low Road.

Private Swift was the first to realize the explosion was a diversion. He shouted, "The Queen, they're after the Queen!"

The group immediately charged toward the Royal Palace. Standing guard outside the main door was Logan Thackeray. Having heard the explosion, the Seraf soldiers had immediately moved into protective formation. Logan was barking orders and sending scouts to survey the situation.

Upon seeing Private Swift, Logan turned to him and said, "Captain Swift? You're out of uniform."

Ignoring the questioning looks from his companions, Swift produced a document and handed it to Captain Thackeray. Upon reading it, Logan motioned for them to follow him. Swift ignored the questioning looks as they entered the palace. Logan led them to a sitting room off of the main hallway and

said, "Wait here."

Maggie immediately asked Swift, "Captain? I thought you were a private. Tell me what is going on!"

"It's a long story. I've been undercover trying to find out who in the Vigil has been feeding information to Serentine and his army. I will explain later, but right now we need the Queen's help."

The door opened and Logan held it for Queen Jennah. As she entered, everyone in the room except for Swift knelt. Swift snapped to attention and saluted.

"Captain Swift," Queen Jennah spoke softly but firmly, "You are out of uniform again, I see. What is it this time?"

"Your majesty, you've heard about Colonel Lynn. Mrs. Lynn left a shoe behind. Eir Stegalkin has determined where it came from. We were on our way to meet her in Hoelbrak when the explosion occurred. We came here to assist if there is an attack."

"These explosions have proven to cause minimum

damage, maximum noise. We think they're diversions." Logan said.

Queen Jennah wrinkled her brow and spoke calmly, "I believe capturing Serentine is a higher priority at this time. The order of whispers has been monitoring and believes he is preparing for a very large assault."

"Your majesty, I have sworn to kill him!" Maggie's voice did nothing to disquise her hatred.

Taking Maggies hand, the queen said, "Come with me, my dear. We have to talk."

As they left the room, Bones asked Logan, "Any word on the cause of the explosion?" Logan merely shrugged and said, "The same as all the rest. Flash and smoke, minor injuries. We've got three companies of Seraf patrolling the city. Any more and the palace is under protected. No clues have been found pointing to any group, but we all know it's Serentine's army."

"Have you been able to ascertain his location?" Mellen inquired.

"We believe he is hiding

somewhere in Lornar's Pass, but we can't seem to pinpoint his hideout."

The door opened and the group was surprised to see Riel Darkwater. She was flanked by Creator Surri and General Soulkeeper. Swift snapped immediately to attention as did Bones and Harry. Mellen and Terri stepped out of the way and carefully directed a nod in the direction of Riel. Electra called Simon to her and stood quietly with her hand on his head. Precious disappeared under a cabinet in the corner.

"Where's Maggie Lynn?" Asked Riel.

"She's with the Queen." Logan answered.

"At ease," barked Almorra Soulkeeper. "We will wait."

Logan and Bones left and returned with chairs for the newcomers and everyone sat down to wait.

"Why are you out of uniform, Captain?" Inquired Almorra.

"I'm under orders, maam. Colonel Lynn's orders."

"Understood. Now brief

me with what you know so far."

Swift began to tell the general about the kidnapping, the shoe, the message from Eir, and their detour because of the explosion. A couple of times during his explanation, Riel and Surri exchanged glances. As he finished, the door opened and Maggie entered. She had her battle face on as she saluted the general.

Riel broke the momentary silence, "Ms Lynn, we have to talk."

"I think I already know what you want to say. You want Serentine alive."

"Yes. We need him alive. We believe he's behind these bombings and that he will not stop until he kills the Queen. We also know he can't be the brains behind this. We need to question him. We need to find out who the real threat is." Riel spoke calmly.

"I have already promised Queen Jennah that I will bring him in alive. I won't promise he'll be unharmed." Maggie's eyes seemed to glow with hate.

"Just don't remove his tongue." Amorra added.

Maggie looked around the room at her friends and spoke clearly, "Eir is waiting for us in Hoelbrak, it's time to go."

Creator Surri cleared her throat. As the room silenced, she spoke, "When you meet Eir, you'll go to Ebonhawke. From there you'll leave for the Elon River."

"Elon River? I thought that portal has been sealed." Electra whispered to Bones.

"Your contact in Ebonhawke is Captain Samuelsson. He will escort you to the portal. It is under the protection of the Order of Whispers." Riel explained, "They will allow you access. Once there you will be met by another agent. His name is Ziegen. He will take you to Serentine."

"You must move quickly, we don't know how long he will be at his present location." Surri added.

"If you know where he is, you must know how my parents are?" Maggie asked.

Surri answered, "As far as

we can tell, they are both his prisoners, but they both seem well enough."

"Once through the portal, you will not be able to contact anyone on this side directly. Radio signals can be intercepted. Carrier griffin is the fastest means of getting messages through." Riel cautioned.

Harry spoke then, "We may have another method that isn't traceable. Our pets are connected telepathically. They have been able to communicate over great distances."

"That might prove very helpful. I would like the priory to research that capability after this is all over." General Soulkeeper stroked her chin as she spoke.

"Not my pet!" Harry and Electra spoke in unison.

"No harm will come to any pets." Almorra said.

Her words did nothing to allay the suspicions of the rangers, who glanced at each other and nodded. Precious and Simon came out of hiding and joined their rangers as the party left

to continue their journey. Maggie held back to speak with Almorra.

Once they were alone in the room, Maggie burst out, “He killed Brightmane! He has held my mother captive for my entire life. He has my father. He has tried to kill Queen Jennah many times over the years. And you want me to bring him in alive!”

“My dear, this is not of my doing. If I had my way, I’d give him to you personally to disembowel. Brightmane was one of MINE! Your thirst for vengeance is no deeper than my own. I will keep the Whispers and the Priory on task to find out who this source of his power is. I promise you, if we can learn what we need to in order to defeat this menace, you will be released from your promise to keep him alive.”

With that, Maggie turned and saluted the General. As Almorra returned the salute, she said, “Bring your father back to us. I can’t think of anyone who stands a better chance of success than you. You have slain dragons. Charr cubs

pretend to be you when they play in the streets of Smokestead. May Dwayna protect you, may Balthazar give you strength.”



The sound of a returning griffin alerted Ziegen that he had another message. He went about his business, ignoring the bell to avoid suspicion. Once he felt safe, he went out the back door and took the griffin in hand. The message it spoke, barely above a whisper told him that he would need to guide Maggie and her party to the house.

He stepped back into the kitchen and gestured for his daughter. She finished her task and joined him at the back door. He put his hand on her shoulder and began whispering instructions, “Quietly gather everyone and meet me at the wagon. We are going to get supplies a few days early this week.”

Squinting her eyes as if she suspected there was more to the story, she nodded her head and

went upstairs to find her siblings. The children were used to sudden changes of plans and each finished the assigned task before getting their jackets and going outside to the barn. Once there, the children hooked up the horses the way they had been taught and waited for their father.

Ziegen stepped into the parlor, where Mrs. Karimi was quietly reading. He stood silently until she looked up and asked him, “What is it Mr. Ziegen?”

“Unexpected guests have left our supplies a little short this week. I was thinking it might be wise to go to the village a few days early to avoid having to dip into the winter stores.”

“I think that is an excellent idea.” She replied as the door to the cellar opened.

A chill ran down Ziegen’s spine when he saw Serentine step out of the cellar. He watched the angry man walk across the floor to Mrs. Karimi. Standing above the timid woman, Serentine growled, “What is an excellent idea?”

"We need supplies. We weren't expecting guests and Mr. Ziegen is going into the village." She replied quietly.

Looking toward Ziegen for a long moment, Serentine spoke with the voice of a man used to being obeyed, "You will take one of my men with you. He has errands to run for me."

"As you wish Mr. Serentine." Ziegen replied. "We will be leaving in a few minutes. Have him meet us in front of the house."

Ziegen turned and left the room, leaving no time for an argument. He quickly made his way to the stable and smiled as he noticed his children had gotten the wagon ready and were already bundled up inside. He quickly moved to the back and spoke to his daughter.

"We're going to have company. I need my medical kit." He told her.

"It would be easier if I handled that, daddy." She answered with a serious look.

"I'm not sure that I want

you to have that kind of responsibility just yet."

Smiling, she countered, "Dad, I've already passed the first tests. I'm leaving for the academy in a few weeks. It's time for me to take a more active role in this mission of ours."

Realizing she was older than he remembered her, he took the syringe from his kit and filled it with a clear liquid, "Give him all of it in the back of his neck. Sit in the corner of the wagon directly behind him. I will signal you by taking off my hat. That's when he needs to take a nap."

She took the syringe and hid it in her apron. He walked around the wagon and climbed up into the seat. Taking the reins, he clicked his tongue and the horses slowly began pulling the wagon out into the yard. Turning toward the front of the house, they stopped suddenly when Serentine and his man stepped in front of the wagon.

"Is this your whole family?" The leader asked.

"All but my wife, she's been in the village with her

mother." Smiled Ziegen, "The children haven't seen her in a few days."

"Leave one."

"Pardon me?" Ziegen's brain began to race.

"There's something I don't like about you. Leave one of the kids here with us. I just want to make sure you'll return with the supplies."

Serentine's eyes began to glow. Ziegen looked into the wagon and tried to think of a way out. His youngest child, a boy stood up and said, "I'll stay. I've got some chores that I haven't been able to finish."

"All right, Thomas. You can finish feeding the pigs and the chickens while I'm gone. I'll see if your mother has time to bake us a cake while we're in town. The biggest piece will be yours."

Thomas nodded his head and jumped down from the wagon and ran inside the house. Serentine's man climbed up on the seat next to Ziegen. Ziegen shook the reins and the horses slowly began to pull the wagon forward. As he drove away, he fought the urge to look

back at the house. He hoped his son had gotten his message.

The wagon had made it half the distance to town when the separatist finally spoke, "Is there anything to drink in this wagon?"

Ziegen took off his hat. Tonia reached up and took a waterskin from a hook on the side of the wall and handed it to the man. As the man began to drink, she mumbled a phrase under her breath. He suddenly became immobile as her spell took effect. Taking the syringe out of her apron, she immediately stuck it in his neck and pushed the plunger all the way in. He fell face down on the floor.

The girls grabbed his arms and pulled him to the back and covered him with a blanket. Ziegen watched forward carefully until he saw a small figure ahead at a crossroads. Urging the horses to go faster, the figure became Thomas. Thomas jumped into the back of the wagon as his father slowed down. Once the boy was safely inside, the old man sped up the horses again.

"I see you got my message." He said to the boy.

Smiling, the young boy said, "Yes, Momma never bakes."



Frieda waited until she was sure the guards had all gone back upstairs. Once she knew they were alone, she took a chance and whispered, "You awake?"

Colonel Lynn answered with a question, "Is it safe to talk?"

"I don't sense anyone close enough to hear us." she answered.

"I think I can untie my hands." He told her.

They had been tied up from the moment Serentine had ported them. Part of that time they had been gagged. The guards had grown lax and not replaced the gags after they were fed breakfast. Colonel Lynn had already loosened one hand and was working on the other as she spoke.

"Will, if you can get me loose, and find a weapon for each of us, I think I can get us out of here."

"Where is here?"

"We're near the Elon River. The house belongs to Khalil and Sarin Karimi. We are only a few Kilometers from the lands of Palawa Joko. Serentine has been travelling here for many years. He always told me he was looking for help to return my family to the throne."

"You've been here and freely walked around the house?"

"Yes, I'm familiar with it. There's a back door, we just need to get to the kitchen."

Then we can escape to the woods. From there we go northwest to the river and find a boat."

"How do we get out of here and to the kitchen?"

"You get me untied and I'll portal us both to the kitchen. I've been there before."

As he continued to work on his ropes, he studied the woman he had loved for all these years, "After all this,

what then?"

"You mean... Us?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"We'll have the rest of our lives to sort it out. I won't keep you from anyone you've become close to."

He smiled, "I've been looking for you for twenty one years. I haven't had time to get close to anyone. How about you?"

Shaking her head she simply replied, "There's been no one. But, how do we get past twenty one years? I was told you were all dead."

Willem finished untying his hands, then quickly his feet. Standing up, he quickly knelt in front of Frieda. As he reached for her hands, he stopped, touched her cheek, and kissed her. The kiss lasted a while, and he was able to get her hands untied. Her arms reached around his neck and she kissed him back.

"I guess that answers my next question." Willem said as he untied her feet.

"What question is that?" Frieda wrinkled her brow.

"Am I dreaming?" He smiled back.

He helped her to her feet. The two looked around the cellar for weapons, but found nothing. Frieda then walked around looking at the ceiling. She found a spot and began mumbling. Willem stood directly behind her facing the door, fists ready. Her muttering became almost hypnotic. Then, her muttering stopped and the two found themselves in the kitchen, alone.

She took him by the hand and led him to the door. He gently stepped in front of her and pushed her behind him and opened the door. There was nothing outside. They left the house and ran quickly past the barn into the woods. As they ran through the trees, they both suddenly noticed they were on a trail. And the trail was heading in the same direction they needed to be running. Once they were far enough into the woods to see only the barn, they stopped to catch their breath.

"I haven't run that fast since my father almost

caught us kissing at the fair." She panted.

"We were fifteen. I was scared to kiss you. You dared me to." He replied with a grin.

"This trail, it's too convenient." She became serious again.

"Maybe not. There's no indication of the trail until you're actually in the woods. It could be here and no one from the house even know it. Or, perhaps not everyone."

"Why was the kitchen empty? Where are the servants? I remember the last time we stayed here, Mr. Ziegen was in charge. His wife and children work there too. I've never seen the kitchen empty in the middle of the day."

He looked down at the ground and noticed small footprints in the trail mud. He followed them backwards, crawling part way until he could see where the child had entered the woods. Crawling back to Frieda, he waved at her to follow him. Turning around, he led her to the edge of the woods and whispered, "The child came

out of the barn, I'm sure of it. I'm going to look around, you be ready to run and get somewhere safe."

"You're not leaving me here alone."

He looked at her eyes and knew it was useless to argue. They both crawled out of the woods and dashed into the open back door of the barn. Once inside they crouched and waited for their eyes to adjust to the shadows. Gradually, they could see a large, wagon-sized open space on the floor. Six stalls, three on one side were empty. Three on the other side, each had a horse.

"Quick, give me a hand." He said.

They looked over each horse carefully, then gently placed blankets and saddles on two of their backs. The horses barely moved, being content to much on the hay. One horse fought a bit as they put the halter on, but once Frieda got her teeth parted, Willem was able to slide the bit into place. They tightened the saddles and Willem carefully climbed on the mare. She tolerated his weight and seemed to know

which direction he meant when he tapped her with his feet.

Frieda climbed on the other horse and after grabbing the halter rope of the third, they headed out the back door, directly through the woods to the trail. Once on the trail, the two continued to follow the child's footprints. The trail curved to the west and as they reached the center of the bend, the tracks moved off to the left. Willem climbed off his horse and guided it by the reins as he followed the tracks. Suddenly they came to a road. On the road were wagon tracks and the child's footprints leading up the middle of the tracks until they disappeared.

"Someone got a ride here." Willem stated. "I wonder if that wagon was the servants going somewhere. We should avoid them if we can."

"We can as long as the trail follows the road. But if the trail turns further west, we'll have to come back to the road. It heads north west from here. There's a town. Further north of the town is a special portal. Serentine's

got at least three watching the portal to see who enters or leaves. The portal is coded. You have to know the code to get through."

"You don't happen to know the code, do you?"

"No, but anyone who comes through it will know it."

"And if we take out the watchers, we could probably wait in plain sight. How often do wagons come through?"

"That I don't know. I do know this is the only supply route they use, Oasis is on the other side of the portal. And, with the wagon gone, tracks leading this way, it might just be supply day. If we hurry, we might be able to get there in time."

They went back through the narrow stretch of woods to the trail and began to push the horses to go faster. The horses were eager to run and twenty minutes later Frieda said, "Stop here! We'll have to walk the rest of the way. I think I know where all three watchers are. Follow me."

They tied the horses to a tree branch and she led him off the trail and up a hill. Once

near the top, she turned left and silently stalked her prey. She was disappointed when there was no watcher there. Moving on to the next position, they noticed all three watchers were there, lying on the ground. One was snoring. All around the encampment were bottles and jugs. Most without caps, it seemed there had been a party. Securing the sleeping watchers was a simple matter of tying them to the nearest tree, stuffing rags in their mouths, and tying those rags in place.

Looking through the camps, they were able to find rudimentary weapons, a slim, lightweight greatsword for her, and a rather shabby longbow for him. Hiding themselves at the edge of the bushes, they lay down to wait. They didn't have to wait very long, someone was coming through the portal.



Maggie saw Eir first in the upstairs window and waved. Garm barked, Simon

answered, and Precious curled up to go back to sleep. Eir made her way out of her mansion and joined them in the wagon. Leaning out, Maggie spoke a single word to Harry. "Ebonhawke."

Harry got the horses moving and back through the gate to Divinity's Reach they went. As Harry drove, Mellen climbed in back of the wagon with the rest and listened as Eir and Maggie discussed the plan.

"We will be met in Ebonhawke by Captain Samuelsson. He will gain us passage through the desert gate. From there we are to travel to a portal and meet someone from the Order of Whispers who will guide us to the house where my parents are being kept." Maggie explained.

"Serentine?" Eir asked.

"In order to gain the help of the Order and the Vigil, I was told Serentine had to be brought in alive. It seems they have questions for him." Maggie's anger was evident.

"Do we have any kind of plan yet?" Bones spoke quietly.

"So far, our only plan is to meet with someone called Ziegen. He is supposed to fill us in on any details we need." Mellen answered.

They continued to talk as Harry drove the wagon. Soon he had driven through the portal to Ebonhawke and they began to search for the Captain. They stopped and asked an Ebon Vanguard Soldier. He gave them directions to the Fallen Angels Garrison.

Soon they met Commander Varalyn who guided them to the Captain's office. Maggie and Eir stepped inside and soon returned with the documents necessary to gain access to the Desert Gate in the Blackwing Escavation. They wasted no time and hurried to the excavation site. Travelling south, they were soon at the gate.

The guards accepted their paperwork and began to activate the opening sequence. The gate swung open to reveal an Asura Gate. As they waited for the guard to allow them through, they were given instructions how to contact the guards from the other

side to have the gate opened to let them back out.

"There's a small stone box at 1 meter above the ground. It's an odd red color. Just remove the cover and pull the lever inside. We will open the gate within a few minutes to allow you through."

With that, the guard motioned them through the portal and the horses began to pull. Once through, the party found themselves at the edge of a stone outcropping. Turning around, Mellen saw the small red box they would use when it was time to return to Ebonhawke.

The Crystal Desert had been replaced with a lush forest when the Elon River had been made to follow Palawa Joko's wishes. This had happened so many years ago, that the actual incident was shrouded in mystery. They could each feel the presence of an ancient evil.

Maggie spoke clearly, "We're in uncharted territory. Harry and Electra, will you take the point? Captain Swift and Bones

will watch the rear. We'll take the wagon as far as the village. We're supposed to meet a man called Ziegen there. He will guide us to the house where my parents are being held."

They continued southward along the road through the forest. Occasionally they would see a field full of cattle or grain, but for the most part it was trees that they saw. From the wagon, Maggie could see Harry and Electra walking on either side of the road in front of the horses. Suddenly they stopped and seemed to be looking intently ahead.

After a moment, Electra waved at them to join her at the top of a small rise in the road. They continued until they were next to her, and Harry joined them. Looking forward on the road, Mellen could see a town. They had found the village of Oasis. In the middle of that village was a large, outdoor market. At the other end of that market was a wagon.

Sitting in the driver's seat of the wagon was a young woman. When the young woman saw them, she turned around in the

seat and spoke to someone inside. She then took the reins and the horses began to walk slowly through the crowd toward them. As Mellen began to move their wagon forward, the girl waved and made it evident that they were to stay.

As the girl's wagon came closer, they could see a man following her. He wore a full beard and the clothes of a guardian. Maggie remembered that Ziegen was a guardian. She stepped away from the others and waited. Soon the wagon reached her and stopped. The man continued to walk forward until he reached Maggie.

As he passed her, he said, "Meet me back outside the village. I'll move north until I'm over that hill. There's a small two wheel rut path on the right. It leads to a safe place for us to talk."

Before Maggie could answer, he had walked by. The young woman in the wagon pulled up next to him and he climbed on. They quickly disappeared around a slight bend. Maggie followed and waved for the rest of the party to join her.

They soon found the path and turned in.

Ziegen called them over and began to draw a simple map on the ground, "This is where we are," He said as he pointed to a small stone.

"Once we're through the village we will come to another portal which is operated from either side using a security code. I will show you how to use it on the other side should you need to come back without me."

He then looked at his children and said, "I need you to find your mother. Then all of you can get back home. I will meet you at headquarters in Lornar's Pass."

With that he hugged each of them and sent them on foot back to the village. Turning back to Maggie, "I will need help getting a prisoner secured."

He opened the back of his wagon and they could see the sleeping separatist. Bones and Captain Swift grabbed him and dragged him out onto the ground. He moaned slightly as his body hit the solid earth, but

he didn't wake. Picking him up by the hands and feet, they carried him to their own wagon and placed him inside. They tied him up with some rope and gagged him with his own shirt.

"Where can we put him for safe keeping?" Terri asked.

"We'll drop him off at the jail on our way, they'll hold him until we come back." was Ziegen's answer.

"So, we're taking both wagons?" Maggie inquired.

"As far as the portal. Once through we'll all have to fit into my wagon until we're close enough to get you inside without being seen."



She had never seen Serentine so angry. His one good eye glowed red as he cursed and called for a rain of death upon all who opposed Palawa Joko. The mesmer had sent his remaining man look for the boy. He hadn't seen the youngster since he was left to tend to the animals. Now

his man was missing as well.

As he walked down the stairs to check on his prisoners, Mrs. Karimi hesitantly called from above. "Your man is back. He's in the kitchen."

Serentine stopped and went back up the stairs. Something was not right. When he got to the kitchen, his man was eating. Sitting in the chair across from him, the Mesmer took a plate for himself and began to pile it with meat and bread. His man poured him a cup of ale and he drank deep before he spoke.

"The boy isn't with you? He must have left with his family"

"I'll go back out and look for a trail." The tall, thin ranger said with a belch.

As he left with his pet bird, Serentine told him, "Something isn't right. Keep your eyes open, and send for more fighters."

With a nod, the man disappeared. Serentine finished his meal and leaving the table a mess went back to the cellar. As he reached the bottom

step, he turned and opened the door to check on the prisoners. His anger level grew even higher when he realized they were gone.

He ran up the stairs, knocking Mrs. Karimi down at the top and darted out through the kitchen. As he reached the barn, his ranger came out at a run. As soon as he saw Serentine, he stopped and angrily declared, "The boy took the horses."

"You sure it was the boy? Frieda's gone too, and her husband." Serentine was nearly spitting fire.

"What do we do now? I can't send for help."

"I'll portal you to the palace. Bring me an army!"

Serentine began muttering under his breath and the air began to glow. Louder and louder he muttered until the floor began to glow as well. The portal began to fill the room with a bright light. Serentine stopped and turned to his ranger.

"I'll expect you back here in three hours."

The man stepped into the

portal, shimmered for a moment, then disappeared. Suddenly, the portal was gone. No trace of it could be seen. Serentine turned back to the house. As he walked, he began again to mutter. A different sound this time, quieter came out of his mouth. His right hand began to glow.

When he reached the kitchen door, he waved his hand in the room. Two tiny sparkles appeared. One in the exact spot he had created the portal for his man. Another directly in front of the door. His suspicions were confirmed. She had been able to use her powers to help them escape. She hadn't been gagged. Perhaps they hadn't even been tied.

He would deal with his men later. But now he had to find her. She would pay for her treachery. He began by searching for signs outside that would tell him which way they went. He searched from the kitchen door to the edge of the woods. As he searched, he noticed three sets of footprints. One small set, which would belong to the boy, and two larger adult sets of prints.

They all led into the woods, but the larger set came back and entered the barn.

He went back to the house and shouted for Mr's Karimi, "I need a horse!"

"They should be in the barn," she replied as she came down the stairs.

"They're gone."

"Well, I think there are still a few horses out in the field. When Mr. Ziegen comes back, I can have him saddle one for you."

"I need a horse NOW." he growled as he turned and went back outside.

It wasn't long before he saw the loose horses. They weren't very willing to let him near, so he cast an illusion to freeze the horses in place. Then he swapped places and grabbed the halter of the nearest horse. The pretty Palomino trembled as he jumped on its back. He muttered a few more words and the horse began to calm.

He rode the horse to the trail in the woods and began to follow the footprints. He found where the boy had

climbed into the wagon and saw the horses trail leading along the path. He suddenly knew where they were. He realized that Frieda did not know the correct combination to open the portal to the village. They were waiting for the portal to open. With a little luck, he would get there before someone opened it for them.

Climbing off the horse, he tried to create a portal of his own to get him there in a moment, but something stopped him. He realized that Frieda was blocking his attempt somehow. Jumping back on the horse, he urged it to go faster. He was going to catch them before they escaped. And they would not escape a second time.

He travelled along the trail until he came to the first guard post. It was unmanned. He quickly checked the other two and found them the same way. He could hear the sound of the portal opening and ran to the edge of the hill where he could see what was going on. Two wagons came through and then suddenly two figures emerged from the brush and joined them.

He looked around for his men and finally found the three of them tied and gagged. Signing for them to be silent, he untied them and waved for them to follow him. Once they were far enough away from the commotion at the portal, he gave them instructions to keep the group occupied so they couldn't escape back through the portal. He then turned his horse around and pushed it to run back to the house.

It had been an hour already, he only had to hold them for two more until his reinforcements came. As he headed back, he began to plan an ambush. He would trap the entire party and portal them directly to Palawa Joko's Bone Palace. They would pay for interfering with his plans. They would pay with their very souls.



As the second wagon came through the portal, two figures came running out of the woods toward the gate.

It was obvious they were trying to get to it before it closed. As they neared the wagons, Frieda and Willem both saw Terri and Maggie exiting one of the wagons. They stopped and waved at the same time.

"Maggie," they shouted in unison.

Everyone's heads turned and time seemed to stop for a moment. Maggie began running to her father. She hugged him for a while, then stepped back and looked at her mother. Frieda could see the uncertainty in her daughter's eyes. She understood that it would take time for her daughter to find the ability to trust.

"It's good to see you," she told Maggie. "I know you probably have many questions. I will answer them when we have time. I promise you."

Maggie looked at her mother and said, "There is one question you can answer me right now."

"And that is?"

"Do you love my father?"

"I have always and will

always love your father.”

Willem reached out with one arm and pulled Frieda into their embrace. Suddenly three men came running out of the woods and positioned themselves between the wagons and the portal. Swift saw them first and shouted a warning. Weapons were drawn and a short battle ensued. The men, hopelessly outnumbered, ran at the first opportunity and soon disappeared into the brush.

“The guards, they got loose. How?” Frieda thought out loud.

“Someone had to release them. I think we need to assume our arrival has been announced. We need to catch this guy.”

Dad, M-Mom, you guys go back to the village with our wagon. We’re going to capture Serentine and bring him to the Order of Whispers.”

“Like hell we’ll run away. We are going to help you catch that scum.” Colonel Lynne was adamant.

“Yes, dear. Your father and I can help.”

Maggie then looked at Ziegen and said, “You’ve done enough, I think we can handle this from here. We just need to be able to activate this portal when we’re done.”

Ziegen smiled and said, “There’s no way I’m missing this fight.”

“So, what’s the plan, Maggie?” asked Eir.

Maggie thought for a moment then said, “We split up. The rangers take the trail, the rest of us in the wagons take the road. Before we get in sight of the house, we’ll join you on the trail. Once we get close to the house, we will figure out the rest.”

With that, they climbed onto both wagons and headed to the house. The wagons took the road. Eir, Harry, and Electra disappeared into the bushes and started following the trail. Simon, Precious, and Garm joined them. Garm and Simon followed the scent of the three men, Precious meandered through the trees and kept watch of their flank.

They reached a turnout

in the road and Ziegen motioned for Mellen to park his wagon there. Terri, who had been silently watching the events unfold, spoke up as soon as the group was gathered outside the wagons, “We need to know how many soldiers he has. We can’t just assume there aren’t enough to pose a problem.”

“He came to the house with two men. One of them is in jail. I didn’t recognize him when those three attacked us. Three plus one plus Serentine is at least five. He will also likely send for reinforcements. I believe it takes about three hours for them to get here from the Palace.”

“So, we have less than that to capture him and haul him back to stand trial for his crimes.” Maggie spoke calmly. “Tell us how the house is laid out.”

Ziegen stroked his beard as he answered, “Kitchen, living room, dining room are on the first floor. Upstairs from the living room are the bedrooms for the Karimis. Upstairs from the kitchen are the bedrooms for the servants, my family. The

cellar is where his office is. Front door is just off the living room, back door is in the kitchen, plus there's an escape hatch from the cellar on the north side of the house"

"He's a mesmer, so if he sees us coming he can just port away." Terri said.

"He can try, but I can stop him. I have the power to stop the formation of the exit from the portal. He won't be able to escape that way," Frieda spoke calmly. "We just need to figure out where he's going and I'll need to get there first."

The rangers joined them and the discussion continued, "Maggie, this is your operation, I think it's up to you how we handle this fight." Eir kept her voice low.

"Were you able to follow the three men?" Maggie directed her question to the rangers.

Electra answered, "They followed the trail for a while, but then they left it and we lost them."

"We didn't want to get too far separated from you

guys," Harry added.

"So, they may or may not be at the house." Maggie frowned, "All right, we hit the house on three sides."

Ziegen spoke directly, "There is a non-combatant in the house. Mrs's Karimi, she has no idea what is going on."

"Do you think you can find her and get her out while the rest of us search for Serentine?" Eir asked.

"She is usually in the library this time of day. I should be able to find her. I might need help getting her out of the house though."

"Captain Swift, you'll help him with the lady." Willem commanded.

"Yes sir."

"Let's send the rangers into the back to go through the kitchen and the upstairs bedrooms. Bones, my father, and Mellen will hit the cellar hatch. Terri, my mother and I will attack the front door."

"Give us ten minutes to get into position. Garm will howl when we're ready. Then you can signal us

with a flaming arrow when it's time to strike." Eir suggested.

"Okay, we have a plan. Remember, the goal here is for everyone to get out of this alive! If anyone sees Serentine, shout his location so that the rest of us know where he is." Maggie was ready.

The group split up according to plan, the rangers went back to the trail, following Ziegen's directions to get them to the house. The rest approached the house on foot from the road. Once everyone was in position, Garm howled his best wolf imitation. Maggie notched an arrow, Terri cast a flame spell that set fire to it, Maggie let it go in a high arc over the house.

The rangers charged the kitchen door, Maggie's group charged the front door, Bones, Willem, and Mellen opened the cellar hatch. For a few moments, nothing happened. Suddenly, there was a bright flash of light in the front room.

Frieda shouted, "Get down!"

Instinctively they all threw themselves on the floor and the bright flash went harmlessly outside. Ziegen and Swift ran in and immediately into the library where they found Mrs. Karimi alone. Swift put his hand over her mouth and whispered, "It's okay, we're here to protect you maam."

She stopped struggling and ran with them back out the front door. Ziegen took her to the wagon and explained what was going on. Swift joined Maggie's group and helped search the house.

Frieda shouted again, "He's upstairs!" as an energy orb came down and struck her. Bouncing off Frieda, it soon found Maggie and Terri, knocking them both down. Captain Swift pulled his greatsword and muttered a spell of his own. The orb disappeared.

Mellen came up the stairs followed by Bones and Willem. Eir and the rangers climbed the stairs in the kitchen and tried to find a way to flank Serentine. They ran into the three guards they had been tracking, instead. In the front room, everyone could hear the

sound of the battle raging on the kitchen stairs. healing.

Terri produced a fireball and sent it rolling up the steps to explode on the top. The explosion jarred Serentine out of his invisible state and the fight began in earnest. Serentine conjured an army of illusions. Frieda dispelled them all with a single wave of her hand. Terri called for a rain of fire all around the steps and soon they began to burn away below his feet.

Serentine tumbled to the ground floor and immediately began to summon a portal to take him out of the house. Frieda countered with a dampening spell that kept him inside. Mellen cast a Reaper's Mark and the Mesmer felt the effect of undeniable fear and began to run toward the kitchen. Once through the door, he headed immediately up the stairs and joined the battle between the rangers and his men, followed by Maggie, Frieda, and Swift. Terri had stayed behind to call a healing rain to fall throughout the house. As the fire began to die, they all felt stronger from the

Harry whistled and Precious changed his attack to go after the Mesmer. As they fought, Harry also set traps on the stairs to hold Serentine in place. Suddenly, smoke from the fire in the front room began to billow into the kitchen. Terri stepped in and cast a shockwave that immobilized all their enemies. Before anyone could stop her, Maggie ran up the stairs and began to fight Serentine face to face.

Once he was free of the shockwave spell, he immediately cast an Illusionary Wave that pushed them all back away from him. He used the momentary confusion to continue up the stairs until he disappeared into one of the bedrooms. Frieda felt him beginning another portal and stopped him once again. The three guards were on their last legs when Eir and Bones combined to finish them off.

Ziegen, having secured Mrs. Karimi returned to the house and shouted in the front door, "He's on the roof!"

Maggie and Terri rushed up the stairs into the room he had disappeared into and saw the open window he had used to escape. Mellen and Bones followed them. The rangers ran outside the kitchen and looked up to see Serentine once again trying to create a portal. Frieda sensed his effort and stopped him one more time.

Mellen reached the window and immediately cast Entangle and wrapped the evil mesmer in vines. This allowed Maggie to climb out the window, reach Serentine, and disarm him. Bones immediately gagged him and tied his hands behind him. They then escorted him back through the window and into the bedroom.

Maggie was moving toward the window herself to re-enter the house when she saw a huge cloud of dust off in the distance. Realizing that it most likely was reinforcements, she shouted to her group, "We've got to get out of here, back to the village. Hurry. He's got an army on its way here!"

The group quickly dragged Serentine down the stairs

and to the wagons. Loading up, they turned the wagons back toward the portal and the race was on. They had gone nearly a kilometer when they realized they weren't going to make it before the army descended upon them. Terri stood at the back of the wagon and cast an Unsteady Ground spell. This slowed the army down. But, it wasn't going to be enough to keep them away long enough to pass through the portal.

The rangers then combined to lay traps the whole width of the road. This slowed the army down enough to let them get away and out of sight. Soon they could see the portal ahead. Racing to reach it on time, Ziegen jumped off the wagon and entered the code to open it. Both wagons dashed through to the other side.

"How are we going to stop them from coming through?" Harry asked.

With a smile, Ziegen explained, "Easy, we destroy the portal. We no longer need it."

Mellen, Terri, Swift and Frieda worked together to

create a warp that would destroy the portal. It took time, and in that time a handful of Serentine's army of undead made it through. As the fight raged on, the warp began to form and suddenly a deafening roar filled everyone's ears. The stones around the portal began to fall and it collapsed into a pile of rubble on the road.

It took a few more minutes to round up the undead soldiers that followed them through. But, soon all was quiet and Bones and Mellen began to treat everyone's wounds. Maggie stepped over to where her exhausted mother and father were standing. Her mother was bleeding slowly from her ears and nose. Bones was casting an overall healing spell, but all it did was slow her bleeding.

Suddenly, they heard the sound of a portal being opened in the wagon that held Serentine. Before they could get to the wagon and stop him, Serentine had disappeared. Cursing under his breath, Bones turned toward Frieda, who had become very pale.

"Can you tell where he went?" he asked her.

"I'm sorry. I have no power at the moment. I'm completely exhausted." As she spoke, she began to wobble and fell to her knees.

Willem grabbed her and carried her to the wagon. Bones, Mellen, and Harry all began to work healing magic to try and revive her. Nothing was working. Captain Swift stepped to the wagon. Looking inside, he reached into his pack and pulled out a vial of dark liquid. Holding open Frieda's mouth, he poured half of the vial into her mouth and slowly rubbed her throat to get her to swallow.

Nothing happened at first, but then Precious climbed into the wagon and laid himself on her chest. He closed his eyes and began to purr. Soon it was evident that the bleeding had stopped. In a few more minutes, Frieda opened her eyes and lifted her head.

"I know where he's gone." She told them all. "He's gone to the Bone Palace. He's in league with Palawa

Joko. They've been trying to get him released from the palace for years. That's where he gets most of his power from."

With that, Frieda lay her head back down and closed her eyes. Precious continued to lay on her and purr. Bones continued to cast healing spells. Eventually, her color returned and she began to breathe normally. She slept.

Ziegen cleared his throat and spoke quietly to Maggie and Willem. "I'm going to find my children and wife and join you later. I'll take care of Mrs. Karimi. If you need anything, just contact the Order and I'll be glad to help in any way I can."

He drove off toward the center of the village.

Maggie and Willem climbed into the wagon and sat next to Frieda. When everyone had gotten into the wagon, they began to head back towards Ebonhawke. There wasn't much talk. They had exhausted themselves. Once in Ebonhawke, they immediately took the portal to Divinity's reach and headed for the Queen's

Palace to report.

They were met there by the Queen, General Soulkeeper, and Riel Darkwater. Colonel Lynn, Maggie, and Mellen joined them in a conference room. Sitting at the large table across from each other, they began to tell what happened.

Maggie started, "I'm sorry, but Serentine escaped. We believe he's gone to the Bone Palace with Palawa Joko. We also believe that's the brains behind all this treachery. Palawa Joko is trying to escape from his prison."

Unable to hide the worry in her voice, Queen Jennah asked, "My sister? How is she?"

"Exhausted Your Majesty," Mellen said. "But, we think she will recover once she's rested."

"She will stay here, I'll have the best doctors take care of her."

Willem spoke calmly, "Thank you. May I stay with her?"

The Queen looked at him and smiled, "Of course you

may. As long as is necessary
Lord Lynn.”

Riel then spoke carefully, “I think we may already have the information we need from Mr. Serentine. General, I believe we can release our friends from the necessity of keeping him alive.”

“Yes, I think so. Now that we know Palawa Joko is behind all this, we need to prepare for an invasion.” General Soulkeeper frowned. “Maggie Lynn, if you should run into that man again, you have my blessing to kill him.”

As the talk continued, Maggie and her father excused themselves and found Frieda in one of the guestrooms. She was surrounded by doctors

and sounded as if she was irritated with them all.

“I don’t need doctors, I need my husband and daughter! I have information that is important to them both!”

“We’re here darling,” Willem spoke softly.

“Get these quacks away from me, I’m fine.”

“Your sister has determined that you need to be watched for a few days, I agree with her. I’ll stay here with you.”

“Mother, I want you to be all right. We have a lot of lost time to make up for. I need my mother now.” Maggie found it difficult to keep her voice steady.

With tears in her eyes, Frieda reached for her daughter. Mother, Father,

and child embraced.

“There’s something you need to know about Serentine. He will not give up. I have betrayed him and he will stop at nothing to gain his vengeance. You are in danger.”

“Well, we’ll have to get Brightmane to assign us bodyguards.” Willem said, then noticed the look on his daughter’s face, “What?”

“Serentine attacked Brightmane just before he took you guys away. He died a short time later. I will make him pay!” The tears came freely now.

“WE will make him pay,” her father answered.

“Yes, WE will.” Her mother added.

To Be Continued...

GUILDWARS2TM

HEART OF THORNS

GUILD WARS 2: HEART OF THORNS

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The Elder Scrolls

ONLINE

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THE END OF FAOLCHU

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The End of Faolchu

By: Althea "Briseadh" Damgaard

I, Asarlai Thornai found myself in Aldcroft having to clean up a possible infestation by werewolves. Sure enough, I found several using an amulet of some sort to see if any of the people, especially refugees from Camlorn had Hircine's Call on them. I dispatched them with more ease than I expected only to find out there was more to do.



I had to go with one of the guardsmen, capture one of these beasts, and take it to a cave where we could do a ritual on it. This should have been easy with so many werewolves north of Aldcroft, but no, it took fighting at least five before she got the spell on one. I ran off for the cave in a hurry to get this done with. I'm not one to let a werewolf live very long for any reason.

The ritual worked perfectly. The information it gave us; however, was definitely bad. Angof, leader of some

Reachmen plaguing Glenumbra, had found a way to pull an ancient warrior named Faolchu, who was, and still is, a werewolf from way back in the past and set him loose on Camlorn. Faolchu promised to serve Angof now, but would see about changing that soon. Figures, both bad guys were full of themselves, even the one in the lesser position for the time being.



Then I find out from the werewolf we captured that Duke Sebastian is infected, so it really didn't matter what we did. That's what the werewolf at least thought before he keeled over dead. Turns out the blood of the person doing the ritual, a descendent of Faolchu, could cure him. Of course, that means she has to die. For the greater good we decided her sacrifice was what was needed. I try not to think about this too much. Of all the sacrifices of death for the greater good I have seen, if I sat wondering if I did the right choice, I would have been

curled up in a hole somewhere by now.

So I'm like some bloody hero for saving Aldcroft and the Duke, so they think I can go help save the day in Camlorn. Of course, I'm not going straight there. First, there is something to figure out at the Glenumbra Moors. Not a place most people want to visit seeing as it is pretty much a ruined place from an ancient battle and it happened to be plagued with spirits when I got there.

It seems Servith, Master of Incunabula, can do something to pull up a vision of Faolchu's death. Of course, in the process of trying to get a simple vision of the path the fool mage and his assistant open a door instead. He seemed like that was even better than what he had planned. Others did not seem so sure. I get to be the fool to figure this one out and test it. I figured, why not? It couldn't be any worse than some of the places I've already seen in my day.

Of course, I have to put on some really bad looking ancient armor and the ghost who got pulled to our time assured me, not so convincingly I would come back to the future as soon as Faolchu died. Yeah, I'm rather particular about what I wear and more so about staying in my own time. I rather like it here, after all. But I put the armor on and next thing I know I am standing before a living version of the ghost who told me to put the armor on.

First off, I'm wondering how she got taller and then realize I look like the Breton male who used to wear the armor. The man who was her lover at the time. Not exactly the

place this Altmer woman wanted to end up. Though it was a bit better than that crazy vision where I was an orc once to complete some task or learn something through a ritual. Time to just get this over with and hope I was back to normal in my own time when done.

First, I have to go find the Alessian orders and bring them back to the Direnni leader. It turns out Faolchu was supposed to have been some invincible Alessian general. Obviously he wasn't because he already died once in history, this history I was about to see. I even got to talk to the Ayleid King, Lalorian Dynar. He seemed a lot like the guy I saved from being caught in Cold Harbor and well, let's not think about where that led. Anyway, I can't remember the name at the moment to be sure.

After the usual spiels that leaders love to give, I get to run off again though I do get to talk to Alana, the ghost who sent me here in the first place. All is good, but then things get a bit crazy and I wind up with the choice to save Alana or go finish Faolchu. Since this is the past and I'm not wanting to change much due to crazy ripples it can cause, I'm off to see how Faolchu dies. After all, I'm probably going to have to know this information first hand in my own future.

We get inside and have to kill a few of Faolchu's minions, who are trying to put out fires. Not surprisingly, when we kill enough of those Faolchu shows up in his full werewolf form. There is a bit of dancing around while I try to keep my precious hide intact and trying to burn Faolchu. It was

interesting how he would lose his werewolf form and be vulnerable to fire. Nice. I made him run into a couple fires to get me, about died myself, when finally he fell over.

Then a portal opened and I was told to go through it to return to my time. Sure enough I pop back out in the tomb where I had put the armor on. Even better I'm back to my Altmer self and not looking to worse for wear. Time to tell them fire is Faolchu's bane and figure out where they want me to go next.

* * *

I get to the siege camp, outside it at least, to find General Gautier trying to figure out how to route werewolves out of the siege camp. So the siege camp to take back Camlorn is already overrun, let alone even getting into the city. I did my best not to roll my eyes or sigh at this news. It got even better. I was to help this fighter, Shaza, clear out werewolves and find out if General Mardin was okay at the west gate.

I rather enjoyed slamming werewolves with lightning and seeming some of them turn to ash in the process. It is rather satisfying watching magicka mess up a brute's day. Shaza proved to be no slouch with her sword and we made it to the west gate. I am sure we killed over a dozen werewolves to do so.

I slipped inside and saw a sorry lot of Lion Guard waiting for their last battle and expecting death. My showing up changed that fairly quick as I recapped what was

going on. General Mardin got her troops rallied and sent me on back to General Gautier with the status report. He appeared relieved when he found out the news that they had not lost the contingent at the west gate. Time to wait for them to collect themselves before a push at Camlorn could commence.

* * *

They formed up outside the outer gate to Camlorn. The doors were open enough to see werewolves prowling about while others were feasting on the dead. That was going to be stopped. Disgusting! But how?

Just wait to hear this brilliant plan. I am told to go in alone all the way across the courtyard and throw the switch for the inner gate. Mmmhmm, right! No matter how much I wanted to clear that place out I knew it wasn't going to be easy. I took a few minutes to watch how the werewolves were moving about and picked my path. Maybe some of the ones feasting would ignore me. In reality, I expected all of them to just jump on me at once. It wasn't like they couldn't see what was going on once I got in there and started killing them. Maybe some feral stupidity had sunk into their brains and I could dance my way across to the gate house just left of the second huge gate I could see from the first.

I pulled up my clanfear to act as a fighter for me and stepped through the gate. Immediately, two werewolves decided they wanted fresh meat. It did indeed take a bit of dancing to dispatch them. No others

came to help. I went up the slope almost straight for the gate and then angled left totally relieved the werewolves down by a smaller gate off to the left of where I entered totally ignored me. So far so good. I know I managed to get one alone, but for the most part had to fight two of them at once.



Quicker than I thought I found myself at the steps to the gate house. I rushed in, found the lever, and grabbing it in both hands moved it into the opposite setting. Next thing I know the courtyard is filled with fighting as the Lion Guard charged in. Within minutes we controlled the area and not a werewolf was left standing. Step two of this adventure in Camlorn completed.

It turned out that General Gautier's son, Darien, was inside with a contingent of guards trying to hold their own. I have to find Darien, get the main gate key from

him, and open the gate. Oh, it sounded simple, but believe me there was far more to this tale. Then General Mardin wanted me to talk to an alchemist named Alinon, who supposedly was working on a cure for the curse a werewolf's bite can cause. That peaked my interest, not that I'm an alchemist, but a way to save people bitten appealed to me.

In through that smaller gate in the lower area of the courtyard I went into a lower district of the city itself. Much like looking into the outer courtyard, I stood there taking in my surroundings and noting a large building off in the distance. Darien was supposedly holed up in the cathedral and that building looked impressive enough to be one.

Fighting werewolves was expected, but Bloodborn cultists? Thankfully they were actually easier to kill than the werewolves despite my having to dodge spell as much as they dodged mine. Fire and lightning lit up the streets as I fought my way to the cathedral. By this point I was getting pretty tired and definitely needed to fix a couple holes in my armor. My healing at least repaired most of what the enemy did to me.

Somehow I managed to walk into the cathedral and not have them cut me down instantly. Obviously Darien paid attention to my entrance and knew I wasn't an enemy. I give him the information from his father, but Darien decides I have to do things for him first before he gives me the key. Really? He didn't want the reinforcement within



the city immediately. I had to wonder about this brash, young fighter.

There were quite a few civilians in the cathedral and he wanted to get them to an inn that he knew would be safe. It turned out Alinon could not work on a cure no matter what he had on hand for components without some of the things an inn could supply, including a fire worth using. So I get to be the one to find the inn keeper, get the key off his apparently dead body, and open the place up. Once in I had to light a candle in an upstairs window that could be seen from the cathedral. If I made it this far, I could make it over there.

Darien pointed it out on a map, but once outside it took a moment of getting my bearings. The inn keeper was last seen not far from the cathedral and I believed there was going to be a short wall I would have to scale as the shortest route for me to get there. The fun part would be seeing how many enemy I could avoid and how many wanted to rip me to shreds. It did start off with a Bloodthorn and a werewolf combo, but then I ran around the back side of the building to find a little spot to slide through into another area.

A quick glance about showed me this may be the area to find the inn keeper. Not far from me was the corpse of a male without a werewolf feasting on it. Might as well start the search there. It was my lucky day. I came up with a key that looked like the one I needed. A quick look at the poor man's body proved he fit close enough to the description to be the missing inn keeper.

So I had some blood from the first werewolf, but Alinon did tell me he would need a sample from more than one. No wonder



I never got into alchemy. It sounds quite messy and had unappealing components to gather in the most disgusting ways. I still worked to find the inn via the path of least resistance.

I found the wall I expected and found a spot with a bunch of crates piled against it. A little adjusting and I had myself a makeshift stairs up and over. I dropped down on the other side and at the time of this telling I am not sure how close I really got, but I don't recall it taking long at all to get inside. I even had all of Alinon's vials filled. Time to make sure I got the candle in the correct window upstairs.

Due to the inn being locked, there was not a soul in the place other than me. Everything looked fairly well kept even if people apparently left the place in a hurry. Upstairs was a bit of a clutter, but I found a sconce for my candle. After thanking the gods for my wonderful sense of direction, I set the candle in the sconce upon a table by a stain glassed window facing the right way. I lit her up and not long after people started filling the place up. It was time for a needed break and someone cooked up a somewhat savory meal with the stores of the inn.

* * *

Another talk to Darien led to another job to do before he would even think of giving me the key. Infuriating man! I had to go out and get weapons and armor from the caches around the city. Wonderful. I must have been picked as the expendable

one, since I was the outsider. Of course, I did have the advantage of surviving quite nicely on my own so far. I couldn't say as much about my armor. My clothier would have my head for all the work I would put her through to fix it.

Darien pointed out where to find the caches. I did my best to mark them correctly on a map I actually managed to scrounge up for myself before heading to the door. Alinon intercepted me and handed me several vials. I was to somehow use these on weakened werewolves. I told him I would do my best and then out into the mayhem of Camlorn I went yet again.

I figured out why I got to go. As Darien put it, my "thrilling" exploits got Faolchu's attention. Wonderful! I would bring fire on his head soon enough. Outside did not look any different with werewolves and Bloodthorn cultists running about. Now to see how this would all pan out.

My first couple of attempts to get Alinon's potion on the beasts did not work. It seemed I had learned a pretty efficient way to kill the standard, mostly feral rather than intelligent, werewolf in my exploits thus far. I actually had to work to let them live longer while making sure my clanfear kept them from trying to hit me more than him. After the first two, I got a rhythm to it that helped though if there were two werewolves together I only saved one. The other was put to rest with flesh still smoking from some impressive lightning bolts. At least the potion worked.



The easier part of this current venture out into the wilds of Camlorn was acquiring the weapons and armor from the caches. Well, it did feel a bit cumbersome by the time I got back to the inn. It's a wonder I didn't lose some of it dropping it to fight enemies in my path.

Back at the inn I find it a little fuller with the few people the potion saved and Darien happy to see me with my load of gear. It's a good thing I'm a lot stronger than I look for a slim, Altmer sorceress. Only thing impressive about my physique is that I'm tall even in Altmer standards and most Nords fall an inch or two short, most even with their horned helms on.

So now we are set to actually open the gate. About time, but at least there are more equipped forces inside.

Darien's force would get to the gate to open it. I got to run and light the fire signals that would let the generals waiting outside to know the gate would open soon. Actually, Darien sent me with someone who would

light the fires while I made sure the werewolves did not stop us. Time to char a few more of them and their Bloodthorn cronies with some fun lightning and storm calling.

Faochu figured out what we were up to. We would fight our way to the tower and the one lighting the fire, she would slip in just fine. Within seconds of that I werewolves ran to the tower to attack me. Thankfully the timing wasn't bad and I did not meet any overwhelming odds. Even so all this fighting even with some rest and some food in me, was taking its toll. I hoped I had what I needed when it came time for us to face Faochu. With all three towers lit and knowing Darien opened the gate, it was time to face Faochu.

He had holed himself up in Camlorn Keep. The place looked like a wreck. This would not be easy. Again I got the honors for what I considered the hard part. I would go occupy his attention while the Lion Guard got in position so they could find a way to rain fire down into the keep. This could even ruin our chances if the fire landed on me instead. One thing that would help



them was the fact the place was already wrecked enough they could dislodge things down further into the keep after lighting it up.

I stepped inside surprised to find nothing attacking me. A wall blocked my view of the main room beyond. Openings to both my right and left led in there. I could hear voices as I moved to peek around the wall from the right hand side. A ghostly vision of Angof stood before Faolchu, who was spouting off that Camlorn was his and Angof could go take a hike. Angof was telling him that an army was at his door. Well, sure, but technically at that moment it was just me and my clanfear. Hopefully the rest would not be too long behind.

Angof's apparition disappeared, so I stepped out to face the brutish Faolchu. We stared each other down before he howled and charged at me. I immediately slammed a lightning bolt down on him making him all the more infuriated. He slapped good before I could dodge. The fight was getting a bit tight as I used various ways to hurt him with my storm calling and destruction staff. The first fire fell in after a warning creak of timbers. It didn't fall on me, but I got singed dancing around it. My stupid clanfear did not let Faolchu get close enough to weaken him however. I love the minion, but sometimes he is so single minded about fighting anything that even thinks of hurting me, he misses the point of having to come to me at times and backing off.

singed me good. Faolchu got really upset with that one and took quite a bit of damage from me before I had to start keeping him off me. He realized the clanfear was the least of his worries. I almost dodged into more fire and came up smoking. I had enough. I pulled out my last stop of being able to throw lightning from my hands and got right in Faolchu's face as I steadily shot lightning into him. He swatted me across the room, but another squeal of protesting timber came and fire dumped on Faolchu's head. I threw my last bit of power I had into him with the lightning until I was sure he would not rise again. He looked rightly charred. I wished he had become a pile of ash for an added ending of all endings. No body for a necromancer to pull back one way or another, no way for Faolchu to rise again.

I stepped outside coughing some from all the smoke caused in the fight and blinking at the light after being within the dark interior. I was congratulated and given some reward I barely noticed at the time. I wanted a bath and a long rest with good food and drink. I moved on from there to talk to Darien, who wanted to have drinks with me of all things. I told him he wasn't my type. For one, he was definitely too short and the other, too brash. He thought that would be a pity, but he was going to go figure out how to take out Angof. It seemed I would wind up doing that myself. Maybe I would even run into Darien again. At least I would know I had a decent fighter on my side with some brains.

The next fire went a lot better even if that one

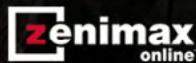
But that story will remain for another day.

LIVE ANOTHER LIFE



The Elder Scrolls®

— O N L I N E —



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Blood and Gore
Sexual Themes
Use of Alcohol
Violence

Online Interactions Not
Rated by the ESRB



Renaissance in Gaming

10 UPCOMING TITLES WITH INNOVATIVE FEATURES

By: Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley

Over the past 5 years we have not seen much advancement in the world of MMORPG's. A lot of them have stuck to the tried and true methods and resisted swaying from the path. Developers began to be controlled by publishers and the creativity in gaming suffered.

Alas, when all seem hopeless and stale, along came a new gaming renaissance in the form of crowdfunding. When first presented, I must admit, I had reservations about the concept. Paying for something that isn't even built yet for the hopes that one day it will be seemed like a pretty severe gamble to me and with past games requiring between 10 and 100 million to be produced it seemed like a longshot that any title could effectively publish itself.

But time past, and game developer after game developer jumped on board the crowdfunding train. By crowdfunding they are no longer controlled by their publisher. They have the freedom to innovate and dare to be different. All with the support of the very people who want to play their game. While not every crowd funded game has been successful a large portion of them are doing that which publishers deemed impossible.

This has created a ripple in the industry and has lead to a revolution in gaming. What we have on the horizon promises to bring new fresh concepts to the MMORPG world. In my research I have tracked 10 new titles which while not all have jumped on the crowdfunding train a lot of them have. All of these games however bring something new to the table.





EVOLVING GAME GEOGRAPHY

Camelot Unchained

Funding: Crowdfunding | Developer: City State Entertainment | Release: 2016

After a bitter departure from his hit classic Dark Age of Camelot, Mark Jacobs set off on a mission to rebuild his claim to fame bigger and stronger than ever. Venture Capital companies refuse to fund RvR style games since the failures of Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic, Age of Conan and Warhammer Online.

So Mark turned to crowdfunding in hopes to build a niche game for the players that want and love this style of gameplay. This title brings a new level of depth to the traditional siege warfare game bringing a fresh leveling concept, the reliance on player crafted weapons and armor, and a massive world which changes shape (physically) as the war progresses.

Based on what objectives a faction controls landmasses form to connect their regions allowing them faster and safer travel to their territories. The physical game world evolves as time passes on.



CHARACTER CREATION **Black Desert**

Funding: Privately Funded | Developer: Pearl Abyss | Publisher: Daum | Release: 2015

When I first laid eyes on this game I thought, wow what a beautiful environment. As development progressed it became obvious that this ambitious new title was going to be a game changer from the far east. The most outstanding feature in Black Desert is its character creator. It is nothing short of having a full fledged 3D modeling application like Poser or Maya to create your character. You can adjust everything about your character including how long each strand of hair is, or simply click on your cheek bone and drag it where you want it. You can even create characters who have suffered grievous injury like a broken jaw. There are over 144 points on the body you can change the shape of. This is by far the most in depth character creation system I've ever laid eyes on.





PLAYER CREATED CONTENT & DESTRUCTIBLE TERRAIN

Everquest Next

Funding: Privately Funded | Publisher: SONY Online | Release: TBA

With the huge success of games such as Minecraft, a new trend is rapidly gaining strength allowing players to create worlds and portions of games. Neverwinter played their hand at this as well, but it's poor microtransaction system decimated it's population before a lot of content creators could get content produced. Everquest Next however is doing it right in the form of Everquest Landmark, a content creation tool released over a year before Everquest Next has even officially been given a release date. With content from Everquest Landmark plugging into Everquest Next it's certain to have a huge amount of player created content ready to explore the day it goes live.





CROSS PLATFORM UNIFICATION

Albion Online

Funding: Crowdfunded | Developer: Sandbox Interactive GmbH | Release: 2015

This ambitious new crowdfund project brings a very hot new concept to market. This is one of the first completely cross platform MMORPG's to date. Playable on PC, Mac, Linux, IOS, and Android devices all at the same time. Players will be able play the game at home, on the road, in a plane, or in line at the grocery store. Next time your wife makes you go shopping for some new shoes... no problem you've got Albion Online in your pocket. This new title offers an expansive 3 realm RvR system with an in depth crafting system. Keep an eye on this one and the games that follow suit. An age of games on demand is beginning to take shape where we won't be confined to one medium.





ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Kingdom Come: Deliverance

Funding: Crowdfunding | Developer: Warhorse Studios | Release: 2016

While not a MMORPG, this title brings something entirely new to the RPG world. If any of you remember when Arcanum: Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura made it's appearance with an all new AI system that was shaped by player action. You can remember the ripple effect it had on gaming. In Arcanum each individual NPC would build a judgment on you based on who you befriended, chose to help, or even the way you spoke to them. Shortly thereafter games such as Baldur's Gate, Oblivion, Skyrim, and Dragon Age would perfect this line of thinking.

Kingdom Come: Deliverance takes this to the extreme with an all new AI system that creates living characters. Who don't act on a set path, standing waiting for a player to interact. They wake up, go to work, have hobbies, and even get in the occasional bar brawl. If you interact with a farmer and send him to a nearby village to get more supplies, the baker won't have supplies to make bread causing him to take the day off and go hunting instead. Every character in the game is programmed to act differently every single day based on a set of careers, work ethics, weather patterns, hobbies, relationships, and player interactions. Everything from the weather, to bumping into the wrong person on the way to work can change the outcome of each NPC's day.





WEATHER & SEASONS SYSTEMS

Gloria Victis

Funding: Crowdfunded | Developer: Black Eye Games | Release: 2016

In game worlds weather systems have been a fairly unexplored aspect. Dark Age of Camelot created a weather system to bring on the onslaught of a rainstorm complete with fog and lightning which impaired vision and changed the way audio was handled in the game.

In Black Eye Game's crowdfunded project Gloria Victis, the next generation of weather systems is introduced bringing seasons which affect the weather into the game. In this game there will be a calendar year, and with the change of seasons will come change in climate. Hot summer days will not only be sunny but it will also cause fatigue among the plate wearers. In the cold harsh winters filled with ice and snow, players will move slower. Wind can affect siege weapons and projectiles. Day's and Night's will also bring change to the world and moon cycles will help players tell what day it is within the month.

For those that brave crafting the harsh winter months will become very harsh to crops and farming certain plants will be impossible forcing crafters to manage their production around the calendar year. What they aim to create is a simulated real life medieval Europe that has the same effect on in games as it would for the people who lived in those times. This system will change luminosity, cloud cover, fog density, temperature, wind, precipitation, and even how npcs change their behavior based on the weather.





MODDABLE PLAYER CONTENT
Shards Online

Funding: Crowdfunded | Developer: Citadel Studios | Release: 2016

This is one of a few titles breaking into the player content creation scene. Like Minecraft before it, players will be able host their own shard (server), creating a game world with its own rulesets, story, and player created content including terrain, story, rules and even skills. These shards are all connected through a universe (cluster) that is comprised of both official shards and player created shards offering unlimited possibilities for creation and creativity.

Place Bookshelf



Employment

Status	Crafting Mana Potions
Quantity Remaining:	8
Time to Completion:	3:02
Stop Job	

Job Categories

Resource Gathering	Select
Crafting	Select
Courier	Select
Merchant	Select
Guard	Select

Dismiss Hireling

A screenshot from a medieval-style game. A character is working at a desk in a dimly lit room. The character is highlighted with a blue glow. The desk has a bookshelf, a candle, and some fruit. The room has stone walls and a candle on the floor.

Pathfinder Online Technology Demo

by Goblinworks Inc.



CROWDFUNDING MMORPG

Pathfinder Online

Funding: Crowdfunded | Developer: Goblinworks | Release: 2015

This project was the first Crowdfunded MMORPG successfully funded on June 8th 2012 and raised 6 times their goal bringing in \$307,843. With venture capitalists and publishers tightening their belts after the downturn of the economy, game developers like Goblinworks looked to alternative funding methods such as crowdfunding. What Goblinworks would pioneer was a revolution in gaming finance that would open doors for thousands of new projects.

Now currently in beta this game looks to bring the fan favorite Pathfinder RPG to the digital frontier offering siege warfare, politics, and a fresh experience for gamers of old and new. This project still needs some polish but as one of the first to brave the crowdfunding scene it stands proud as one of the first successful campaigns to bring something venture capitalizes weren't interested in to market opening the doors for so many others to follow in suit.





CONTROL SCHEME & CINEMATIC GAMEPLAY

Lineage Eternal

Funding: Privately Funded | Developer: NCsoft | Release: TBA

If you played the original Lineage, Lineage Eternal might not be too unfamiliar to you. However if you entered the series at Lineage 2 you might be a bit put off by the change. Lineage Eternal is not to be mistaken as Lineage 3. It is a spin off in the world of Lineage that takes a fresh top down perspective similar to Diablo and Dragon Age. Its gameplay is going for a more cinematic approach making it feel like you're participating in a movie. Combat is using a set of mouse "gestures" which sounds both frightening and interesting in the same. NCSoft is taking a big risk on this one but if it plays out we could see a whole new line of cinematic MMORPG's.





CONNECTIVITY OPTIONS

Shrouds of the Avatar

Funding: Privately Funded | Developer: NCsoft | Release: TBA

It's been nearly a decade since Lord British launched a successful MMORPG. So what has he been up to? Well there was Tabula Rasa, but we wont go into that. More importantly he flew into space as one of the first privately funded space missions. Maybe it was the aliens or just getting a new perspective but when he returned to earth out came the idea of Shrouds of the Avatar, the first Single Player, Multiplayer, Massively Multiplayer RPG ever created. Yes you heard that right. This game can be played offline as a single player game, it can be limited to just you and your friends, and you can go MMORPG style with the good the bad and the trolly. Lord British rolled the dice on this one hoping to provide a successor to the MMORPG Godfather Ultima Online.





EXPLORING THE VAST FRONTIER

By: Amanda "Soren" Carr

WHAT IS BLACK DESERT?

Black Desert is an upcoming sandbox-esque MMORPG that offers a huge, dynamic world free of loading screens to any brave enough who wish to explore its vast array of scenery and dungeons. The World provides a variety of unique experiences in an open environment and features a wide selection of things to do such as siege battles, crafting, complex large scale battles requiring skill and strategy, player housing, and a robust trading system.

Experience magnificent landscapes and architectures with some of the most breathtakingly realistic characters with different abilities, from Fighters to Sorcerers, Beasts and Tamers. There's optional PvP and bind-on-equip items that don't drop if you're killed by another player. The story of Black Desert centers around

the two warring countries, The Kingdom of Valencia and The Republic of Calpheon, both of which are separated by a vast desert. The desert, known as "The Black Desert" is named for the valuable resource black stones that litter the area.

WHO CREATED IT?

Pearl Abyss was established in September 2010 as a Korean stand-alone game development company (created Continent of Ninth), targeting MMORPG users worldwide. The CEO of Pearl Abyss is Daeil Kim and his team of over 50 members have produced many box-office hits together over the last 10 years. Utilizing their previous experiences, Black Desert was designed to incorporate and satisfy the demands of gamers everywhere. For its North American release, Black Desert is being published by Daum Communications.

FEATURES

Black Desert is host to a vast number of unique features that are in place and designed to give the player the best immersion experience they can get in an MMO. Some of features included are:

- Day/Night cycle that creates an ever-changing dynamic to the world. NPCs will go home during the night, and monsters come out to play – it's a very different experience between the two times zones
- Truly open world with no load screen making for seamless gameplay as players transition from one zone to the next
- Climate system that changes as players progress from region to region - Travel from the heart of the desert to vast tundras to rolling plains
- A fully functional Parkour system (think Assassin's Creed) that will allow your character to climb anything low enough
- Interactive AI/NPC system where building relationships with NPC's will become vital in improving your individual reputation and guild success
- Fully functional in game wiki for all your gaming needs
- Need a break from all the PvP action? Why not check out musical instruments, fishing, or pigeon shooting!





RACES & CLASSES

In Black Desert players will have the option to choose from 3 main races (humans, elves, and giants) with 8 unique classes (Ranger, Warrior, Sorcerer, Predator, Tamer, Wizard, Valkyries, and Blader). While players can choose any race during character creation, currently they will find that certain classes are gender locked. Even with the restriction in place each gender will have a similar class, ie) warrior (male) is the very similar to Valkyrie (Female), wizard (male) is similar to sorceress (female). Characters are fully customizable in one of the most robust character creator in an MMO.



ACTION COMBAT

Black Desert features a robust action combat system that utilizes WSAD movement and mouse clicks, combined with intricate key combos (similar to TERA) to get things done. Collision is present so positioning and strategic planning will be the key to success. Use your environment to your advantage in the open world.

Not only can you hack and slash in the typical melee and ranged combat styles, Black Desert takes things one step further with mounted combat. Leveling your mount and fighting from it will give a player all kinds of advantages out in the open field, such as height, speed, and agility advantage. Siege also plays an important role in pvp combat and fighting with it will give bonuses when trying to take castles.



PVP AND SIEGE WARFARE

PvP in Black Desert is open world meaning that you can be attacked and killed anywhere outside of a designated safe zone. Players need to reach the soft cap of level 50 in order to participate in PvP related activities sieges and arena matches. Black Desert's PvP system also boasts a stellar ambush and camouflage system to give those with patience an advantage in the field.

Castle sieges offer great rewards to anyone brave enough to claim them. Any guild holding the castle also holds the lands and taxes around it. Sieges are not limited and there have been battles of 400+ players each side.

War however is not without its consequences and the current loot drop system adds a bit of risk to any PvP foray. When players are killed they have a chance at dropping

an item that is not character bound and currently held in their inventory such as gold, trade goods, mats, and certain quest items.

GUILDS

As with many MMO's, guilds are an important feature in Black Desert and they are key to holding resources, land, and surviving in a hostile environment. Guilds have their own skill tree and require the help of its members to advance. Improving and upgrading a guild will give its members



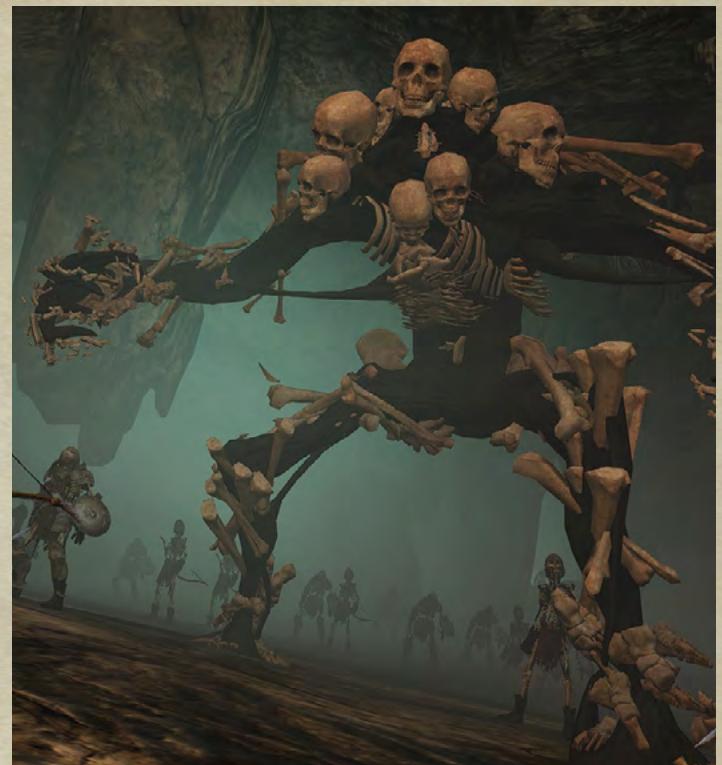
various things like buffs to fighting, crafting, guild shops and the ability to declare war on other guilds. Guilds are upgraded by collecting karma which can be gained by completing guild missions and befriending NPCs..

Guilds can be created by anyone that is level 50 and has 30k silver and have a member cap of 80. Guild upkeep starts once a guild reaches 31 members. Failure to pay upkeep will result in the guild losing its ability to guild quest, gain members, and siege, and the more payments that are missed, the worse the penalty.

PvE

The PvE scene offers the standard fare of open world questing, crafting, world bosses and dungeons. Most of the fun comes out of exploring and there are rewards for those brave enough to travel to the far corners

of the world. Black Desert also features a robust housing system, mount taming, fishing, a host of musical instruments and NPC's to befriend and take quests from. Like the real world everything will require a fair bit of hard work to obtain.





CRAFTING/TRADE

Crafting is completely player driven and allows for the creation of best in game gear and siege weaponry for castle sieges making crafters a much needed asset to any guilds arsenal.

Crafters will find themselves with 5 unique professions to choose from and will need to develop and manage resources to increase their skill and proficiency in their chosen craft. Management of workers, workshops, waypoints and caravan routes will be key

to getting their goods out to the world. Different resources require different tools to harvest and each tool must be developed in your workshops.

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE HORIZON

Black Desert is shaping up to be an ambitions MMORPG that offers a great deal for players to do and is full of action packed, fast paced combat where skill is king. Become one of few landowners in a world where housing is open, and very limited and fight others in epic sieges, and become a legend.

Open Beta is currently underway for the Korean version with a Western release date set tentatively for April 2016.





A large, detailed tree stands in a field of flowers at sunset. The tree has a thick trunk and a dense canopy of green leaves. Sunlight filters through the branches, creating a warm glow. In the foreground, a field of small, pinkish-purple flowers, possibly poppies, stretches across the frame. In the background, there's a fence and a line of trees under a sky with soft, pastel-colored clouds.

Kingdom Come: Deliverance



Ambition Meets Innovation

By: Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley & Jiří Rýdl

I always have my eyes on the horizon looking for games that have unique qualities and that dare to advance gaming technology. In my lifetime I've seen gaming go from the Commodore 64 and Atari 2600 to the modern marvels in full high definition. I even played my part on the development side by building mods and models for Marathon, Neverwinter, Vampire the Masquerade: Redemption, and a little tank game called Bolo.

The evolution of this industry fascinates me because it used to be a taboo source of entertainment that people frowned upon, but has now become a major entertainment industry that touches households worldwide. It has even rivaled other long standing household entertainment sources, such as film and television. Traditional entertainment was based on storytelling, but video games bring a new element into that formula in the form of interactivity and choice. Through the years, we have seen game changers like Marathon (Mouselook), Red Faction (Destructible

Terrain), Doom 3 (Rounded Polygons), Meridian 59 (MMORPG), Dark Age of Camelot (RvR), and so many others that have taken the industry on to the next level.

It is because of those who dare to innovate and shape this industry that we have gone from Pong to Dragon Age: Inquisition in just 42 years. Today I sit down with one such company that brings changes to the face of gaming once again.

Warhorse was founded in 2011 by Dan Vávra, creator of Mafia and Mafia 2; and Martin Klíma, formerly of ALTAR (Original War, UFO:^{*} trilogy). They are a new independent crowdfunded game development studio based in Prague, Czech Republic. Their first title is 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance' set in medieval Europe during 1403. Along with its beautiful and breathtaking living world, it brings a fresh perspective to siege warfare.

I am very excited to get the chance to sit down with Warhorse Studios to discuss their new title.



Thank you for joining us today. Can you tell us a little about your studio and how it came to be?

Jiří Rýdl: My name is Jiří Rýdl and I am responsible for marketing and communication at Warhorse Studios. I know Martin Klíma from the past, when we worked together in ALTAR interactive on titles such as 'Fish Fillets', 'Original War' and 'UFO trilogy'. Then we worked in IDEA games on distribution and marketing titles like 'ArmA', 'Alpha Prime' or 'Fish Fillets 2', you can still buy some of them here: <http://bit.ly/1uqsRdG> and the first 'Fish Fillets' are open source now: <http://bit.ly/1yO488Z>

J.R.: Warhorse Studios was established by Martin Klíma and Dan Vávra in 2011 with the plan to produce AAA title for PC and next generation consoles (nextgen in that time :-)). Dan worked on 'Mafia' and wanted to create a game from medieval times in Bohemia, so he went to Martin to help him produce such a title. Martin worked besides the mentioned PC games on 'Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising'





as a producer and said why not :-] The third important person behind the studio is the financial investor, who agreed to help Dan and Martin with preproduction of the game demo for publishers.

I understand things were pretty rough in the beginning and you were moments away from having to close the studio. What changed, and how were you able to recuperate so suddenly?

J.R.: After 18 months of development in a rather small team, around 20 people, the demo was prepared (what it looked like

can be seen in our first live stream: <http://bit.ly/1CMffho>). The publisher's roadshow began – we talked to every big player on the market and the first feedback was pretty good. The only worries were about the lack of fantasy elements and wow moments like fighting the dragon.

We did a market research among PC and console players in the US to ask them if they would like to play such a game and the outcome was highly positive. Publishers liked that, but no one was offering a real deal, so we kept the discussion alive, met them at the conferences etc. After almost a year of polishing the demo for the publishers we decided to stop wasting our time and money and show the game to the public. We went to Kickstarter (<http://kck.st/1t9BNsQ>)!

Crowdfunding has become quite the latest development trend. Many developers are turning to





this over conventional publisher funding. What are some of the advantages and limitations that you have found in crowdfunding?

J.R.: The good thing is that you get real feedback from players. Some of them even pledge for your project, which means they are really eager to see the project alive! But even if they don't, it's very nice to read all those comments and emails wishing us the best of luck.

Game developing is a time consuming process and after two years in a "cave" talking to publishers only, it is a fresh air of ideas and energy coming towards us. I would say there are limitations, you just need to be prepared to answer to all those voices. People who pledged for your game want to know a lot of about it and they will follow you for months or even years of development.

So your first game is Kingdom Come: Deliverance. I read about this a few years ago with a brief mention that it would be a historical game set in medieval Europe, and that it would feature true historical weaponry without the dragons and magic that tend to fill popular medieval themed games. What inspired you to build a more historical based game over following the traditional format?

J.R.: It was Dan's idea and if you know 'Mafia', you already know that he is the kind of "realistic" game designer. The 15th century were interesting times and Bohemia was one of the important centers of European politics, culture and science, especially thanks to Charles IV. (<http://bit.ly/1L5utEq>)

After his death there was a dispute over the Czech throne between his sons Wenceslaus IV and Sigismund I, which led to civil war in the end (well it was a little bit more complicated :-]).



Any chance of running into some historical characters from that era like Ján Hus?

J.R.: Well, no comment :-]

One of the things I haven't seen a lot of right now is story. Can you paint us a picture of what the setting is for Kingdom Come: Deliverance?

J.R.: Henry (Jindřich in Czech) is a blacksmith caught in the midst of civil war, and the lives of his family are unfortunately lost. Henry swore that he would get his revenge... This is the beginning of a long thorny way, but revenge is never sweet.

Aside from fighting, what types of activities will players experience?

J.R.: Fighting is definitely not the best way to solve problems and as in a real life, it is usually better to choose some other option. For instance you can talk yourself out of the troubles, you can even lie, if you have charisma :-]

You can also craft new stuff if you can find an abandoned smithery and then sell it. Or steal it :-] You can create potions from herbs or shoot the wild boar, set up the fire and cook a good meal. You can get lost in the woods, find a bandit camp and ...



From the alpha test videos I've seen, one of your major innovations in this game is the AI and the way it interacts with the world. Can you explain how this works? What does this mean for the player?

J.R.: The world is living and changing according to your actions. For instance – Samopše – the village in the technology alpha (<http://bit.ly/189Usvo>), people are waking up in the morning, they eat breakfast and go to work – smithery, shop, field, forest ... If you still do nothing, villagers finish what they do and then go after some fun – fishing at the creek, shooting at the shooting range, drinking at the pub. While you are doing nothing, men and women of

Samopše go to sleep, the moon raises and you can listen to the howling of a night owl. On the other hand, when you for instance tell the shopper there is some cheap stuff to buy in the other city, he will pack his stuff and go do business there. Fisherman is not able to sell him his fish, so he instead sells them to you. You can exchange them in the pub for a free beer. And meet a stranger there...

What other innovations has the team cooked up for this exciting new title?

J.R.: The combat is completely different from what I know, every cover is important, every blow can be deadly. If you meet an armored opponent with a sword, you should rather run away, if you don't want



any trouble. Of course sometimes the only way out of trouble is to draw your weapon, but killing people has consequences. And there are no swords +10 fire damage :-)

From the tech demos we've seen, the world appears to be vast. Just how large can we expect the world to be? Will it be based on medieval Europe's geography?

J.R.: The map is bigger now, around 12sq km and it will be just a small part of Bohemia. But beware, the map is not small! There will be around 150 places to explore and the traveling is not on the back of a dragon, but by foot or on a horse, it takes time as in a real life. The forest is deep and who knows what is hidden in it?





Will there be a crafting system in 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance'? If so what types of professions will players be able to learn?

J.R.: You can make weapons, cook food, hunt animals, steal money, shoot the bow, ride the horse and many more. Our RPG system is not about professions, it's about skills. So you can do whatever you want, but you are not good at everything.

One thing I have not seen yet, but I'm very excited to learn about, is the siege warfare. Are there any details you can share about what players can expect to see in the epic sieges you have planned?

J.R.: Siege is not an everyday event, as in real history, large battles are usually very rare and the time between them can be months, even years. You need to manage





and feed the huge army and it is never easy. So don't expect one battle after another, this is not a strategy :-) But you can look forward something special, I can promise that!

Are there plans for DLC content in the future?

J.R.: Well, yes, there are plans :-) But it is too soon to talk about it, we are still in the middle of development of 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance – Act I' and we have already promised a lot of stuff on Kickstarter, so no more stretch goals or DLC content for now :-)

What platforms are you planning to release 'Kingdom Come: Deliverance' on?

J.R.: We aim for PC, PS4 and Xbox One, we would like to release Mac and Linux versions also.

Is there an estimated release date for this title?

J.R.: We would like to finish the development this year in December.



Where can players learn more about Kingdom Come: Deliverance?

J.R.: We have a great community of backers on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/kingdomcomerpg>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/WarhorseStudios>) and YouTube (<http://bit.ly/1z1bTtP>), but of course there is also an official website and the forums at www.kingdomcomerpg.com.



My final question for you is, which would disappear from your cafeteria first, Horalky or Lentilky?

J.R.: Hmm, tough question ... Probably Horalky, I like a cup of coffee after lunch, and Horalky is the good choice :-)





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Kingdom Come:

Deliverance

WWW.KINGDOMCOMERPG.COM

CREATING AN EPIC MUSICAL JOURNEY WITH IVAN TORRENT

BY: BENJAMIN "FOGLADHA" FOLEY

It wasn't long ago that I first discovered this young Spanish composer by the name of Ivan Torrent popping up on my Amazon Recommended list. His cover art of his song "*Human Legacy*" inspired me to listen. What I heard was a fantastic journey of epic proportions. I went on to listen to "*Icarus*" featuring Julie Elven and again I found it to be a mind blowing composition that sent a flood of imagery into my mind.



I continued down his long list of singles and found my personal favorite "*One of Us*" also featuring Julie Elven. After browsing through his collection I ended up buying every song available. Much to my bliss, Ivan Torrent released his first compilation album titled "*Reverie*" on digital retailers such as iTunes, Amazon Music, and Bandcamp last December.

I went on the hunt to learn more about Ivan Torrent and the works he's produced and was amazed that there was little to no information about him on "The Google". I did however find his Facebook account and sent him a friend request. From there I got this crazy idea... Why don't I interview him and get the information about this breathtaking composer. So I asked.

Much to my surprise, I received a reply a few hours later. So today I get to bring you the life and inspiration of Ivan Torrent.



THANK YOU FOR JOINING ME TODAY. FIRST I WOULD LIKE TO ASK HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU STARTED COMPOSING?

My pleasure Benjamin. It's an honor to share some thoughts with the Gaiscioch Family!

Well, I can't remember exactly but the thing is that I started playing keyboards since I was 6 or 7 years old. I was really young when my interest in music awoke, as many other fellow composers that I know... So I studied music theory for a few years to improve my skills. In these early stages, I only played covers of songs from other artists. Actually I remember that I was trying to learn those songs during the year to perform them on the last days of classes in my school, when all children showed their plays, dances..you know...I was the child with his little keyboard, playing songs like Lambada, Greensleeves or When the saints go marching in...

So, I don't remember having the impulse to write anything myself till I was maybe 13 years old, when I discovered the magic of samples and my interest for computers appeared...It was then that I discovered how much potential I had to create music with computers, rather than with keyboards

alone. Thus I left traditional music theory, because it seemed boring...Big mistake! Haha... So I began writing some jingles for Radio stations, although my goal was to write for TV.

Advertising was always interesting to me... however, I took another path.

WHAT WERE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MUSICIANS AND BANDS GROWING UP?

My main influences were Mike Oldfield, Enigma, Enya, Clannad, but also some pop and electronic music like Pet Shop Boys, Chicane, Delerium, Madonna, Michael Jackson... All those artists were extensively using new technologies in their music. I was really interested in these new sounds and mixes with really great melodic hooks, brilliant chord progressions... It was like a drug to me...

Personally, I think I grew up in a splendidous time for music. Not sure if it's because the music is related to my childhood and the good moments I lived, but I truly think that in those years, I had the privilege to experience one of the biggest moments in the music industry, when the electronics evolved to new boundaries and there was less qualms about using it.



That gave us a front row to watch the birth of a new genre, as a result of the symbiosis between traditional and electronic music.

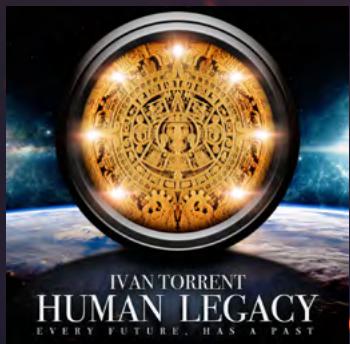
In short, to me, the music came out of the closet, and that freedom helped to be less polite, less restrained and experimental. It was something like old school melodies, with a new fashion approach.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CHOOSE EPIC CINEMATIC MUSIC AS A MEDIUM FOR YOUR ART?

I think it's important to be eclectic. Search for new limits, and above all, experiment with all the different resources that music provides you.

Neo-Orchestral, Cinematic, Epic Music... you name it... was a logical way for me to express my restlessness for orchestral arrangements in my music. I worked as a producer for other well known artists in my country, such as Monica Naranjo, Soraya, Manu Castellano, Aerosoul...where I always tried to add orchestral elements, strings, etc.

So, this genre has been an open door to express myself in an extensive way. Mixing the electronic stuff (where I come from) with the orchestra, pads, voices...It makes me feel really comfortable.



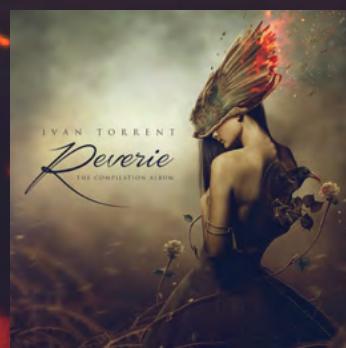
WHERE DO YOU DRAW INSPIRATION FOR YOUR MUSIC? IS IT IN OTHER SONGS, IMAGERY, OR SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY?

It simply comes. I am not sure what the catalyst is, but it can be anything.. Watching a movie, something interesting that I read...An oneiric concept, a song that touched me...Sometimes it comes to mind as a spontaneous string ostinato or a melody... and I record it on the phone to remember the idea and write it later on the computer...

WHAT OTHER ARTISTS DO YOU ENJOY AND RECOMMEND FOR SOMEONE WHO ENJOYS YOUR MUSIC?

There are well known composers in this musical genre that I deeply admire such as Jo Blankenburg, Thomas Bergensen, Michal Cielecki, Paul Dinletir or Mark Petrie. Not only for their absolutely elegant way to compose, but also for their polished production. Something that as a producer makes me enjoy the composition even more.

Also some well known Production Companies, such as Really Slow Motion, Sonic Symphony, Audiomachine, Position Music, Two Steps From Hell...





The interest for Epic music has grown, and lately makes me think that it will become a nice and long journey for both the audience as well as for the composers of this genre... It's a fact that it has came to stay, and that's great!

IF YOU HAD YOUR DREAM PROJECT LAND ON YOUR LAP, WHAT WOULD IT BE? WHAT'S YOUR END GAME GOAL?

I prefer to live in the present rather than think always on what the future holds... Actually, I am making true a part of that goal, that basically is to be a full time composer, and as a plus, to have the chance to work for the film industry, writing music that has been placed on some trailers for blockbusters... something that I've always wished for.

So... honestly I couldn't be more fortunate to work on what I really love, and definitely the goal is to evolve as an artist and share my music with the audience as long as possible.

I UNDERSTAND YOU JUST RELEASED A NEW ALBUM? CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THIS ALBUM?

Indeed, recently I published "Reverie", a compilation album with 26 tracks that I wrote and released publicly along these last two years at the same time that I was writing trailer music for several production companies.

I had released some of them previously on digital platforms, but many people asked me for an album with more tracks, so I thought it could be a good chance to do a selection and work on them, doing some tweaks, new arrangements and mix and master it all again. A true challenge, but with great satisfaction and rewards beyond all that work. It has had a really warm reception and I couldn't be happier.

For those tracks, I had the good fortune of working with the awesome voices of Julie Elven, Aeralie Brighton, Gaby Koss, Roger Berruezo and Rangel Da Silva as well as

really gifted musicians, such as Éanán Patterson, Frederic Descargues, François Ragot and Pete Whitfield. That brought a more live and organic sense to the whole album.

WE HAVE SOME TECH SAVVY READERS, SO I HAVE TO ASK, WHAT TYPE OF EQUIPMENT DO YOU USE TO RECORD YOUR MUSIC?

At the studio I have a pair of ADAM S3x-V speakers that are my main tool to mix all my music right now. These offer me a detailed and natural sound to my ears.

I also have a workstation with many hard drives and a large amount of ram to load all the samples quickly. Usually, I work with many plugins and orchestral libraries, as well as synths on a big orchestral template in Cubase, to have all the sonic palette at

my disposal instantly.

For the vocal recordings and some instruments, I use a Neumann u87, Avedis M5a and Anamod 660 (preamplifier and compressor). If I need to record a specific instrumentation, I tend to hire some external recording services, that can bring better sonic results.

WHAT'S YOUR TYPICAL PROCESS FOR CREATING NEW MUSIC?

As I mentioned before, there is no pattern defined, but only the impulse to write something that moves something within me. If it works and catches me, then I develop it.

I sketch it on piano mainly, and then I try to structure it all, to have a better approach of the overall time of the song. The structure



is a very important point to me, as well as the leitmotiv. If both work in communion, then I feel more safe to work on the arrangements and the production.

The vocals are important as well, so if I have some lyrics and ad-lips in mind, I wonder who could sing it. Then I send the track as soon as possible to locate the most comfortable tune range for him/her... in order to avoid surprises at the end... I work on the production once we both have established the safe and comfortable range.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR IVAN TORRENT?

Currently I am working on a second solo album with brand new material, that is scheduled to be released at the end of the year...but you know, this is never exact.

In my experience, an album is a surprise box, and along the way, anything could happen! But, yeah...I am on it, and I hope I can have it ready by then... Fingers crossed!

I HAVE TO ASK, DO YOU PLAY VIDEO GAMES AND IF SO WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE GAME OF ALL TIME?

Haha, you will not believe it, but I am not. I am a 'potato' when it comes to playing video games...Actually I tend to get bored, but maybe it's because I didn't find the game that catches me. I was very addicted to Mario Bros with my brother in my childhood, but it was long time ago!

I must admit that I admire immensely, the evolution in graphics, and the attention put into the music of the new generation of games. That opened a big door to the epic and big orchestral music recordings, since

video games seem like movies more and more.

DO YOU HAVE ANY INSPIRING WORDS FOR A YOUNG ARTIST ON THE FENCE ABOUT MAKING THE JUMP TO FOLLOW THEIR DREAMS?

I often say, that the most important thing is to be clear with your feelings, and your impulses... In short, to be authentic with yourself. And do all the things you really want in this life, not thinking in the future as a goal, but as a way to be happier in the present.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR JOINING US TODAY. IF THE READERS WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE WHERE CAN THEY FIND NEW SONGS AND INFORMATION ABOUT YOU?

You can find my music through iTunes, Amazon, Bandcamp & Spotify.

And all the info about new releases on:

<https://www.facebook.com/ivantorrent?ref=hl>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/IvanTorrent>
<https://twitter.com/ivantorrent>
<https://soundcloud.com/ivantorrentmusic>

Again, thanks to you Benjamin, it has been a pleasure, and I would like to send greetings to all the Gaiscioch Family.

Cheers!



TRAILER CREDITS

Captain America -The Winter Soldier (RSM) - Marvel

Seventh Son (Sonic Symphony) - Warner Bros & Legendary Films

Star Trek (Sonic Symphony) - Paramount Pictures & Skydance

3 Days To Kill (RSM) - Relativity Media

The Amazing Spiderman 2 (RSM) - Marvel & Columbia Pictures

The Amazing Spiderman 2 (Sonic Symphony) - Marvel & Columbia Pictures

The Edge of Tomorrow (RSM) - Warner Bros & Village Roadshow Pictures

The Edge of Tomorrow (Sonic Symphony) - Warner Bros & Village Roadshow Pictures

Exodus-gods-and-kings (RSM) - FOX

Exodus-gods-and-kings (RSM) 2 - FOX

Fury (RSM) - Columbia Pictures

Hercules (RSM) - MGM & Paramount Pictures

Into The Storm (RSM) - Warner Bros / New Line Cinema/ Village Roadshow Pictures

Jack Ryan (RSM) - Paramount Pictures

Lego (RSM) - Warner Bros & Village Roadshow Pictures

Man With the Iron Fists (Sonic Symphony) - Universal Studios

Noah (RSM) - Paramount Pictures / Regency

Shadow of Mordor (Videogame) (Position Music) - Warner Games

Sin City (Sonic Symphony) - Dimension Films/ Aldamisa Entertainment/ Troublemaker St.

The Giver (RSM) - Walden Media / Weinstein Company

The Maze Runner (RSM) - FOX

Vikings (RSM)

Alarm für Cobra (RSM)



IVAN TORRENT

Déverie

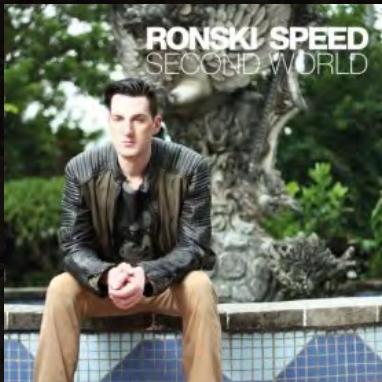
THE COMPILATION ALBUM



NOW AVAILABLE ON

clubGAISCOCH

the hottest new music in epic & trance



Second World
Ronski Speed



Reverie
Ivan Torrent



Sun
Thomas Bergersen



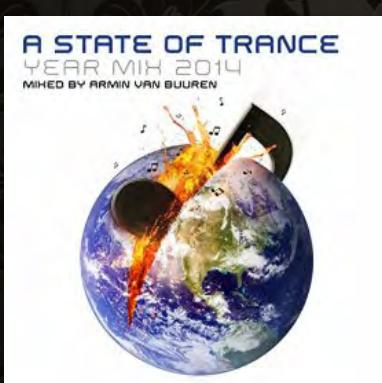
Dragon
Shogun



Of Mist and Magic
Really Slow Motion



This Is Epic Music, Vol 1
Various Artists



A State of Trance Year Mix 2014
Armin van Buuren



Listen
David Guetta



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FEATURED ARTIST

CARLOS E. QUEVEDO

Carlos Quevedo is a graphic artist based in Valencia Venezuela, graduated in Monseñor de Talavera College with a degree in Graphic Design and Publicity. He worked on several publicity agencies during almost three years before to start working as a freelance artist. During the last two years he has been developing his style on illustration using digital media, and he has contributed on the design of several commercial projects. Specialized on Illustration and Photomanipulation, his main focus is digital art. He uses photographic material, as well as painting, to create an illustration. His art is very influenced by religion and personal beliefs. He finds inspiration on Theology, Technology, symbolism, metals and mechanisms.

CARLOS E QUEVEDO IS AVAILABLE FOR COMMISSIONS

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Celestial Warrior Leah



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N y m p h



ROGUE PHOTOS THE ART OF PHOTOGRAPHY BY AOIBHEANN

After spending 37 years in front of or behind the camera, 2014 was a real challenge for me as a photographer. To start off I had an accident in January that broke my wrist, cracked my skull, and as I recently found out, also broke my back at T-12.

In April I moved from TX to AZ. Within a few days of arriving in AZ one of my younger brothers died; in May my youngest daughter graduated college; in June I welcomed a grandson; and that same month my mother died.

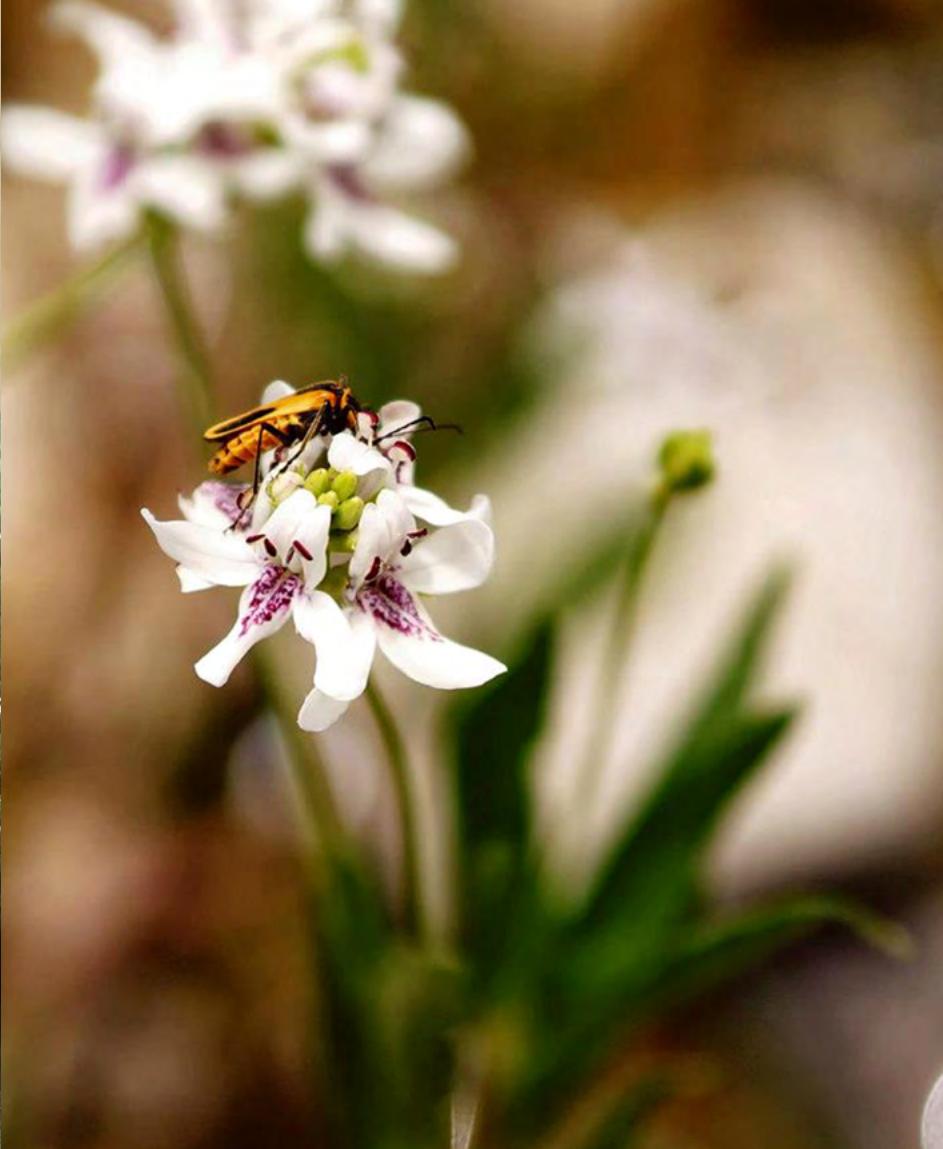
My photography had to be put aside for a while so I could heal emotionally and physically.

In September my friend Roger pointed out that I hadn't posted any new pictures in a very long time. Of course I explained that I was not fully recovered and that I hadn't been taking pictures at all. So he challenged me to take out some old photos and put them through Photoshop and post those. So I did, and that was the start of 'The Roger Pictures' that were posted daily through the beginning of 2015.

This project was just what I needed to shake off some of the sadness and help revive my passion for photography again. I hope you enjoy some of my favorites from this collection. You can find more of my photos on my website: <http://roguephotos.virb.com>











DONALD RUSH: A MAN IN MOTION

By: Aoibheann

*THE TENDENCY OF A BODY IN MOTION IS TO KEEP MOVING,
THE TENDENCY OF A BODY AT REST IS TO KEEP STILL.*

Don, or as we in Gaiscioch fondly know him, Donaliam, has dealt with being overweight his entire life. Starting in high school he has been active in various sports, including baseball, football and roller skating; and sporadically starting and failing at dieting. Nothing seemed to help in his ongoing fight to lose weight.

This past year when he reached his highest weight of 365 lbs. he knew that he had to do something different. So, instead of just joining another gym, he went the extra step and hired a personal trainer and invested in an armband that helps him keep track of the calories he burns and his sleep. He also started using dotfit.com to input his food log to keep track of his diet.



Don during the 2012 Season (at 365lbs)

MOMENTUM WILL PUSH YOU IN THE DIRECTION THAT YOU HAVE SET.

Once he made serious lifestyle changes he finally started seeing his weight drop and his muscle mass increase. Now at just 298, he has lost a total of 67 lbs.

His commitment has made more changes in his life than to just his weight. His friends and colleagues have witnessed his transition from a man that made excuse about why he couldn't do something to one of drive and ambition.

It has been my great pleasure to get to know Don; he is truly an inspiration that it is never too late to achieve your goals.



Don at the 2015 Rain Bowl (at 298lbs)



HOMETOWN GAISCHIOCH

BENONI, SOUTH AFRICA

By Wolvain Dawn & WolfersMorax

INTRODUCTION

Where to begin? My name is Wolvain (aka the Martian) ^^

I stumbled upon the Guild running around in Rift looking for a home and friends to share in fun and adventures. The first guild member I met was none other than Fog himself. He was standing at the steps on the main city and I liked the look of his character, so I took a random chance and poked for a guild invite and was greeted with open arms. Never in my life did I think I would find a gaming guild that would become such a huge part of my life and ultimately lead to becoming

my family. My heart raced when I read through the guild page, designed professionally and elegantly - a true eye catcher. I then met with Jex, Jess, Izzy, Pops, Prissy and Brie, who treated me as more than just another player by showing me respect and friendship, and accepting me for who I am – a gay furry.

It's not easy to be accepted into a gaming community that understands my way of life. Some questions were asked that brought about a very funny conversation between those who know what a furry is and those who don't. There was also a great deal of fun giving me the title of the "Martian", brought on through my coun-

try's less-than-perfect network infrastructure that created so much in-game lag that it seemed I was speaking another language unheard of.

I live in South Africa- no not quite Africa, South Africa - same continent but culturally, socially and economically much more European. Our democracy is young but thriving, ever growing. Not quite on par with the rest of our friends in the Western countries but we're getting there. Being a young country has many advantages, one of them being that citizens are open-minded, kind and accepting. Culturally diverse, full of life and beautiful - all we now need is better networking infrastructure (haha).

Before I go on delving further into the details of my country and its wonders, I wish to give a huge shout out and thanks to Fog and Pops for being there for me anytime I needed, guiding me and helping me find my way around the guild rules, site and members. You guys have always been patient with me and are loads of fun to talk to, teaching me a lot and helping me learn new things. Pops has been a bottomless source of information on more than just gaming, freely sharing his knowledge and passions.

I'd also like to make another shout out to Jex - when I started playing Guild Wars 2 I was somewhat lost and a little behind due to the game downloads taking longer than pretty much the rest of the world. Jex took the time to help me by teaching me many things and showing me around - thank you SO much.

Now we come to Jess... wow what a character. The second she learnt about my acceptance into the guild she was intrigued and showed a lot of interest in me. She peppered me with questions - where I'm from, how I became part of the community, why I sound so funny - and our friendship just grew from there. We shared in loads of in-game fun and real life stories; whenever I would log onto a raid call she would go beyond ecstatic to hear my voice and sometimes we would just take over the chatroom catching up from the last chat we shared. Thank you for always being a beacon of light and joy Jess, you'll always have a very special place in my heart. Lastly to Brie and Prissy, wow what can I say - fun, caring, helpful beyond words and always ready to offer an ear to gaming and even non-gaming issues.

Thanks guys, ALL of you have a special place in my heart, I don't think of you as guildies or friends, you are my family and I'm proud to be part of yours.

YOU LIVE IN AFRICA? WAIT WHAT?

So now onto the fun stuff - time to learn about my home and what makes it so amazing. Generally what the media tells us is rife with sensationalism and negative reporting. It seems easy to lose sight of the good in life and the little things that make South Africa the magical place it is.

Let's start with my home town Benoni, a small suburb in the part of Greater Johannesburg known as the Ekurhuleni



municipality. The name Ekurhuleni means place of peace in Tsonga, one of our 11 official languages. The municipality is an important manufacturing centre in South Africa, and has been described as “the workshop of the country”. Benoni itself is built around a large lake and more on the outskirts away from the hubbub from the industries and international airport. Interestingly, Benoni has more horse stables per square kilometre than anywhere in the southern hemisphere... Who exactly did this kind of research and why is somewhat beyond me, but anyway. Benoni has one more card up its proverbial sleeve—the lovely Charlize Theron (or “Ther-on” as our American friends pronounce it) was born right here.

I’d like to take a little bit of a broader view of the country now...By looking at us on a map it would be impossible to tell

that we actually have the world’s largest verified meteorite impact crater. The site is referred to as the ‘Vredefort Dome’ in honour of the town in the centre of the dome (Vredefort is an Afrikaans word meaning “Peaceful Fort” in reference to a peaceful conclusion to a territorial war in the 1800’s). It is estimated that the original crater was approximately 300km wide, caused by a meteorite about 10km across (190mi and 6.2 mi respectively) somewhere around 2.02 billion years ago. Today all that remain is concentric circles of low-lying mountains and ridges. It is in these mountains that South Africa’s rich deposits of gold, coal, diamonds and uranium are found. The Dome is a UNESCO World Heritage site as of 2005. Apart from the geological interest, the actual area is incredible and worthy of exploring. I’ve attached some photos a friend took over December at a little place called

Schoemansdrif next to the Vaal River – in the heart of the Vredefort Dome:

As you can see – summer in the Southern Hemisphere! Apart from a skirmish with a mud crab and assaults by thousands of caddisflies, the photographer returned to the city unscathed.

NOW ONTO A LITTLE MORE SOCIAL FUN...

Recently a group of friends (furries) decided to go to a resort for a small meet to relax, enjoy nature and probably get drunk (well them at least – I don't drink but certainly get a kick out of watching them fall over one another). Our chosen location was Roodeplaat Dam, a large nature reserve to the North East of Pretoria. We unpacked at a nice spot at the border of the lake, a peaceful place where we can get away from city life and just enjoy the comfort or nature; also considering it being summer here it's nice to get out into an open landscape to cool off.

We were barely there when it started raining. But that was not a problem. Not at all. There is no comparison to the beauty of what we saw. Standing on the shore, watching the storm roll in over the lake... breaks in the clouds letting through streaks of sunshine in defiance of the downpour... and then we saw the incredible. A perfect double rainbow, in its entirety... all 180 degrees. I don't remember ever seeing this in my life. No-one even spoke much. We watched it until it faded into nothingness.

It was nice to stand on the edge of the shore in the rain enjoying the beauty nature has to offer. Not many people do that these days, most would rather run for shelter rather than enjoy the feel of the drops on your face, the view of the fog it created over the dam and the drops hitting the water just goes to show that this world has more to offer than just sadness and destruction.

After the rain had subsided it started to darken. Myself and two enthusiastic exploring friends decided to go for a nice long walk and see what awaits in the bushes. After losing some track of time we decided to head back to camp. On the way back we came across a strange sight: a cactus that decided to call a tree home, growing up its branches into probably the biggest cactus I've ever seen... The unlikely symbiosis gave the tree a very unique look:





On our way home from this remarkable trip we stopped to see one final sight, as we came across some Zebras (or as you Western friends like to call them Zee-bra). This brought about the best riddle to date, are they black horses with white stripes or white horses with black stripes?

SHALL WE MOVE ONTO MORE MODERN SOCIAL EXPERIENCES NOW?

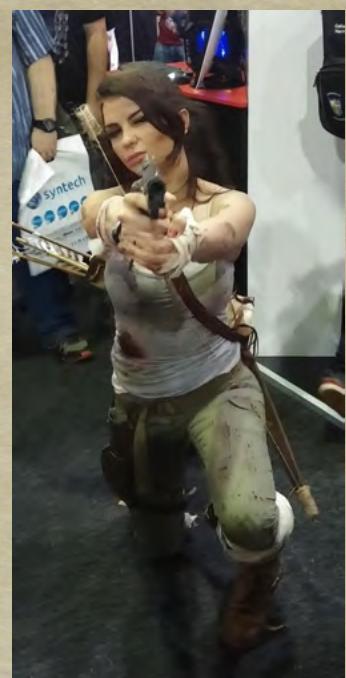
The following weekend myself and my best friend took a trip to rAge.

rAge(<http://www.rageexpo.co.za/>)

rAge is a local technology and gaming expo that takes place annually. Think Africa's E3 and you know exactly what rAge is all about. The NAG LAN hosted at the expo is the largest continuous gathering of gamers playing nonstop for 53 hours in Africa, with up to 2500 gamers connected

to the same network and sharing petabytes of data. The expo itself exhibits the latest technology and computer hardware including exclusive previews to unreleased games and systems, and many of the exhibitors sell some incredible geek stuff such as figurines, comic books, art and related kit. This is of course a perfect opportunity for the attendees to dress up as their favorite game characters – cosplay!





And of course... any convention wouldn't be complete without a group of furries invading it... yes we are everywhere >.<

Most recently we met again to attend Geekfest, an outdoor convention catering more to the geeky among us and not as much to the computer nerd. This was also the first time this convention was held in South Africa. The theme was definitely cosplay and tabletop games, but we had a good look at a few 3D printers in action – what a remarkable breakthrough in technology.

There was also a medieval centre displaying battle-ready armor and weaponry. We sat on the grass and watched a couple of skilled warriors engaging in battle with and competing in an authentic medieval game of running of the sheep's bladder from one goal to the other and trying to avoid the armored opponents trying to take you down.

Yet again we were entertained by people dressing up for cosplay but what stood out the most for me was an adorable sight – I'd say more, but I'll let the photos speak for themselves ^^





The paint used was a clever base of water and powder and therefore not harmful to the adorable little puppy who's only real pain was the heat. If memory serves correctly, the owner spent most of his time stationed by the water outlet with the pup's bowl.

TO WRAP THINGS UP...

Thus we come to the end of my simple life down in the South tip of Africa. I hope you all enjoyed reading this article as much as myself and my dear friend Wolfers enjoyed writing/editing it!

I leave you with this final piece:

"Life is short, live it, love it and enjoy it to the fullest; we only get this chance once and have to make the most of it. Share in the joy you experience with others, don't hold it back - the world has enough greed and hate filling it so let's add a little of the opposite and we will have taken the first

steps into making this a better place for us all."

The above rings true for our amazing leader Fog, who ignores the rabble of rules guilds demand, and thus goes against all gaming law to make his own guild for those rejected by the rules and demands of others. This all resulted in the creation of one of the largest guilds I've ever seen - a place of peace, happiness and fun, oh and of course adventures... like bridge diving without ropes in Guild Wars 2 :D We love you Fog, and we'll follow you anywhere... literally >.<

Thank you all for being part of this with me and for taking me in, giving me a place I can call home and a sanctuary, I've shared in your joys and sorrows and I regret none of it. I look forward to the future of this guild and the gaming community ever growing!

hugs all round



Qwafroleq's Cheater Quilts

I love making designs with my quilts, but I don't like to hand stitch the quilting or fight with the batting. One of my friends gave me this idea and I call them "Cheater Quilts." Basically, I machine sew the tops of the quilts using different patterns I like. Then instead of batting or a backing I use polar fleece for both. In place of the quilting, I finish them with little knots tied in strategic places

across the quilt to hold both sides together. Here are some of my finished projects.

These two quilt patterns are similar, both are made up from a 3 strips block. This first uses 9 inch squares and the other 6 inch squares. Once all the blocks are made, I assemble them into patterns and sew them together.



Just a basic alternating square quilt.



This is called a Lattice Quilt. A bit harder to line up, but can be done. It is backed with a blue marble polar fleece.

POPS' MUSINGS OF LIFE

By: Wally "Pops" Anderson



y, oh my....How things change. At my age, I know priorities certainly do change. At one time, I really looked forward to getting up and going to work. Now I just hope to make it to sunrise. Morning coffee and the morning newspaper, starting with the sports section, was mandatory. Now it's geritol or grape juice, decaf coffee and the obits.

Memories of my youth take up chapters now written as American History. I did know my Great Grand Daddy and was very close to my Grampa Bill. When they spoke, I listened. It was an unabashed living history lesson conveyed verbally to me to share with future generations. Now if I could only get those generations (my kids and grandkids) to listen to the lessons taught to me. For that to happen, I must find or build an app that they can see on a smartphone, a computer, or maybe a tablet.

I also found that as one ages, you're no longer considered "Cool" or a "Hunk". My "studliness" is out the window. Clothes??? Don't get me started....being in the military, I had certain advantages for clothes choice during certain periods and/or events. My civilian attire now is not considered "cool" or "in". People look at me and wonder why I'm trying to look like I do...grey hair, wrinkles, and all. (Maybe Joan Rivers had something going for her in the cosmetic surgery dept...) I'm really starting to think sweats and a tee shirt are the way to go..... and if I go to a more formal type affair.....

off with the Tee...on with a polo shirt.... with one of those checkmark thingys on the sleeve.

Discussions, which often turn into debates, are exercises of a cerebral nature and are considered very important. You learn many skills from these exercises, confrontation and negotiation to name a few. As you age, you've heard both sides of every discussion and debate known to man. I'll tell you with no uncertainty that naming a side to a discussion will result in a smartass, or snarky comment about it, often resulting in another debate.

My language skills have grown exponentially. It definitely grows in spurts, and usually occurs when a new generation comes of age. I heard many of the words but deciphering some of them have eluded me thus far. "Cray Cray"??? Crayon, crayfish, cray computer.....nope.... Crazy is the meaning. Got a prob??? Wait, I stand corrected, what was once short for a problem now stands for probably. I'm caught in that time warp where "gag me with a spoon" was acceptable.....now it can be found in the idiot section at the library!

The more I write and think about events for this article, the more I'm convinced I was wrong. I earlier stated how things do change. I'm now of the mind that there are some things that will never change. Growing old will never change. It's an unstoppable process. It's how we age that will dictate the process.

Gáisclioch

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The Gáisclioch 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.

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