

Gaíscíoch

MAGAZINE

Live Epic

LEADING A MEMORABLE LIFE
OF EPIC ADVENTURE & WONDER

FEATURING: TIRZAH BAUER, PAUL NEURATH, AND BREE ROYCE

GAISCIOCH MAGAZINE ISSUE 5, 2015



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

For the past year, the Gaiscioch Magazine has been committed to bringing you epic stories, interviews, and perspectives directly to your desktop. In January, we shipped our 4th issue wrapping up our first year of publishing.

To our more than 10,000 readers, I give you my thanks. You have made this magazine quite special to a lot of us and we could not have been as successful without your diligent shares and tweets. Your growing support has encouraged us all to continue this year bringing you all new epic stories with an all new theme.

At the very core of the Gaiscioch Social Gaming Community, one underlying premise has been at the very foundation of everything we do. It is our overall goal, the thing that drives us to do that which others deem impossible and our source of courage where there is none. I like to refer to this as “Exemplary People Inspiring Courage”. Whether its on the virtual battlefield or in our own real life, our commitment to helping people overcome their fears, insecurities, and limitations is at the very core of what we do.

I am pleased to announce here in Gaiscioch Magazine first that our community has decided to adopt a new slogan. “Live Epic”. To kick it off we have created this special Epic edition of the magazine featuring stories and experiences from the creator of the Thief, System Shock, the Ultima Underworld series, and Underworld Ascendant Paul Neurath, and ArenaNet’s Tirzah Bauer, along with an epic rebirth of Massively.com in the form of MassivelyOP.

In addition you can read about leading an epic life and how I created this epic community. It is my hopes that over the next year we can continue bringing you stories about epic people in the world of gaming and share stories and insight to help make your lives more memorable.

Slan Go Foill!

Benjamin Foley

MAGAZINE STAFF

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

MANAGING EDITOR & LAYOUT

Benjamin “Foghladha” Foley
<foghladha@gaiscioch.com>

SENIOR EDITORS:

Beth “Jae Onasi” Carlock
<jaeonasi@gaiscioch.com>

Dan “Spanyell” Beers
<spanyell@gaiscioch.com>

Susan “Lakshmi” Warren
<lakshmi@gaiscioch.com>

EDITORS / COLUMNISTS:

Althea “Briseadh” Damgaard
<briseadh@gaiscioch.com>

Amanda “Soren” Carr
<soren@gaiscioch.com>

Aoibheann Ní Choileáin
<Aoibheann@gaiscioch.com>

Caitlin “Caytlynne of Skye” Martin
<Caytlynne@gaiscioch.com>

Christine “Seacoral” Metz
<seacoral@gaiscioch.com>

Esther “GmaFog” Foley
<humblemisty@gaiscioch.com>

Herb “OldGoat” Townsend
<oldgoat@gaiscioch.com>

Juliana “Yulishka” Foley
<yulishka@gaiscioch.com>

Kimberly “Izmina” Perdue
<izmina@gaiscioch.com>

Phillip “Moe” Armstrong
<moe@gaiscioch.com>

Robert “Jairone” J. Mann
<Jairone@gaiscioch.com>

Timothy “MrFallenAngel” Beerman
<mrfallenangel@gaiscioch.com>

Wally “Pops” Anderson
<pops@gaiscioch.com>

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Donald “Donaliam” Rush
<donaliam@gaiscioch.com>

Lisa “Prissy” Grant
<prissy@gaiscioch.com>

Follow the Gaiscioch Magazine Online at:

<http://gsch.info/mag>

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<http://www.gsch.info/>

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magazine@gaiscioch.com

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ABOUT THE GAISCIOCH FAMILY

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

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

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

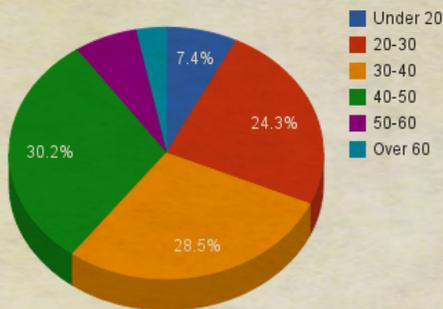
their members to play how they want, when they want, as long as they want and do not constrict them with quotas or requirements.

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

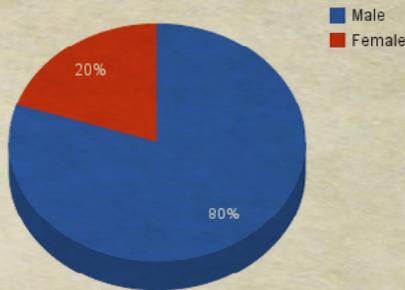
With a strong focus on community our endgame goal is to create memories, friendships, and participate in the overall success of the community. It is through gaming, athletic competition, and social interaction that we forge new friendships and relationships.

Gaiscioch Spring 2015 Demographics

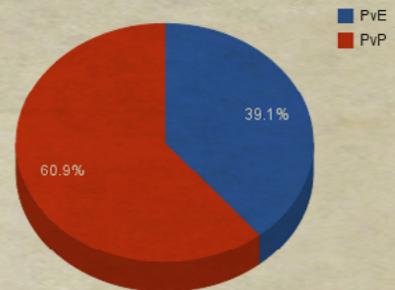
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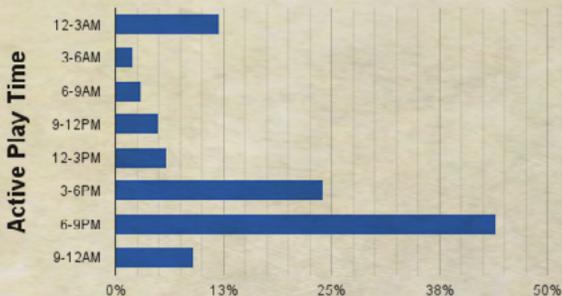
Gender



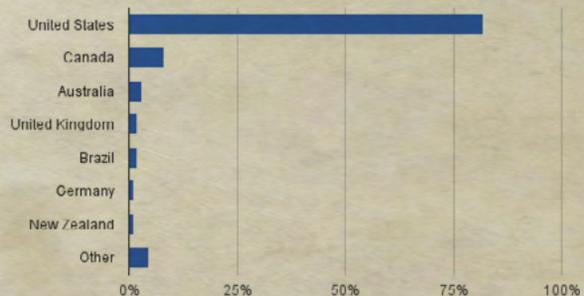
Activity Type



Activity



Locations



Player Base

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Oooo Shiny!

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Since 2001

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Leading an Epic Life

By: Benjamin “Foghladha” Foley

Epic. A simple word, that inspires greatness. When we think of the epic stories we’ve been told, the one thing you will find in every story is adversity.

In life we are handed challenges every day. Some seem small and you barely take notice. Others tend to stop you in your tracks, putting that rush of fear and panic down your spine.

In that moment, stop, breathe, and think to yourself *“Right now, in this moment, when all seems lost, all seems hopeless, I have been given the opportunity to do something Epic.”*

What is Epic?

This is a tough question that

I love asking people. Each person’s answer is a little different but most will agree that is something extraordinary. It’s a description of empowerment, courage, inspiration, and accomplishment. Most of all it’s a permanent stamp on your lives that lives on through memories and stories. It can be found in all aspects of life.

When we think about Epic Stories or Legends, what makes them epic? In the Lord of the Rings, why did Tolkien choose to send a hobbit on this quest?

He was small, filled with fear and excuses. He could have easily said *“Hey Aragon, Jump on this eagle and fly this ring over to Mount Doom and drop it in. Mokay thanks!”* He did that because that’s not an epic story. Epic stories are about people placed in extraordinary circumstances that overcome the challenges they face against all odds. Memorable stories are not about people who have it all, and still have it all. They are about what I like to call the *“possible impossible”*. The situations that people deem impossible, yet somehow you manage to make possible.

Epic encounters are created

in the face of adversity. They create a permanent stamp in our minds and the lives of others in the form of memories. It is the pitched battle where you should have been defeated yet you persevered, displayed courage and came out on top.

Being epic is doing that which others deem impossible. Being a light in the darkness. Helping those in need not because you gain something but because you can. Epic people walk the unpaved road and bring greatness and happiness everywhere they travel.

Being an Exemplary Person Inspiring Courage

Many times, people are afraid to take the first step. Fear, hate, rage, pride, and greed keep us complacent. They keep us in the land of ordinary and boring. Their purpose on this world is to prevent success. But if we can learn their true nature we can use them to inspire epic moments.

Each of these must be present to create an epic memory. You must have fear to be courageous. You must hate to learn to forgive. You must be angry to learn self control. You must put aside your pride to become humble. You must put aside personal greed to become benevolent. By

identifying the positive from the negative you can begin shaping situations for the benefit of others.

It's only when we can inspire others to take that first step that something epic begins to happen. Sometimes just having a friend to encourage you to step out of conformity and reach for your dreams makes all the difference. Other times its a simple act of benevolence that can be the inspiration that someone needed to find the courage to overcome the situation they're in. In both gaming and in life, being able to identify the restraint that keeps someone complacent will allow you to help them overcome that which keeps them from obtaining their goals.

Facing Adversity In Your Own Life

This road is not easy. It's almost always the hard road. When challenges arise, do not see them as a wall that you can not pass or a curse on your life. How many times have we been told "that's the story of my life" by a down and out friend? This is because they have yet realized that adversity is not a curse.

Adversity is a key ingredient in Greatness. You cannot have one without the other. It is the prelude to an epic story that can

become legend if you allow it to. All you need is the courage to face your fears and inhibitions, as well as the perseverance to endure the trials you face.

The moment you start welcoming adversity and challenge into your life instead of fearing it, you gain control of the situation. It doesn't matter if it's a life changing decision or raid boss you and your friends cannot seem to defeat. You must face it head on and remember that patience is the currency of accomplishment. If you pay it, you will succeed. You will not fail until you have given up. Stay strong and endure.

Epic Encounters in Real Life

In life, we can create an epic experience in others by pulling people from the fire of life. Giving them a helping hand. Even the smallest gesture can leave a permanent mark on someone's life.

I think back to the nights I would go bowling with my mom and hang out in the arcade all night while she was in her league. One night I was fighting the final boss of Kid Niki: Radical Ninja, a classic arcade game I spent months trying to beat, when I ran out of quarters. There in big letters were the words

“PATIENCE IS THE CURRENCY OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.
IF YOU PAY IT, YOU WILL SUCCEED. “

“Continue?” A clock ticking down as if to taunt me and my shortcomings. I frantically checked my pockets but alas they were empty. This boss had defeated me. An overwhelming sense of loss overcame me.

But that’s not how the story ended. In the last 5 seconds an older gentleman who had been watching me tossed a quarter into the slot and slapped the start button and looked at me and said “beat him son”. I grabbed the joystick and fought harder than I knew I could and at last the credits would roll. That gentleman gave me a nod and walked away without another word.

That man, whose name I didn’t even catch, paid 25 cents to create a memory in my mind that has lasted over 25 years. Even the smallest gesture can create an epic moment in the lives of others.

We all have the ability to change people’s lives for the better. Whether it’s teaching a student how to do something, helping a friend in need, or being there as someone endures the most challenging moment of their lives. Greatness exists within all of us.

Creating Epic Moments in Gaming

By understanding how epic encounters work we can

orchestrate them in the games we play. These moments can be big events, or even small gestures. To illustrate this I will visit two very different moments that continue to shine as epic memories in my gaming life.

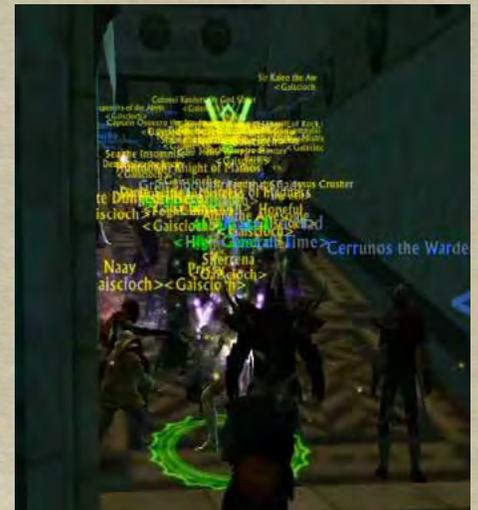


#1. THE KINDNESS OF A STRANGER

In my very first experience in an MMORPG I decided to try Dark Age of Camelot. Before this I had written off MMO’s all together. But, alas, the lure of being able to play in a time taught to me in fairytales was far greater than my prejudice against the genre. I was lost, confused, and baffled at how the game worked and kept finding myself on the losing end of a fight.

That’s when an unguilded, Celt Warden by the name of Roac picked me off the ground and watched over me while I tried to fight things. He later gave me some coin and crafted me some items to help me out. He spent close to an hour making sure that I was taken care of.

Why did he do this for me? What did he have to gain by this? This player asked nothing of me yet went out of his way to help me. In return he created a stamp in my mind of my very first epic experience in a MMORPG. This memory has shaped not only the way I play games, but the way I run Gaiscioch. I crossed Roac in the field many times over the 6 years I played Dark Age of Camelot and later he would even come to join Gaiscioch. He will forever be that hero that keeps me going when I thought all was lost and I was close to giving up.



#2 KILLING THE UN-KILLABLE

In the early days of RIFT, I set out on an extreme challenge to kill the 6 leaders of the Defiant faction. I even created a Public Community Event series called the Telara Saga to make this happen. Along side me I had hundreds of other players up for the challenge.

We spent months attacking

“IT’S NOT THE THINGS WE HAVE THAT LEAVE THEIR MARK ON GENERATIONS TO COME, IT’S THE MEMORIES, STORIES AND RELATIONSHIPS THAT TRAVEL BEYOND ONE LIFETIME INTO THE NEXT.”

these NPC’s that, if we were to believe people on the forums, were unkillable. I was even told that they were immune to damage. At the time these NPC’s were the highest health NPC’s in the game and every time we tried to kill them we were one shot.

One by one we killed each of them up to Asha Catari, the leader of the Defiant faction. She was placed in the War Room, a room filled with other elite NPC’s and PvP focused players. I spent weeks scouting her attacks, then spent weeks gearing our team to resist her attacks. Finally, we came up with a plan to assassinate this unkillable NPC.

After 6 months and 9 attempts we finally killed her and the

crowd went wild. We were the first in the world to kill this NPC and the forums erupted with compliments and comments about the feat. This by far has been one of my most memorable experiences in any game.

Large or Small, Epic Happens

These two examples are just a sample of the various ways that you can create epic encounters remembered by you and your friends for years to come. The key is that you do something that is not ordinarily done. Epic encounters are rare and not something commonly experienced. But when they do happen they stay with us for a long time. Some even have the

ability to change the course of lives and shape futures.

Strive to Live Epic

In the end, you can not be brave without the presence of fear. You can not have integrity without it being challenged. You can not have an epic experience without adversity. It’s the contrast in life that makes it worth living. In all things there must be balance. Strive to do that which others deem impossible and the only limit you will face is the one that you place on yourself.

It’s not the things we have that leave their mark on generations to come, it’s the memories, stories and relationships that travel beyond one lifetime into the next. Strive to live epic. Create epic moments in every day, and strive to be an epic person in someone’s life.





Creating Epic Worlds With Tirzah Bauer

By: Benjamin “Foghladha” Foley

When we think back at the epic battles we shared over the years, how many of us think about where the foundation for that epic battle began? Games often time provide us with a canvas for us to paint epic battles and memorable experiences within.

But how are these created? A simple flat terrain wouldn't be the most engaging experience. What is it that makes a battleground epic? For this we turn to one of ArenaNet's environment artists, Tirzah Bauer, for insight into the life of an environmental artist and map designer.

Greetings Tirzah, or as many us know you, Tiny Tee. Thank you for joining us today to talk about the life of an environmental artist. Can you tell us a little about yourself and your role at ArenaNet?

Hello! Thank you for having me. An Environment Artist deals with a lot of things! We get to design and implement environments for people to play in—everything from castles to candlesticks (as my lead, Dave Beetlestone, always says).

Did you always want to be an environmental artist or did you just find your career pulling you that direction?

I actually first applied as an Animator. I didn't quite have the experience needed for the position so I applied for a screenshot artist position, which I also didn't get. Thankfully the Environment art lead saw my portfolio and had me come in for an interview and art test. I got the job and started the day that Guild Wars 1: Factions shipped (everyone was celebrating haha). I'll be celebrating my 9th year at ArenaNet in May. It's been a fantastic job.

Over the past “few” months, you’ve been working on a very special place within the Guild Wars 2 world. One that a lot of people are really looking forward to. Can you tell us a little bit about this new zone that you’ve been working on?

I've been working on a new World vs. World Borderland map! World vs. World (or WvW) is our large-scale PvP realm where three teams of players and guilds team up to take control of castles, towers and other objectives.

The theme of the new environment is Desert and will be replacing the current Alpine themed maps. We will be bringing back the Alpine map in the future. The new Desert Borderland has evolved in all respects from art, design and mechanics. I can't wait to play it with everyone.

So the idea of rebuilding the entire WvW Borderlands lands on your desk, after you pull out your hair in a panic what do you do next? What's the first step to creating an

epic battleground?

Lots of thinking and dreaming. I play WvW and gather feedback from other players, coworkers, and my own experience. We collaborate and come up with things that will make WvW better and what the next step will be.

Do you ever draw them on paper? Make post-it's with ideas or have any other unique tradecraft for brainstorming ideas?

For WvW I always start with “paper” (photoshop image) layout. This way I know how many keeps, towers, etc. are needed, and can play with layout and map-flow ideas. I then translate that into a 3D map and work from there.





How much freedom do you get when it comes to creativity in the design of these realms?

I get a lot of freedom! Environment artists at ArenaNet really get a lot of say in the look and design of these environments. Not only do we get to make areas look pretty, but we also get to work with designers to make sure the environments work well with content. Sometimes we'll have a cool area that we made that the designers like and make content for, and sometimes a designer will come to us with a cool idea and we'll build an area for that idea.

In the new borderlands, what unique areas did you really want to introduce into the WvW scene and how do you think they will affect the way players interact with the world?

I really wanted to provide more strategic benefit for holding objectives outside of score. The objectives in this new map work with the terrain to provide tactical benefits for your team, and make it rougher on enemies who try to bypass your "turf".

On the art side of things, I wanted the objectives to feel like real places. Areas that you like to hang out in and defend! Even the sentries have little camps that they can hang out in now. I'm always imagining silly stories in my head when I make environments so that the environment itself is alive.

The previous borderlands was rather flat and above ground. With the new borderlands, the vertical axis is being used more and there is even underground areas for players to enjoy. Can you tell us a little bit

about the challenges and how you overcame them in creating this vastly larger, more engaging battlefield?

Creating a challenging but fun play space is the hardest thing to do I think. I'm trying to create that balance between unique and challenging content that's not super frustrating, but not so trivial that it's easily overcome. Generally, as a team, we try a lot of things and play through it, determining if it's fun or just plain crazy.

For example, I had this crazy idea to put oil pots and cannons so high in the sky that they were out of reach of player skills. I thought it might help with defense as the offense would have to build a siege weapon to take out the oil pots and cannons. It was super fun for the defenders, but also way overpowered. The extreme height was rough on the players'

camera below too. Tyler Bearce (WvW game designer) gave me the idea to put in the same gate design that they used in Edge of the Mists and we really like how that feels now.

What is your favorite part about the creative process you undergo when creating new game worlds?

My absolute favorite part about the creative process is that after months of hard work, I get to play it with people in-game and hear their reactions!

Thinking back over the years of building game worlds and playing those game worlds, what would you say is one

of the most critical things to get right when you are creating the pallet for an epic experience?

Creating experiences takes a lot of hard work, patience, teamwork, caffeine...etc. If I had to choose the most important, I'd say it's "have fun". We are making entertainment after all. Some days it's stressful and feedback can be overwhelming. But if you're generally having fun with what you're doing, then it's going to translate well into what you're creating.

Lastly I understand you're a bit of an artist after hours. Do you have any art you would like to share with us?

Where can fan's follow your work?

I enjoy doing illustration on my free time, and I've recently started doing sculpture as well! If you'd like to see my work you can check me out on twitter or art blog:

<https://twitter.com/tirzahbauer>

<http://tirzahbauer.blogspot.com/>

I've also just opened up an Etsy store:

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/TirzahsGallery>

Thank you!

















Creating an Epic Community

By: Benjamin “Foghladha” Foley

Once upon a time in Camelot, I set out to create a refuge for people who were overlooked, discounted, and discarded by other communities. I grew tired of seeing people kicked from their guilds because they weren't good enough, or didn't play enough, or didn't have the right gear on. I hated seeing people discounted just because they weren't elite.

I set out to create a community for all walks of life. The young, the old, the in-between. The skilled, the learning, and the confused. A community that would instill good wholesome family values in its members and the server communities it took part in. Regardless of who they are and how skilled they are, I wanted to create a place where they could feel welcome and appreciated.

The key however was how to both attract the right people as well as keep the people who would subject our community to the same type of scrutiny out. This was something that took me years to figure out.

The Foundation

The first part of putting together any type of business or community is locating your target

market. So I sat down with my old sketchpad and drew out the type of players I wanted to attract and what traits I would need to possess and encourage. On this paper you would find the words: Honor, Respect, Integrity, Fellowship, Kindness, Compassion, Initiative, Benevolence, Nurturing and Selflessness.

Then I drew the flipside with all the characteristics I wanted to discourage and avoid. Items such as: Rude, Vulgar, Elitist, Lazy, Greedy, Disrespectful, Selfish, and Conceited were among the top.

What this did was allow me to start building a system that would attract the people I wanted and discourage the people I didn't. Once I had my target demographic, it was time for marketing. To attract the caring, I cared. To attract the kind, I displayed kindness.

"The Family"

Many have come to ask why we call the Gaiscioch a family. In Irish heritage and many Irish families today Family is first and foremost the strongest bonds you will share in your life. In a traditional Irish family you never act out of anger or rage at another member. Your "Blades Out" at the enemy, "Not In" at your family.

Growing up in an Irish family I knew no matter what happened I could turn to family and they would pick me up, dust me off, and encourage me to get back in the game. We helped one another and I cannot think of a single instance where we ever hurt one another. Life was explained to me as a family sport. It was up to all of us to ensure we all cross the finish line. It was this upbringing that I wanted to recreate virtually.

This feat is difficult with a family. With so many different backgrounds and ways of life it's hard to keep hostilities out. With a community that has exceeded 6,000 people, you need to have a rock-solid system to help attract and encourage a certain type of behavior and understanding.

Creating our Digital Home

In the early days of the family we were but a handful.

But that all changed when I built our website with a self maintaining moderation system.

Most guilds in the MMO space have websites. What I wanted to build was more than just a website. I wanted to build a virtual town hall; a meeting place and central hub for information about the family. This was designed to be both a test and filter to separate players who seek power and control, from the people who seek compassion and unity.

My grandmother taught me a very valuable lesson as a child: Leadership is not about telling people what to do, it's about inspiring people to do what needs to be done. I applied this to the system so that I don't tell people what to do, I let them decide to do it and inspire them to take initiative. This happens through a series of trials that happen behind the scenes as they climb the Gaiscioch family tree.

Taking Bias Out of Family Structure

The Gaiscioch Family is built on a structure that allows members a clear view of what needs to be done to achieve their next rank within the family. There is no sucking up to the leader to get promoted. It's a clear structure based on how much a player Leads, Follows, and Contributes. If



a player rises in the ranks it is by their Initiative, not by the leader's bias.

Family Structure as a Mini Game

The Gaiscioch family structure is built in a way that new members only need to worry about participating in events. As they ascend the family ranks, they gain new abilities like claiming leadership, discovering recipes, and gaining access to special opportunities with game developers.

To climb the family ladder, members must earn "Family Honor Points" by participating or leading events, tokens of valor for proving their leadership on the battlefield, earning contribution points, accepting credos, and active days participating.

FAMILY HONOR POINTS

This is the core piece of how people climb the ranks. There are 2 primary paths that serve as requirements for certain tiers.

- **Valor Points:** earned for leading events
- **Fellowship Points:** for attending events
- **Lore Points:** for creating guides and stories
- **Discovery Points:** for discovering and logging recipes and important locations.
- **Artisan Points:** for crafting goods for family members.

TOKENS OF VALOR

These are awarded to leaders for displaying exemplary leadership ability. They can only be

given by someone lower rank than the leader. This is a measure that creates synergy between leaders and followers. Leaders need the approval of followers to advance. Followers need leaders to advance.

CONTRIBUTION POINTS

These can be earned a variety of ways and measure the members willingness to give.

- **Crafting & Gathering:** members can earn contribution by filling work orders placed by other members.
- **Donations:** several items can be donated to the community to help support our prize giveaways during our public community events.
- **Charity Support:** Members can earn contribution by supporting annual charity events.
- **Surveys:** Periodically Gaiscioch issues surveys to help gauge community opinion and interests. Members can participate and earn contribution points.

CREDOS

These are oaths that we ask members to take to reach certain ranks. These allow us to outline what to expect with each role and allows members to choose not to accept them if they do not want the responsibilities that come with the role. They also ensure that members of that role act in a way becoming of someone in that role.



ACTIVITY

To prevent people racing up the ranks too fast before having a chance to learn about the Gaiscioch way we put in a timegate. This timer continues to count so long as the member logs some form of activity each month. If a member goes dormant the timer stops until they resume.

The Trials of Gaiscioch

Once I decided who I wanted to focus our sights on, I needed to create a way to filter those that don't fit the target audience in a way that didn't create drama and hostilities, all the while encouraging those that fit our ideal match. I created a series of tests within the family structure and website to help accomplish this goal automatically. This doesn't mean there is anything wrong with those people that don't fit our target. I have just come to the understanding that when you pair people up with like minded people fun happens in a big way. When you have conflicting personalities, you end up with drama, hostilities, and resentment. Gaiscioch is not the Guild for all, it is the Family for many.

TEST OF INITIATIVE

To join the Gaiscioch Family, a person must inquire about the family. We do not recruit by conventional means. We go into the world and show them our way of life and if a member wants to know more we welcome them to join us. But the first step is that they need to approach us. This tests their initiative.

Next they will have to register on our website, again ensuring that they are willing to take action to get something they want. The reason we do this is that we want to avoid the self-entitled players who expect everything to be done for them. Our community is about teamwork, but every member needs to be willing to help the family. Throughout their time in Gaiscioch they will continuously need to display Initiative to advance through the family

tree.

TEST OF FELLOWSHIP

To advance in the Gaiscioch Family members will first show their willingness to become part of the fellowship by attending events and claiming participation on the website. They will begin earning Fellowship points for participation which are 1/5th of their Family Honor Points which determine their rank within the family. Without attending events, members can not improve their place in the family tree.

TEST OF SELFLESSNESS

Being charitable is a trait I try to nurture in every Gaiscioch. Both in-game and out. This is where Contribution Points, Family Vault Credits, Artisan Points and the Marketplace come in.

Each rank within the family requires a certain number of contribution points. These can be earned by donating items to the family for their public community event prize giveaways, providing crafters with supplies, participating in charity events, or by crafting items for players.

Players can fill work orders in exchange for artisan and contribution points. The system intentionally set up to be a loss to the artisan: the value for the item is not comparable to what someone could get from an in-game. It is designed this way to test who is willing to give to the cause, and who is just looking out for themselves.

Gaiscioch wants to separate the two like removing rocks from the sand in a sifter. Encouraging those who give without second thought and discouraging those that only seek personal gratification. Now that said, we have known many to come into the guild being self focused only to find themselves over time as part of the family and transitioning into major supporters of the family.

Looking out for others, even when they don't



ask for it, is one of the key components of our community. We have built our community around being a positive influence in the community helping players new and old any way we can.

In Guild Wars 2 alone we have given away 10 Legendary weapons, 14 Precursors, and over 100,000 gold worth of prizes to the Guild Wars 2 community during our public community events. In addition we have raised over \$30,000 for children's charities such as the Children's Miracle Network. It is only from the hearts of a charitable community that this was possible.

TEST OF PATIENCE

A key element I struggled with early on was players racing through the ranks as fast as they could. Once they hit the top they had nowhere to go and grew bored and stopped visiting the site. This is where I came up with the idea of a time gate. Each rank has a minimum active days requirement based off the players daily average family honor point gain. As members climb into the higher ranks a longer window of activity is required.

Patience is currency of accomplishment and is very crucial in many gaming and life situations. It is also one trait that is on the endangered list in humans.

Everything is about instant gratification today. We used to schedule time to catch our favorite TV shows, now we DVR them or watch them on demand. With this new age we, as a human race, have lost patience. Waiting for the right moment is a very critical ability both in relationships and in the virtual battlefield.

From time to time, while setting up an ambush, you will hear me call out over voice communications, "put your ADHD in a can, fingers up your nose, and off your keyboard." In today's age the concept of an ambush is foreign. There you are hiding around a corner and a few people are jumping around, running in circles or casting random things calling attention to your position. Teaching patience is something I believe is absolutely essential. It's a dying trait and someone has to preserve it.

TEST OF INTEGRITY

A little known system hidden from public view exists as a way to test ones integrity and honor. A watcher script sits in the background and monitors claiming activities. If a member claims 2 things that happened at the same time, or lists several events that nobody claims participation for, it flags that member in the system for me to look into before their next promotion. I check in



with the user about the discrepancies, ensure they know how the system works, and if I catch them in a lie, I note it in their admin log.

All complaints, discrepancies, and suspicious behavior are logged for future reference. All compliments and accolades are also logged. In addition, our Eldership team takes notes on players who they catch going out of their way to help someone. With this system we are able to locate both trouble spots before they erupt and future elder candidates. All in all the system allows us to monitor a players integrity. It serves as a sort of “checks and balances” for our family.

The People in Between

There’s no way to build a 100% black and white gauge. Often times we find ourselves with people who are in the Grey area. These people are who I personally like to work with to help bring them to the light.

Just by being part of the family we have seen people change their lifestyles to embrace the Gaiscioch way. This is an amazing transition to watch as a new member entering the family, concerned with personal gain but lacking the initiative to reach out and get what they want. They call us their guild and always ask people to help them do something.

Time passes and then it starts to happen. They stop asking for people to do it for them and start inviting them to join them. They begin to look out for others and see past their selfish desires. Finally, they begin to call us their family. We have seen this transition many times.

Teaching people that they don’t have to be selfish-driven, rage-mongering, bundles of chaos is not easy when the rest of the world pushes them in that direction. But with a little friendly encouragement and camaraderie, we can break those barriers and help make more ladies and gentlemen in this world who and are both respectful and honest.

“Leadership is not about telling people what to do, it’s about inspiring people to do what needs to be done.”



While Gaiscioch may not be the guild for all, it's the family for many. We encourage all interested parties to visit our website and ensure it is something that they would like to be apart of. Misrepresentation can be catastrophic to a player's enjoyment and it is important that they want to be apart of what you're doing before they join. Otherwise you just end up with resentment and animosity. Bitter people don't make happy times for communities.

The Mission

I will be completely honest with my intentions. I hope that through Gaiscioch we can help teach the family values I grew up with, to help people learn what integrity is and why it's so important, how to be honorable and kind. Most of all I want to teach people how to get along with others even when their personal beliefs and ways of life are different.

We have thousands of people in Gaiscioch from 76 countries. Our forefathers fought each other in wars, but we hold no grudge. We see the world for what it is and see a place where young and old can

gather and call each other friend.

The beauty is, in the gaming world, we have no borders. We are one planet playing the same game as brothers. It's my hope that through Gaiscioch we might be able to leave people with some traits that are on the endangered species list for humanity.

I don't want to control people, I just want to show them there's an alternate storyline to their life where things don't have to be so hard. All it takes is pushing more kindness into the world, to be willing to reach out and seize the opportunity before them. This isn't about control, it's about inspiring people to better their lives and the lives of those closest to them while teaching good ol' Irish family values.

In the end the Gaiscioch mission has and always be to create lasting memories and friendships. It's only through understanding and compassion that we can make this happen. Creating extraordinary situations for people to bond together and overcome is one thing we have always done very well.

Teaching people that they don't have to be selfish-driven, rage-mongering, bundles of chaos is not easy when the rest of the world pushes them in that direction.

"Our forefathers fought each other in wars, yet we hold no grudge. We see the world for what it is and see a place where young and old can gather and call each other friend."

Gaiscioch Beyond Borders

Our focus doesn't stop at our borders. What we do inside the family bleeds over to what we do in the server community and in our real lives.

We do not recruit people with words and we require them to take the first step before we welcome them to the family. But we understand that the only way that can happen is if they see who we are and what we do. This is why Public Community Events are at the very core of our existence.

We use our numbers and teamwork to gather prizes for giveaways, we find unique parts of games that attract people and we create an event series around it. These events recur for several weeks and are consistent so people can learn to depend on them.

If we do them right, they will be perfect catalysts

for creating epic memories and lasting friendships. Now we don't want everyone to join the family, we want to entertain everyone regardless of their guild affiliation. Even the people who don't fit the target demographic for Gaiscioch are welcome to join in the fun.

In the end we are entertainers, and will go and do what is necessary for us to entertain. These events are our lifeblood and people have experienced and enjoyed them for over a decade.

Staying True To Your Mission

In all things in life, the more power you have, the more temptation will try to lead you astray. As Gaiscioch has grown I have been ever vigilant to watch myself and ensure I continue the course with the mission I set forth. Most guilds fall when the leader changes with power.



It's not an easy task to keep your own actions in check when more and more people look to you as a leader. The opportunity to be corrupted rises with the gain of power. Temptation is put in your path to destroy your vision. As a leader you need to take time and be sure the motives are pure and true to your course. In moments, any false step can destroy all that you have built.

For me, I had to find an anchor. My grandmother's legends and my upbringing have been that anchor. I am not a person motivated by greed or pride. These things are very low on my desire poll. For me, happiness has always come from the feeling I get helping others, in seeing someone accomplish something that they never imagined they could.

I tend to nurture that feeling on a daily basis to keep my intentions and goals pure. For years I have frequented new player areas, helping random strangers and giving them some easy to create items to get them started. I find by seeking out and helping others it helps me regulate temptation and keep my focus on what matters.

It is too easy to wander off course and it will be a full time task to avoid this as a leader of any community. In life you can see how power

corrupts even the strongest of people. You'll see it in your workplace, in your country's government, and even in your local communities. The key is to establish something in your routine to keep you grounded.

The thing to remember is that people came to join your community for its values and traditions that you had at the moment they joined. If you allow temptation and power to shift your focus, you change the very thing they fell in love with to begin with and, in turn, change the atmosphere that they have grown to love. This will cause resentment, hatred, and anger which will slowly destroy your new civilization. The first and foremost enemy you will face in running a community is yourself. You must ensure that you stay true and do not let greed, and power corrupt your vision.

The Eldership Team

To aid me in my mission, I selected an Eldership team that saw my vision and like me possessed the natural affinity to chase this vision. Each elder was hand chosen because of their natural desire to help others and nurture a healthy community. None of my elders are people who sought power within the community. They didn't even seek gratitude. They simply felt compelled to help others whether they were thanked for it or not.



spend our time helping others.

At the end of the day

Creating a gaming community has proven to be a difficult, but enjoyable feat. It comes with its share of stress and worry, but at the end of the day when you watch hundreds of people enjoying themselves with others, it all comes together.

My approach is just one example to a plethora of styles to run a community. It has been an evolution over time and likely would not be easy to recreate. In the end if you're looking to create a community, make sure you know what your mission is before you start. Stay focused on that mission and do your best to not let temptation lead you astray.

Lastly, remember that all people have a natural desire to feel important and included. They all seek acceptance. The more personal acclamation you weave into your community the stronger the bonds will be forged.

Everyone wants to feel they did a good job. Help them do a good job and they will forever be loyal.

Respect is something we all crave.

I find by surrounding myself with other like-minded people I am more easily able to keep my focus and stay true to our mission. When times grow hard, they pull me from the fire, dust me off and throw me back into the fold. It is very important in all things in life to build yourself a support network. Without one you will shoulder the burdens of life on your own. No man or woman is meant to bear the weight of the world alone. It is through friends, family, and community that we are able to grow as humans and surpass whatever obstacles come our way. Even leaders need to seek a support network to keep them honest, and keep them moving forward.

Over the years I have seen what happens when you place a person in power that is self focused. It never ends well. Selfish behavior is amplified when you add power. They stop seeing people as brothers and sisters and start seeing them as tools. While every community may not practice this, I go through great lengths to ensure power hungry people to do not ascend into the Eldership ranks. Being a leader of Gaiscioch is not about telling people what to do, it's about inspiring them to do whats necessary to obtain their goals. It's not a position of power, it's a position of servitude. Our eldership team (myself included) are expected to





Paul Neurath's Epic Rebirth of the Underworld Series

By: Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley

A long time ago, there was a young version of me, fresh out of school and one of the rare few that knew his way around building a website. The year was 2000 and I was on a mission to work in the gaming industry.

There was only one company in the world I wanted to work for and that was the creator of my favorite game series, Thief. This development studio was Looking Glass Studios. I managed to make it through my first phone interview, but unfortunately for me the studio would meet it's

untimely end just before I had the chance to go for my first in-person interview.

Looking Glass Studios (as LGS and Blue Sky Productions) was also known for the work on Ultima Underworld I & II, the System Shock and Thief series, along with several other PC and console titles.

This company featured some of today's biggest names in gaming including Ken Levine, who went on to launch Irrational Games and the Bioshock



series; Warren Spector, who created Ion Storm and the critically acclaimed Deus Ex and was later recruited by Disney to create Epic Mickey; and Paul Neurath, the original founder of Blue Sky Productions and most recently OtherSide Entertainment.

In an unexpected turn of events, I found myself with the opportunity to sit down with Paul Neurath and discuss his newest collaboration with Warren Spector, a crowdfunded rebirth of the Underworld series in Underworld Ascendant produced by OtherSide Entertainment.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to not only meet one of the most influential people in my career, but also discuss a project that I am really excited about. First and foremost can I ask you to share with the audience a little bit about yourself, and your journey from Blue Sky Productions to OtherSide Entertainment?

When we completed Ultima Underworld II in 1993, I never imagined that this classic fantasy

RPG franchise would go dark for two decades.

The Underworld's were arguably the first immersive 1st person games. Not only were they the first to create a real-time 3D texture-mapped world, they also pioneered player-driven sandbox gameplay. They influenced a whole generation of games: Doom, Thief, Deus Ex, Skyrim, BioShock and more. Today, leading game designers view the Underworlds as still astonishingly modern in design.

But when released, the games were years ahead of their time and didn't fit into the established genres of that era. This contributed to the franchise falling between the cracks and becoming lost in the publisher's labyrinth depths. Over the years I've tried without success to raise the Underworld series back up. Just now have the stars aligned so this can happen.

I started OtherSide Entertainment, an indie studio, to rekindle this classic. Joining me is an incredible team of developers, who will be introducing themselves over the coming weeks. Some worked



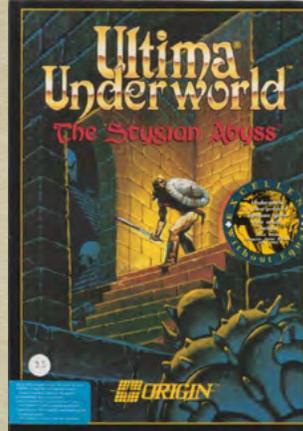
with me on the original Underworlds, along with Looking Glass favorites like System Shock and Thief. Others contributed to more recent classics including Deus Ex and BioShock Infinite. We have deep understanding of the genre, and share a passion for bringing Underworld back.

The newest incarnation of the franchise, Underworld Ascendant, will retain the distinctive fantasy RPG gameplay of the originals. We already have an early prototype running on the PC. At that same time we will be pushing forward with new innovations --- I can't wait to tell you more about what we have planned!

But this can only happen with your help. As an indie studio, we are looking to our fans to fund a significant portion of the development through our upcoming Kickstarter campaign, which begins on February 4th, 2015. We aren't shy about our ambitions to make a great game, but that takes serious resources and effort.

Beyond funding, we are inviting you in on the making of Underworld Ascendant. Rarely have fans

been able to participate in the often unpredictable, sometimes messy creative process that gives birth to innovative games. We hope you'll join us on this adventure!



It's been over 20 years since the release of the Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds, a lifetime in game development years. What do you see the major differences are from creating a game back in the late 80's and early 90's to today's era?

One challenge is to balance the expectations of those who love the original games with younger





gamers who probably have never played them. Also, the industry has moved forward over the past two decades. Not as much as one might expect in terms of game design, but hugely on visuals and audio production. The bar for AAA games is super high on that front. Fortunately, there is a thriving market for indie games that don't have to go toe-to-toe with big budget AAA games. Players have come to realize that some of the most innovative and fun games are coming out of indie studios. And that is where we fit.

One vibe we're holding tight to is being thrown in a dark, vast and deadly underworld, and where at first you feel like a "stranger in a strange land", barely knowing how to survive. There is real fear and sense of the darkness pressing in close. Over time you grow into mastery of the underworld and that arc of progression holds great satisfaction. An obvious place *Underworld Ascendant* is different is 100-fold more advanced visuals and audio to take full advantage of power PCs, as well as a modern user interfaces.

On a side note, we really see it as a combination of

the two things: storytelling and game mechanics. The desire to provide creative problem-solving tools is coupled with the need, and the will, to hand over more authorship to players. It's an across-the-board shift from the concept of story to scenario for the meat of the game. We will build on the framework of a strong plot line to orient and energize players, but our ideal is the kind of freedom to improvise that we feel in our pen-and-paper role playing campaigns.

I imagine this is a bit of a homecoming for you. How did *OtherSide Entertainment* come to be? What inspired you to revisit this classic title?

I have always wanted to make a sequel, but could not get it greenlighted with EA over the past two decades. According to their formulas, the costs associated with development would not get a high enough ROI (Return On Investment). I always felt differently about it.

A year ago, EA came to realize that nothing more was ever likely to come of the franchise unless we,

the original creators, took it forward. It is hard for a new team to pick up somebody else's vision for a game and often the results are less than great. We secured the rights to take the Underworld franchise forward from EA, and here we are.

Crowdfunding and being indie allow us to stay relatively nimble and small, which means we don't have the massive overhead that big publishers do, allowing us to keep development budgets lower. And we don't have to have to sell 10 million copies to turn a necessary profit to keep shareholders happy.

20 years have passed since the last Underworld, what new technologies and features do you plan to introduce to Underworld Ascendant?

This past year came the first hints that the technology to pull this off might be around the corner. Augmented Reality, AR for short, is a new approach for melding a digitally synthesized 3D image into the actual world around us. Several companies have been making announcements about their consumer AR endeavors.

AR headsets project into your eyes a digital image, which gets seamlessly merged with your view of the physical world around you. Potentially these images can look more solid and real than any hologram. A key part of AR is not just in the visuals, but also how the devices can read your hand motions precisely, so as to enable you to manipulate the virtual images in a natural and tactile way. It is the combination of the visual projection into the real world and tactile interaction, which makes AR so promising.

Keep in mind that these consumer AR devices are still in development. It may be some time before they are consumer-ready.

AR is not the same as VR, and does not provide VR's deep immersion. It offers a different way to interact, especially suited to having virtual space in the real world around you to examine and touch. VR and AR will co-exist, offering different advantages.

For OtherSide, both technologies are an opportunity for us to explore innovative ways to extend the play experience of our games.



There are many possible ways to use AR in a game such as *Underworld Ascendant*. One example would be to use the same sort of mechanic we already have working in the prototype for when you lock pick a treasure chest. Currently the player uses the mouse to turn a lock tumbler displayed on the laptop screen. In the AR version the tumbler would be floating a foot in front of the player, and they would use their hand to rotate the tumbler until they heard the satisfying click of the lock springing open. It's a parallel game mechanic, but here made much more tactile.

As with VR, we will be experimenting with AR to see if it might be a strong fit for *Underworld Ascendant*. It will be further down the road before we'd have anything to demo, but when we do we'll share what we have.

Can you tell us a little bit about the story behind *Underworld Ascendant*?

We aren't ready to get deep into the narrative at this time. I can say that *Underworld Ascendant* is a next-generation sequel to the legendary fantasy RPG's *Ultima Underworld 1 & 2*. It will not only

modernize the series' visuals and user interface to take full advantage of the today's powerful PCs, it will innovate in bold new ways.

We have the rights to use pretty much everything from the original games except for the *Ultima* brand. I'm not sure how many players are focused on that brand itself these days. And the original *Ultima Underworlds* were fairly loosely connected to the classic *Ultima* games anyway. As a team, we actually like the fresh start of not having to ensure that this feels like an "Ultima" branded game. Gives us more creative freedom.

Interestingly, we are creating a fictional connection with *Shroud of the Avatar*. So we're keeping alive the collaboration that Richard Garriott's and our team had done with the original games, just in a new era.

What features make this title unique to other dungeon crawlers like *Wizardry* and *Legends of Grimrock*?

We're pushing forward on several fronts. The faction system in *Underworld Ascendant* will



incorporate a level of sociological modeling beyond what we've ever had before. We'll be feeding the player's actions in the game through an ecological simulation, with outcomes in both the situations the player encounters. The factions in turn will have environmental preferences, so they'll have opinions on the player's actions and inputs into the ecology. All of this will rest on top of and be intertwined with the (by now) conventional AI and physics systems we pioneered in the original Underworld games.

On a side note, one challenge is to balance the expectations of those who love the original Underworld games, with younger gamers who probably have never played them. Longtime players will instantly recognize elements of the Stygian Abyss, as well as signature creatures like the Lurker and the Shadow Beast. But we're also

expanding our universe with new ideas, many developed with the involvement of our backer community.

Can you tell us about the new Improvisation Engine you are using for Ascendant? What features does it bring to the table?

Our aim with Underworld Ascendant is to offer players a greater freedom of choice and allow them more ways to devise their own clever solutions to challenges. The Improvisation Engine provides an array of sophisticated technologies so that players have more freedom to play the game in their own preferred style. So, instead of the designers scripting a set solution path for a player, the Improvisation Engine puts the problem solving in the player's hands. We create an encounter; set up the monsters, traps, the physical layout, etc. Then





the world simulation is turned on. A set of fairly complex interactions and dynamics take place of their own accord. The player comes into this dynamic mix, and can permeate this situation in whole range of ways, some of which the designers may have never imagined.

Also, the Improvisation Engine will have a pervasive effect across virtually all minute-to-minute game play, and apply to almost every encounter. It's central to how we are crafting our systems, AI, combat, magic.

I understand you're giving the player a lot of freedom in their character development. Can you give us some examples of how players can customize their characters strengths and skillsets through weapons and magic?

I can't go into everything just yet, because we have only been in development for a few months, but here is some information that I can share.

Magic in Underworld Ascendant springs from the original Underworlds. As with the originals, magic

is built on rune stones. Scattered around the Abyss is an alphabet of rune stones, each inscribed with a runic letter. The Avatar discovers these stones as they explore the Abyss, over time building a vocabulary of spells.

To cast a spell, the player lays out particular combinations of stones. For instance, the pair of stones IN LOR casts a dim magic light. A much more powerful version of this spell using 3 rune stones, VAS IN LOR, casts the brightness of daylight. Learning new spell combinations is part of the fun. You feel as if you are growing in arcane knowledge --- which of course you are!

Underworld Ascendant explores a new dimension of runic magic. As players master the lore they will uncover hidden powers, and learn how to magically transform their runes. For instance, a mage might learn how to transfigure the runes for a Fireball, POR FLAM, to enlarge its blast radius. As the mage's knowledge deepens, the mage might make the Fireball dance around the chamber, seeking out each nearby foe in turn. Or perhaps instead, they will make it to burn with a violet aura, which



clings to foes longer and with more terrible effect. Ultimately, a mage can craft their own repertoire of unique and powerful runes.

Spells in Underworld Ascendant are also far more diverse than the standard RPG variations on “blast your foe”. There is magic that will aid in your being stealthy, alert you to a variety of dangers, let you levitate or fly, or bar a door, to name just a few. These more diverse non-combat spells feed right

into the Improvisation Engine, giving spell casters all sorts of clever approaches to solve challenges. Speaking of spell casters, any Avatar can learn to wield at least some magic. A player focused on, say, combat skills, will never become master of the magical arts. However, they can still learn to cast some less powerful spells if they choose.

What inspired you to use crowdfunding to create this product?



When we created the original game, there was a wall between us and the fans. Publishers didn't really encourage us to reach out and have a dialogue. That was, and still is, a lost opportunity to connect with fans. Crowdsourced funding and digital distribution are amazing opportunities for us to open up and let the fans who supported the franchise all along to come onboard and help shape Underworld Ascendant. Plus, we get more freedom to be creative.

Is there anything else you can share at this time?

It is still early on, but here is a little nugget on how players can develop their own Avatar and how their Avatar's development will open up new solutions. In battle, for instance, a Thief sort of character who has developed advanced skills in acrobatics will have more options to consider, being able to out maneuver, avoid, or conduct

quick strikes. A fighter sort especially skilled with ranged weapons could be effective at sniping creatures before they could get too close. These character specializations will tend to lead to more unique experiences between players during their playthrough, making it more fun to play again as a different type of character.

Some players will prefer their characters to be already set. Others prefer the freedom to customize. We want players to be able to play the game in their preferred manner.

Where can players learn more about Underworld Ascendant?

Players can visit:

<http://othersideentertainment.com/>.



A Massively Epic Comeback

By: Benjamin “Foghladha” Foley



A long time ago, when Gaiscioch launched its very first public community event, the Battle for Badlands, Massively.com featured the public community event on its site, driving even more attention and people to the event. Battle for Badlands was a wide success and launched a new Gaiscioch tradition of creating and hosting public community events.

The staff would continue to support our posting news about our Telara Saga in RIFT and our Great Tyrian Adventure

in Guild Wars 2. Some of the staff members even came to join the Gaiscioch Family. For the better part of a decade, Masively.com has been there for our community both as a news source giving us the latest information on the games we play and as a distributor of our own news.

On February 3rd, 2015, AOL Inc., the parent company of Massively.com, Joystiq.com, and WoWInsider.com, pulled the plug on these sites. After almost 8 years of bringing news to gamers far and wide, Massively.com would finally close its doors. But this is not how the story ends.

Today I talk with Bree Royce, the Editor-in-Chief, about the all new Massively Overpowered. Thank you for joining us today, Bree. What can you tell us about what was going through your team’s mind on February 3rd?

February 3rd was a rough day. We actually found out on January 26th and were told to keep it quiet while Joystiq’s boss tried to negotiate for us a severance deal to which we were not entitled as mere contractors. We were finally allowed to announce it on the 30th, which was by far the harder day because of the rush of support: It was gratifying but also horribly sad. And we spent that entire week debating what to do next. By the 3rd, we had a plan, so while it was painful to see the lights wink out—quite literally—at least we knew there was a way forward.

Being laid off is never an easy feat. It doesn’t feel good, and a lot of people fall into a depression. Where did the idea of crowdfunding a rebirth come from? How did you manage to turn that negative upside down and within a week have Massively back online on Massivelyop.com?

It was definitely depressing,



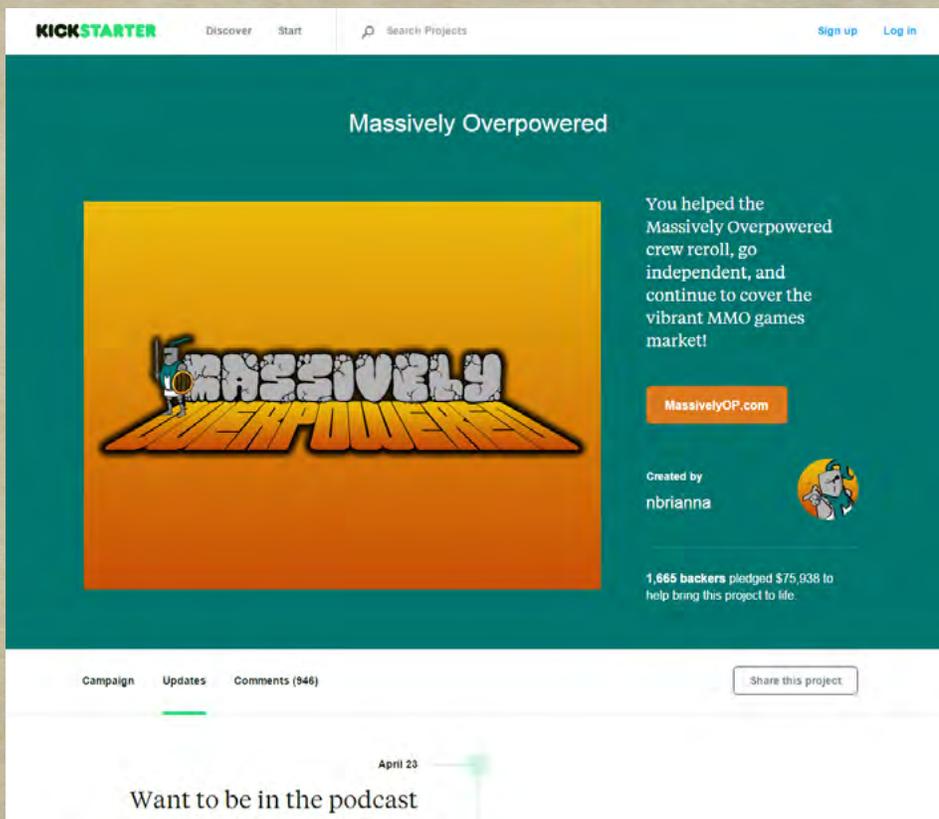
doubly so when the cause wasn't our fault, affected thousands of people, and was such a public spectacle (not unlike the layoffs we cover in the news). Crowdfunding was something we toyed with last year when we had to let go half our staff because of AOL's huge budget cuts; we considered at the time to all of us quit and start a new site right then. So the idea was already in our heads from the moment we learned what AOL was up to this year. I admit I had to be talked into it, though. Over the past year, our stretched-thin team had managed to keep our numbers up, but it was an exhausting, grueling year, one in which I personally had a baby and moved from coast to coast just to add to my stress, and after that, to be told none of that hard work mattered, that AOL

was "streamlining" and adopting a new "simplicity" mantra? I just wanted to walk away and take a vacation or maybe even a weekend when I didn't have to work and just enjoy my kids. (When game developers say things like that, I believe them – I know exactly how it feels to be secretly relieved that *well, at least this bullshit is over*. You're scared because you don't know what you'll do next, but at least you can enjoy some time off and recuperate from an extremely stressful situation.)

So some of us debated a much smaller volunteer site, something we could do while we all looked for new jobs. But the support we were getting and the personal familiarity and success with Kickstarter that several members of our writing staff

already had ultimately convinced us that we might be able to pull off something much bigger. And truthfully, while there are other MMO blogs, none is quite like ours. We weren't quite sure ourselves what to *read* after Massively.com was gone. I think we felt a responsibility to our fans, the genre, and each other to at least try, even if we failed.

While this issue is laced with stories about living epic, I can think of no greater story than the epic comeback of Massively. You took a pink slip and turned it into entrepreneurship. In less than 2 weeks nonetheless! What was running through your head when you made that jump and put up the Kickstarter hoping for the best?



It was a crazy couple of days. Most Kickstarter advisors recommend three months of prep time before launch. We didn't have it. We knew that interest in whatever we were doing would fizzle if we didn't get moving (WoW Insider had a temp site and Patreon up on the 3rd, for example). We didn't think that would work for us because of the ebb and flow of our readership and the variety of games we cover, and that meant a lengthy and detailed Kickstarter pitch, video recording and editing, a budget prepped months before we had any money – basically, an entire company with branding and

promotional materials planned out before we went to ask our fans and readers to donate a penny. We literally finished writing and editing it at midnight on February 5th and pressed go first thing in the morning, launching on the worst day of the week in the worst month for successful crowdfunds. One of our staunchest supporters actually chewed me out – rightly! – for not warning him and other key backers ahead of time. More time to research and prepare would have been lovely.

And what was running through our heads? Terror and determination. Everyone had doubts, especially me. We've seen so many MMOs fail to fund, and I was sure that it would be embarrassing. But it was do or die. When you push that button, you're committed. We pushed it. We're all in.

Did you expect the support that you received, or did it catch you completely off guard?

Truthfully, I didn't think we would fund to our minimum number, but there was no point asking for less because it wouldn't give us enough time to try to put together our own ongoing funding otherwise. By then, I absolutely expected lots of love and moral support, just not lots of money! I wasn't sure that people would pay for our kind of entertainment in the

The screenshot shows the Massively.com website layout. At the top, there's a navigation bar with categories like NEWS, OPINION, COLUMNS, GAMES, BETAS, COMMUNITY, PODCAST, STREAMS, VIDEOS, GALLERY, ABOUT, and TIPS. The main content area features several news articles:

- H1Z1 IS GETTING A FULL WIPE THIS THURSDAY**: An article dated April 28, 2015, by Ief Reahard, discussing the upcoming wipe for the game H1Z1. It mentions that early access players will have their servers and characters wiped, but account-bound items and inventory will be reset. It also notes the addition of a female model and new crafting elements.
- DOTA 2 HONORS PRATCHETT IN TODAY'S PATCH**: An article dated April 28, 2015, by Ief Reahard, reporting on a tribute to Terry Pratchett in the Dota 2 patch. The tribute is an Ocarine Core, a new endgame item.
- WATCH DOTA 2'S RED BULL BATTLE GROUNDS AMERICA REGIONALS... NOW**: An article dated April 28, 2015, by Eree Boyce, covering the Dota 2 Red Bull Battle Grounds e-sports event in America.

On the right side of the page, there are several promotional banners and featured content sections:

- HEARTHSTONE HEROES OF WARCRAFT**: A banner for the game with the text "Deceptively Simple. Insanely Fun." and a "PLAY FREE NOW" button.
- BREAKING**: A section with a "GTA ONLINE: ALL THE OPEN WORLD FEELS, NONE OF THE MMO GRIND" article.
- GET OVERPOWERED**: A section with a "LATEST" tab and a "TAG CLOUD" tab, featuring articles like "H1Z1 IS GETTING A FULL WIPE THIS THURSDAY" and "DOTA 2 HONORS PRATCHETT IN TODAY'S PATCH".
- GAME LIKE A LEGEND SHOP LIKE A PRO**: A banner for the Newegg game shop.
- FEATURED CONTENT**: A section with a "THE SOAPBOX, MAKING YOUR OWN FUN IN MMO RPGS" article and a "STAR WARS THE OLD REPUBLIC" article.
- META CONTENT**: A section with a "BLASTING THROUGH A HANDS-ON WITH TERA'S NEW GUNNER" article.

F2P and Let's Play video era. I clearly misjudged how much the MMO community thought of us as an internet home and how much they wanted to telegraph their anger at AOL. I'm certainly thrilled to be wrong. But that was just me. There were Massively writers and supporters who were convinced we'd fund easily, and they were right! The internet met our initial goal within 48 hours. A journalism blog about niche video games! How awesome is that?

Well I guess it would be safe to say that Massively Overpowered is well loved and respected within the community. I actually found out about the project from Mark Jacobs, Founder of City State Entertainment. With legends like that pointing at your rebirth it's no surprise how quickly it took off. What was the biggest challenge you faced in recreating the magic that happened on Massively.com?

Money and time. Kickstarter operates on such a delay that we didn't see any money until recently, and it's taken us a lot of time and personal cash behind the scenes to actually get set up as a real company, to replace the mechanical infrastructure that AOL once provided and do so in a way that is completely legal and above board (which also costs money). Everyone had to

work on the promise of future pay just like a startup. That was a hard thing to ask.

Are there any changes you plan to make going forward to the way you report games?

For the most part, no. We'll still be covering a wide variety of MMORPGs and fringe MMOs as we were before; we'll still shoot for accuracy and timeliness in our news; we'll still have insightful columns. In fact, so far we've increased our column loadout and have been able to cover more indies. But we enjoyed significant editorial freedom under Joystiq (my boss there was wonderful), so there isn't a huge push to change much about the writing since we were already fairly happy with our content itself, though of course we'd always like to be producing much more and we're forever striving for cleaner and more precise work.

Perhaps the biggest change editorially is that we are now allowed to accept travel stipends to studio events, provided that we disclose everything to our readers so they can decide whether we were unduly influenced. We had no such freedom before under our rigid network policy, which meant that our writers and our voices were left out of dozens of MMO industry events every year.

How many of the original team have returned for this project? Are you mostly intact?

Mostly! We lost two columnists to game studios, one before the Kickstarter launched and one recently, and I don't blame them a bit for choosing full-time employment over a weekly column with us (both would have kept writing for us, but since they were working directly for MMO studios, we couldn't keep them in accordance with our ethics policy). We were able to add back someone laid off a year ago and will probably add another. That's in addition to the tech engineer and sales manager we brought on. Our core news team has all stuck around. That's been tremendously helpful because everyone knows what to expect and how to make a site go 'round. And there's a shared personal loyalty. We're friends. That's priceless.

What are the major differences you see with working for a major media outlet to working for yourself? Are there tools and resources that you miss? What advantages have you found?

Oh yes. We were running the editorial end of the business at Massively.com, but AOL was at least ostensibly providing tech support, site design, the content management system, legal

support, payroll, and all of the ad sales and implementation going on behind the scenes. Those are not insignificant roles, not at all, and we've had to find ways to replace all of them (and a lot of those ways involve my working 16-hour days!). On the other hand, because we were off in a corner of the Joystiq network, we were usually neglected. Our site was outdated and broken, tech support was a frustrating game of email tag, our CMS was easily 10 years old and hacked together, pay was often late with no warning, archaic travel reimbursement resulted in at least one person being stranded at a con per year, and multiple advertising experts now have told us that AOL was mismanaging ad placement and sales on our behalf. So on one hand, it's awesome that we can take a stab at fixing all of the things that were wrong with the site that we had no power to control before. On the other hand, now we have no choice but to take on all of those tasks, and none of them

comes cheaply. Just having a lawyer craft custom contracts that will stand up in court has cost a small fortune.

What would you recommend for others who are placed in similar situations?

I am not a risk-taker. I am a careful planner and a worrier. Without at least one risk-taker on our crew, we might not be here today. A strong team needs lots of talents and personalities. Make sure you're diverse and that you challenge each other. And of course, if you have the time and luxury of planning well in advance of an adventure like this, take it. If you don't, and you get only one chance, go for it and have no regrets. Prepare for failure but work your butt off anyway and be pleasantly surprised if you succeed.

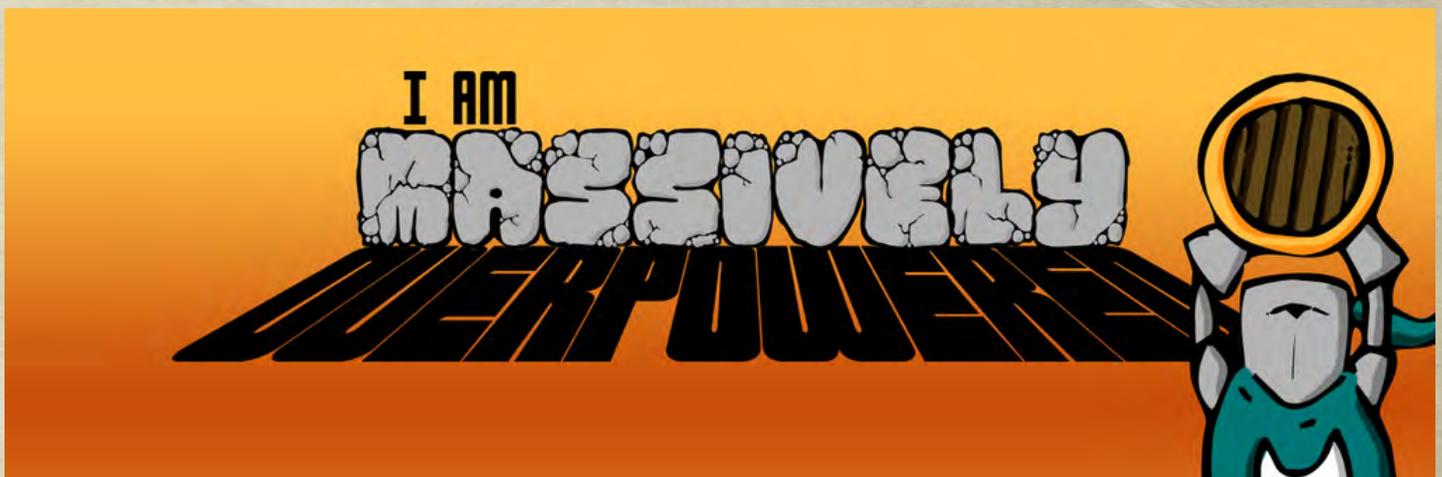
Now for a fun question, How would you describe something "Epic"? What does Epic mean to you?

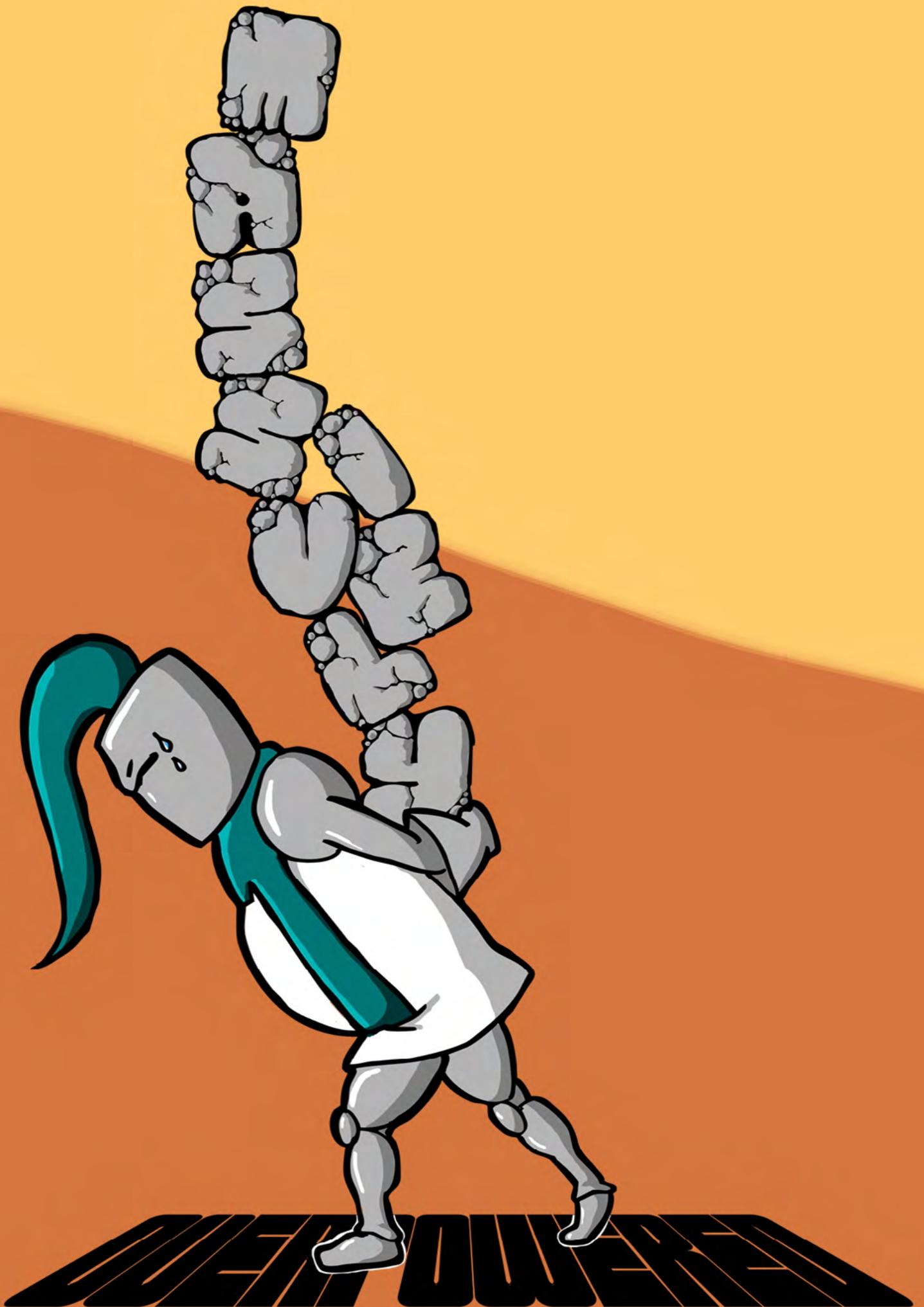
Our lawyer helped me register our company as Overpowered Media Group, LLC (OMG) and never even batted an eyelash. That is epic. The Firefly-inspired crowdfunding video that Jef designed and Larry narrated is pretty darn epic too!

Thank you so much for sharing this amazingly epic comeback that is Massivelyop.com. Do you have any final words for our readers?

Thank you all so very much. Without the literal and figurative support of the MMO community, we wouldn't be throwing our everything into this site. It's renewed my passion for the genre and convinced me that it's still worth championing. And it's showed me that our community isn't really "us vs. them" the way it can sometimes feel in the comment section. Ultimately, we're all on the same side of loving MMORPGs.

CHECK OUT THIS MASSIVELY EPIC GAMING SITE AT: [HTTP://MASSIVELYOP.NET/](http://massivelyop.net/)







GUILD WARS





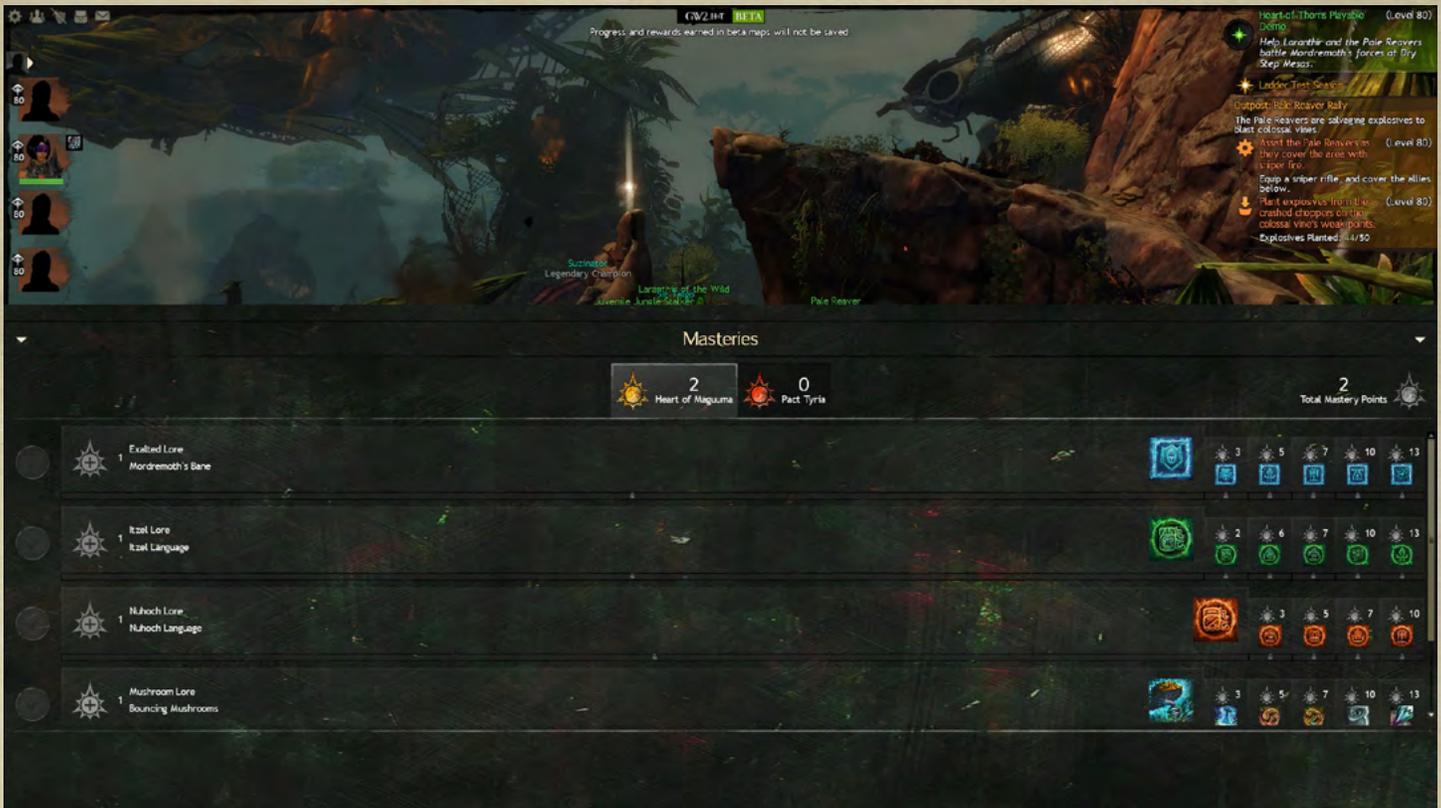
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Guild Wars 2 Mastery System

By: Aoibheann Ní Choileáin

Heart of Maguuma Masteries:



EXALTED LORE

- **Mordremoth's Bane** – The Exalted introduce you to the basics of combating the Mordrem. Their conditions affect you far less.
- **Exalted Acceptance** – Gain the trust of the strange and mysterious Exalted, giving you access to their services in the Forgotten City.
- **Exalted Honing** – Learn how to pierce through tough bark, making some of the previously invulnerable Mordrem now weak to your attacks.
- **Exalted Markings** – Gain the knowledge to read Exalted markings. You can now decipher their words and gain access to secrets of their civilization.
- **Exalted Purification** – You've become honored among the Exalted. You can now challenge their champion each day and unlock their finest treasures within the Forgotten City.

- **Wyvern Defiance** – The Exalted have taught you to stand in defiance of wyverns. They can no longer knock you down with their wing buffets.

ITZEL LORE

- **Itzel Language** – The spry Itzel speak a very different dialect from the hylek of old Tyria. Through trial and error you learn to communicate, marking the first steps towards earning their trust. This opens up vendors and trade with the Itzel.
- **Itzel Writings** – You discover that the glyphs and pictographs you've seen around the Heart of Maguuma are the Itzel tribe's written language. With practice and conversation, you've learned to decipher them and discover the hidden treasures they conceal.
- **Itzel Herbicides** – The Itzel have taught you

to use the various extracts around Maguuma to create poisons. These poisons allow you to deal bonus damage against poisoned or burning Mordrem.

- **Itzel Leadership** – Through careful study of the Itzel language and society, you've earned the right to challenge their champion and claim rewards in Verdant Brink.
- **Itzel Hunting** – Through dedicated teaching, the Itzel train you how to take special trophies from foes in Maguuma, unlocking rare collections.
- **Itzel Stalking** – The Itzel teach you how to operate their harpoon cannons scattered throughout Maguuma, letting you pull Wyverns down to your level to hunt.

NUHOCH LORE

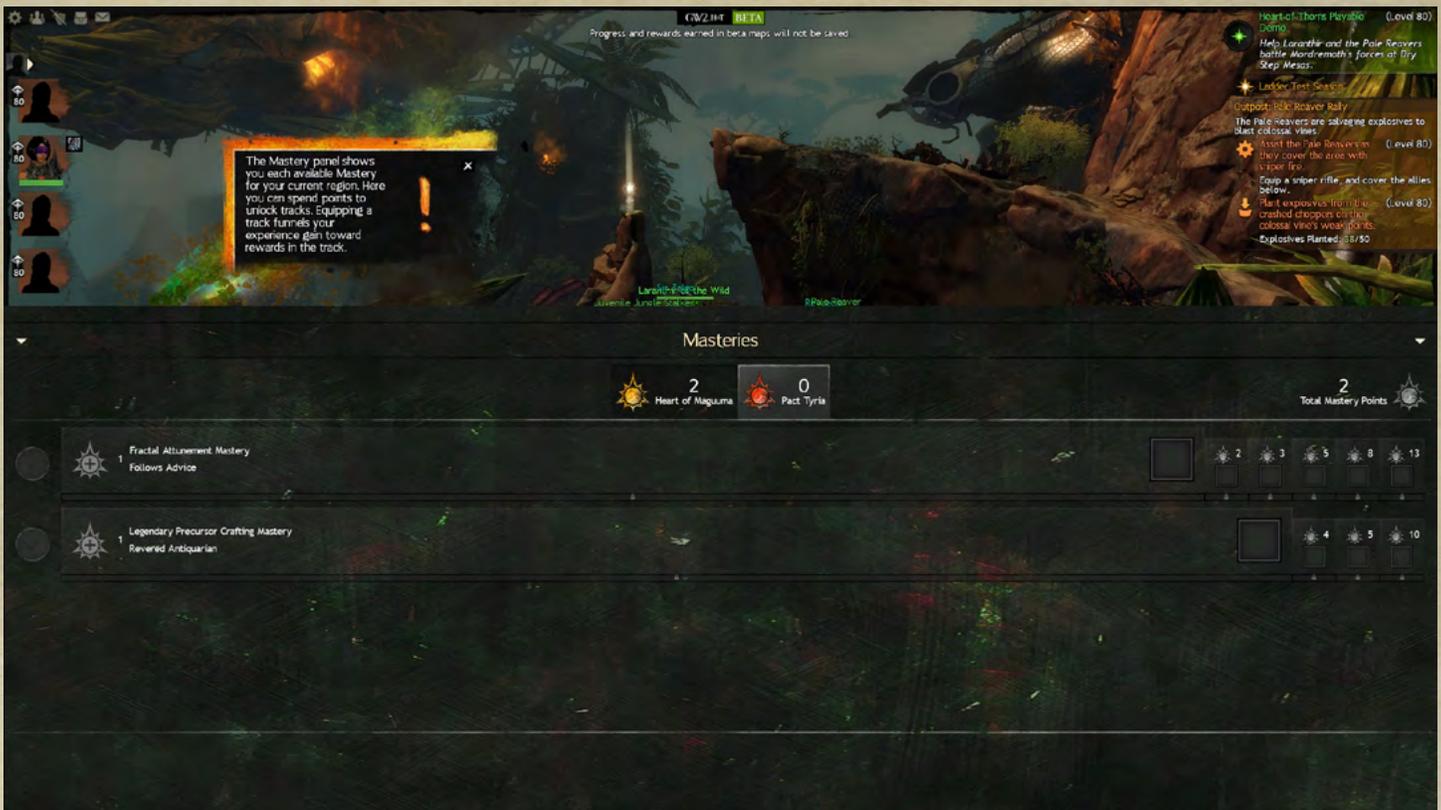
- **Nuhoch Language** – The brutish Nuhoch tribe's language is a difficult series of tones, but with some practice you learn to communicate. You are able to trade and converse with the bullish Nuhoch tribe members now.
- **Nuhoch Proving** – The Nuhoch tribe give gifts based on trials of strength. Unlocking the Mastery of proving gives you the right to enter the trials.
- **Nuhoch Energies** – The Nuhoch tribe teach you the ways of surviving chak energy. By absorbing a powerful chak energy discharge, you're able to create orbs that you and others with this ability can use to break through impenetrable champion chak energy shields.
- **Nuhoch Alchemy** – Masterful fighters rely not only on brute strength, but also tactics. The Nuhoch train you to remove the chak's powerful acid with your healing skill.
- **Nuhoch Trail Signs** – Master the art of reading Nuhoch trail signs, allowing you to gather information in the field. The Nuhoch trail signs reveal that which was hidden before.

MUSHROOM LORE

- **Bouncing Mushrooms** – Learn how to land precisely and use the bouncing mushrooms found around the Heart of Maguuma to get to places previously impossible to reach.
- **Blazing Speed Mushrooms** – With stomach training, you can ingest the speed-increasing mushrooms found scattered in the Heart of Maguuma. Run at blazing speeds with the help of nature.
- **Adrenal Mushrooms** – Learning to eat these mushrooms tweaks your adrenal glands, giving you a surge of adrenaline and instantly refreshing your skills.
- **Recovery Mushrooms** – Gain the ability to consume these multifaceted healing mushrooms, healing you instantly and curing some conditions.
- **Master Forager** – With training, you've learned to spot the mushrooms in the Heart of Maguuma even faster. They're now more visible on your map.
- **Massive Bouncing Mushrooms** – After much practice and core strength training, you can use massive bouncing mushrooms to fly even further through the air.

GLIDING

- **Thick Wings** – With practice you learn to treat the wings on your glider, strengthening the flaps, allowing you to stay in the air longer.
- **Updraft Use** – Improved design to your glider handles and slits in the wings let you confidently fly into updrafts, allowing a boost to your flight height and the ability to travel to never-before-reachable locations.
- **Stronger Bindings** – You learn to bind the wings of your glider with stronger binding straps. The results is longer glide times without tearing apart your wings!
- **Powerful Leap** – After intensive leg training, you have learned to boost yourself into your glide with far greater force.



Pact Tyria Masteries:

- **Fractal Attunement Mastery** – Information was not available to view during the beta test; however there appears to be six levels to train.
 - **Legendary Precursor Crafting Mastery**
 - **Revered Antiquarian** – Grants access to the First Tier of Precursor Collections
 - **Magister of Legends** – Contributes to the Second Tier of Precursor Collections
 - **Historian of the Armaments** – Contributes to the Third Tier of Precursor Collections
 - **Scholar of Maguuma's Secrets** – Grants access to Heart of Maguuma Precursor Collections
- Please note that this is a preliminary report – All information is from the closed beta stress test 3/24





GUILD WARS 2™ HEART OF THORNS

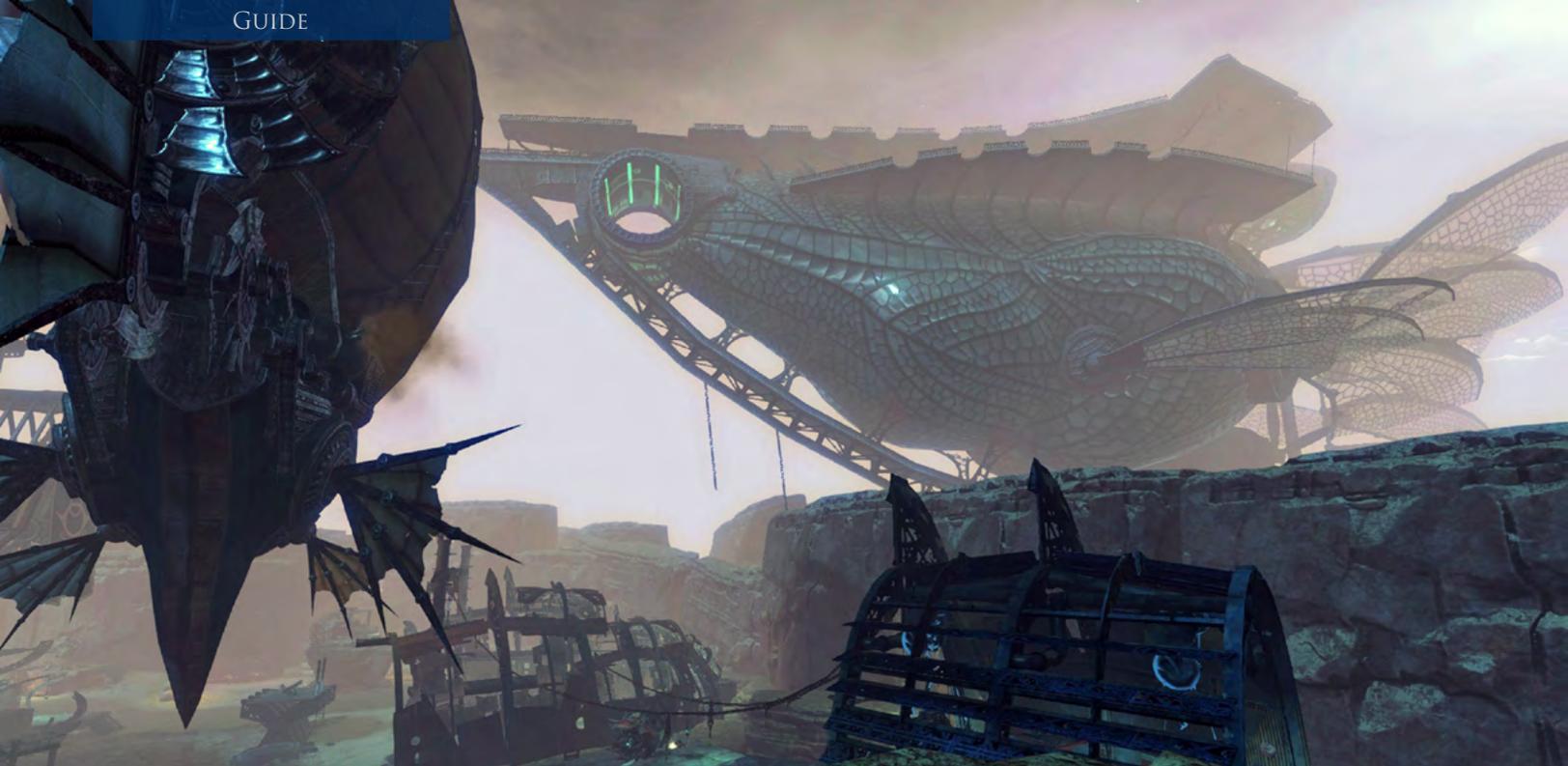
GUILD WARS 2: HEART OF THORNS

Guild Wars 2: Heart of Thorns™ is the first expansion for Guild Wars 2. Founded on the idea that the journey is the goal, the Heart of Thorns expansion continues the Guild Wars 2 tradition of challenging the conventions of MMOs to fulfill the promise of what online worlds should be.

Journey deeper into the Heart of Thorns.

Learn More At: heartofthorns.guildwars2.com





Adventures in The Silverwastes

By: Susan “Lakshmi” Warren

Guild Wars 2 has perhaps the best ‘pick-up’ open world PVE of any MMO. The game is designed to reward cooperation and—sure enough—complete strangers flock together to conquer zones all over the world.

At level 80, one of the best places to do this is The Silverwastes—especially during prime time. The Silverwastes is a zone that gets better and better as more players pack into it. It’s also a very rewarding zone, with lots of great loot, titles and achievements.

Getting There

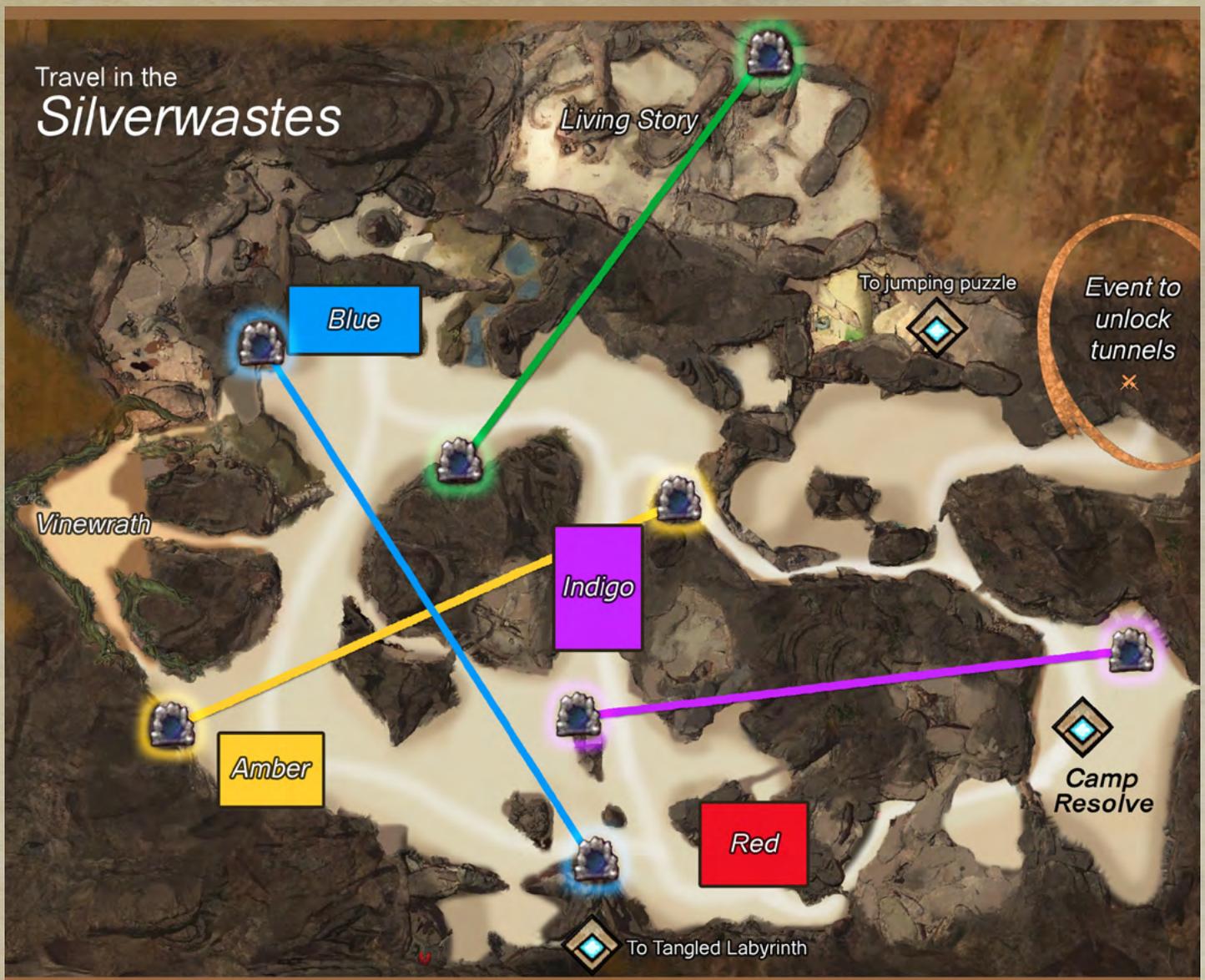
The Silverwastes is in the northwest corner of the world map. To reach it, start at the Triforge Point Waypoint in Brisban Wildlands. From there, run north through Fort Vandal and zone in.



Getting Around

You arrive in Camp Resolve, in the southeast corner of the zone. It’s a safe spot with a waypoint and some basic services.

There are two more waypoints, but you’ll soon discover that the waypoints are too sparse to access most of the zone easily. Luckily, there’s another option besides hoofing it from place to place: skritt tunnels. Each tunnel links two spots on the map with instant travel. By the way, skritt tunnel travel



is the *only* way to get to the Living Story area in the north of the map.

But there’s a catch. The skritt tunnels are often closed, so you’ll need to complete the “Drive the bandits out of skritt territory” event in the northeast to unlock them again. This also completes the Ambassador’s Aid achievement which awards an item you can trade for a Carapace boot box.

The route to the jumping puzzle and the vast underground region of the Silverwastes also passes through the skritt cave in the northeast. Complete the same event then look for a stairway leading down to the Drydock Grotto waypoint, diving goggles and Drydock Scratch jumping puzzle.

What to do?

Now that you’ve reached the Silverwastes, it’s up to you to decide what’s next. You can work on the meta event chain through Vinewrath, of course, and I’ll explain that in detail later in this article. First, let’s explore some of the other choices.

TITLES AND OTHER GOODIES VIA ACHIEVEMENTS

The Silverwastes zone has its own achievements category under General, and several give you titles or armor. In addition, a few chapters of the Living Story take place in the Silverwastes and award Silverwastes-themed items, including Carapace armor pieces.

Titles	
The Annihilator	Slay the Legendary Mordrem Annihilator at Red Rock Bastion
The Demolisher	Slay the Legendary Mordrem Demolisher at Indigo Cave
The Executioner	Slay the Legendary Mordrem Executioner at Amber Sandfall
The Tormenter	Slay the Legendary Mordrem Tormenter at Blue Oasis
The Be-All and End-All	Slay all four legendary Mordrem champions
Dark Traveler	Unlock the greater nightmare pod in Hidden Depths
Light in the Darkness	Unlock all Luminescent armor skins
Armor	
Carapace Coat Box	Complete the Vinewrath event
Carapace Boot Box	Complete “Drive the bandits out of skritt territory” event
Carapace Shoulder Box	Complete the “Hidden Arcana” chapter of Echoes of the Past story
Carapace Glove Box	Complete all chapters in the Tangled Paths story
Carapace Legging Box	Complete the “No Refuge” chapter of the Seeds of Truth story
Carapace Headgear Box	Complete the “Mystery Cave” chapter of the Point of No Return story
Other goodies	
Skritt Burglar Tonic	Complete the Drydock Scratch jumping puzzle

INDIANA JONES MODE

If you just feel like exploring, you are in for a treat! The forts and frenzied combat at ground level account for only a fraction of the explorable areas. There’s a whole world underground, and another high above on the mesa tops--and the scenery is gorgeous.

A great way to tour the hidden parts of the Silverwastes is to do the Drydock Scratch jumping puzzle, which starts at the Drydock Grotto waypoint. It’s much longer than most jumping

puzzles, and transverses both the underground and the mesa tops. Good news for the jumping-impaired: there are very few difficult jumps.

If you’d like a guide, Dulfy has excellent one: <http://dulfy.net/2014/12/03/gw2-retrospective-runaround-jumping-puzzle-guide/>

CHOO-CHOO! SHOVEL TRAIN



Running the Silverwastes meta will give you loot similar to other Guild Wars 2 zones: champ bags, crafting materials and gear drops. But occasionally you'll also get something unique: a Silverwastes Shovel.

Each shovel can reveal a single Lost Bandit Chest. Equip the shovel and use the #2 skill, Sonar. If a chest is buried nearby, a green line will lead you to it. Once you find the mound of dirt over the chest use the #1 skill, Dig, to dig it up.

To open a Lost Bandit Chest, you'll need a Bandit Skeleton Key. These are found occasionally in loot too, but they can also be purchased from vendors in the forts or Camp Resolve for 5 Bandit Crests each. From every chest you'll receive a champ bag, bandit crests, ambrite, and silky sand. At level 80 you'll also get either dragonite ore or empyreal shards. More rarely you can receive obsidian shards, Carapace boots or gloves and zone-themed mini pets, tonics and crafting recipes. It's exceptional loot that's very easy to obtain.

Shovels are far more rare than keys, so players often pool their shovels and move around the map in a blob (a.k.a. shovel train or chest train) to open chests together. It's common to open 30 or more chests in a single circuit of the map, so bring plenty of keys!

The shovel train usually happens during the downtime in the zone meta cycle to take advantage of the buffs from completing the meta event. These buffs add to a player's effect magic find, and also add bonus magic find when opening lost bandit chests.

SUPER SHINY ARMOR!

If you like long-term goals—or just like to glow in the dark—try the collection quests for Luminescent armor. Each armor slot has its own collection. In addition to the corresponding Carapace pieces, you'll need to collect parts from the Silverwastes

and the ascended trinkets rewards from the 4 final episodes of the Season 2 living story.



It's a lot of work but in the end your armor will shine like the moon while you rock the coveted "Light in the Darkness" title.



CARAPACE ARMOR

You can obtain Carapace armor boxes uncommonly from drops, lost bandit chests and event bonus chests in the Silverwastes. Some achievements reward Carapace armor as well (see "Titles and other goodies via achievements" above). You can also purchase Carapace armor boxed from the vendor in Camp Resolve for 1000 bandit crests and 1g each.

The exception is the Carapace Coat Box. This comes from only one source: Vinewrath. You are guaranteed a coat box the first time you beat the Vinewrath fight. After that, it's an uncommon drop from Vinewrath, so expect to fight Vinewrath event several more times to get all three Carapace coats.



MORDREM PARTS

You have to *extract* these (ewww!) from Mordrem bosses during The Breach and the Vinewrath events.

Use an Experimental Mordrem Extraction Device before jumping into the Breach, and another before the Vinewrath event. After that, get at least one good hit in on the boss. Win or lose, an Extracted Part Bag containing a Mordrem part will drop into your inventory. Opening the bag will automatically update your collection. Simple!

The wrinkle is that you need specific parts for each collection. For example, the Luminescent Gloves collection requires Mordrem fangs, one from each type of Mordrem boss: teragriff, husk, troll and thrasher.

To find a the right type of Mordrem boss you need to join the Breach at a specific fort:

Mordrem Type	Fort
Husk	Red Rock Bastion
Teragriff	Indigo Cave
Troll	Amber Sandfall
Thrasher	Blue Oasis

To guarantee you get a specific body part—say, an eye—use an extractor that targets that body part. Both the experimental and specialized extractors can be bought from vendors in the forts and Camp Resolve.

After collecting the part, trade it to the Krewe Researcher NPC for more badges. He moves to a new spot in the zone every 30 minutes, and is marked on the map with the collections symbol.

LUMINESCENT PARTS

To obtain these, first get at least three stacks of the Perseverance buff by defending forts, collecting rubble, escorting supply caravans, and other zone events. Then talk to one of the fort quartermaster NPCs, and choose the ‘Prove your perseverance’ option. Select the luminescent part you want to add to the collection.

You can vendor the part immediately for 25 silver.

IMBUED PARTS

These parts are ordinary items drops, event trophies or heart NPC items collected elsewhere in the world and then imbued in the Silverwastes during the Breach.

To imbue an item, jump down into the breach then interact with the Luminescent Pollen Cloud next to the exit.

Collection	Item needed	Where to find it
Headgear	Dragonfly-Wing Earrings	Purchase from heart NPC Cook Huelic in Michoan Marsh, Metrica Province
Shoulderguard	Firefly Luminescence	Event trophy from “Give firefly luminescence to Warden Annwyn” in Village of Astorea, Caledon Forest
Coat	Large Skull	Mob drop, or purchase from Trading Post
Gloves	Matlal Enchanted Pig Truffle	Purchase from heart NPC Matlal in Eukaryan Caves, Kessex Hills
Leggings	Powerful Venom Sac	Mob drop, or purchase from Trading Post
Footwear	Beetle Remains	Event trophy from “Gather insect parts from nearby beetles” in Challenger Cliffs, Dry Top

ASCENDED TRINKETS

Obtaining the ascended trinkets can be the most challenging, time consuming and expensive part of completing the luminescent collections.

Collection	Item needed	Where to find it
Headgear	Jurah’s Jewel	Purchase in Silverwastes for 10g + 1000 bandit crests, or for 30 laurels from a laurel vendor
Shoulderguard	Caithe’s Blossom	Complete all Echoes of the Past achievements
Coat	Caithe’s Remorse	Complete all Point of No Return achievements
Gloves	Plague Signet	Complete all Tangled Paths achievements
Leggings	Verata’s Seared Ring	Purchase in Silverwastes for 10g + 1000 bandit crests
Footwear	Wynne’s Locket	Complete all Seeds of Truth achievements

If you find a particular achievement too challenging, having more people can help a lot! Try finding (or starting) a group in party finder or guild. Dulfy.net is an excellent resource for guides and videos.

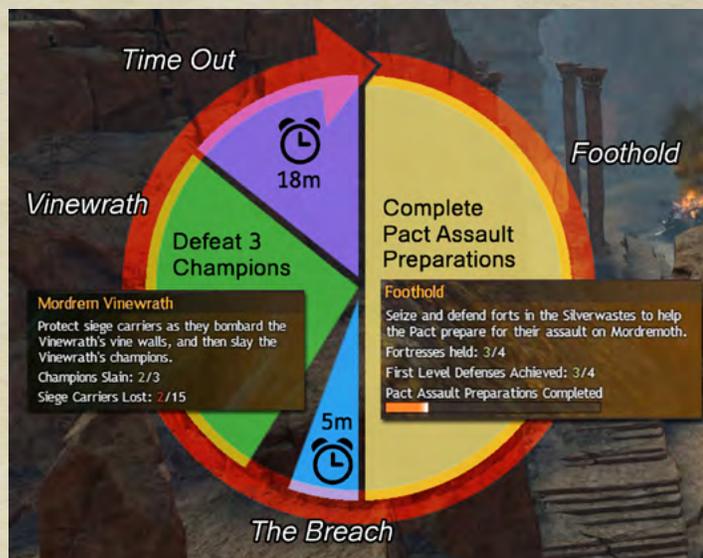
- Echoes of the Past Achievement Guide <http://dulfy.net/2014/11/05/gw2-echoes-of-the-past-story-achievements-guide/>
- Tangled Paths Achievement Guide <http://dulfy.net/2014/11/18/gw2-tangled-paths-story-achievements-guide/>
- Seeds of Truth Achievement Guide <http://dulfy.net/2014/12/03/gw2-seeds-of-truth-living-world-story-achievements-guide/>
- Point of No Return Achievement Guide <http://dulfy.net/2015/01/14/gw2-point-of-no-return-living-story-achievements-guide/>





The Silverwastes Meta

And now for the main event! The Silverwastes features a meta event cycle that's a challenging mashup of WvW-style siege warfare, large scale zone boss fights and the frantic haste of a guild rush.



Two of the events—The Breach and Time Out—are timed. For the others, you must complete the objectives to advance to the next event. When the

Time Out countdown reaches zero the cycle starts over with the Foothold event.

Numbers help enormously to complete the meta cycle quickly and successfully, so use the LFG tool to taxi into a well populated map (or fill your own map).

FOOTHOLD

The goal of the Foothold event is to fill the “Pact Assault Preparations” gauge as you protect and upgrade forts, escort supply caravans and fight off the Mordrem.

More and better siege equipment appears as you upgrade a fort; however, two of the best defenses are almost always available.

First, **burning oil**. It works great, far better here than in WvW, since mobs aren't smart enough to avoid it. Just two players can wipe whole waves of attackers by pulling them into the oil. Be sure to Pour Tar occasionally: the Mordrem will be stuck in the fire until dead.



THE BREACH

The goal of The Breach event is to kill the 5 champions under the forts in 5 minutes.

Remember the scene from Star Wars where Jabba the Hut forces Luke to walk the plank over a huge, nothing-but-teeth sand pit monster? Well, the *sarlacc* makes a cameo for The Breach event. Four of them, actually—one under each fort.

Hop in! Aim for the center to reduce falling damage. Once inside, you'll need to kill a Mordrem champion. If you are collecting Mordrem parts for luminescent armor be sure to use an extractor now.

The fight mechanics differ by fort. Here's a quicky strategy for each fight.

Your other secret weapon is the **air strike**. To call in an air strike grab a “signal torch” (there are several in every fort) and use it to light the fort's signal fire. The signal fire is high up in the fort, on a wall or ledge. Fifteen seconds after the fire is lit, the bombs fall doing massive damage to the Mordrem horde.

CHAMPION MORDREM HUSK COPPER

The champion at Red Rock Bastion is a high defense melee fighter. He spawns numerous Mordrem Husk Offshoots which move as a pack and can easily overwhelm a player with bleeds



and cripple. If you find yourself focused by the offshoot pack, stealth or kite until they shift to another player, or use skills that block or reflect projectiles.

The husk champ also spawns bubbles that heal him if they are close to him when popped—about 2% per bubble. Popping the bubbles will also poison nearby allies.

Strategy: *Pop bubbles away from the champ, avoid offshoots, DPS.*

CHAMPION MORDREM TERAGRIFF SILVER & CHAMPION MORDREM TERAGRIFF GOLD

This pair of champions at Indigo Cave can put up a very tough fight. The fight takes place in a narrow, donut-shaped cave—perfect for these giant teragriffs to bowl right over you.

Just to make things more fun, you can't damage the champs unless you use a special fight mechanic: pop a bubble near a champion to stun it, then DPS like crazy. When the stun wears off, the champ will become invulnerable again and dash off in the opposition direction.

Popping them prematurely almost always causes the fight to fail since no bubbles means your team can't stun the champs to DPS them.

Another fight mechanic that kills quite a few players is the champs' Shriek attack with a 600-radius AoE that does 2000+ damage per tick. This attack occurs when the champs meet face-to-face at the same point of the racetrack. (Fortunately, you can see this easily on the minimap.) Watch out for it as you are chasing after the the champs.

Strategy: Hug the walls, *pop bubbles close to a champ*, burst DPS on stunned champ, stay far away from Shrieks.

CHAMPION MORDREM TROLL IRON

This champ spawns under Amber Sandfall. He's a melee fight that can launch and cripple players. He also summons Veteran Mordrem Trolls as allies and revives any that die at specific phases in the fight.

His biggest attacks are ground targeted. At 80% health he starts to use a wedge-shaped, melee-ranged attack. At 40% health he switches to a donut-shaped AoE that affects the entire room.

Strategy: Avoid the veteran trolls (don't kill them), dodge ground AoEs, DPS champ.

CHAMPION MORDREM THRASHER PLATINUM

The champion under Blue Oasis teleports, a *lot*. The fight takes place in a large cave that's roughly square in shape, and each teleport moves the champ to the next corner of the square moving in a clockwise direction. You'll know he's about to teleport when he becomes invulnerable to attacks.

At 50% health bubbles will spawn near the champ. Popping the bubbles charges a large AoE pull-then-poison attack by the champ.

Strategy: DPS, then chase when champ teleports. After 50% be ready to double-dodge out of the champ's pull-then-poison attack.





Vinewrath

The Mordrem Vinewrath event is a coordinated, level 80 encounter similar in scale and complexity to fighting Tequatl. And like Teq, it's quite common to taxi more people into the map to have an adequate force for the fight.

This handsome thistle is the Vinewrath, and it's just a spectator for this battle. Instead you must defeat each of its three Legendary champions in turn. Divide your forces into three teams—one for each lane: south, mid and north.

Each lane must protect its Pact Siege Carrier and ammunition stockpile as the carrier tries to blast its way through the barrier shielding the Vinewrath's champion. Of course, the many Mordrem that spawn will try to kill both the siege carrier and the ammo, so you'll need to clear them as quickly as possible. It's possible (and extremely helpful) to heal and stealth the siege carrier.

The barrier in a single lane becomes vulnerable to the siege carrier's attack when no boss fight is currently underway. First up is the south lane, immediately after the event starts. An "open door" icon on the minimap shows when a barrier is

vulnerable. Escort the siege carrier to the barrier to open the path to the boss fight.

After the south lane finishes their boss fight (win or lose), the barrier for the middle lane becomes vulnerable. Next it's north lane's turn. The cycle repeats until all three bosses are successfully defeated, or the event fails.





KILLING THE LEGENDARY CHAMPIONS

The Legendary champions must be defeated in order: Beekeeper, Mangler, and Dark Wing. When all three champions are dead, run back into the Vinewrath's lair to loot the chest.

These fights are fairly straightforward, but there are a few mechanics you should be familiar with.

Avoid the “raid wipe” attack.

Each of the three champs has a “raid wipe” attack. When the champ runs to the far side of the room, near the Vinewrath, you'll know it's about to happen. The way to avoid it is to stack in the safe spot. Most of the other players will be running to the safe spot, so follow the pack!

Where to stack:

- **Beekeeper**—behind a honeycomb
- **Mangler**—in the white cone-shaped area in front of the boss
- **Dark Wing**—on an open flower

Beekeeper is about the bees.

DPS the boss and avoid the allies he summons. If you get a swarm of bees on you run to the honeycomb to build it up prior to the “raid wipe” attack.

Mangler is pustule powered.

DPS the boss and avoid his AoE attacks. If you have a reflect skill, the best time to use it is when he is spinning. It's very important to clear the pustules that spawn around the room since these greatly increase the area and power of his AoE poison attack.

As you kill a pustule stand in the white circle created to receive a powerful DPS buff (and a nifty purple paint job).

Dark Wing is about the daisies. DPS the boss, and avoid his teragriff-style charges and shrieks. DPS the unopened flowers to ensure you'll have one to stand on for his “wipe ride” attack (which turns the floor of the entire room to lava).

FAILING THE VINEWRATH EVENT

The Vinewrath event fails when 15 siege carriers are lost.

A failed attempt to kill one of the Legendary champs doesn't necessarily cause the event to fail, however it does cause 3 siege carriers to be lost. If 15

siege carriers haven't been lost yet the next lane will fight the same Legendary champ.

TIME OUT

The last event in the Silverwastes meta is the aptly named Time Out. It's 18 minutes to clear your bags, harvest, and explore before the next meta cycle. Since the map is relatively quiet, the shovel chain often happens

during Time Out.

THE TANGLED LABYRINTH

For something more challenging, visit the Tangled Labyrinth (which is open only during Time Out). Start from the Hidden Depths waypoint and run downhill. You'll find an underground maze filled with ghostly green Mordrem wolves that are faster and far more

deadly than their cousins up on the surface. You'll also find lots of chests with loot.

Navigate the labyrinth like you would a guild rush. Watch the minimap for approaching wolves and hop onto a flower to transform into "Cold Light" when they are close. You'll have super speed for 10 seconds and a skill that will stun nearby wolves, helping you escape.





Triple Trouble: The Great Jungle Wurm

By: Amanda “Soren” Carr

“THE HEROES OF TYRIA FACE A BATTLE ON TWO FRONTS; THEIR BELOVED LAND IS IMPERILED AS NEVER BEFORE. FROM UNDER THE SUN-BAKED SANDS OF BLOODTIDE COAST A GIGANTIC, THREE-HEADED JUNGLE WURM HAS ARISEN TO THREATEN ALL WHO COME WITHIN ITS DOMAIN DUE TO SCARLETT’S SEARCH FOR THE MAGICAL LEYLINES. IN THE MOUNTAINS OF LORNAR’S PASS, SCARLET’S LATEST CREATION — A TOWERING, MECHANICAL MONSTROSITY — IS WREAKING DESTRUCTION.”

- GUILD WARS 2 LIVING STORY

Triple Trouble was released in conjunction with the *Living Story: Origins of Madness* and the Twisted Marionette. While Marionette is no longer available, the three headed worm rampages through Bloodtide coast every 4 hours. The fight itself is essentially 3 boss fights going on simultaneously that are split into 3 Phases. The escort phase, decapitation phase and kill phase. All three worms must be decapitated within 60 seconds of each other to progress from phase 2 to phase 3.

Waypoints Required:

- **Amber:** Whisperwill Waypoint [&BLABAAA=]
- **Crimson** (Gather Point of the Event): Firthside Vigil Waypoint [&BKoBAAA=]
- **Cobalt:** Jelako Waypoint [&BK8BAAA=]

Food Buffs:

PHASE 1 FOOD



Main Zerg/Reflect Teams - Feast of Orrian Steak Frites (+100 power, +70 vitality, +10 Experience from kills)



Condi Teams - Rare Veggie Pizza (+40% condition duration, +70 condition damage, +10 Experience from kills)

PHASE 2 FOOD



Everyone - Feast of Truffle Steak (+100 power, +70 precision, +10 Experience from kills)

Consumables Required:

Weapons: Sharpening stones or tuning crystals are required to max out everybody's dps.



Zerker Builds: Toxic Sharpening Stone (+100 Power, Condition Duration Increased By 10%, +10 Experience from kills)



PVT Builds: Superior Sharpening Stone (Gain power equal to 6% of your toughness, Gain power equal to 4% of your vitality, +10 Experience from kills)



Condi Build: Master Tuning Crystal (Gain condition damage equal to 6% of your toughness, Gain condition damage equal to 4% of your vitality, +10% Experience from kills)

ITEMS:

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

Things to Note:

- **Husks:** Should only be touched by the Condi teams. They have extremely high armor and very low vitality
- **Eggs:** If eggs manage to get out they need to be dps'd down asap. If left alone eggs will turn into grubs and they have the potential to wreck the zerg
- **Coordinated Kills:** Voice comms while not necessary are strongly recommended to coordinate kills between phases and to ensure commanders can send/request help if needed or to communicate a need to extend the decap phase
- **Blast Finishers & Fire Fields:** It is important during burn phases that the zerg is doing max DPS and that everyone has 25 stacks of might. This is quickly achieved by using Fire Fields/Blast Finishers followed by Guardian Empowers (staff 4) & Warrior Banners
- **Grouping:** Unless in a designated Condi or Reflect team, players should never be grouped up. This is to allow boon sharing between those closest to you rather than just your party members. This is especially important during phase 2

Primary Set-Up

Since all 3 wurms need to be dropped at the same time it is important to make sure the dps is spread evenly between each worm. The basic set-up is as follows:

- **3 Condition Teams (One 5 man team per worm)** - Their job is to deal with the husks. Necro's, Engi's, Thieves, and Ranger's are most common
- **3 Reflect Teams (One 5 man team per worm)** - Their job is to reflect the eggs the worm spits out, eliminating the need to kill eggs and grubs. Guardian's, Mesmer's, Ele's,

and Ranger's are most common

- **Class Split** - The rest of the players are grouped by class then evenly divided amongst each worm

Once set-up is complete, each worm should have between 45-55 players in order to ensure a good chance of success

The Condition Teams

Condi teams are in charge of taking out any husks that spawn during phase 1. Teams are usually made up of Necromancers and Engineers with the goal of pulling husks away from the main zerg. Then a Necro's Epidemic is used to spread condi to all the husks, essentially melting them. Husks have very high armor and low vitality meaning straight dps will do next to no damage to them while conditions will practically melt them.



HUSK ATTACKS:

- **Stomp** - Knocks players into the air
- **Punch** - Knock back that launches players away from the husk
- **Throw Parasite** - Throws parasites at players causing them to vomit and leaving them with a 3 second stun. This will remove all kegs, eat me buffs, and phytotoxin clouds

REFLECT TEAMS

Reflect teams are in charge of stopping the Wurm from spitting out eggs. Eggs that land and spawn will hatch into Veteran Wurm Grubs after 30 seconds. Grubs have ranged aoe's, hit like a truck and are incredibly hard to kill.



The Reflect Team generally consists of a group of 5:

- **Caller** : The caller is normally the party lead. They will be watching for tells and calling when to drop reflects, large & small spins, as well as spits
- **Primary Reflect**: 2 people are assigned to primary reflect as the first option. They will be the first to drop reflects
- **Secondary Reflect**: 2 people assigned as backup in case reflects are dropped and the wurm spits husks instead of eggs
- **Classes able to reflect (order of preference)**: Guardians, Elementalist, Mesmers, Rangers, Engineers, and Thieves

Anyone interested in learning to reflect or call is highly encouraged to watch this reflect strategy video by GW2 player Kalak. https://youtu.be/A88iwlpx_U8

Phase 1 ~ Escort

At 5 minutes after the hour the final staging/pre-escort will begin. This is a 5 minute warning to players that the event is about to start. At 10 minutes after the hour the escort phases will begin.

For each wurm an investigator will be making their way from the Vigil camp to each of the three spawn areas. Along the way they'll encounter eggs and veteran wurm heads which need to be killed. Should the investigator die, the escort team will have 4 minutes to rez the investigator before the

event fails. **Note: All escorts must succeed for the Evolved Jungle Wurm to spawn.**

Each Wurm will need a 5 man team to run the escort. Escorts scale, so any more than 5 players will make things more difficult. This also gives commanders an extra 5-10 minutes to finish instructing the zerg on how to successfully decapitate their wurm.

Phase 2 ~ Decap Phase

When Escorts arrive at their designated wurm, players will have about 1 minute to do any final prep work before the fight begins. Generally this will involve popping sharpening stones/tuning crystals, dropping food/banners, as well as assigning war banner numbers (usually done right after the commanders explanation).





Once the worm arrives, players will have **14 minutes** to take the worm heads to 0 health and decapitate them. When the first head has been decapitated, the over-all timer will reset to **60 seconds** and the other two heads **must** be decapitated during this window to proceed to phase 3.

The basics of each worm is to:

- Perform the specific mechanic to activate burn (different depending on what worm you are at)
- Burn worm
- Repeat until worm is about 5-10% hp (commanders will be coordinating a final burn, usually starting with Amber)
- Wait for commanders call to go, then dps worm until the decapitation occurs

All worms have the following basic attacks:

- **Small Spin & Spit:** The worm will curl up and unleash a downpour of green ooze. There is a small aoe around the worm when this happens and around half a dozen other aoe's showing on the ground indicating where the spit will land. Ooze has a tendency to one-shot players so make sure you dodge out right away
- **Large Spin:** The worm will curl and do a large AOE spin dealing damage and knocking people back. This attack will cause players to lose kegs at Cobalt, clouds at Crimson, and the "eat me" buff at Amber
- **Husk/Eggs:** The worms pull back (just like a cobra ready to strike) then spit out 3 husks or eggs at predefined areas. The husks can't be reflected. Husks share the same animation as eggs, so if husks appear the back-up reflectors will be called in. Husks have an internal cooldown of 100 seconds and eggs have an internal cooldown of 45 seconds



Crimson Wurm

Crimson is considered the easiest out of all the wurms mechanic wise. Around the wurm players will see 3 phytotoxin extractors (see mini-map for location): Red, Yellow, & Blue.



Players will need to run in a counter-clockwise direction and pick up the various colored clouds that will randomly spawn

and take those clouds to their corresponding colored extractor.



Once the extractors are filled the burn phase will trigger. It takes 30 of each color to fill the extractors.

TIPS & TRICKS:

- You can carry more than 1 color at a time
- Speed is your friend, so if you have buffs to speed

the group use them (road markers are excellent for this)

- Make sure everyone is running in the same direction, generally counterclockwise
- Skills such as Blink, Teleports, Portals will cause you to lose your clouds so do not use them
- When stacking for burn make sure you have the wurm set as a priority target and that you are stacked on the tag and getting double numbers

For the final burn of phase 2, Crimson will usually fill both yellow and blue extractors and then wait for the call to fill red.



Cobalt Wurm

Cobalt is arguably the most difficult of the three worms as it requires quite a bit more coordination and the individual players carry a lot more responsibility on this worm. There are three keg locations around the map: Easy spawn, Medium spawn, Hard spawn.

Kegs will spawn randomly at one of these three locations every other minute. The goal is to run 20 kegs from these locations and place them on the giant arrow in front of the worm to trigger the burn phase.

TIPS & TRICKS:

- Make sure you do not pick up a keg until you are told to by the commander, stack and then run as a group
- If you lose your keg (falling in water, hit by spin/spit, or mobs) you will have a 20 second debuff where you can't pick up another
- Do not use any skills like blink, portal or other transport skills as it will cause you to lose your keg
- Hard/Medium spawns are mini jump puzzles. So if you can, practice a bit before the worm spawns
- When waiting at hard



spawn, wait in the water in case the worm spit lands on the platform

- It takes 20 kegs to trigger the burn phase and all kegs need to be dropped on the drop location (arrow)



While the overall concept seems simple, the execution of the mechanic can be difficult and a lot of issues can come into play when running kegs.

Veteran Wurm Heads will spawn around the map, and if focusing on kegs/keg runners, they can rapidly reduce the number of kegs dropped on the drop spot. Husks, if they are in the keg drop area, can destroy kegs with their launch attack.

Another thing to keep in mind is the hard/medium keg spawns can also be hard to run if players are not adept at doing jumping puzzles. Kegs can be lost by people falling into the water.

Also, the Wurm's aoe's can cover the keg drop point and land on the zerg so players need to be on their toes and dodging as needed to avoid losing their kegs.





Amber Wurm



While the mechanic is fairly straight forward, the Amber Wurm is by and far the most unforgiving if mistakes are made. Players will need to seek out and destroy a special Abomination to get the required buff to be eaten.

Once it dies, it will explode, but instead of dealing damage the explosion will provide the Wurm Attractant, or more commonly referred to as the “eat me” buff to all players in the *white* AOE circle. The buff allows players to be eaten by the Amber wurm and enter it’s stomach where they will grab harpoons, bust their way out & trigger the burn phase.

It’s very important that all players are listening to their commander and working as a solid unit. It takes 20 harpoon shots once players are spit out to trigger the burn phase.

MECHANIC BREAKDOWN:

- When directed to, players need to kill the abomination and get the “eat me” buff.



- Players then run to the red arrow in front of the Amber Wurm and stack. They will also need to drop stability and reflects if they have them to prevent husks & wurms from stripping them of the buff



- Make sure to set priority target on the Amber Wurm
- Once inside the wurm, players need to look for the skeleton and pick up the harpoon guns



- Turn 180 degrees and shoot at the valve to get the Wurm to regurgitate players



- Target the Amber Wurm and run close to it before firing your last harpoon shot. **DO NOT SHOOT YOUR HARPOON IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A CLEAR SHOT**

- It takes 20 shots to trigger the burn



- After the burn DO NOT attack the abomination. All players that were previously eaten will have a de-buff that lasts 30 seconds where they can't be swallowed again



- There is no in between state for a burn phase. It will either be a success or a fail

TIPS & TRICKS

- Stability & reflect skills will help when stacking to get eaten by the wurm
- Make sure not to hit husks unless on the condi team. The husk parasites will remove your "eat me" buff
- Make sure Amber is set as your priority target
- Once you are spit out, cast stability and run to a place where you can get a clear shot on the wurm with your harpoon
- Do not prematurely kill the abomination, wait for your commander's call





Phase 3 ~ Kill

Once all 3 of the worm's heads are decapitated, phase 3 will begin. This is the hardest part of the fight and it requires the most player skill. Players will only have **2 minutes** to DPS their worm head down while trying to avoid the Wurm's attacks and making sure they are stacking in the correct position, buffing, and dropping consumables. This part is a very frantic, fast paced, adrenaline filled fight.

During phase 3, the wurms have the following attacks:

- *Flippity-flop*: The worm will flail around on the ground, much like a fish out of water. While the move looks intimidating it does no real damage. This is the best time to get in there and dps the worm down
- *Leap*: The worm will leap high into the air and slam down into the ground, doing damage and knocking everyone back. Aegis and dodges are crucial to avoiding the knockback and losing dps

- *Charge*: The worm will randomly target someone, rear back and then perform a charge attack, launching itself forward. During the charge, the worm will leave a poison trail behind it which applies conditions and deals massive damage to anyone caught in it. Players need to be ready to dodge to the side when this happens

TIPS & TRICKS:

- Always make sure that you position yourself between a wall and the worm. The goal is to get the worm cornered on a wall to maximize dps
- Never run directly behind the worm head. After a charge attack the worm will leave a trail of poison
- Dodge, Dodge, Dodge, & DODGE! Dodging is your key to survival! Your commander and fellow players will be calling out dodges and you need to react immediately, especially if

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Maggie - Part 3

Herb "OldGoat" Townsend



It began at the Ashford Gate in the Black Citadel. Brightmane's casket was pulled by six black horses on a black caisson and the funeral procession stretched the entire length of the mustering ground. The casket was decorated with the hundreds of ribbons and medals presented to the Legionnaire during his service to the Blood Legion and the Vigil. The only sound was the marching of the legions, perfectly in step as they proceeded toward the Plaza of Remembrance.

Directly behind the wagon came Maggie and her parents, dressed in their Black ceremonial uniforms of the Vigil. Following them were three companies, one from each of the Legions. Slowly they marched at half step until they made the turn to the Memorial Quadrant. From

there the wagon made it's way to the entrance of the Plaza where it stopped. Six soldiers, three human and three charr, climbed down from the wagon and fell into place, three on each side.

On Captain Swift's command the six turned toward the casket. Reaching out, they lifted it and held it while the wagon was pulled away. In unison they turned toward the memorial and lifted the casket to their shoulders. Carrying it to the center of the plaza, then they lowered it onto a stand that had been placed there. The six then moved off to the side and stood at attention while the "family" filled the plaza.

The bleachers that had been put up for the audience were filled within moments. More onlookers stood throughout the Memorial Quadrant. A group of well guarded chairs had been placed behind the casket and were soon filled by high ranking charr officials. Five chairs remained empty. Maggie and her parents marched around the casket and filled three of them.

Maggie could see security personnel from the Vigil and the Seraph watching over the ceremony from many vantage points. In the crowd she could also see armed charr and humans. In the front row of the bleachers, she saw Terri and all

her friends.

Two Asuran's came onto the dais with microphones and cables to set up for the speeches. Shortly after, Queen Jennah entered escorted by Captain Logan and they made their way to the remaining two chairs. After they were seated, Almorra Soulkeeper stepped up to the microphones and began to speak.

"Today we say goodbye to a legend. For sixty years, Brightmane Bloodaxe has fought beside us. For forty five years he has put his life on the line to protect those in his warband. For forty five years we have heard the Norns sing his praises. For forty five years we have told his stories to our cubs. And we will continue to tell his story for generations.

"But today we have one final story left to tell. The story of how our brother died defending those he loved. The story of how he stood in the line of fire and continued fighting until long after he knew his wounds were fatal. The story of how he smiled at the end and gave a last bit of council to a sister in arms.

"Today we say goodbye to Brightmane Bloodaxe, we will never see your like again. Those of us here who have survived you will carry your memory into

battle with us. We will strive to hold ourselves to your example of courage, determination, and caring.

“Good-bye, brother.”

With that, she stepped away from the microphones.

As the applause died down, Queen Jennah stood and put her hand on the casket as she walked by to the stand. Turning towards the crowd, she waited a long moment before she began to speak.

“The first time I saw Brightmane Bloodaxe was when I was a child. It was the first time I was allowed to be part of an official ceremony. Young Brightmane’s warband had won a competition and was being presented the trophy by my father, the King. He was young and very sure of himself. When I stood, I was so nervous I started to stumble, but he caught me.

“When the ceremony was over, I wanted to thank him and asked my father if I could invite him to dinner. My father thought about it and said, ‘Invite them all.’ As the dinner progressed, Brightmane and I had a wonderful time. I didn’t feel left out like I usually did with the adults.

“When the dinner was over, and he had to leave. He turned to me, kneeled on one knee and said, ‘If you ever need help, you can call on me.’”

The queen dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief and

continued, “I have called upon my friend Brightmane Bloodaxe countless times over the years, and he has always come to assist me, now he won’t. We are all one less because he is gone.”

She managed to retain her poise as she turned back to her chair, so only those closest to her saw the tears streaming down her cheeks.

Then it was Maggie’s turn. She had been asked by her warband to speak for them.

“I was a typical rebellious human teenager when I met Brightmane. He had been asked by my father to smooth out my rough edges. After a few days of countless questions and exercises, I was afraid I would fail with him the same way I had failed with all my teachers and tutors. I decided I didn’t need anybody to teach me anything. I was going to fail anyway.

“The last night after the testing, we had all gone to the tavern across the way and I had drunk just enough. I stood to leave and told him, ‘I don’t want to be in your stupid warband.’”

“Why not cub?”

“Because I’m smarter than you and I always will be,’ I flippantly told him. ‘I understand your parents may have misled you by telling you how smart you were, growing up. But the truth is...’

“I slammed my beer stein on the table and stood glaring at the Charr Warrior who was supposed to be judging me.

Suddenly, my legs went out from under me as he used his cane to pull my ankles to him, and I fell right on my rump. The beer stein covered me with beer when it was knocked off the table.

“The laughter resounded throughout the tavern. Except for Brightmane. He sat quietly watching me. I sat there soggy with beer glaring back at him.

“‘What are your choices, now?’ he asked me.

“‘I can sit here and whine or I can get up and get another beer.’ I snarled back at him.

“‘Get me one too, and clean yourself up, you look like a damned Flame Legion reject.’

“He helped me to my feet and silenced the room with a glare, ‘She hasn’t got the social skills down yet, but she’s one of mine. Don’t think she can’t take on any three of you right now and gut you.’

“And that was how Brightmane had announced that I had become one of his Warband. He pushed me beyond what I thought were my limits. He praised my efforts and ridiculed my excuses. I am going to miss you, you old wildcat.”

She then drew the dagger from her skirt and held it above her head, “I swear to you my brother, I will spill blood to avenge you.”

She pulled the blade across her palm, and as the blood dripped on the casket, she spoke in perfect Charr, “My blood for

yours. I will send your enemy to you in the mists.”

The silence was deafening, but lasted only a moment. It started with one staff way back in the crowd rhythmically pounding on the concrete and steel. Another joined it, then another. Feet began to stomp. Hammers began to tap. Louder and louder it became until the entire city was filled with the sound.

Suddenly the crowd began to move. In unison they moved to the north and formed a line. One by one, the legions all passed by the casket. One by one, the legionnaires each drew a dagger and sliced their skin enough to draw blood. They then dripped that blood onto the casket and pledged vengeance for their brother. One by one, they walked by Maggie and saluted her.

Finally, when they had all paid their respects and had returned to their formation. Maggie stepped back up to the microphone and began to sing. She reached into the depths of her sorrow to the ache in her heart and her words resonated throughout The Black Citadel. Her song told of the final homecoming of a hero, of the broken hearts of all who loved him, and of the emptiness that remained.

As the song ended, Maggie turned from the microphone and walked into the shadows. No one noticed her disappear. No one noticed the Queen or Maggie’s family disappear either. What everyone did notice was the

disappearance of the casket. A sudden flash of light, the sound of thunder, and the dais was empty. The funeral was over. The legions began to march back out the way they came in and the onlookers dispersed.

Maggie exited the portal right next to the wagon, which had been brought by Mellen and Harry. The Queen and Logan were next, then Maggie’s family. Bones and Electra were in the wagon with the pets. Berry was climbing in to join them.

“I’ll take everyone home,” said Mellen. “Then we’ll deliver Brightmane to the crematorium.”

At that moment, a messenger came running up and stood in front of Logan and saluted. Logan took the message from him, opened it, read it quickly then handed it to the Queen. She read it and gestured for Maggie to join them. They walked away from the group.

“Our garrison is under attack. Commander Foghladha has requested reinforcements,” the Queen told Maggie.

“Is it Serentine?” Maggie asked.

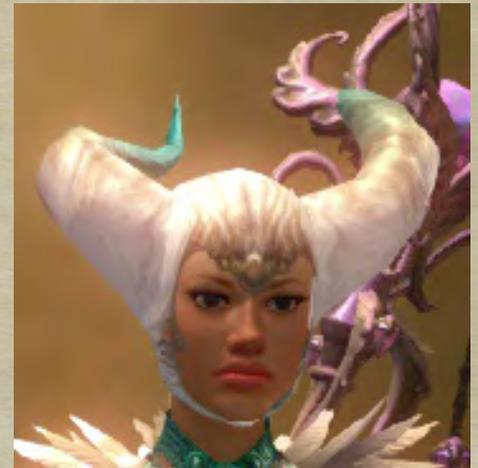
“I believe it is. Maggie if you need anything, contact Logan.”

“Thank you your majesty. I believe we are going to need all the Orders for this battle.” Maggie said.

Mellen spoke quickly, “I’ll have everyone ready.”

As they watched her ride off,

they heard the Queen tell Logan, “Contact the Orders, we need them to join the Commander at the Garrison. Make Haste!”



Later that evening, Terri stood at the Statue of Dwayna, waiting in the shadows. It was very late and just before she was ready to give up and go back home, a quiet, woman’s voice said, “By the back of the bank, not down the tunnel.”

Terri moved directly to the spot indicated, followed by the shadowy figure of a Shrouded Necromancer. Once they were together beside the bank, the shroud disappeared and a beautiful girl in a dark blue gown took its place.

“Kooshie,” Terri whispered, “we need to talk.”

“That’s what your message said. Talk about what?”

“I’m leaving the order.”

“You can’t leave the order. I was just told to promote you to Senior Field Agent! You get to call your own shots, pick the jobs from a list, and finish them

however you see fit.”

Realizing that their voices could be heard, Terri motioned for Kooshie to follow her. Heading down the street, she soon found another secluded spot and they continued their conversation.

Terri couldn't believe it, “What do you mean I'm being promoted? Why? I haven't even been active for the last year.”

Kooshie looked Terri right in the eye and said, “Because you're close to Maggie. The Order sees her as one of our most valuable assets and you're already in place to handle her.”

“I'm not going to 'handle her' for anybody. I'm leaving the order.”

“She needs to be protected.”

Terri looked at her in disbelief, “Protected from what?”

“You mean who. Serentine for one and Palawa Joko for another. As a field agent you'll be able to call for assistance at any time.”

“How do I get the list of jobs?”

“Here.” Kooshie handed her a folded sheet of paper.

Terri unfolded it and began to read.

TO: Agent Elemen
Terri Watson (Lynn)

From: R. Darkwater

Terri,

I hope you'll accept our offer. In spite of your recent inactivity, your previous record is exemplary. Agent Kooshie will be your contact. Below is a list of the jobs we presently would like you to consider.

We will expect you to complete these jobs in whatever manner you feel will best achieve the objective. Any assistance or resources you require will be provided through your contact.

I am confident we have made the right choice.

Riel Darkwater

Protect and Assist Maggatha Lynn in her efforts to find Serentine and avert war with Palawa Joko..

“There's only one assignment listed.” Terri frowned. “This feels like a setup.”

“Of course it is. No one else can stay close enough.” Kooshie smiled.

“All right, I'll do it. What happens if Maggie finds out?”

“It's right here, 'whatever manner which you feel will best achieve the objective' is my favorite line.”

“So, I can tell her when

and if I choose to.”

Terri circled the number 1 and signed the letter before returning it to Kooshie. They hugged before leaving in separate directions. Neither of them noticed the glint from something shiny on the roof of The Plaza of Dwayna as they rushed away.

Commander Foghladha (affectionately known to his



troops as Fog) was a really good officer, and once an officer gets that good they usually get a Staff Assignment (desk duty). Sometimes his meetings lasted late in the day and this evening he was still in his weekly briefing with his Supply Sergeant when a messenger came running into the room.

“Sir, I think we're about to be attacked. A large army has been spotted six miles south of here and they are moving quickly.” the messenger blurted out.

“Meeting adjourned, to your posts.” Fog barked as he stood and left the room.

Rushing down the hallway to

one of the entrances, he opened the door and listened to the preparations being made for the upcoming battle mixed with the sounds of civilians streaming into the Garrison.

“Crank up the Siege Weapons” he shouted, running up the stairs to see for himself. “Second Squad, man the south side mortars and cannons. Third Squad West, Fourth Squad East. Get on the horn to Vigil HQ and notify the other Orders while you’re at it. This looks like a big one.”

As he looked south, he could see the the invaders coming. The largest army that he had ever seen slowly marching towards the garrison. Taking a deep breath, he shouted more orders and called for movement of some of the siege weapons.

He called for the reloaders to be doubled on each weapon. Suddenly the oncoming army stopped. The sergeant in charge of the nearest catapult came over to the Commander.

“Sir, they’re just out of range of our longest weapons. We can’t do any damage from here.”

“Sergeant, you just keep them ready and able. We’ll have to see what they’re going to do,” Fog replied.

As he stood on the rampart watching the army below, he heard a familiar voice down below. “I need to speak to Commander Foghladha. It is beyond urgent.”

“Ma’am, the Commander has his hands full right now. There’s an army at our gates.”

“That’s what I came to talk to him about. Now get him or take me to him. Immediately. That’s an order!”

“Yes, ma’am, right this way.” He started up the stairs with her following.

Commander Foghladha shouted down, “Is that Maggie Lynn I hear ordering my adjutant around?”

Smiling, the redhead answered him, “Yes Sir, it is, and I come with some important news.”

Fog jumped off the wall and landed in front of her, “And what kind of news do you have for me?”

Maggie stuck her hand out and gave the commander the secret Gaiscioch handshake to let him know she had to speak to him privately.

He understood and took her by the arm and guided her to his office. As they walked in, he shooed everyone out and closed the door.

“So, what’s going on?” He asked pointedly.

“That army you’ve got staring at you? Their leader is Serentine. I’m going to bring him in, dead or alive. We need you to keep his army occupied while I lure him away.”

“Hmm, have you seen the size of their force?”

“Yes, I took a roundabout way to get here. The good news is that at least two thirds of what you can see are clones or minions. Once I take Serentine out, we’re betting they’ll disappear.”

“All right then, let me get Gaiscioch rallied together for this fight. I’m not sure how long we can hold them.”

“I understand,” Maggie said, then added, “It’s going to take us until tomorrow morning to get everyone here. That should give the Legions time to arrive as well.”

As they discussed strategy, a single rider approached from the invading army. He carried a white banner. When he reached the Bauer’s Estate, he thrust it into the ground and sat staring up at the walls.

A knock came at the office door. Fog walked to the door and opened it. A corporal reported “Sir, there is a messenger from the invading army. He’s waiting at the Bauer’s Estate. What are your orders?”

Commander Foghladha ordered horses be brought and he left the Garrison with Maggie right behind him. Arriving together at the Estate, they sat on their horses and waited for the rider to speak.

He stared at them for an extended time. When he began to speak, it sounded as if he was being controlled in some way. His words came out jerky and sounded mechanical.

"I am here to give you the conditions for your surrender to Palawa Joko's army. You will turn over the imposer Queen to Commander Serentine. You will end all treaties with the Charr. You will submit to the rule of Palawa Joko immediately. You have until first light to fulfill these conditions or your entire army will be destroyed on our way to Divinity's Reach."

With that the rider turned and raced back to the south. Watching him ride away, Fog motioned for Maggie to follow him to the top of the hill. Looking south they could see the vast army spread out in every direction.

Cold chills slid down Fog's spine as he said, "We'll hold them as long as we can. Is there anything else you need?"

"No, thank you. I'll make contact with the Priory, Trahearne, and the Legions and I will return before first light. We will be victorious sir, I promise you that."

As she rode away, the commander watched her. He couldn't help but marvel at her confidence. A spark of that mettle took hold of him as he rode back to the Garrison, giving him an idea.

He spent the rest of the day preparing an offensive strategy. He wasn't going to wait for the battle. He was going to begin it.



"I don't know what to say." Frieda Lamented. "She is obviously in great pain, and I can't do anything about it."

Her husband, Willem put his arm around her and said quietly, "Welcome to the club. I've known her since she was born and I have never known what to say when she's like this."

"What did Brightmane do?"

"He always took her hunting."

"Then, maybe that's what you should do. Take her hunting. Willem, she needs to get this out of her system. This hatred will eat at her."

"No, maybe YOU should take her hunting?"

In that moment, he saw the glimmer of understanding in her eyes and he remembered once again why he never found another lover. She was his one and only and no one ever came close to making him feel the way she did. He stood, pulled her to her feet and kissed her.

"You always know the right thing to do to help me," she whispered.

A moment later the door to the

den opened and Berry poked her head in, "Have you seen Terri? It's getting late and Maggie's worried."

"We'll help you find her, I'm sure she's around here somewhere." Frieda answered.

With that, the couple went outside and moved toward the garden to look. Before they could get the gate open, they both saw Terri walking back down the road from Divinity's Reach. As she neared the white picket fence they could see a very serious frown on her face. She opened the gate and saw them.

"Hi," she said quietly. "Is Maggie home?"

"Yes, and she's worried." Frieda replied. "There's something wrong, isn't there?"

"Is it that obvious?"

Willem stated simply, "Yes, it's that obvious. I promise, we won't spill our guts to Maggie."

"I just have something I need to tell her and, well, it's complicated."

"Spit it out then, you should know by now that we're family here. No excuses." Willem smiled.

Looking at Frieda, Terri blurted out, "I'm in the Order of Whispers."

Willem stifled a laugh, "Maggie already knows that."

"I never told her, she's Vigil not Order, how would she know?"

"Sweetheart, will you come

stand between us a moment?” he asked Frieda. “I’m not sure how Terri is going to react.”

Turning to Terri he explained, “I did a background check. I had you investigated when Maggie was considering her proposal. I’m a nosey father-in-law.”

The load had obviously been lifted as Terri stood on her tiptoes and hugged her father in law. She then turned to Frieda and hugged her.

“Thank you. It will be much easier now.” she smiled.

They walked up the stairs and sat on the porch swing to enjoy the evening. As they chatted away about nothing and everything, the door opened and Maggie stepped out to join them. She had a tray full of drinks and passed them out before she sat next to Terri. As they continued talking, the moon began to rise above Lake Delavan.

When the moon was at it’s highest point, Maggie stood and said, “It’s time to get ready. We leave in two hours for the Garrison.”

The scramble began immediately. The wagon, having been loaded already was brought out front. Mellen and Harry were on the front seat. Maggie and her parents joined Berry and Terri in the back. They would pick up Bones and Electra at the Asura Gate in Divinity’s Reach.

As the wagon began the journey, Maggie briefed everyone on the plan and gave each of

them their own instructions. They would join Commander Foghladha at the Garrison. Once there, Maggie and the two mesmers, Berry and Frieda would work together to separate Serentine from his army. Once they had him away from the rest, Maggie would attack. Once she struck, the rest would reinforce her attack in a coordinated effort to end the fight quickly. They all knew that the longer it took, the stronger he would become. They also knew that should they fail, Foghladha’s army wouldn’t stand a chance.

Willem watched his daughter and saw the clenched jaw and steel in her eyes. He was not a betting man, but he was willing in that moment to bet everything, including his own life on his daughter. He took Frieda’s hand and could see she too was measuring their daughter’s resolve. She reached across and took Maggie’s hand as well. Eye to eye, mother and daughter stared for just a moment. Then Maggie went back to sharpening her axes. Precious lay next to her on a cushion, seeming oblivious to the danger that threatened them all.



Shortly after midnight, Ziegen was the first agent from the Order of Whispers to arrive at the Garrison. He was alone except for the carrier griffins in his wagon. As the workers unloaded ammunition and weapons, he went searching for the Commander to report in. Climbing the stairs to the battlements, he could see the army they were facing. Turning around, he could also see what looked like marching torches coming down from the north.

“Those are the Charr Legions. Over to the east you can see the Vigil with the Priory is right behind them. You’re with the Order of Whispers, I believe?” the commander asked him.

Ziegen went right to business, “Yessir, reporting in. I’ve brought some supplies. I’ll be moving out shortly to reconnoiter the enemy. I need you to connect with these griffins so they’ll come directly to you when I send reports.”

Foghladha followed him to the wagon and placed both hands on the cage filled with griffins. They jumped and licked his hands through the mesh and then settled down. The men then walked silently to the commander’s office to discuss strategy.

Once inside, Ziegen asked directly, “I know you’re planning on attacking before first light. Where should I look for weakness first?”

“It would be helpful if you could point out the real enemy as opposed to the phantasmal enemies. We need to hit the live targets and not waste time on shadows.”

“I will make that a priority. You should hear from me within an hour, sir.”

Placing his hand on Ziegen’s shoulder, Foghladha said simply, “Stay alive. We’ll need everyone for this fight.”

They left the office and Foghladha returned to barking preparation orders. Ziegen stopped at his wagon and removed two griffins from the cage. Placing them carefully into his pack, he whispered quietly to each of them and they fell asleep. Taking his staff, he silently left the garrison and slinked into the shadows to the south.

He worked his way through the underbrush until he had a clear view of the enemy. Travelling east and west he surveyed the line and found a number of weak spots. Travelling back away from danger, he quietly whispered to the first griffin and sent it on its way. As he watched it disappear into the darkness, he heard a single twig snap behind him. Turning quickly he took a blow and everything went black.

The griffin made its way directly to the Commander’s office and flew in as an orderly opened the door. Landing on the desk, the griffin began to dance. Fog whispered into its ear and

put its mouth up to his own ear.

“The east side of the line is made up of mostly phantasms and a few mesmers. It is by far the weakest. I will send another message after I find a suitable lookout position.”

Fog went to the door, opened it and shouted, “Mission briefing, five minutes.”

He then went back to his window to stare at the daunting task ahead.



The sky in the east had just begun to lighten as the wagon crossed into the Citadel from Lion’s Arch. Directly behind them was another wagon, driven by a young woman. Maggie sat up, stretched and looked out the back.

“I know that girl.” she stated. “That’s Ziegen’s daughter, Tonia. Mellen, stop.”

She didn’t wait for the wagon to stop, she jumped out the back and waved down the horses pulling the girl’s wagon. Calming the horse, Maggie smiled at the

girl and said, “Hello Tonia, is your father with you?”

“No, actually he’s missing. He was supposed to send us a message last night, but we didn’t get it, so now we’re going to go find him.”

“Is your mother with you?” Maggie’s suspicion began to grow.

“She left before we did. I know she told us to stay, but if they’re in danger, we can help.”

“I don’t think they would want you to put yourselves in danger.” Terri piped in.

“Parent’s don’t always know what’s best. They need our help.”

Terri whispered to Maggie, “Let me talk to her.”

Maggie nodded and Terri stepped closer to the girl’s wagon.

“You aren’t going to change my mind,” Tonia firmly said as she crossed her arms.

“I wasn’t going to try, I am going to give you an order. Because as an acolyte you must obey an officer. Your order is to get these children to the hospital tent where they can help with the wounded. If your parents come that way, they can notify you. Then you are to report to Commander Foghladha at the Garrison. Is that clear?”

“Yes ma’am,” Tonia replied respectfully. “I will take the children to the hospital tent, and then I will report to Commander Foghladha.”

“Very good, carry on.” Terri smiled at the young woman. “You’re going to be a fine addition to our order.”

“Thank you ma’am,” The young woman said, “I will always do my best.”

With that, she snapped the reins and passed Mellen and the others who had gathered to watch. Maggie and her party climbed back into their wagon and continued to the battle. Soon they came to the north gate of the Garrison. It stood open, a company of troops on either side to deter any enemy activity. Wagons streamed through with ammunition, supplies, and soldiers prepared for war.

A single Charr Legionnaire stood at the gate mechanism, Maggie recognized him as a member of her warband. She waved at him and he snapped to salute. The two companies on the ground, upon seeing his reaction, snapped to salute as well. Shaking her head, Maggie saluted back.

As her wagon passed through and made the turn to the south entrance, the Charr shouted, “If you need someone to cover your back Maggie, I’ll be glad to.”

“You’ve always got my back covered. Congratulations on your promotion.”

“You as well, Primus Centurion Maggie.”

Turning to her father with a puzzled look, Maggie said, “When did I get promoted in the

Legion? And what do I do now that I outrank myself? I’m only a lieutenant in the Vigil.”

Mellen slowed the wagon to a halt. Two soldiers began taking the horses to be brushed and stabled. Maggie and her party exited the wagon and entered the courtyard. Small groups of soldiers were scurrying about preparing for the attack. Almorra Soulkeeper was conferring with Commander Foghladha and his officers. When she saw Maggie, she waved to her over to join them.

Maggie and her father joined the group. Almorra turned to Maggie and said, “I see you got your warband drunk again. They’ve promoted you to Primus Centurion. I hereby grant you a field promotion to Captain of the Vigil. Congratulations Captian, now I need you to give us your plan, so we can start this attack.”

“It’s simple, my mother, Berry and I are going to the ruins. We will draw Serentine in, then Berry and my mother are going to portal us both down below into the catacombs. I will kill him, his phantasms will disappear, and you will defeat the rest.”

“He’s got Ziegen.” Foghladha interjected. “We don’t know where or in what condition he is in, but he hasn’t returned and his last message said that the east is mostly phantasms.”

“That means Serentine is on the East side of the line,” Willem thought out loud.

“Then that’s where they’ve taken Ziegen.” Maggie blurted, “That’s where we’ll draw him from. We’ll get set up in the Askalion Hills.”

“Sounds like you know what needs to be done. Let’s go. I will start the attack once you’re in position.” Foghladha was ready for the talking to end and the action to begin.

“Start it now Commander. It will provide us cover.”

“Done!” he replied, then shouted, “To arms!”

Frieda stepped up to Willem and seeing the look in his eyes said, “I know, me too.” She embraced and kissed him. Then turned to the others and said, “I’m getting a hot bath after this.”

They left by the northern gate and immediately turned right to head to Askalion. Staying away from the road, they remained hidden and took a longer path. They could hear the battle raging as the sun began to rise. When they reached higher ground, they carefully looked to see how the battle was going.

It appeared that Foghladha had ordered a third of his troops to attack the enemy’s left flank and the rest of his soldiers were fighting in the center. The enemy had moved both ends of the line to the north and that meant Maggie and the others were now behind enemy lines. It was time for them to initiate their plan of distraction.

They began by charging up the hill screaming, then they turned east and ran until they reached Askalion Hills.

The gate had been deserted when it had been overrun by the invading army the night before. It seemed empty as they reached the top of the stairs. When they reached the Northwest entrance they heard shouting and it sounded far away. Frieda knelt down on the step and placed her ear to the stone.

"It's coming from under here, there is someone in the catacombs," she told the others.

Standing back up she climbed past the top step to the gate and began to mutter a spell. Berry caught on right away and joined her. Terri and Maggie came and stood before them questioningly, when the ground seemed to fall out from underneath their feet. They came to rest gently on the floor of a very dark place.

A spark emerged from Terri's hand and with it's light Berry was able to spot a doorway. Opening the door revealed a room and Ziegen, his back against the wall, holding a chair between himself and two of Serentine's men. He was bleeding from the forehead, but the two separatists were bleeding from many more places.

Without a word, Maggie jumped through the doorway and tackled the one closest to her. Berry mumbled and waved her hand and a protective bubble

wrapped around Ziegen. Frieda and Terri joined in the fray and the men were finished in moments.

"I owe you for my life." Ziegen whispered just before falling unconscious.

Terri said, "He needs a doctor."

"Yes, but we don't have time to take him back right now," Maggie replied.

Berry spoke next, "I can get him back for medical attention. Frieda can do the portal without me and Terri can help you both fight him. I can use my phantasms to help carry him to the hospital where his children are."

"We don't know where his wife is" Terri stated.

As if on cue a moan was heard from the other side of the room. Walking over to the wall, Terri saw another door and she could hear that the moaning was coming from inside. She looked at Maggie, who simply pulled out her bow, notched an arrow, pulled the string back and nodded her head.

Opening the door, she found it was a closet with a solitary female curled up on the floor. Reaching down, she gently rolled her over, the woman's eyes opened wide in fear. Terri calmed her with, "It's okay the bad man are gone now. We're here and we're going to get you to safety."

"Ziegen?" the woman moaned.

"He's is injured and we need

to get you both to a hospital." Frieda said.

"How bad is it?"

"He's been wounded. When we got here he was fighting off both men with a chair."

"Yes, he managed to free himself while they interrogated me and he went after them."

Maggie asked, "Are there any more guards?"

"There were three, my husband killed one before I was captured and the other two are over there," Mrs. Ziegen replied.

Berry and Frieda began mumbling again and soon they were all back outside. Berry then activated a handful of phantasms and ordered them to carry Ziegen and follow her. She and Mrs Ziegen left quickly with a wave to the others.

Maggie and Terri moved closer to the battle to see if they could see Serentine. He found them instead, out of nowhere he appeared behind them. Maggie, sensing danger pushed Terri out of the way and rolled back with her axes flashing. Serentine easily dodged her attack and she started to run back to the stairs. The mesmer followed and Terri stayed behind him.

Maggie quickly went up the steps, taking two at a time, moving towards where she could hear her mother mumbling. Serentine stopped once and turned toward Terri, but Terri dodged right by him and joined

Maggie at the top of the stairs. Serentine followed and suddenly they all found themselves inside the catacomb.



Commander Foghladha had caught Serentine's army by surprise. He attacked the left flank first to draw Serentine in closer and give the women a better chance to get in position. Then he sent the Charr and the Priory troops to the center of the fight and hit them just hard enough to stun them, all the while they were pulling the enemy back and into catapult range. Serentine's troops fell for it.

As soon as they were in range, the catapults opened up and the Charr and Priory fighters pushed through the enemy line, then turned around and forced the Separatists closer to the Garrison.

Effectively trapped, they soon found themselves outnumbered, outfought, with nowhere to go, but still they wouldn't give up.

Foghladha waited until just the right moment, then called for Gaiscioch to mount up and head west. They attacked with

speed and force and soon had the entire enemy army on the run toward the estate where they were met with a company of Norn rangers. The fight lasted for hours. Rangers picked their targets well. Warriors drove directly up the middle. Casters stood high on the ruins.

Eventually, the survivors threw down their weapons and begged for their lives. Commander Foghladha called Captain Swift to take control of the prisoners and arrange for their shipment to Vigil prisons. This left the phantasmal army to the east.

After a quick regroup, the Commander had the bugle sound the rally. Everyone picked up and began to form into battle lines.

Charging directly into battle, the Gaiscioch, the Vigil, the Priory, and the Order of Whispers exploded with action. Over and over again, phantasms would disappear as they were being destroyed by the pact.

After a while, Foghladha noticed something was wrong. Serentine's phantasmal army was standing still, staring vacantly.

Then for a few moments, they all jerked into motion and took a few steps, raised their weapons, and then wilted again in place, staring into space.

Colonel Lynn rode up to the commander and said, "Looks like the women have his attention,

perhaps there is something else we can do to help them?"

Smiling, Commander Foghladha barked a command, "Ready."

Exhausted arms snapped weapons into ready position.

"Two columns, left and right. Hold position until I give the order."

Two columns separated and took their positions on either side of the phantasms, which had started moving again.

"LEAVE NONE STANDING, CHARGE!"

Foghladha was the first to strike. Using his greatsword he bounced a clone weapon that struck the nearest three phantasms. Each of them jerked when hit, but continued to stand still.

He thrust his greatsword into the ground and watched the three he had previously struck disappear. Two others jerked as if hit and then continued to stand still.

The rest of his troops waded in and began the task of cutting the rest down. Every so often, they would run into a group that was able to fight back and it would last a few minutes, but they gradually worked their way through the enemy.

Suddenly, the battlefield exploded into a major fight. Every phantasm seemed to come alive and began to fight back in earnest.



Frieda jumped in and blocked Serentine's attempt to create a portal to escape. He directed his own attack toward her with his staff. She felt the beam strike her picking her up and throwing against the wall, but Terri quickly cast an armor spell on her that deflected his next attack. Maggie drew her bow and fired three arrows directly at him while Terri imprisoned him with wind.

Frieda got to her feet, holding the spell on Serentine by sheer force of will. Maggie and Terri could both see she was losing energy quickly. Maggie pulled her axes and dove directly at Serentine who seemed distracted and she was able to strike him multiple times, when he staggered, Terri dropped an avalanche of stone on him and he went down.

His attention shifted back to the fight and he drove all of them back into the wall with push from his greatsword. Maggie shrugged off his attack and

dove directly at him, once again striking multiple blows. Terri recovered and surrounded him with a wall of flame, and Frieda not to be outdone sent in her phantasms in to apply stacks of torment.

Suddenly he change tactics. Putting away his greatsword, he enclosed himself in a protective bubble, that try as they might, their attacks couldn't get through it. As they watched, they could see that his eyes were closed and his lips were moving.

Maggie switched back to her bow and tried to set fire to the air around him, but the bubble reflected her shots back at her. Frieda mumbled incantation after incantation, to no avail. Terri struck him with everything she had, then conjured up a flaming sword which seemed to jar him for a moment. But Serentine continued to mutter and stare straight ahead.

Frieda shouted, "We need to all hit him at the same time. I will throw my sword, Terri use your lightning, and Maggie hit him hard with those axes. On three. One. Two. Three."

The three women attacked at the exact same moment. For just a second their adversary seemed oblivious, but he fell to the floor clutching his head. Frieda and Terri kept up the attack as Maggie continued to pound on him with her axes. Serentine waved his left hand and Maggie flew out of range striking the wall and crumpled

in the corner. Terri was the next to be driven back and she found herself unable to move just a few feet from Maggie. Frieda countered his sweep with one of her own and the room began to glow with energy.

Suddenly, Serentine cursed and dodged out of his circle. Maggie was able to get to her feet in time to trip him as he tried to escape through the door and Terri dropped a pile of rocks on him from above. Frieda sensed another mesmer coming within range, her own power was waning so she could only hope it was Berry.

The room began to glow and it became extremely difficult to breathe. Serentine was trying to suck the air out of their underground battlefield. Terri's fiery sword was almost instantly snuffed out so she quickly conjured her ice bow to use instead. Her first shot struck the mesmer in the chest. She then sent a volley of frozen arrows at him, each hit caused him to weaken.

Suddenly, he stood up and turned his full attention toward the fight at hand. His eyes filled with golden fire as he stared directly at Frieda. Muttering under his breath, he raised his hands and suddenly they contained a greatsword. Pointing it at Maggie's mother, he forced her backwards into the opposite corner. She struggled to free herself but the harder she struggled, the weaker she became

until she fell unconscious.

Terri threw a circle around him and filled it with a static field. He immediately conjured phantasms and clones. With a single shout he drove them toward Terri and snapping his fingers they exploded. Terri became confused and began to run away. Serentine then threw his greatsword at her. Hitting her, it bounced and hit Maggie, hurting them both. He then directed an illusionary wave that drove her fully into the wall where she slid unmoving to the floor.

Maggie rolled behind him and jumped directly upon his back, he slammed her back into a wall and she seemed stunned. He stood surveying the three women and began to laugh. Maggie not completely finished, picked up a rock and threw it right at the Mesmer. When it hit him in the forehead, he reeled and began to fall. At that moment, the wall behind him crumbled.



The fighting on the battlefield lasted until every phantasm was spent and every fighter was exhausted. Foghladha allowed everyone to catch their breath

then announced, “Don’t get too comfortable, we’re not finished. We’ve got to find Maggie Lynn.”

A young captain rode up, “Sir, I’m Captain Swift and I think I know where she is.”

“Captain, where is my daughter?” queried Colonel Lynn.

“We found Berry helping get Ziegen and his wife to the hospital, and I sent men to help get them there safely. She told me the locations and Sir, they’re under the mound at the top of the stairs.”

“How do we get in?” asked Harry, who had just arrived.

“We dig if we have to. Shovels to the front,” shouted the Commander.

A group of soldiers began to climb the stairs. Foghladha stood on top and closed his eyes for a moment. Then he said, “Not here, it’s blocked, we need to move south a bit.”

He walked south, coming to rest on a spot surrounded by trees, “Here,” he shouted, “Dig here!”

The first soldiers to arrive belonged to Maggie’s Iron Legion Warband. They didn’t have shovels, but they soon had their uniforms off and were digging on all fours in a perfect circle.

Deeper and deeper they went until they found solid stone. The Priors took over at that point and began to demolish the wall

that had been uncovered. Three Asurans and a Sylvari set up explosive charges and once they scrambled out, Mellen pushed the button.

The explosion was rather anticlimactic and sounded more like a dud. But that wall had been breached and they could see another wall ahead.

The Order of Whispers then took the stage and sent in their keenest eyes, ears, and noses to find out which way they should go next. It was soon determined that there was a tunnel leading in the proper direction.

Foghladha sent his best Vigil troops into the tunnel to clear any booby traps. They found several and it took a few minutes to remove them, but once the hall was cleared, Mellen, Harry, Bones, Electra, and Colonel Lynn all rushed to the end. Mellen and Bones planted six more charges and waved to the Commander.

Foghladha gave the order and the tunnel was once again emptied. Mellen pushed the button. Dust and dirt came boiling out of the hole and as soon as the air began to clear, everyone rushed down the tunnel. Somehow, Commander Foghladha was the first to push through the wall.

The wall collapsing was enough of a distraction to allow Maggie to get to her feet and make a leaping attack with her axes. Serentine dodged at the

last moment and turned his attention on the unconscious Frieda. Maggie dived between them and with one final flurry of blows drove him down to the floor. His greatsword slammed back at her, but she stayed the course, growing weaker and weaker, but continuing to drive him down. Until finally, she reached for her ceremonial dagger and plunged it deep into his chest. He gasped his last breath and lay dead at her feet. But the damage he had done had taken its toll, Maggie fell on to his body and lost consciousness.

Harry, Bones, Electra, Mellen, and Captain Swift all burst into the room to find their friends unconscious. Precious and Simon darted in immediately to find Frieda and Terri. The warmth of the pets bodies along with Mellen's healing soon had the women awake.

Maggie was more difficult to revive as she was barely breathing. Captain Swift barked an order and four men came and moved her away from her vanquished foe. Bones rushed in and immediately opened his Tome of Courage. Muttering and slowly moving his hands above her prone form, he began the task of reviving her.

When Mellen finished with the others, he joined the Guardian. He called to Precious, who came and lay beside Maggie, purring loudly. Then Mellen conjured a well of blood, slowly a slight change could be seen in the color

of Maggie's cheeks. It seemed like hours, but eventually her chest began to rise and fall more normally, and a while later she woke up to find herself surrounded by her family and friends.



A few days later they were almost fully healed and the women were finally ready to go home. As they gathered their things, Maggie heard a familiar voice behind her saying, "I think you girls need a bath."

Smiling, Maggie turned to find Captain Erica Hartmann, "Sounds great, do you know anyone who can get us to some tubs?"

"I just so happen to know of a whole airship and it's crew who would fly through walls of fire to be at your service." Erica smiled back.

The four women walked out of the hospital and over to where Captain Swift was briefing Colonel Lynn and Commander

Foghladha on the dismantling of the hospital. Maggie and Frieda both put their arms around the Colonel and Terri was holding Maggie's hand.

Colonel Lynn asked, "You girls all better now?"

"We will be, for now we're off to take a bath." Frieda replied, "We'll meet you back in Shaemoor in a couple of days. Berry, Electra, come join us!"

The men just looked at each other puzzled by the conversation.

Colonel Lynn mused out loud, "I think my life has just changed again. For the better, Thank you Commander, and Captain. I owe you both for the lives of my wife and daughter."

Foghladha smiled at the Colonel and said simply, "No thanks required, that's just what families do."





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The Goat Rescue by Mistocracy

By: Herb "OldGoat" Townsend

The two Ancients stood guard over the cabin and the sapling growing in the yard. The Old Goat grazed, as he always did around the house. The grass was sweet and the elders within would feed him corn and other delectable grains on occasion. The dogs would bark, but rearing his head would usually silence them.

As he grazed, the air around him began to waver and suddenly he was buried, face down in snow.

His head was stuck and he wasn't able to pull himself back to his feet. After careful deliberation, he realized his horns had become fused with the stones. He had been portaled into stone. He was trapped, and he would die here.

As the Old Goat realized he was dying, he got the attention of a single Asuran Mesmer, Mistocracy. Turning, she caught his last feeble struggle. He began to lose consciousness. Quickly she muttered an incantation and

waved her hands. The Old Goat was suddenly free and could breathe. He jumped and danced for joy.

Looking over at the Asuran, he said, "*Thaaaaank You. You saaaaaaved my liiife.*" Mistocracy just bowed and smiled. "*You're welcome.*" The two remained friends and had many adventures in their long happy lives.



Mad Mardine's Cattlepult Riot Event has begun!



The Elder Scrolls

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The Elder Scrolls

— O N L I N E —

↔ TAMRIEL UNLIMITED ↔

ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE IN REVIEW AND A LOOK AHEAD

By: Althea “Briseadh” Damgaard

A lot has changed in the Elder Scrolls Online (ESO) since the beginning of the year, with plenty more changes to come. Some of what I cover here is already available in the live game. My goal is to sum up what changed this year with the 1.6 Update and Zenimax changing the payment plan with Tamriel Unlimited. From there, I will explain what to expect with the next update.

1.6 Mount and Collectible Changes

Before the 1.6 update we had specialized horses for speed, food and stamina, and then we had all our pets that cluttered our inventory. Now that the collectibles system is in place neither of these exist as they did before.

Let's talk about the changes

to the pets first, as that is the simpler of the two. In the past, Zenimax rewarded pets to us via our in-game mail, and we had to store them in the mail unused, or pull them out into our inventory. These have all been magically put into a collectibles holding area where we can access them account wide. This way we can chose to have a pet on a character and not worry

about having to find it and put it in the appropriate character's inventory. You simply go into the collectibles screen and activate whichever pet you want to follow your character around. It is as easy as a few clicks to have your pet active, changed or put away.

On to the mounts. I really like the changes they did here: the



horse “look” and the riding skills have been separated. Now buying a horse, or any mount, is for the look to put into your collectibles, to be activated much the same way as a pet. Once you have a mount in the collectibles all characters on the account have access to it. You only have to buy each look once.

The riding skills for speed, stamina and carrying are still character based. However, now you can work on leveling all three to a maximum of sixty points. You still go to the stables and talk to the stable master. You pick which one of the three you would like to train in, pay your 250 gold and then twenty hours

later you can pick the next thing to train. This cost and timing is the same as feeding each horse back in the old system.

Many of us who knew this change was coming actually had three horses, one for each stat, and were working to get as many points in each by being able to feed all three horses once every twenty hours. The rest of the points we did not get completed will have to be done one by one. For the average player starting a character within this new system, it would probably be more like a once every 24 hour feeding and six months later you have your full riding skills. Seems like a long time, but I’m still trying to figure out how thirteen months

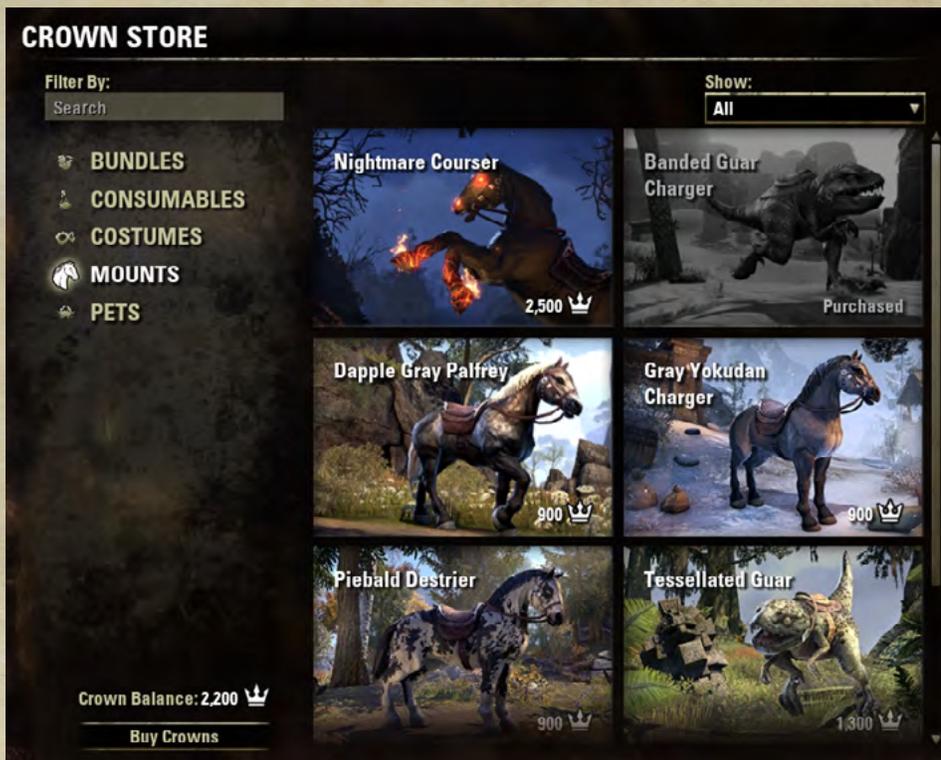
of live time has already passed me by.

The Crown Store and Tamriel Unlimited Options

As of March 17th Tamriel Unlimited, along with its Crown Store, is available on both the NA and EU servers. Now you have the option to play the game without a subscription, but pay for any updates that require purchase as they are released. Or you can use the subscription plan that is now called Tamriel Plus, which can revolve monthly, every 90 days or every 180 days. A Tamriel Plus player will earn 1500 crowns a month. The subscription choices are all controlled in the same place when logging into your account on the website.

The Crown Store is a nice addition to the game. It is definitely not a buy-to-win set up as everything in it is vanity items or paid expansion packs. They keep adding things and the latest that occurred while in editing phase for this article, is motifs. All those hard to find motifs for crafting various styles have been put in the crown store. Thankfully they are not that cheap and some of the rarer motifs will have to take three months of earned crowns and dip into the fourth for a Tamriel Plus player. Also, if you didn’t get the Imperial Edition, you can now buy it with crowns. The items





here allow you to personalize your characters beyond what we used to be able to do. There are five types of items you can buy in the Crown Store: Bundles, Consumable, Costumes, Mounts and Pets.

Once you buy a one time item, it grays out. For example, in my crown store picture of the mounts the Banded Guar Charger is grayed out because I bought this to use with a Dunmer I play.

1.6 Provisioning - New and Improved

Provisioning saw a good deal of love when Update 1.6 came along. The best part is that the number of items used to cook with went from 111 to 50. The other nice thing, which actually impacts all the crafts, is that everything used for crafting now stacks to 200, giving even more breathing

room to the inventory space for us crafters of everything.

The recipes and items we do craft with have had a name change overhaul, as well. Bye bye, Maggot Haggis! Hello, Chicken and Biscuits! Sounds far more appetizing, don't you think? And what about the sudden abundance of tomatoes. Well, those rare tomatoes of yore have become Frost Mirriam and now tomatoes are a much commoner item.

All food items are still lootable and the grocer has several of the more common in a pinch for 150 gold a piece. Only four items are rare and must come from your hireling or a really lucky loot. These two are: Bervez Juice for drinks and Frost Mirriam for food. These rare items will show up with the name in purple in

your inventory, while all the other ingredients will have their names in white.

The other nice thing is that now the recipes are in seven groupings instead of three. The first three are your green recipes that impact one stat only. The next three are the blue recipes that impact two stats at once. And the last group is the purple recipes that impact all three stats



at once.

With the changes to the magicka, health and stamina stats in the game, the new foods have had their stats upgraded from the old recipes. You still cannot eat food and then drink to have both buffs, although they have been looking at this possibility. I'm not sure if is going to happen considering it is another element that has to be thoroughly balance-tested. I can see why they did not include it in 1.6 with the changes to how the stats worked.

You still have to loot dressers, trunks, wardrobes, etc to find recipes, although there is a small chance of finding one on a mob you kill. This will make provisioning all the more fun since anything in town now has to be stolen. You have to be in an unguarded place without NPCs that care about your looting since you can't just do the standard search of old. I'll go into more detail about the changes to looting when I discuss the new Justice System later in this article.

Good luck in finding those recipes and ingredients you need without having guards hunt you down and take it back for the owners. Happy provisioning!

The Champion System

The Champion System allows for the allocation of points to various passives that can be found in the nine constellations. They are grouped in sets of three based on Health, Stamina and Magicka.

The following lists the constellations and their overall use. The information here is directly from in-game tooltips.

Red (Health) - These three are under the warrior's influence

- **The Steed** - boosts your Health and Shields you from damage
- **The Lady** - gives you Health and protects you from Negative Effects
- **The Lord** - grants you Health and improves your Vitality

Blue (Magicka) - These three are under the mage's influence

- **The Ritual** - grants you Magicka and makes your attacks more Precise
- **The Atronach** - boosts your Magicka and trains your Skill-at-Arms
- **The Apprentice** - increases your magicka and Empowers your spells

Green (Stamina) - The three are under the thief's influence

- **The Shadow** - grants you Stamina and helps you Elude your enemies
- **The Lover** - gives you Stamina and accelerates your Regeneration
- **The Tower** - raises your Stamina and makes you more efficient with Spells and Abilities



Each constellation consists of 8 stars.

In four of these stars, you spend points to increase the passive the star is associated with. For example, in the Apprentice which is pictured here, Blessed increases the effectiveness of any healing you initiate by an added percentage, based on the points you have assigned to it. With only 5 points in Blessed, the increase is 3.1%. All of the passives you can put points into work on a percentage basis to the attributes they effect in the game.



The other four stars are special passive abilities you acquire as you spend points in the constellation. These occur when you spend 10, 30, 75 and 120 points. In the constellation of the Apprentice that is shown here, the buff you acquire at 30 points is 12% chance to your Spell Crit. There are some nice things in these constellations and they will slowly empower you character to greater abilities and deeds.

So how do you gain champion points? Veteran characters gain them as they gain experience for whatever they do in the gaming world. For every 400,000 experience points gained, you earn a champion point. These accrue in a revolving order through the influences, so if you just received a Stamina (green)

point, your next will be a Magicka (blue) point. No matter what class your character is and what skills they have, there are worthwhile points in all three influences for the character to spend points on. You know which point you are currently on and how far along in it by looking at your experience bar. On any veteran character you now have it appears just below your normal experience bar.

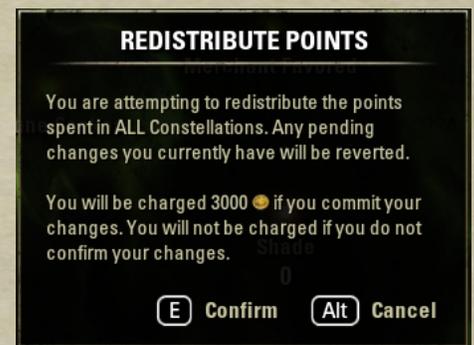


Now it takes a lot of growth to fill in these constellations. For instance, if you wanted every constellation on a given character to have 120 points so you have all those special skills and buffs, it will cost you 1080

points to do so. So pick carefully as you go for what you need now, but know someday you will have reached great potential. It is my understanding the maximum number of champion points is well above 1080, so who knows what they may add in the future based on how the population grows into their use of the Champion System.

The cool thing is that all champion points earned can be used by all characters, even your non-veteran level characters. So as you gain the points, don't forget to assign them whenever you get on another character to play them.

However, if you don't like how you assigned points, you can redistribute them. There is a price for any confirmed points. For 70 up to 85 confirmed points it was telling me it would cost 3000 gold. If you hit it by accident or don't want to pay, you simply cancel. The choice to redistribute is on every view of the Champion System at the bottom center, whether on the main one showing all nine constellations or zoomed in on a constellation.



The Justice System

The initial phase of the Justice System was introduced with 1.6. This allows for stealing, pick pocketing, breaking and entering, and the murder of NPCs along with their livestock. The guards now hunt you down on sight if they know about your crimes, and many of the NPCs not related to quests are killable.

In most towns and well-guarded areas of lawful citizens you can no longer just search crates, barrels, trunks, dressers, etc.—you have to steal. It will show the word Steal in red rather than Search in white if this is the case. Some places may even have lock boxes for you to pick open and these tend to hold the better loot out there. The other new thing is some houses now have locks for you to pick in order to enter.

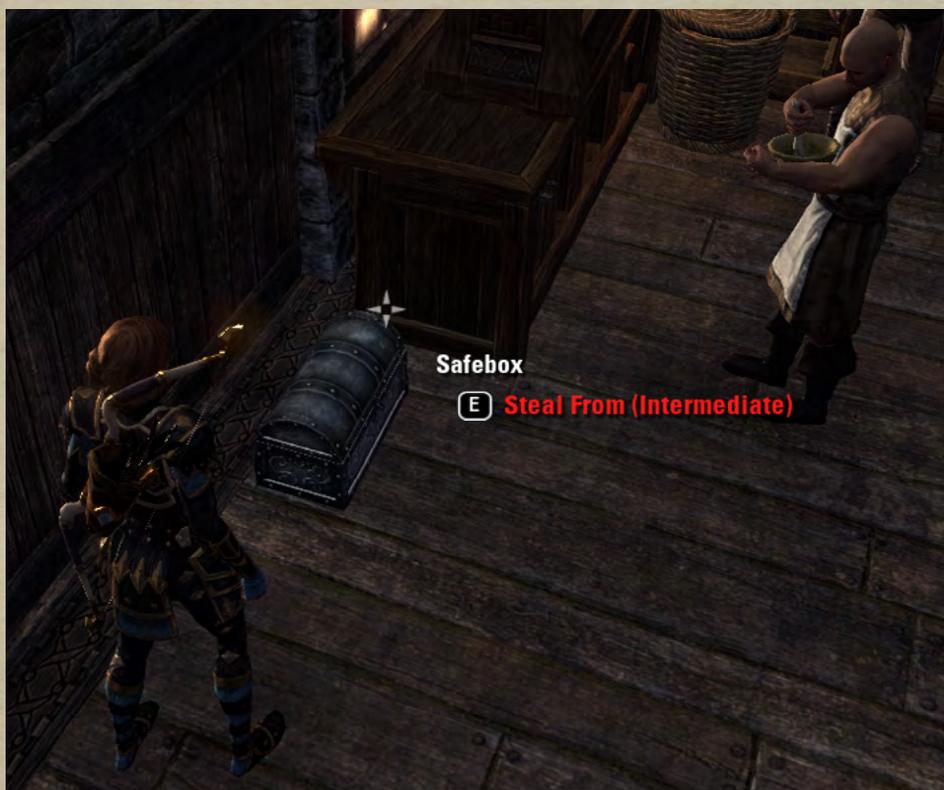
These work just like the locked chests you can find randomly out in the world. If someone sees you loot or break and enter, they will shout and point you out. If a guard shows up, they will chase you down. Some of them are dragon knights with the fun chain pull and they will use it!

The chances of you killing a guard are pretty slim and you are better off running for the outlaws refuge. Every main city has a refuge with two entrances, one inside the city limits and one outside, marked on the map with the Thieves Guild symbol. Some places are easy to escape from and others definitely are not. For example, if caught inside a building with a guard you will not get out the door because you cannot use doors when in attack mode. Figure out your city well before doing anything.



There is a new skill line called, Legerdemain, under World. As soon as you do anything that breaks the law, you will gain access to this. As you advance in levels you have better chances at getting away with illegal acts, and can sell and launder more with a fence. The five passive skills are:

- **Improved Hiding** - Reduces stamina cost of sneaking
- **Light fingers** - Increases the chance of pickpocketing
- **Trafficker** - Increases the number of fence interactions you can do daily
- **Locksmith** - Increases the chance of forcing locks
- **Kickback** - Reduces the cost of the bounty you must pay



If you do anything that might get you caught, you will see an indicator in the bottom right corner of your screen telling you how guards will react. It also lists the gold you must pay for your bounty to come clean, which

you'll be forced to pay if you get caught by a guard, or can be paid to a fence. If you have any bounty at all expect to be stopped by a guard even if the color is white on the circle. They will not be hunting you at this point, but if you walk too close to one you can either pay up or run. The good thing is that this will decrease over time while your character is online or offline. Although if you get caught again it just adds on to whatever bounty you have already.

The indicator has three segments in the circle. The first third you are Disreputable and just more of a nuisance as far as thieves go. The second level is Notorious. At this point they are looking for you more seriously, but may not attack you on sight. If you have any red in the third segment of the circle then the guards will attack on sight. You can also tell they are attack-on-sight due to them glowing red instead of white when you target them.



To sell or launder stolen items you must go see a fence in the Outlaws Refuge. I typically sell most things, but definitely launder recipes and motif books. I usually do not steal food items for provisioning unless it is an

item I am really low on. There are still plenty of places where you can simply search for items and not get into trouble.



The Future

Due to a lack of concrete information at this time, I'll speak instead about changes we'd like to see or speculate are coming. Hopefully soon!

I do know that one of the things people are really waiting for is the Enforcer part of the Justice System. This will allow players to sign up to acquire bounties from players that have them. It will allow the bounty hunter and the wanted person to fight each other one on one. I'm not sure how this is going to work for low level versus a higher level unless the duel is scaled. We are just going to have to wait a little longer to see how this is really going to work, but it should add a fun new element to the game. I know I've already had enough

fun with working on those fun achievements you can get for the Justice System right now and in one day I had a bounty of 61,000 plus. That would have made some Enforcers want to find me for sure.

At some point they will be adding the Imperial City to Cyrodiil with a set way for each alliance to complete to get inside and then work to take control. With all the population sizing and having more than one campaign, it will be interesting to see how big the instances really are and how things work out for stability. I'm hoping it's large enough and that there are plenty of things that must be done to take the city piece by piece, just like we have plenty of objectives out in Cyrodiil. Too few objectives would make it too easy and possibly boring. Again, this is definitely up in the air as to what they will really come out with.

The final part of the Champion System is purported to remove Veteran Ranks entirely. Someone said they thought this would be the easiest thing to do of the three. I honestly disagree with that. They have to find some balanced way to deal with fourteen levels of gear and three rankings of food, drink and potions. I'm quite sure the person that worked really hard for that uber VR14 armor is not going to be happy if a VR1 can suddenly get the same thing without all the effort of gaining

those veteran ranks. This too shall be an interesting thing to watch to see what they truly do. Though I'm wondering what incentive they will throw in to make people do Cadwell Silver and Gold if all veteran areas are

made equal. I foresee a straight run to Craglorn, since you won't have to level some in order to survive VR11 mobs in the initial areas.

But this section truly is a lot

of speculation. I'll leave it at this and let the speculations on several forums out there go where they may while we wait for the true information to be revealed.



Plunder and Loot in ESO

By Robert J. "Jairone" Mann,

With the release of patch 1.6, there is a brand new justice system in ESO, or at least there is a portion of a justice system. Now that all those sacks, barrels, crates, and other lootables are no longer yours to loot at whim, you may be wondering how the system works, and specifically where you can get some of the best loot.

To start, the random containers still contain many food items, worthless gear, and random low value crafting materials. However, they may contain any of the stealable items available in the zone, which means that occasionally you find something of value by looking in them. That, however, is a huge undertaking without much relative payoff. Instead, let's focus on how you can find items with high value regularly.

First, you can pick pockets to get items. Generally, picking a pocket rewards a decent item worth 100 gold or more, although occasionally you get your 30 gold items here, too. Still, odds are in your favor for a decent haul when you pick pockets. However, starting off your success rates will be somewhat lower. I'd suggest only trying to pickpocket easy targets when your success rate jumps at first, and only when you do not have many goods on you (because the guards will take these if they kill you or you pay your bounty to them.) Still, picking a pocket or two to start isn't a bad way to get a couple items when first hitting town, and even getting caught once or twice is a pretty small bounty.

The big money, however, came from strongboxes. Finding them can be a little tricky, as they do have some random spawning habits, but there are certain rules you can follow to find them. When you do, you generally get some direct coin, and at least 1 item worth 250 gold. A few strongboxes

a day can earn you 10,000 gold in a week easily, and checking them takes very little time.

Post the population surges from buy to play, and people figuring out strongboxes, you need some other tactics to make it rich. Thus I proudly present weapon and armor racks as your alternative at higher levels. These items will net you 30-60 gold average, and are found in large groups which makes a single point worth several hundred gold in many cases. For lower levels, just go to places with a ton of crates, sacks, and barrels you can steal from... and pick up the theft specific items.



The rules to strongbox picking (should you care to hunt for them) are as follows: First, to find them you must know where they can spawn. Strongboxes can spawn at any inn, shop, or private home. When searching, private homes are locked, so they will raise your ledgerdemean skill line, but they also take more time to enter and find what you are looking for, especially since the boxes are far rarer inside homes than inns and shops. When you are at a shop or inn, search near counters or back corners to find the box. However, as the population of the game has found stealing to be fun, the lockboxes in the stores and inns have become so over-farmed, that houses may well be a better bet!



Second, observe. There will be at least 1 NPC in the room. Your task is to learn a little about how they move. Most NPCs will have a few points they stop at randomly. What you need is for none of them to be looking at you from relatively close, and for them all to have moved within the last 5 seconds. This gives you enough time to pick the lock and loot the contents. Alternatively, you can pick the lock and exit really swiftly, waiting for a second chance to loot what you have found.

Third, plan wisely. You can almost guarantee that if you aren't careful, the guards will notice you. Thus, if you have a fair amount of loot on you, it is wise to go and turn it in before attempting to tackle some of the tougher strongboxes. Even worse, most of these boxes are indoors. If you get caught, you can't step outside while in combat.

When you do find yourself dealing with the guards:

First, look to see if they have a grey hitbar rather

than a red hitbar. If they have this grey hitbar, you can't kill them, so be extra cautious. This covers most of the guards at this time, but there are still a few around that you can murder. Just remember that this makes you even more wanted.

Second, if you are caught, you may flee or pay the bounty. Waiting for 15 seconds automatically starts you fleeing. This turns your bounty way up, and makes guards attack you for a while. Guards take your stolen items, but fences will not when you pay them your bounty.

Third, bounty goes down over time, so you can do something else to let your bounty run down before you go back to town to deliver your goods. Remember that some NPCs will not talk to you if your reputation is really bad, so if you are planning on going hunting for certain things out in the wilderness, save it until after you do any skullduggery. This gives you that time to let things cool off, reducing



any bounty you do pay to the guard or a fence.

Finally, you have options with your loot. Some of it you will sell, but there may be some items that you want to keep for whatever reason. These can be laundered, allowing you to keep the item. This is also a quick way to help level your skill line with junk items.

Pro tips:

In some cases, Guards and people can be distracted. This requires either the use of a sacrificial pickpocket who simply pays the penalty, or has some other means of engaging their attention. It isn't a 100% thing, but in some spots it really helps.

Friends who loot together can monitor movements for each other, and larger groups can have a designated lookout who is tipped by the parties that take the loot.

Combat inside prevents you from leaving, at least normally. However, invisibility potions can give you the chance to escape outside from one of the overpowered guards. To successfully escape, you will want something to purge yourself with (DOT damage disrupts the potion) and the potion ready to quaff. Additional effects like a short stun can be helpful here.

Don't go AFK on a patrol path with a bounty. Guards hate paper towels. You'll die. *My apologies for the bad pun.*



Saving Nirn

by Althea “Briseadh” Damgaard

Spoiler Alert. The Elder Scrolls Online has been out for over a year now. However, if you are new or have not played through Coldharbour and went on to Defeat of Molag Bal, this is your warning. I don't want to ruin your experience in game so continue reading at your own risk.

I, Velaeria Vitalia, Imperial Night Blade of the Ebonheart Pact, would like to share with you the tale of my adventure that helped to save all of Nirn from the clutches of Molag Bal.

I do not recall how I wound

up soulless and imprisoned in Coldharbour by Molag Bal, but one moment I was living my life and the next thing I know I am waking up in a cell in Oblivion. With the help of Lyris and the Prophet, I was able to escape and ended up in Davon's Watch. From there I was able to locate the Prophet at the Harborage and was sent out into the world to find and save the five companions from Molag Bal.

After many adventures I was

given counsel from Vanus to seek out the leaders of the three alliances: Ebonhart Pact, Aldameri Dominion, and Daggerfall Covenant. I attempted to negotiate a cease-fire in the Alliance War, so that they could commit their full resources to an assault on Coldharbour. Though rejected, the alliances did endorse a smaller action, in which the Mages Guild and Fighters Guild forces would help me to invade Coldharbour to stop the Planemeld.



Finally back in Coldharbour I was able to work with Vanus Galeron, leader of the Mages Guild and King Laloriaran Dynar, the leader of the Fighters Guild, to build an army with soldiers from both Tamriel and Coldharbour. No thanks to the interference from the Dremora, Lyranth, who I ran into before my journeys took me to Coldharbour.

Vanus arrogantly brushed Lyranth off, though I understood why, as I've had enough run ins with Dremora and Daedric Princes to last ten lifetimes. Still, I knew that we could use her help, though I hated being manipulated, I just hoped that whatever she was playing at somehow in the end would benefit Nirn.

Our plan was to get into the city and take it over, but with the main gate blocked we had to find another way in. The soldiers of the Fighter's Guild were able to go through a tunnel to get into their guild hall, but they could not leave the hall until the wards blocking their way out were

deactivated. Lyranth pointed out a breach in the city wall that she claimed wasn't heavily guarded: however, upon further questioning she would only comment that the little mortal (meaning me - and this is why I dislike Dremora) shouldn't worry and just use it.

After dispatching some enemies that barred my path, I was able to use the ward key to open the Fighter's Guild. Then they were able to secure part of the city so it was easier for me to get to the Mages Guild where I could activate a portal for the them to join us. This was tricky as I still needed to sneak around unsecured parts of the city to find four portal stones that then had to be placed on the four quadrants of the portal, thus activating it for the Mages to come through and finish securing the city.

Once that was done we had to deal with Vanus and his vain glory comments, but at least he was a competent mage and not a dremora, so of course Lyranth showed up to tell us about a Labyrinth that we would have to go through after taking out the citadel. This just kept getting better and better. In order to secure the Citadel and access the key to the Labyrinth we had to kill his Dremora, Valkynaz. But I guess I should have expected that Molag Bal had managed to keep people out somehow.

At this point we finally found out why Lyranth wanted to help us. This Valkynaz was responsible for the destruction of her entire clan. So even if she was a Dremora, I felt some sympathy for her having lost everyone and everything that she ever cared about. I understood her wanting to exact her revenge, but by the rules of the dremora, she





could not be the one that killed Valkynaz.

When we finally reached him, Valkynaz was not alone. There was also a Titan that we had to kill. Luckily for us, it must have been a weak one because even after a tough fight, it died fairly quickly. (There were some challenges, but it did not feel as epic as I thought a titan fight should be.) The beast itself was huge, at least four times the size of a horse, then there are the wings. I just kept dodging, sticking it with my weapons and using my Night Blade skills I had

until eventually we had both the titan and the Valkynaz dead.

At last the Citadel was secure and the key to the Labyrinth acquired and I got the pleasure of knowing that Valkynaz's death made Lyranth happy and then she disappeared.

Once we were all gathered up and ready to move forward to the entrance of the Labyrinth, King Dynar gave us a briefing and sent the Strike Force out to cause a disruption while I went ahead with a small group of soldiers to follow behind me to

keep the way clear until we came to Molag Bal's reinforcement portal.

At this time I am required to choose one companion to go with me. After considering all of my options I decided on Cadwell, who has lived in Oblivion a very long time and though he might be crazy, he certainly knew how to fight.

There were a few daedra to take out before the portal would be closed. It was enough of a fight to make things interesting. I was just working with Cadwell, who



zealously ran into every fight, until we had nothing left to fight and the portal stopped working. I honestly do not remember how we managed all of that.

We took a moment to catch our breath before we had to deal with the gatekeeper, a nasty looking Harvester. For those of you that have never seen one, think of a crazy snake lady with arms and a really bad attitude. I switched to my bow for this fight knowing that it worked more efficiently on the Harvesters that I had fought before, due to their healing orbs. This one looked like it would take a little more effort, but I was not alone. Once we were ready, Cadwell ran at the beast as I let my arrows fly. Having Cadwell there made taking out this Harvester far easier than I expected.

Finally, we reached the entrance of the Labyrinth and Vanus

Galerion caught up with us to tell me how things would proceed from here. The main force was going to go in to deal with Molag Bal's minions, while I made my way through the Labyrinth. He wished me luck and then took Cadwell with him back through his portal.

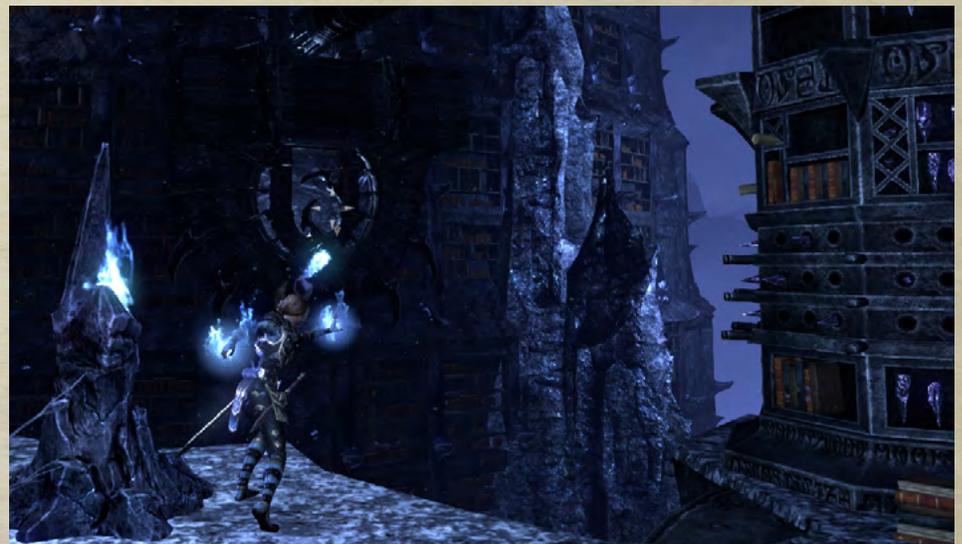


Garielle Benele, a talented mage, stepped up to help me with the next part of the journey, to get into the Labyrinth. With her assistance I made it through the first door into the Labyrinth, a crazy room of circular platforms

at various heights and partial walls with pipe ends sticking out all over the place. There were several shelves around the room too, making it seem even more surreal (I was even able to find readable books in the weirdest places.)

After I navigated my way through the maze of shelves I came to the next part of the room where I found two mages, Malkor Valus and Ragnar Vanus, reading through various books. I was able to convince them to help me by deciphering the puzzle that would open the door on the other side of the chamber and let me in to the next part of the Labyrinth. Between the books and their knowledge of the room I was told that I had to light the ends of the pipes by throwing fire at them in order to progress to the next area.

There were lit braziers strategically placed around the room, I just had to take the magical fire into my hand





and fling it at the end of a pipe, but there was a time limit of how long the flame would exist in my hand before it would extinguished. It didn't burn, but then again Coldharbour fire is weird like that.

The first three pipes were easy enough to light, but the others were harder as they were increasingly out of reach and difficult to get to. I had to jump from one platform to another over what appeared to be a bottomless area, like the whole place was just suspended in the

air. I survived it, although it was a bit gut wrenching to look straight down while I was jumping. With all the pipes lit properly, the door to the next chamber opened and Garielle and I stepped into what was called the statue room. Seemingly out of nowhere we were attacked by groups of indescribable humanoid creatures, as we made our way towards the next door.

Luckily Garielle knew the spells needed to open this door. As she worked the spells I had to defend her against the attacks from the fiends, twisted creatures created by Dremora that were determined to get at her and to stop us from opening the door to the next chamber.

Vanus Galerion showed up just as we made it through that door. This time he ported to us with Cadwell's help, to let me know

that our forces were not holding up as well as they had expected them to and to hurry me along. Vanus took Garielle back with him to join the others while I continued on alone.

The entrance to the Planemeld was not far ahead, but it was well guarded, first by minions that were easily dispatched and finally the true portal guardian, a beast named Telkar the Unforgiving. He gave me some trouble at first, at one point I was nearly dead, which I resolved by using a healing potion. However, once I was able to figure out his tactics, which included some subtle moves leading to powerful hits, and how to avoid most of them, I was able to defeat him.

When Telkar fell, I was greeted by the Groundskeeper, Meridia, a powerful daedra prince (note: to the daedra, the title of prince





applies to both male and female) from the Hollowed City telling me that I had done a good job. (I was really starting to hate how people could just pop up in this place while I had to fight through everything along the way.)

From Meridia, I learned that I had to go inside a storm to find and release the anchors within to unmoor the Planemeld and with Meridia's Light, destroy it.

Prepared with the shards from Cold Harbor, Meridia brought all of the survivors of our expedition to me so we could take out the anchors together. In the mix of all of this, we had three champions of Molag Bal, oversized daedra and titans that had to be dealt with. The fights were daunting, but in the end we released the anchors.

Portals open and minions start pouring out, the tricky part was that we had to try to fight them within range Meridia's magical shield bubble for protection. All the while we were fighting, Meridia was casting her spell, finally, she told me to release the light to destroy the Planemeld.

Suddenly I found myself alone

with Meridia. She tells me that my adventure is far from over and our world will remain for some time to come without being sucked into Oblivion. However, the Daedric Princes have taken note of my exploits of ruining Molag Bal's designs on grabbing Nirn up into Oblivion.

I rejoined the small remnant of the crew that I had first started





out with on this expedition in the Hollowed City. Sadly, King Dynar had been mortally wounded during the last fight when he took a blow outside of Meridia's shield. He just managed to survive long enough to be taken to this safe place. As the last of the Ayleid, his tragic death ended their influence upon Nirn, but his sacrifice meant the

Nirn would now be safe from Molag Bal.

The Prophet took me aside to tell me it was time to return to the Harborage and then to lead the five companions to defeat Molag Bal and reclaim my soul as well the souls of the surviving vestiges. He also informed me that there was a ritual of power

and I would have to sacrifice a companion in the process. Wow, I knew this final task of defeating Molag Bal wasn't going to be as easy, but this was rough.

Then the Prophet portaled me and the companions right into the heart of Oblivion. Ahead of us was another portal that kept spewing out enemies - a combo of Dremora and giant Daedroth. I hoped that this portal would close when they were defeated, instead a bigger things popped out. It took us a while to destroy the Titan, and right behind him was something even nastier, Balefire the Implacable Guardian. After his demise we could finally enter and explore the Area.



Moving forward we found



Mannimarco pinned down and being tortured by Molag Bal. As much as I didn't want to release the worm, in the end it was inevitable.

Ungrateful wretch, as we destroyed the skeletons around Mannimarco and he just spat angry words at us. He might find a way for his egotistical ideas to manifest into something we have to worry about again, but I think Nirn is safe for a bit.

We had to fight through more skeletons on the Path of Woe to reach the Seat of Tyranny where Tharn started the ritual. After some incantations and waving his arms about, it was time for the sacrifice and I chose the Prophet. With a few more words a great force sucked all of the Prophet's energy and I felt a great power being transferred to

me and the ritual was complete.

I had to go on alone, now that I was infused with power everything before me seemed to melt and I easily blew through

three different walls in the process of reaching Molag Bal. He was in a gigantic form and snatched me up like I was a bug, but when I worked my hands free I and blasted him with the power, he dropped me. Somehow I managed to land on my feet unhurt, and he seemed to shrink some. Now in a more manageable size (still huge), I decided to stick to a ranged attack with my bow because he hit hard!

He had a lot of moves, including jumping in the air and landing hard enough to damage things around him. I spent half my time dodging these attacks all the while sinking arrows into him whenever I could. I came close to dying a couple times and was glad for the health potions I had brought along. It was a





long, hard fight and in the end, I unleashed one last surge of power and was able to finish him off. I won.

Now I have my soul back and as do all the surviving vestiges. We spent so long getting here, that I am not sure what to think and wonder what I am supposed to do now.

Leave it to Meridia, she pulls me into another surreal place where I find myself running across a clear surface, when I look down all I can see is an endless void. When I finally reach her, I learn that Molag Bal is not dead, just banished for how long, and other Daedric

princes have made note of me. Wonderful!

After our little chat, she sends me back to the Harborage where I bid the remaining companions

farewell. No longer just a soulless one, a vestige, and with some suggestions from Cadwell, I go in search of my next adventure...

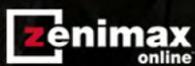


LIVE ANOTHER LIFE

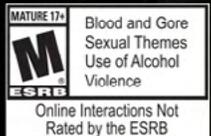


The Elder Scrolls

ONLINE



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Gaíscíoch

SOCIAL GAMING & ATHLETICS COMMUNITY





BLESS



Who is Neowiz?

Neowiz may not be a large name when it comes to the MMO world, but they are part of a contingent of South Korean game devs and publishers who have been seeking to put their mark on online gaming worldwide.

Neowiz has been in the gaming world for quite some time, entering from a rather unique path focusing on the fields of internet and information technology. Neowiz Games officially started in 1997 and has since gone on to publish over 41 titles (Alliance of Valiant Arms, S4 league, Battlefield Online, Warlord). They currently possess two in-house development studios (Neowiz Games Studio and Pentavision) and a division within Neowiz Games aptly named Bless Online Studio, which was created to specifically handle Bless: Embers of the Storm.

It's All About Story

Through epic, cinematic storytelling, a detailed history of two feuding nations and deeply involved characters, BLESS strives to put the RPG back in the MMORPG by making it a more engaging experience. Each race has its own storyline where the decisions you make in the game will ultimately affect the world around you.

The main story revolves around a decade-long war between two nations: The Union and The Holy Empire. The southern part of the continent belongs to the *Union Alliance*, which consists of the races Amstad, Aqua Elfes, Pantera, Iblis and Siren. With their militaristic alliance they fight the Holy Empire to the north. *Hieron*, also

known as the Holy Empire, is the northern half of the continent and builds its alliance between Habicht, Sylvan Elves, Lupus, Fedayin and Mascus. The Holy Empire has been defending its “civilized” territory for more than a hundred years.

Classes, Races & Character Creation

Bless is setting up to offer 10 unique races (5 for each alliance), 8 character classes, and a character creation menu that will let you customize just about everything you could imagine. Rather than opt for a straight up traditional option-based system, Bless has chosen to mix new with the old and give players a robust set of makeup tools. These will allow you to



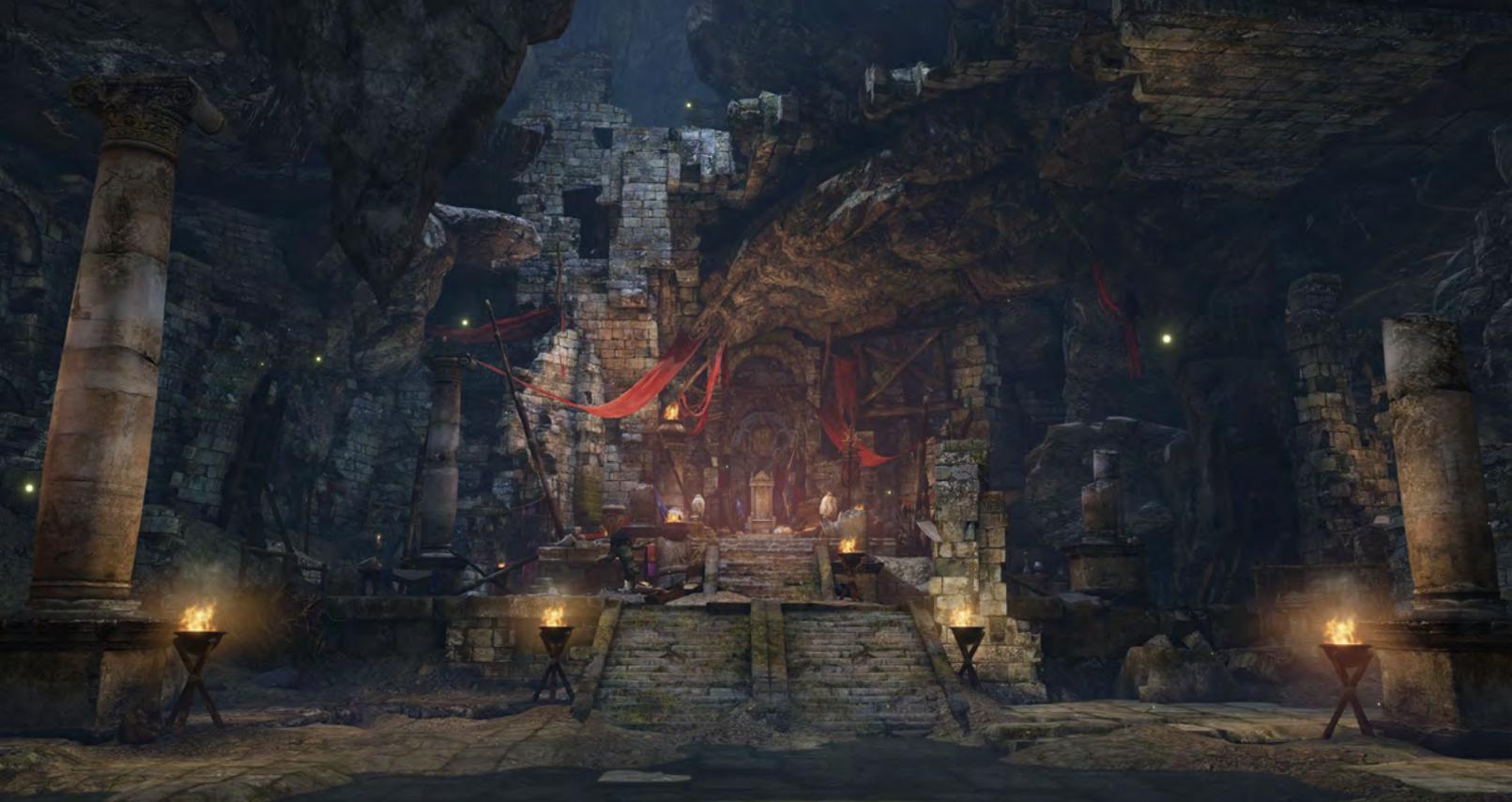
use things like lipstick, lip gloss, pencil, eyeliner and others such items to customize the facial details for your character.

Combat Skills

The combat in Bless seems to depend on the class you are playing. Rangers for instance, use traditional tab targeting while melee focused classes use

an action combat system similar to what you might find in Tera or Guild Wars 2. This means you can freely use your skills without being forced to select a target. You also have the option to use the left and right mouse buttons to activate your first and your second skill. As of closed beta 2 it looks like both ranged and melee classes will have a mix of skills that require targeting and





those that do not.

The Skill system itself is huge and will give players many ways to make the most out of their adventuring. The maximum amount of skills you can have slotted at any one time is twelve. Players will be able to train and choose from 4 different types of skills: Auto-hit (standard auto-attack), active, passive, and heal. Every class also has a unique ability that can be activated with the shift key. These skills typically increase your survivability and will vary depending on the class.

Realm vs Realm

The world of Bless has two warring nations, Hieron and Union. In each Nation there exists various City States that are in a constant state of turmoil. There are those who seek warfare, some for power and

others for glory.

NATION VS. NATION:

This is the standard siege campaign that will pit all the forces of each Nation against each other in a huge open world battle. The campaign is divided into two stages: the open world battle (no player limit), and a siege stage (200 vs 200 castle siege). The open field fight

chaotic. The goal of the fighters is to take over control of the rival nation's Guardian Stone, which sits near the middle of the territory that is under siege. If either nation loses the stone, the targeted castle will lose its protective shield and advance the battle to the next phase. The attacking side will attempt to break the castle gate and kill the NPC lord to end the siege and claim victory.



CITY STATE VS. CITY STATE (GUILD VS. PLAYER):

Each nation is divided into multiple city states or territories that are ruled by Lords (Hieron), or Governors (Union). There are two unique ways to become the Lord or Governor of a city state. Guilds, when the player reaches the required influence points, they have the option to attempt to rule a city state. Guilds or individual players can challenge the current Lord / Governor in battle to obtain the throne. Other guilds and players can choose to support the current Lord / Governor, back up the challenger, or attempt to make a claim themselves. This makes having friends and allies all the more important.

PATRON & PROTECTOR (PVP):

While Lords and Governors are rulers of the City States, Patrons and Protectors are rulers of the Nation and they primarily reside in Nation's Capital City. To become the Ruler of a nation the Lords / Governors need to capture the Capital City of an opposing nation. Patron and

Protector will need to summon their allies to defend the Capital and everyone in it. Rulers and challengers won't be able to protect or secure their throne with gear or PvP skill alone — playing politics and getting majority support will be the only way to win. To become a King, players will have to win the heart of a Nation and its ruling Lords/





Governors. This will eventually turn into a siege war that involves base occupation.

PvE

Bless uses a traditional quest system and players need to take part in main story quests, side quests, and world quests for leveling. On top of the regular fetch quests and mob kill quests, players will also have the opportunity to get a Monster Hunter logbook. They may then go out into the world to complete it by doing world bosses, dungeons and monster slaying.

Extras

And what would a game be without all the fun little things? Mounts will make an appearance and players be able to ride anything from horses, or unicorns, right up to trolls and other beast-like things. Bless also gives players two other unique fast travel options to get around the continent: Airships and Wyverns. Yes, I mean Wyverns, as in the dragon-like thing.

A Storm is Coming

Whether it's realm-vs-realm, PvE, raiding, dungeoning or high level missions, there will never

be a shortage of things to do in Bless. Every decision a player makes will ultimately shape the fate of the world and those that inhabit it.

While still early in the testing phase, Korean testers have already finished their closed beta 2 and are eagerly awaiting the next beta. Bless is shaping up to be quite a contender in the MMO market. Currently there is no release date for the Korean version and Neowiz is still on the hunt for a North American Publisher, hoping to land one by early 2016.







A Sneak Peak at Crowfall

By: Amanda “Soren” Carr

“We are immortal. The gods chose the best of us to be champions. They send us to the dying worlds to fight. To collect the souls of the damned. The mortals fear us. They see us as executioners and scavengers. They call us crows....”

Who is Artcraft Entertainment?

Artcraft Entertainment was founded by two of the most awesome and experienced MMO minds out there: J. Todd Coleman (creative director, Shadowbane, Wizard101, Pirate101) and Gordon Walton (executive producer, Ultima Online, Star Wars Galaxies, The Sims Online, and Star Wars: The Old Republic).

Based in Austin Texas, ACE is an independent developer and publisher of cutting-edge Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games

(MMORPGs) that seek to push the boundaries on what an MMO can offer. Their first game, Crowfall, was announced in January of 2015 and quickly gained a loyal following. Choosing to go the crowdfunding route with Kickstarter, Crowfall raised \$1,766,204 from 16,936 backers making it the 15th biggest video game, and 47th largest successful kickstarter project.

So What is Crowfall?

Crowfall is the brainchild of Gordon Walton and J. Todd Coleman and is described as an MMO mixed with a Game of Thrones-esque large-scale strategy game; basically a throne war simulator. According to Todd Coleman, if Game of Thrones and EvE Online had a secret love child, you’d end up with Crowfall.

Players or “Crows” control the universe and shape it as they see fit. Each world is unique and

players join teams, factions, or guilds to fight for control of the world—with a strong focus on time, destruction, and power. The worlds themselves feature non-persistent maps that are destructible, various rule sets, and unique victory conditions that take skilled play to survive.

It's About Time, Destruction, and Power

One of the key ideas behind Crowfall is that worlds don't last forever. Each campaign world is its own server and it will cycle through the four seasons (approximately one year in game time) over a set period of real world time. As the campaign progresses toward winter and its end, the world becomes a harsher, deadlier place with resources becoming more rare and the undead legion called the "Hunger" consuming everything in their path. Once a world reaches the end of winter or its win condition is met, that world then goes offline forever and players return to their home world with all the spoils of war.

The worlds themselves are created in a similar vein to Minecraft: everything is destructible. The idea behind this is to allow for truly unique campaigns that players can shape, conquer, and destroy on a whim.

Crowfall also gives players the Eternal Kingdoms, or persistent worlds where they can set up a solid base of operations before heading out to conquer the unknown. Essentially it can be thought of as the PvE portion of the game. Eternal Kingdoms will never be destroyed and they are entirely player-controlled right down to what ruleset they want their subjects to deal with, what kingdoms they want to trade with, and who they want to offer land and titles to. The most important thing to note about them is that they are devoid of any resources used in building or furthering your kingdom. In order to advance, players will have to embark out into the various campaign worlds.





Character Creation

Character creation is all about choice and Crowfall puts a unique spin on it. When players start out each character is allotted a certain number of points that a player can spend as they see fit. Players choose an Archtype/Race combination from a set of options. Each Archtype costs a set amount of points and some will cost more than others depending on what a player chooses to specialize in.

Players are also able to use Advantages and Disadvantages to further customize their character. These represent specific talents, traits or backstory elements that change your character in unique ways. Advantages will cost you points while Disadvantages give you points to place into different traits.

Character features such as body type, facial features, and hair are fully customizable.

The Economy

In Crowfall there are two main types of resources:

those used in personal crafting and those used in conquest. Think of it as resources and materials. Resources are harvested from the environment (stone, iron, wood) and are considered base ingredients for crafting. Materials can be refined using various points of interest (factories, quarries, mines, mills) and are the base ingredients for building and repairing structures.

Crafting is the main key Crowfall's player-driven economy and will function in a similar vein to Eve Online with influences from Ultima, Star Wars Galaxies and Shadowbane. This allows players to create awesome items and gear while encouraging player interaction and making crafting something worthwhile. Crafters are able to mark their items and build a social reputation. The fact that gear decay and full looting is enabled will ensure crafters are never in short supply and items are always in demand.

All characters are able to craft some basic things right out of the gate, but it will take a truly dedicated player to explore and seek out the rarer recipes or capture Thralls (souls of the fallen that

you can bind to weapons) and make a name for themselves.

Campaigns

Campaigns are broken down into the following types:

- Eternal Kingdoms (PvE)
- God's Reach (3 Faction)
- The Infected (God)
- The Shadow (Guild vs Guild)
- The Dregs (Open World PvP free-for-all).

Each campaign has its own unique rule set that can range from 0% loot drop on kills right up to 100% full inventory loot. The harsher the rules and the harder the campaign the better the reward and the rarer the resources found. Players are able to partake in more than one campaign at a time.

At the start of a campaign, players are dropped into the newly created world filled with villages,

mines, gatherable resources, and ruins. Much like the game Civilization, the world is a harsh place of unknowns covered by a fog-of-war and it will be up to the player to use the environment to help them survive. With the resources they gather, players are able to craft weapons and build castles and fortresses for defense against the other players and wildlife. As the seasons progress, resources become more scarce, and the world's monsters become more and more powerful.

Combat

Crowfall looks like it will be using an active combat system that will be a little more active than most people are used to. Gone is the traditional tab-targetting. Instead attacks use various shapes that are centered in front of the player and it will be up to them to position or dodge and dash their way to victory. The overall goal of the combat system is to make it function seamlessly with the environment to give it a more fluid look and a life-like feel that requires more tactical thinking rather than your





typical button mashing.

No holy trinity and a de-emphasis on a healing class is also something the creative minds behind Crowfall are focusing on. There are still classes that will focus on defensive play and offensive play, but with lack of a pure combat healing class the encounters become much harder and more deadly. Tactics and smart use of skills are going to win the day.

So Where's the PvE?

If you are one of those players looking for your typical dungeons, raids, and other instanced content, its safe to say you aren't going to find it here. Does this mean there will be no PvE at all? Not necessarily. Worlds will be teaming with NPC mobs and bosses that will need to be dealt with in order to capture various resource nodes, points



of interest and to flat out survive. Many monsters will require groups of players to take them out and even then the fight will be tough.

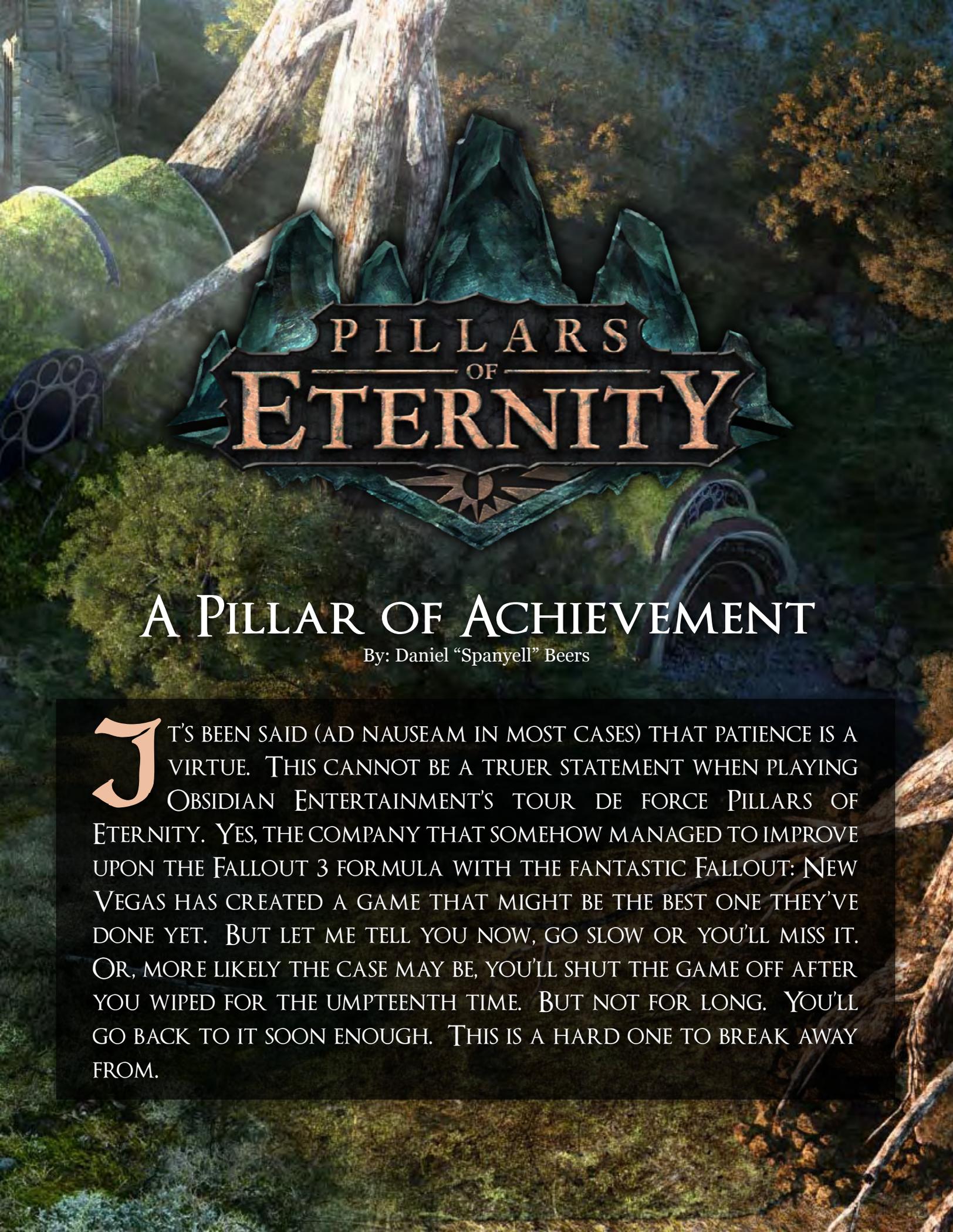
There will also be “quests” or tasks for players to perform that could involve searching for various relics to help their kingdom or they might need to kill certain creatures to obtain things only dropped by that creature.

Not Your Typical MMO World

Crowfall is definitely shaping up to be a heck of a lot more than your average MMO and considering the creative genius behind it, this should be no surprise. The most appealing and probably the most unique feature Crowfall has to offer is its focus on eternal heroes and dying worlds, essentially creating a never ending endgame that will keep players busy for quite a while. The base module is estimated to be delivered sometime around Winter 2016. The first release (with partial functionality) should begin alpha testing late Summer 2015.







PILLARS OF ETERNITY

A PILLAR OF ACHIEVEMENT

By: Daniel "Spanyell" Beers

JT'S BEEN SAID (AD NAUSEAM IN MOST CASES) THAT PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE. THIS CANNOT BE A TRUER STATEMENT WHEN PLAYING OBSDIAN ENTERTAINMENT'S TOUR DE FORCE PILLARS OF ETERNITY. YES, THE COMPANY THAT SOMEHOW MANAGED TO IMPROVE UPON THE FALLOUT 3 FORMULA WITH THE FANTASTIC FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS HAS CREATED A GAME THAT MIGHT BE THE BEST ONE THEY'VE DONE YET. BUT LET ME TELL YOU NOW, GO SLOW OR YOU'LL MISS IT. OR, MORE LIKELY THE CASE MAY BE, YOU'LL SHUT THE GAME OFF AFTER YOU WIPED FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME. BUT NOT FOR LONG. YOU'LL GO BACK TO IT SOON ENOUGH. THIS IS A HARD ONE TO BREAK AWAY FROM.



I'm not going to spoil the plot with this review, because it is a good one. Suffice it to say, you have a particular talent you didn't ask for. Quests ensue. Sounds contrived, but the writing is obviously done with love and with intent. I found the underlying motifs of gods and men quite intriguing. You're going to do a lot of reading here, but it isn't bad thing. I actually ended up preferring that the mostly decent voiceovers were absent, as there were some great descriptions between the dialogue that could show more than a voiceover could. Because of the religious undertones in a lot of the story, I did get a little whiff of similarity with the plot of *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, but it thankfully ended up veering in a totally different direction. This is an RPG, so you have some quests, you meet people that can help, you kill monsters, you pick up nifty new gear to do it all again. As with any solid RPG, the plot is merely the McGuffin for the journey. And what a journey it is...

The game begins with creating a character. I know this seems like a duh moment, but the amount of options for your beloved avatar is staggering. There are countless options here. A lot of it is

typical fantasy fare, but not all of it. There are a few variations to make it original. Because I'm boring, I chose a human Paladin that likes to do good things for people (and yes, there's an option for "bad paladin"). The rest of the game is played in the isometric view. If you've played *Baldur's Gate* or any other equally brilliant derivation of that game (*cough* *Planescape: Torment!!!* *cough*), you'll feel right at home here. I admit I was a little disappointed that the view happens to be locked in one angle. More than once, I found myself wrestling with the shadows of a fight behind a particularly high castle wall that was dead smack in my way. Beyond that though, the graphics are stunning. Every blade of grass, every rock, every ugly cave stone is done with meticulous beauty. Like the writing, it is clear that the designers took a lot of pride in creating this game. There's a lot to be savored here, albeit slowly. My advice is to stop and smell the roses. You'll be glad you did.

You don't gain constant experience through massacring monsters in the conventional sense, so there is usually more than one way to complete a quest. I rather liked the idea of not being tied to

farming bad guys just to get to the level I needed to be for more exciting quests. But combat is inevitable no matter what, so it's a good thing it's fun. You are the general to these battles, so every spell and special action is entirely up to you. This is a double-edged sword if you're not careful, as your spell casters won't go back to auto attacking after a spell if you don't tell him to. It sounds nit-picky, but the combat is refreshingly satisfying, and after surviving a particularly tough battle you feel like singing Queen's "We Are the Champions." Because this game is not a fan of hand-holding, you might want to get in the habit of saving your game often.

To prove my point, I'll tell you a quick story. I'm in the ruins beneath my keep (a sort of player housing that is surprisingly more interesting than it sounds for a single player game), just feeling things out. I'm still fairly new at this point, still learning the ins and outs of the combat. I destroy a rather large group of bad guys and I'm feeling fairly good about myself. A gigantic hole is in the center. I click, allowing a sort of "choose your own adventure" mini-game to start. I happen to have

the proper tools to drop further and further down the great chasm, anxiously awaiting the impending righteous loot for doing such a great job. Instead, I drop down to level five of this dungeon. Now this shouldn't be a bad thing if I saved the game properly like I'm supposed to. I didn't. So now, I'm stuck in a terrifying state desperately trying to come back up to safety. I have no campfires (and therefore cannot rest my party, and regain spells, etc.), my whole group is still pretty banged up from the fight before. I had to go up three floors of this dungeon or restart the entire game. Suffice it to say, I did manage to get to safety after about five grueling hours of slow, thoughtful gameplay. And then it hit me. It is quite an accomplishment to keep my mind fixed on the big yellow sun four floors above me. When I got out of there, I was ecstatic. I mean, I was very literally giddy with my little victory. It's been awhile since I felt that kind of satisfaction in an RPG.

This is just a tiny piece of a larger game full of delightful little vignettes like this. Obsidian has really outdone themselves with this one. This is the RPG for fans of RPGs. No babysitting, no

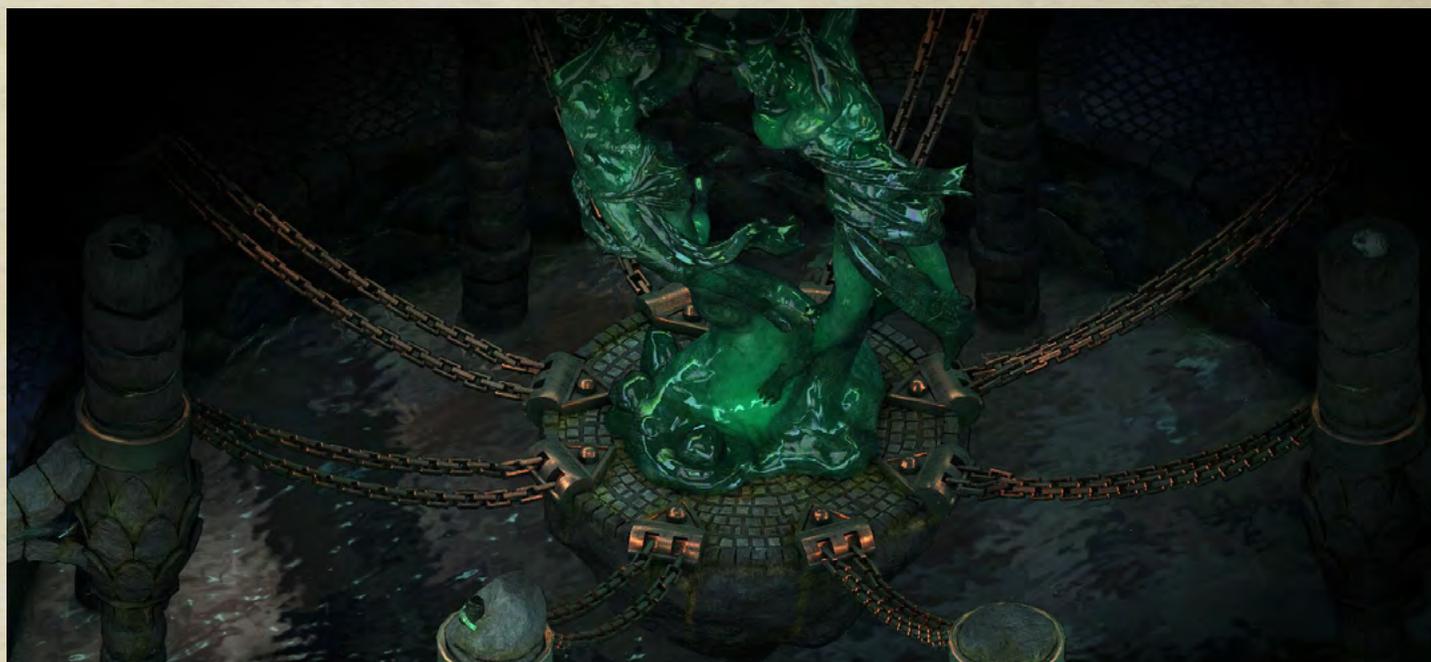




simplistic combat, no boring filler plotlines. This is truly what we've all been waiting for when we first heard about the Kickstarter campaign.

There are a few issues I probably should mention. There were some instances where I told my fellow party to attack and they decide to attack something else. In the heat of a long battle, a general shouldn't have to issue the same orders

twice. There are also some balancing issues with certain spells being way overpowered while others are pretty much worthless. Once you figure out which ones are which, you are basically blasting the same spells over and over again. Since you have to tell your party what to do every step of the way, it borders on being boring after a long session. The voice-overs also ended up being more of a hindrance than anything. Random bits were





spoken, sometimes even in the same conversation. I found myself turning the volume down during those moments and just reading it instead. My imagination could just as easily assign a voice to the words. I also ran into some game crashing when ALT-Tabbing out every once in a while. I foresee a patch that will address most of these issues in the near future.

These trivialities are just that, though. For every mild annoyance, there are fifty moments of awesome. Steam told me that I spent almost 60 hours on it from start to finish. This includes a fair share of side quests, about half of the stronghold dungeons, and one (very early) do-over. There is no question that one could add 20+ more hours to their first time through merely by more questing, taking it all in one glorious moment at a time.





Now, if you don't mind, I'm going to play it again. This time I'm going to take my own advice and play it slow. It's the best way to make this great game even better.

BY THE NUMBERS:

Graphics – 9 – It's a beautiful game to play. If it weren't for some questionable blockiness in full zoom, as well as multiple angles to the isometric view, this would have been a 10 easy.

Sound/Music – 8 – Satisfying clanging of the swords and mysterious arpeggios of magic spells. The music is your standard fantasy fare with a melody that took a long time to grow on me. The inn music is fairly annoying.

Price/Value – 10 – Yeah it's not even a full priced game. At \$45, you're getting a bargain. Heck, it's a bargain at \$60.

Gameplay – 10 – This is an RPG for people who really like RPGs. The dialog is fantastic, the combat is challenging and fulfilling, the size of the whole thing is mind-boggling.

Replayability – 10 – As soon as I beat the game on (mostly) normal mode, I have already made it a point to play it all over again with a completely different character on a more challenging mode. I've no doubt any other RPG fan will do that same.

The "Skew" factor – 10 – I went into this game hoping for Baldur's Gate III. I got more than that. I'm skewing this up as high as I can.

Bottom line – 10 – A compelling story, memorable characters, satisfying combat, an original setting, and beautiful landscapes all add up to one of the best RPG's in a long time. If you are into RPG's, you owe it to yourself to buy a copy immediately.

THE BEVERAGE PAIRING:

Over-21 Pairing – I recommend drinking Elysian's The Immortal IPA. It's a beer for people who like beer, and it meant to be enjoyed nice and slowly, much like this game.

Under-21 Paring – Coca-Cola Classic. Because this game is going to be on a lot of "Best of" lists for 2015. It's bound to be a classic.





♥ Health: 496/496
 + Endurance: 100/100
 // Damage
 Primary: 15-22
 Accuracy
 Primary: 35
 Damage Reduction: 10
 / 13 9 9
 Defenses
 66 53 36 36

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Quick Items: [Icons]
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Crafting

Party

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Warhammer Retrospect

A tribute to an epic game by Aoibheann

The Old World. A dark and grim place filled with peril and riven by war. From the teeming cities of the Empire to the Elf haunted forests to the lofty crags of the Worlds' Edge mountains where Dwarfs battle with Goblins and their vile kin, a shadow hangs over the world, cast by the dark corrupting hand of Chaos. All along its borders, the Old World's greatest nation, the Empire, seeks to hold back the dark tide. But even within the Empire there are enemies. Twisted cultists seek to bring about the Empire's fall, cold-hearted Beastmen stalk the forests, and loathsome Skaven ratmen spread plague and sickness from their suburban lairs.

In Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay, you are unlikely heroes in a grim world of perilous adventure. You venture into the dark corners of the Empire and deal with the threats that others cannot or will not face. You'll probably die alone in some festering hellhole, but maybe, just maybe, you'll survive foul Mutants, horrible diseases, insidious plots, and sanity-blasting rituals to reap Fate's rewards.

"Welcome to the roleplaying game of the Warhammer World... Death and glory await!"

(From the back cover of Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay rulebook, 2nd edition.)

You find yourself alone and lost in a dark forest, the path ahead can barely be seen as the daylight fades to a moonless night. You hear a soft footstep and then a gentle voice that calls out, "Come traveler, join me at my fire." A wispy elven lass peeps out from behind a tree, her eyes glowing bright green under a cascade of long black hair that swirls around her as she turns to lead you to a small clearing.

Drawing your dagger you cautiously approach the camp only to find a cheery fire and the

mouth watering smell of meat roasting. The elf waves you to sit and offers you a flask of a sweet mead. You hesitate until a slow grin spreads across her face and she takes a sip herself and then offers it to you again.

Relieved to find a warm spot and a friendly face, you sit down and accept the drink and food offered to you with many thanks. Curious about your hostess you inquire as to what business brings her to be out in these woods alone with the dangers of war all around.

Your question brings a wistful look to her eyes and she replies, "Peace traveler, I gladly offer you a safe place to pass the night in warmth and share with you a tale if you will hear it."

"However, before you accept you should know that I am a Witch elf," there is a pause as she takes a breath and continues. "I have led great armies of Chaos against the Empire, killing them and sacking and burning their villages, towns and cities as we laid waste to the lands."



Seeing your horrified look, she lays a comforting hand on your arm. "Peace. Yes, I am a Bride of Khaine, but you see I owe a great debt to a Dwarf...." Her words trail off and she pulls a small harp from the folds of her cloak and begins to pluck a melancholy tune.

With the night growing darker, the warmth of the fire and the lovely voice of a beautiful, if deadly elf, how can you resist. So you make yourself comfortable and with another swig of mead, nod your head to acknowledge acceptance.

In a sing song voice that keeps time with the music she began, "This is the tale of the Tower of

Neborhest as told to me by the Dwarf Clanorton, Clan Lord of Orton."

Deep within the Marshes of Madness, where the conflict between the Dwarves and Greenskins had spread to the far corners. There was once a place that neither order nor chaos would dare venture near... Rising from a dense bank of perpetual fog, an ancient Mourkain tower of pure jet erupted from the sodden swamp, home to the Vampire Lord Neborhest and his undead minions.

The tower exuded all the foul menace of the concentrated evil of it's Necrarch master, and the area occupied a rare

pocket of silence amid the cacophony of chirping frogs and buzzing insects from the myriad creatures which dwelled in the marshlands.

There came from Kilsev a brave party of friends, each swearing to slay the Lord Neborhest. Their leader was a solemn Warrior Priest bearing a great golden hammer, rightly called Vampires Bane. The magic bearers were a Bright Wizard named Azazen whose eternal fire blazed from his fingertips and the beautiful Elven Archmage, Tatja with her magical staff and glowing robes. Then there were the dwarves, Clanorton a fierce, great axe wielding, Ironbreaker, and finally Artss, an Engineer with a vast array of rifles, grenades and turrets tucked all about him.

After many days of travel they arrived late in the evening to the camp of Oathhold where they met the leader and rally master, Droki Redbeard, who when told of their quest offered these words of advice, "Manlings find it hard t' get along while they're alive. I reckon it's not hard to believe they'd behave the same when dead. That monster in the tower seems t' be deep in conflict with that mess o' skeletons to the south. Something we might use to our advantage. Strike them both while they're distracted!"

Exhausted from their journey and grateful for the welcome fires of the camp, the party bedded



down for the night and awoke at first light to Droki calling them to break fast with his company of miners.

After a hearty meal the party gathered their belongings and readied themselves for wading the murky paths through the swamp to reach the heart of the marshes, where the long forgotten ruins of an ancient cursed empire lie and there the Tower of Neborhest and it's corrupt Vampire Lord.

It was a weary journey with intermittent attacks from wolves, but finally the party came upon a clearing. Before them was a sickening sight, Thorgrim's elite Oathbearer regiment, a brave company that had decided to do an expedition across the Marshes in an attempt to regain control of

the Eight Peaks. All fifty dwarves were slaughtered in battle and their remains were being feasted upon by hordes of undead.

The gruesome scene and horrific smell briefly halted the party until the soulless feeders turned their attention to the living and started to advance. Gathering the grudges from the slain dwarves as they fought through a seemingly endless assault, they battled their way forward with hammer, spells, axe and bullets.

Azazen and Tatja called upon their magic, killing dozens with fiery blasts and mystical flicks of their hands. Artss' rifle weaved back and forth, firing shot after shot, all the while covering Clanorton's flanks as the Ironbreaker decapitated each foe with a swing of his great axe.

Their leader, full of Righteous Indignation, crumbled the undead army before him with every stroke of his hammer.

When they reached the foot of the tower suddenly the attack ceased and the undead receded. A wild laugh broke the silence, followed by a call, *"Come brave adventurers, enter my lair, for you shall serve me. Be it in life or in death, it is your choice."* As the voice faded, a door swung wide revealing a gaping black hole that lead into the tower.

Cautiously they stepped inside and as their eyes adjusted to the dim light, they saw before them a gaunt and dusty man who they recognized as the long missing Witch Hunter, Mattias Von Jaeger. He swept off his hat and bowed at them, saying, *"My*



Lord bids me to welcome you and offer you eternal life in his service.”

In answer for all, the Warrior Priest lifted his hammer and started a prayer to Sigmar. With each word that he spoke under his breath his weapon began to glow, then it became brighter, until the bottom room was aglow with his holy power. The whole tower shook when his first blow landed on the large central pillar with a resounding “No!”

With a terrible screech as the pillar crumbled, Mattias pointed a finger at the party and suddenly they were being attacked by skeletons. While the others laid waste to the bone army, the Priest focused on the undead Witch Hunter until finally he landed a mighty blow that knocked him to the ground. Before their eyes

the once great man decayed, then turned to dust leaving only a large silver charm on the floor.

At the back of the room they found stairs leading up, so they followed them to the next landing above. There they were surprised to find Norrison, the Captain of the slain Oathbearers standing in the center of the room next to another pillar and surrounded by giant swooping bats. The Captain’s deep voice bellowed, “Join us or die!”

Azazen and Tatja fought the bats with magic blasts as the others battled their former ally, Norrison, who even in death was a skillful warrior. There were dead bats everywhere when they finally overwhelmed and defeated the Captain. Again, the Priest charged his hammer and struck the center pillar so hard

that it crumbled, and the tower shook once more and a side door opened to reveal another stairway leading up.

They climbed the stairs, brushing through webs and then fighting off the giant spiders that attacked them when their webs were broken. At the next landing they found yet another pillar and waiting beside it was the great Orc Chieftain, Dork Redeye, now an undead Hero. With a loud grunt, Dork charged at them swinging.

The Orc fought furiously and with his wild blows he managed to land blows that injured each one of the party. With a nod from Clanorton, he broke away from the group as a distraction. It was just enough to give Azazen and Tatja time to weave a powerful spell together and with one great fiery blast the orc was incinerated and his ashes puffed out, then scattered to the floor.

The group rested and regrouped a few minutes as Vampires Bane healed their wounds. This time when the Priest charged his hammer and smashed the last pillar, there came a terrible scream of pain from above. Then complete silence descended on them as they made their way to the last stairs leading up to their final battle.

They climbed the steep stairs upwards to the top of the tower without any more attacks. When





they reached the doorway they were greeted by an old but powerful voice, *“Welcome brave adventures, throw down your arms so you can join me at last.”*

In slow motion Clanorton, then Azazen, then Artts and finally Tatja laid down their weapons. However Vampires Bane just bowed his head with a quick prayer to Sigmar he smashed the head of his hammer to the floor and the others came back to their senses with renewed strength and they grabbed their weapons.

“I see that you have made your choice fools, now you will serve me in DEATH!” And out of the shadows stepped the rotted skeletal remains of an ancient Lord, Neborhest. Clad in tattered black robes then covered with pitted armor, around his waist

hung skulls and bones and he was wielding a foul black sword, the runes glowing a poisonous green in the dusty gloom.

With a wild cry the Lord raised his sword and lunged at the group. Clanorton stepped up to block his first attack and was thrown across the room.

Neborhest turned on Tatja next and before she could utter a spell, she too was swept aside.

Azazen was able to blast him with a fireball as Artss hit him with a close up blunderbuss attack, before both of them were knocked down. Just as Neborhest raised his sword to



kill them, Vampires Bane, his hammer charged and glowing with Sigmar's blessing, delivered a mighty blow that staggered him while Clanorton used his axe to slash behind his knees. Screaming the Lord fell to the floor and Vampires Bane brought his hammer down upon his chest crushing the ancient bones beneath his armor. When he tried to rise again he was hit with spells from Azazen and Tatja that set him afire, then he was blasted by Artss' rifle just before Clanorton, with a mighty swing of his axe, beheaded the Vampire.

An empty voice whispered "Vengeance!" as the Warrior Priest chanted a loud prayer to Sigmar damning him to the

endless void and with one great blow, crushed his skull and they all watched as the remains of the Lord crumbled to dust.

As her voice trails off you look around and notice that night has fully descended and the fire has died down to hot coals, the air is chilly and you hear a howl in the distance. You wrap your cloak tighter and throw more wood on the dying fire.

Glancing up at your hostess, you see her staring off into the dark, then slowly she turns towards you and sets aside her harp. Curiously you inquire how she came upon this story. Silently she pulls off her bracers to show you deep red scars on her wrist, then removing her boots, she

reveals more fresh scars on her ankles.

"I too went to that tower to fight Neborhest, however in my arrogance I went alone." With a heavy sigh, she continues, *"I was able to cloak myself and while invisible make my way to the very top of the tower without a fight. That was my mistake, and instead of taking on one monster at a time, I had to deal with Mattias, Norrison, Dork and Neborhest all at once."*

"I was outnumbered, and though I put up a fierce fight, in the end I was captured and then chained up when their party arrived. Helplessly I listened as they fought their way up the tower and watched as they



fought, then destroyed the Lord.”

“I do not know what would have become of me if they had not arrived. I do know that when the party found me in the room after they had slain Neborhest, they were ready to kill me on the spot, all but for one dwarf, Clanorton. He stepped in front of me and released my shackles, then helped me to descend to the lowest room of the tower.”

“The others would not come near me, but he told me this story as he healed my wounds as best he could.” she paused again. “Because of his kindness I am alive and free to travel back to my own lands.”

“Soon enough I will rejoin the war, but for now traveler, I have put away my daggers and offer shelter to those I find in need along the way.....”

This article is a compilation of the introduction from and a story about the Roleplaying version of Warhammer that is wrapped

around a story written about one of the the Public Quests in the MMO, Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning. Special thanks to Clanorton for his invaluable contributions.... Now I am off to find my dice





A Once in a Lifetime Trip

by Althea “Briseadh” Damgaard

One of my epic adventures started when I got out of the military. I was discharged in Anchorage, Alaska and decided to ship all my stuff home and make the 5,500 mile drive back to the Catskill Mountains of New York.

I had a car after all, though it was this great big car, which my friends called the Blue Boat. It was a 1977 Mercury Cougar, and pretty much a gas guzzler due to it’s weighing two tons with a 351 engine under the hood. The car was nearly 18 feet in length and around five and a half feet in width. My dad’s dual axle dump trucks were only slightly larger in parking space needs.

Now the kicker is that this car was ten years old when I made this trip in 1987. Yet it managed to survive an average of 800 miles a day during my week long journey. The only issue I had was a transmission leak in Grand Prairie, Alberta. I figured I was up to driving to the next town, but the car decided it wanted to die a couple miles out. I ended up blocking this guy’s driveway before it finally gave out. That driveway led up to a house on a knoll (what you might call a knoll in the Great Plains), that seemed way longer that evening than it really was. I was halfway home during a three day weekend in Canada with Monday being

their Thanksgiving. I actually listened to Turkey themed classical music on the radio for an hour due to the tape cassette overheating. I bet some of you don’t even remember tape cassettes, other than your parents’ old music on them.

Anyway, I get up to the house where the fellow is really nice and even has transmission fluid in his garage. Actually his garage reminded me of what most of my family did. We would have everything and anything you might need in it for fixing cars and equipment. So once we get the fluid in my car, it starts right up. Even better, a friend of the guy’s wife was heading back into town and she followed me to make sure I got to a hotel near a repair station. First thing I did was check what the ground under my car looked like. This was for puddles and whatever dripping were occurring so I could compare it the following morning. Then I proceeded to get a room with a hamster in tow. I forgot to mention that I made this trip with a pet hamster named Wembley, whom I had gotten from a coworker when he changed duty stations. (My mom swore he would come when you called it. After all he did get out a few times, but I never lost him throughout his whole life.)

For the rest of the trip I kept checking my

transmission fluid every time I fueled up. Why? Because I know the seal had some issues when the car overheated, luckily it hardly leaked after the guy helped me the night before. It took a couple liters to get it back to normal and keep it that way, but I made it the rest of the way without any further breakdowns. I did stop a lot to let the car cool down, just to be on the safe side.

My route included the infamous Alaskan-Canadian Highway (better known as the Al-Can). Remember this was 1987, before they had the entire highway paved, and on top of that, it was October and in the middle of the rainy season. When I finally got to the end of the Al-Can and decided to wash off my big ole car, it took several rounds at the car wash to get nearly an inch of mud off. Yup, it was that crazy. It was a brown boat with a blue top until five Canadian dollars worth of quarters later I had it all spiffed up again.

Another crazy thing that happened on this trip was in Western Ontario over Lake Superior in the middle of nowhere. I got pulled over for speeding. I was just letting my Blue Boat coast down this gentle incline around this really long curve, taking in the fall foliage with a view of Lake Superior on a wonderful sunny day. My car was registered in Alaska, my drivers license was from New York and here I was being pulled over in the middle of nowhere in Ontario. Aside from that, my car was full of stuff I did not ship and a hamster riding shotgun. I turned the car off and 20 minutes later he finally finished writing the speeding ticket.. This was the most unforgiving cop I ever met in my life when it came to speeding. He probably was bored, as I don't remember a single car going by while we sat there.

An annoying thing at the time was that once I hit Ontario, whenever I tried to call into the U.S. the phone lines were always busy. (I later worked for a telecom company that helped alleviate these issues in the 90's.) So much for updating where I was to the parents until I finally dropped down

into the states and stopped at a rest area near Watertown. They were shocked to find me already in NY as they thought it would be two weeks of travel. Lucky for me it was only a week and I wound up home with thirteen Canadian pennies in my pocket and a near empty gas tank. I even slept in my car at a truck stop one night to save on hotel costs. I also had a cooler that I ate out of most of the time, though I did get a few hot meals along the way. I doubt I could do that in this day and age with gas costs being what they are on the same amount of money. I'd need three times what I had then to do the trip again.

Not everyone gets a chance to go on crazy trips like this. Some people hardly venture out of the place they grew up in. However, you can live epic no matter where you are. It's not about how big the adventure is. What I've found that makes an adventure epic is what it really means to you and how it makes you grow. Even better are the adventures that lead you into doing little things for others that mean the world to them because someone bothered. That's why I've stayed with Gaiscioch since I joined back in 2009. There are lots of epic game adventures meant to involve the community and make everyone feel like they can contribute and have fun. There is plenty of help outside the games, too. Sure my trek of 5,500 miles across North America was epic, but I still have epic moments right here in the good ole Catskills stomping around my backyard. I'm just glad I got to do that trip. It was a fun adventure that would be entirely impossible for me to do now. I had decided to do this whole trip through Canada because I knew I would never do it again. Now, living with multiple sclerosis there are days I don't want to drive the ten miles I need to go to town.

Go live epic! Give people smiles, time, something they need. Volunteer to do things at your church or in your community somehow. That's where the best epics will be written.



Crafting on an Epic Scale

By: Robert J. "Jairone" Mann

When we think of MMO games, crafting is... well... often not very exciting. Harvesting, gathering nodes, and turning raw materials into refined materials. Making items as a function of watching a bar without thinking, ad infinitum. This can be fun for a little while, but it certainly is not EPIC.

We have seen the process streamlined marginally over the years, but crafting has changed very little. Even with attempts to include more world interaction and involvement, the formula has just defaulted to the same old system. Crafting interdependence died. Players could roll alts and, in some cases, it was possible to craft every item

in the game with one character. Crafting never really worked well to provide interaction between people anyway, especially when the rare items that you needed from somebody else didn't matter. Actually, crafting, outside consumables in the common system, is not a big deal, unless you rush to get ahead of the game to get gold.

All that, however, is changing. There are a few games coming out that are really focused on crafting. The one I am going to discuss is Life is Feudal (LiF). The game is still in Alpha through Steam Early Access, but it really shows just how crafting can be an important part of a gaming world. Due to

the Early Access setup, there is no Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), so you can play and talk about it with friends to your heart's content... assuming you pay to own the game.

The differences start from step one. Unlike most MMO games, which make you wait a few levels before you can craft, LiF jumps directly into their crafting system. There are no levels in this game, which makes it run far differently from other games in the genre. The first steps of crafting in LiF involve simple gathering and tools. This is done by searching out areas where you could gather materials, and just doing it. There are no specific nodes here. Instead you actually

utilize the game's terrain. This means that you get sticks from trees, basic fibers from grasses, and a little flint for the tools from rocky areas. Eventually you learn to construct big buildings, which will take a single player a long time to complete. Building a castle as a single player, for example, generally isn't something you need to do. Still you can try, if you really want to.

Everybody can do anything in the first tiers and skill range. Each given skill is in a tier much like talent trees in other games. Sometimes this seems arbitrary, but it is a very important system to the game. Each skill has 100 points for maximum use, and you are limited in how many you can spend. This means that your character is limited to crafting certain things, but you can decide how those limits are spent. This

limitation is what builds the first layer of interdependence. This is further restricted by the cost to move a character into the main world (you start on a 'small' island that is far larger than zones found in most MMOs.) This makes it far less of a matter of convenience to push alts into the game, which means that many people will not be doing every craft for themselves, and thus leads further into trade.

Trade is a function that is still in development, but there are already buildings and transportation options to help facilitate it. More importantly, however, is that each and every crafting option at the highest tier needs something from a different tier at some point. In some cases this may be buildings to work in, and in others raw materials to build or craft with. For instance,

weapons and armor need leather, even the metal ones. This is fairly realistic, which is a stated goal of the game, and makes the hunters and animal tenders useful for the smiths. In turn the smiths specialize in high quality tools, which wear constantly with use, and need to be replaced eventually so that the skinning processes can continue. Animals can be domesticated, which means you need somewhere to keep them. These buildings require wood and nails, so you need lumberjacks and smiths, and the larger ones require materials from your gathering and construction professionals.

As stated earlier, materials aren't just nodes. They grow, or exist, and you must go find them. The game uses a quality system, where quality makes some difference in how well



something works. For instance, higher quality tools last longer than lower quality tools. Crops and trees grow, although crops currently are somewhat of an exception to the 'find it in the world' setup), and metals are found via prospecting for them. Ore comes in veins, and other things generally work in a way that would make sense if you were somehow placed in an actual world.

Everyone works together. That's how a town is built in this game, i.e. how roads are made, farming done, etc. It isn't something that is quick or easy to do by yourself. There are protections against the cruelty of the world, but it is a dangerous place where you can lose what you have earned. Crafting matters. It is how you get gear or do anything else, and it is what makes the fighting aspects of the game possible. In LiF crafting hasn't been marginalized to a grindfest with no real payoff. All of this taken collectively leads me to say that the crafting here looks EPIC. It will not be instant gratification. Rather, the feeling that by working with your friends over time, you have made something that is noteworthy.

LiF is not, by any means, the only game doing these things. It is merely one example of why we may see crafting becoming more than just a disposable bit of content focused on providing consumables and rng mitigation in our MMOs. Other games that are making changes can be found across the board, from a more traditional approach like Gloria Victis, to similar ideas mentioned in Crowfall. There are other games with innovations that make crafting different or less boring, like the bonus to first time experiences in Project Gorgon. These aren't games which merely add timers like Farmville (although time based growth is a part of what is happening), or insane grinding to get anywhere back into the genre. Rather these are games that are attempting to find a way to do something new, interesting, and fun. It is a small step toward a world that we can interact with on multiple levels, and a giant leap forward for those wanting crafting to make some impact toward roleplaying. Crafting, on an epic scale, is coming... and the genre may never be the same.



The Art of David "Neoyoshi" Lanni



Words Hurt....

By: Wind

As much as we would like to believe otherwise, the truth is that hurtful words can sometimes do more emotional damage than a blow. The scars that words leave us cannot be seen, instead they are felt inside, hidden away, something that was done to us, yet we are the ones that are left ashamed.

Hi, my name is Wind and I am a survivor. I have become a fire burning with the confidence that has so often eluded me. Every fire, however, starts with a spark and for me, one that was almost extinguished.

In the beginning of my schooling, as with many other students, I longed to belong. To find that I was accepted for who I was and be able to fit in. Yet I was shy and hadn't the confidence to reach out to make friends, but instead waited for them to find me.

I waited, and waited to be noticed, for someone to smile at me or invite me over to their group of friends. Nobody did. As despair began to fall upon me one boy reached out and we became friends. Then something changed, our feelings increased and with them a longing to do what we saw in movies, kiss.

One such opportunity befell us. At recess just when the bell had rung signaling the end we met in a patch of trees right by the lines of students waiting to be counted and brought back inside. Our lips touched. The news was around the school like wildfire and the mocking began.

From fourth to the beginning of fifth grade, we were mocked and ridiculed, placed as boyfriend and girlfriend. My reputation at the school was forever ruined. I was never placed in that boy's class again nor saw much of him after that. Just when I thought it had all died down, sixth grade came.

"Look at her, do you even think she washes her hair?" or "She's so ugly, no wonder she has no

friends," Yes, ugly, dirty, unfashionable, smelly, were the words that cut like daggers. Another boy shared my torment as I was ruthlessly paired with him. "Look at you two. You're both the smelliest people in sixth grade. You should get married!" Snickers and many jokes followed this idea.

They boy would always try to fight back spitting words of his own, but I mistakenly believed that my classmates were right because they were 'cool' kids. This led me to add my own hurtful words a time or two, playing to their game. "Yes," I'd say batting my eyes pretending to kiss him or make jokes to pair us. I still feel the sting those words left on my tough unwitting friend and see his eyes hurt and angry.

My classmates were experts in playing at my gullibility. At one point the dominate group of girls asked what my favorite place to shop was. I told them about a used clothing store that my mom had always gone to and they laughed and sniggered. Then came their next words as part of the joke. "Maybe I can have my birthday party there," was the leader's comment.

I didn't catch the teasing, so I replied, "Well if you are going to have a party there I'd have to ask my mom because I'm not sure that the store hosts parties." I can still see their faces as I walked away and hear their laughter.

Everything about me was a target. I liked the school food. My tormentors made concoctions of their own to feed to me or try to get me to eat. I remained silent, hoping against all hope it would stop. It didn't. Sixth grade passed away to be filled with the horrors of seventh grade where I, still struggling with the schedule of seven classes, had my name turned against me.

Two boys at lunch, of a higher grade, would find me and torment me with a mispronunciation of my name while I sat hunched in a ball waiting for the bell to ring. I think that they thought I liked it because I, in certain circumstances, will smile, not because what they are saying is funny, but because I have retorts of my own that I hold back.

Frantically I looked for a fail-safe, somewhere

no one could hurt me with words. Luckily during a conversation with a family member, writing came up. I was wishing that there were more female characters in books, that there could be warriors or girl main characters when this family member said, "Well, if you want to see more female heroines and want to read about more books like that, why don't you write one?"

Quite frankly the thought had never crossed my mind, however, the more I pondered the idea the more appealing it became. Again and again I'd be sitting there thinking, I could write a book. I could be the next Brandon Mull. Enthralled by this idea, I began to write.

In time, the bully's words began to dull, my wounds began to heal, and my tiny ember began to flicker. They can't hurt me; no one can make me feel like a nothing unless I let them. No one can hold power over me for, as the poem *Invictus* starts, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul."

I found friends who knew nothing about my past, but merely extended an invitation for me to sit with them at lunch—a choice I never regret. My new burning fire longed to show the world what I could do, I wanted to be a leader and oddly enough that opportunity came by means of a game called *Guild Wars 2* (GW2).

At first this was an opportunity to create my characters in real life! To send them on journeys and quests. The thought that I would meet friends here never crossed my mind. But as I began to warm to the game I found a guild called *Gaiscioch*. My dad suggested I join and so I did not thinking more on it.

Over the next year, I got a voice chat and began to participate in family activities. I'd associate with people on the game, but never truly built friendships. The more I played with them, the more open I became and now the term friend fits them to me.

I was afraid of talking into a mic and so mostly I'd pretend to not have one, but still I wanted to participate in their conversations besides just a

game chat. Then I met Findan.

I followed him in WvW (World vs World) and longed to be the leader of such a group with the fire of leadership burning bright within me. I became friends with him and told him that I wanted to learn how to talk in a voice chat.

He agreed to help me. The first chat was, to say the least, terrifying. But he didn't give up on me and eventually we had a conversation. I wanted to lead with him, but said that I'd probably not get enough gold for a tag. Then the opportunity came and the tag was bought. I was jumping with glee; now I could lead with Findan! I'll show him on his next event, but that never came, instead news of his accident reached my ears.

The tag went on a back shelf and I became completely worried; I couldn't concentrate on anything but Findan. As updates came of his improvement, a new thought followed, I still want to learn to command in WvW. I want to be flying a tag and leading a group through the borderlands when he gets back. I want him to see my events on the calendar and know that I did it for him.

It took a lot more encouragement from other friends in the guild to help me start overcoming my fear of commanding in voice comms. However, by gritting my teeth and never giving up on myself, I finally started asking leaders in WvW if I could co lead or shadow them to learn the trade.

Everytime I tag up, a terror arises that sometimes silences me, and on occasion causes me to panic and cry. It is a struggle that I am overcoming in part for Findan, because I know that when he comes back to GW2 he will be so proud of me and I will finally feel like I am worth more than words could ever describe.

Yes, I am a survivor and I will spread my voice to the nations with one solemn phrase. "It matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishment the scroll. I AM the master of my fate, I Am the captain of my soul!" and nothing will ever change that fact again.

Pops' Musings of Life

"Thank you for your service"

"Thank you for your service"...A seemingly innocent statement that conjures up many different responses and feelings from a multitude of Veterans. In researching this topic, I was amazed at the number of articles written about this very subject and the different feelings that were triggered by each Vet. I did a small survey on our forum, as well as, visited the local VA Center and all of the local Veteran Clubs I belong to (Am. Legion, VVA, DAV, VFW, AMVETS, Desert Vets). What I found was, but for a small sampling, Vets in general were positive in nature toward being thanked. That being said, we all know that there are exceptions to everything. Remember, these are reactions and feelings of individuals and in no way reflect what I think, do, or say. When I do interject, it is only my opinion and not gospel.

When I discussed the "thank you's" we received with fellow vets, I found the replies from some took some unusual turns. Many said they would thank them for caring, shake their hand, and move on. Some would just nod at the person and move on. Many said nothing. I noticed that when someone would say "Thank you...", many Vets would look and size that person up. Was he serious, was he being patronizing, were they sincere or just being a jerk. In certain cases, some vets would think, "you thank me now but were you the one that spit on me in 1969". Those surveyed found most of those who thanked them were males, age 25 and older. I don't think this was a matter of gender or age, but of the person's background. I've started asking them if they are a Vet and most have answered in the affirmative. Many people who have thanked us have had family members that served or are currently serving.

Some Vets said they didn't join to be thanked and get very upset. Some take it as a form of pity and are spiteful. A few have said they are

embarrassed at being thanked or that it wasn't deserved. I've found that the initial reaction can also depend on one's experiences. A combat vet will react differently than a peacetime or era vet. A combat cavalry scout will react differently than the supply guy stationed at the same place. If PTSD is involved while taking the survey, things "could" turn ugly in a response. Overall most just seem to roll with it. They are polite, they thank the person, give them a smile, and move on.

My military career spanned across five decades and in that time I've seen many things change. Some changes were for the better, others, not so much. The one constant in any military is the bond forged by the blood, sweat, and tears of its' vets. I've found that most Vietnam vets are glad to be thanked, albeit belatedly, for their service. Many felt as I did, that a "Welcome Home" would be nice to hear once in a while. In fact, many Nam vets do exactly that. They will give a hug and/or a handshake to a brother Vietnam vet and welcome him home.

For myself, when I'm "Thanked", I respond with a nod, maybe a handshake, and a "Thank you for your Support". Many look at me a little weird for saying that. It takes a lot of humility to thank anyone, especially a perfect stranger, for anything.

As a Nam vet, I'd much prefer a "Welcome Home" than a thank you. As a Desert vet the thanks given are always appreciated. One thing I'll never forget...when we arrived stateside after a tour in Iraq/Kuwait we were greeted by hundreds of Vietnam vets. Through tears and cheers, I finally got my welcome home.

To all... "Thank you for your Support."

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"It is in this moment, when all seems lost,
that you possess the most potential,
to do something remarkable.

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Benjamin "Foghladha" Foley
Founder, Caiscioch Family