

# ENDGAME

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Bioware Austin

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# INTRODUCTION

## Designer

Meridian 59, Shadowbane  
Bioware's Austin Project

## Design Pundit

ZenOfDesign.com  
"Design of the Times"

## Player

Lots of MMOs

# THIS LECTURE

What is Elder Gameplay?

Why is it Important?

Analysis: Territorial Control

Analysis: Raid Encounters

What are the Universal Challenges?

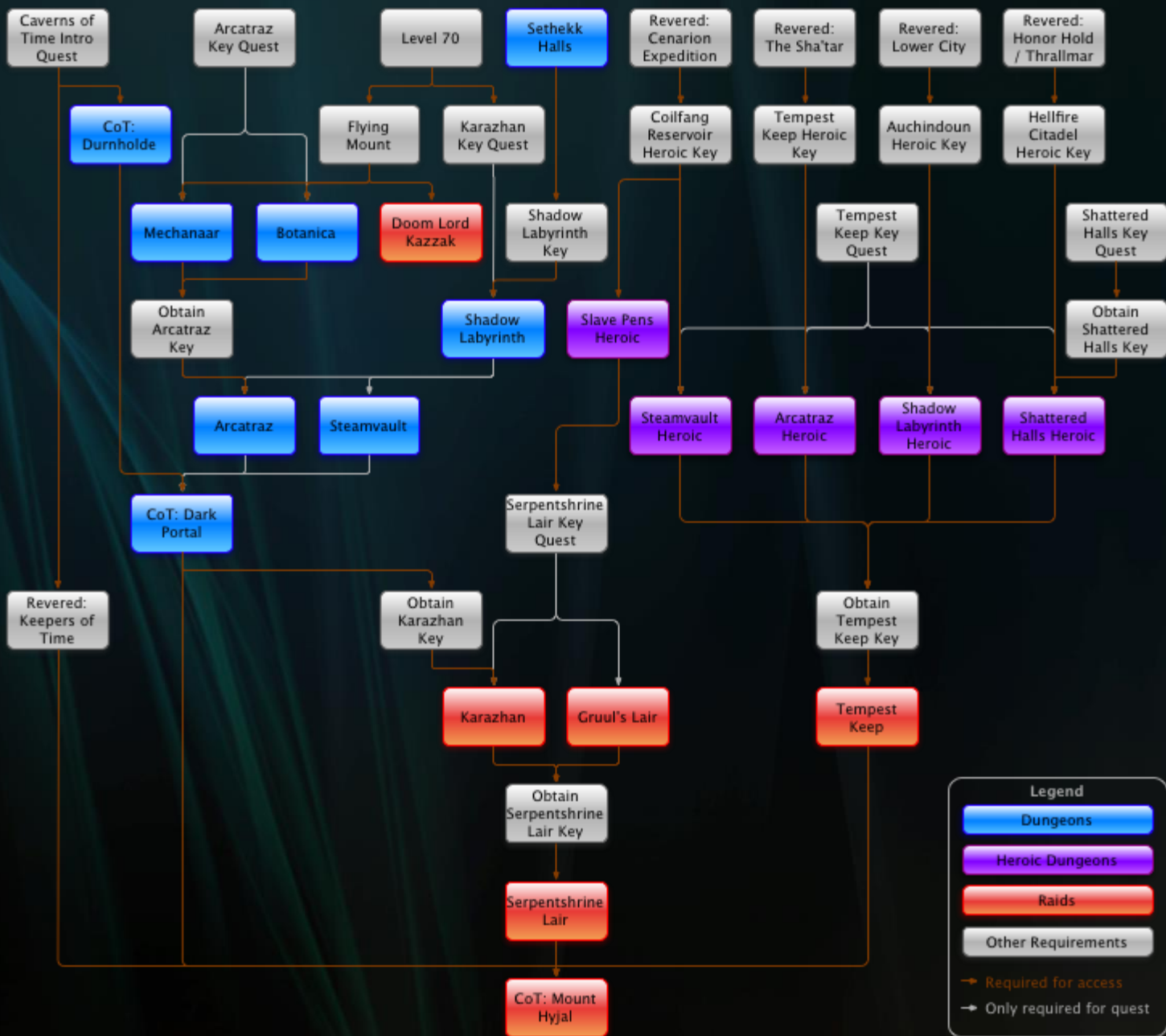
# WHAT IS ELDER GAMEPLAY?

It's more than just 'something for players to do when they're done.'

# THE ONWARD PATH

Something to do when you're done.





World of Warcraft Attunement Map, Burning Crusade.



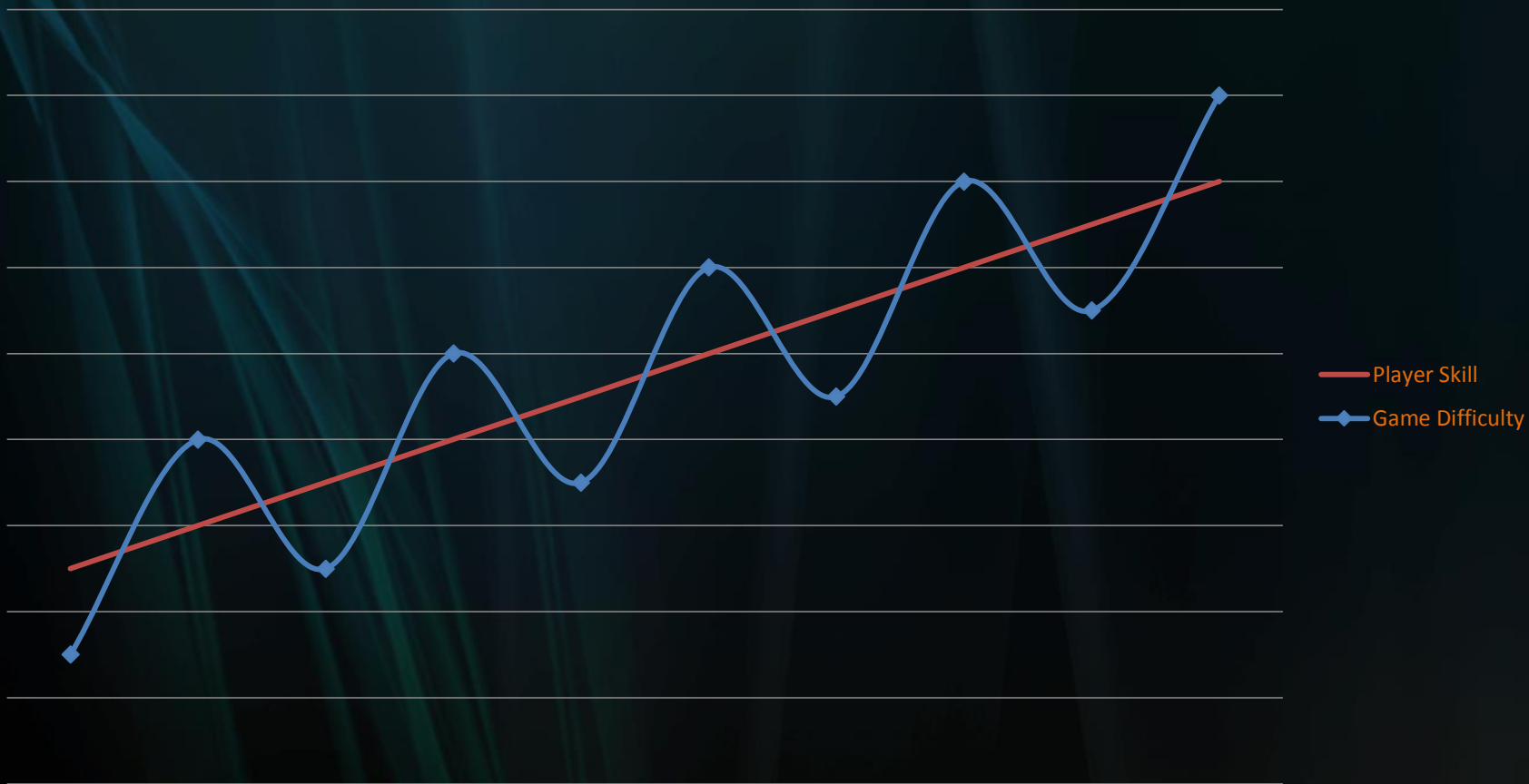
# THE PINNACLE

The apex of the player's heroic arc.

# A WORTHY CHALLENGE

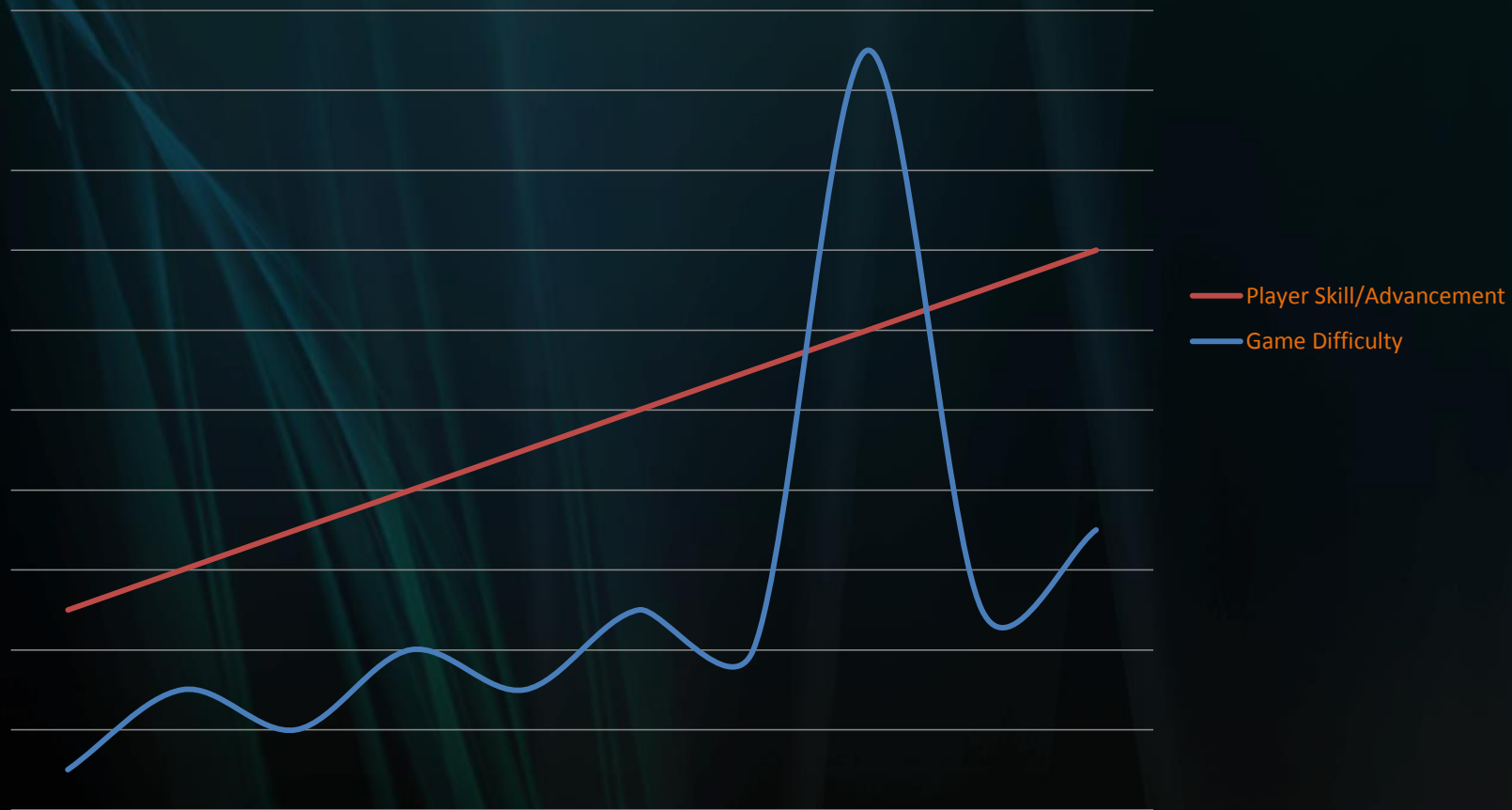
Possibly the only difficult thing in your MMO.





Ideal easy fun/hard fun curve for best selling games

(Based on Amy Jo Kim's research).



What the MMO curve is more like.



Kotasoth, Everquest 2



# A SENSE OF HISTORY

When something is hard,  
doing it first is notable.

WowJutsu.

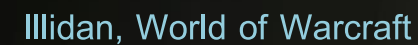
#	Guild	Raid Instance	US Rank	Score
 1	Apples	        	822	988.71
 2	Dark Favor	       	1750	915.76
 3	Exodus	       	1994	915.14
4	Uprising	       	3857	676.71
5	Relentless	       	4034	645.75
6	Vanguard of Silvermoon	       	4336	642.84
7	Felony	       	5439	517.13
8	Timeless Order	       	5509	516.71
9	Ordo Ab Chao	      	5777	485.45
10	Rangers of Lyonya	      	6431	425.74
11	Council of Dragons	       	6649	423.54
12	Eternal Haven	      	7034	393.67
13	Ghostfang Brotherhood	      	7273	382.31
14	Trinklets	     	7351	373.86
15	Legacy of the Dire Panda	      	7403	366.44
16	Riddle of Steel	     	8042	332.72
17	The Holy Word	     	8965	278.85



# TRULY MASSIVE GAMEPLAY

Rewarding simultaneous GUILD play.







Band of Brothers gathering for war, Eve Online



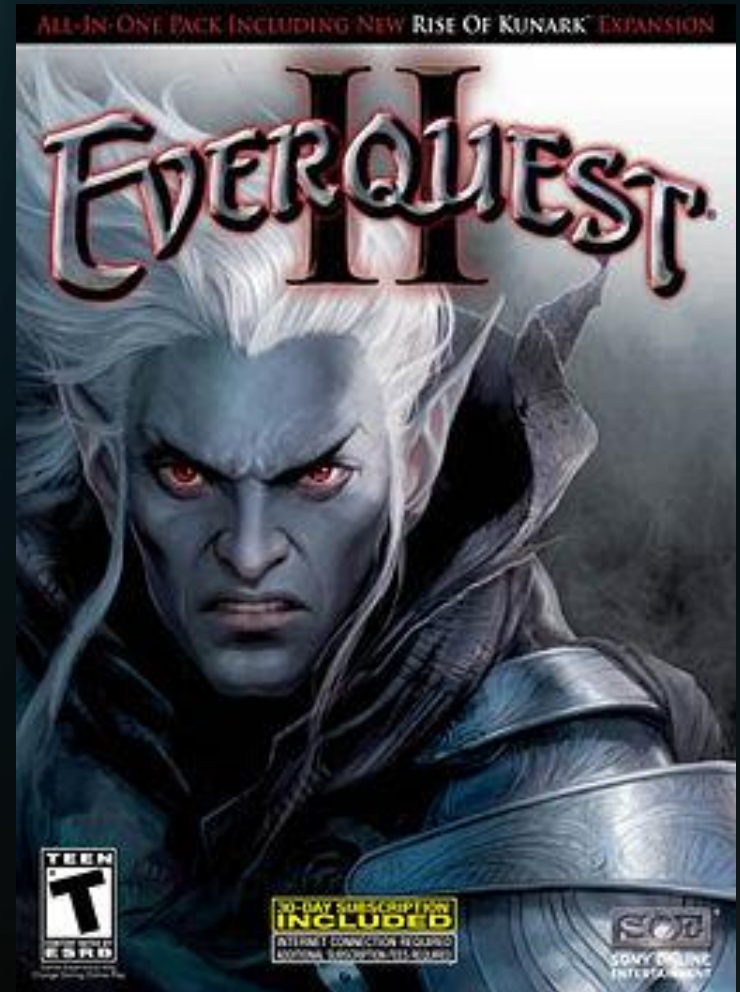
Age of Conan City Siege



Most importantly, elder gameplay creates fun and activity for your

# MOST DEVOTED PLAYERS

Why do the World of Warcraft and Everquest 2 teams make expansions mostly for high level players?



Because those are the players that are out of content.

# ANALYSIS OF ENDGAME

# TERRITORIAL CONTROL

Key design concepts

# AFFILIATION

Need clearly defined teams, and the ability for players to identify team members.



# OBJECTIVES

Give players something to fight over.

Preferably multiple things to spread them out.





Tabula Rasa control points

# RESPAWN AND ATTRITION

How fast players can get back to the fight after they die, and how often they can do so.

Give defenders the edge somehow!



# ATTACK WINDOWS

No one wants to log in to find their city in ashes.



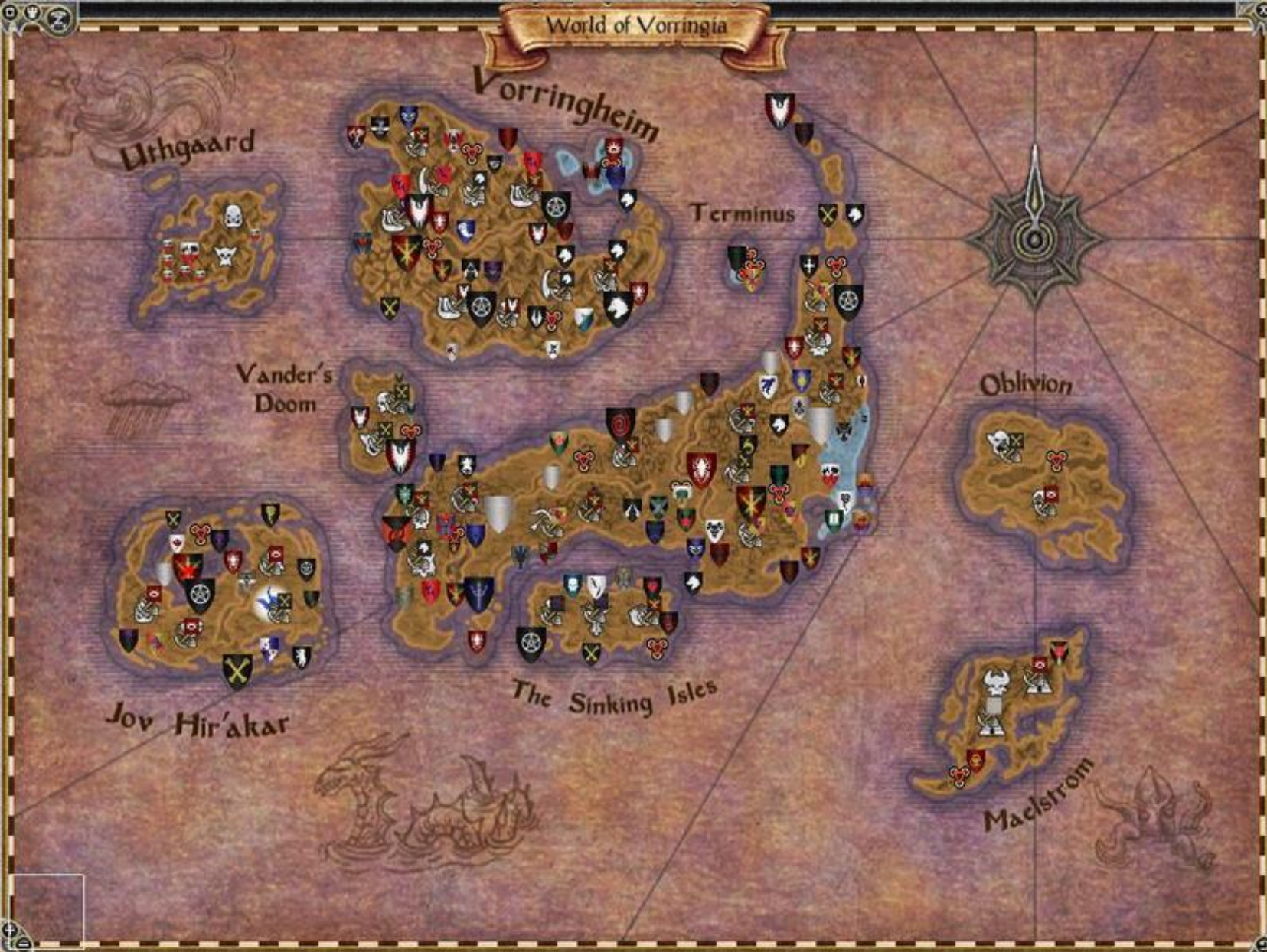


A Bane Stone, Shadowbane

# POLITICAL MAP

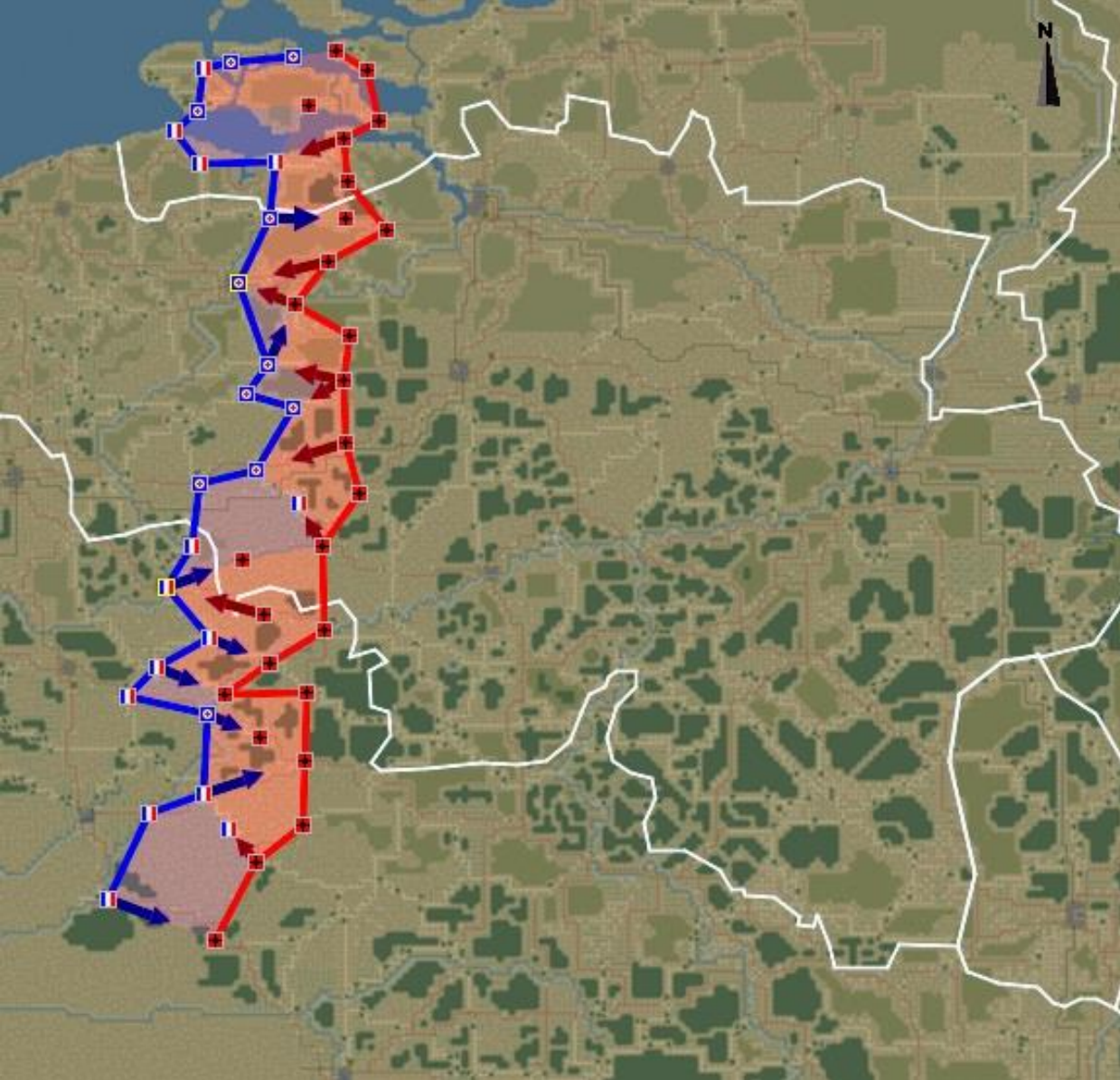
A highly visible abstraction of control.



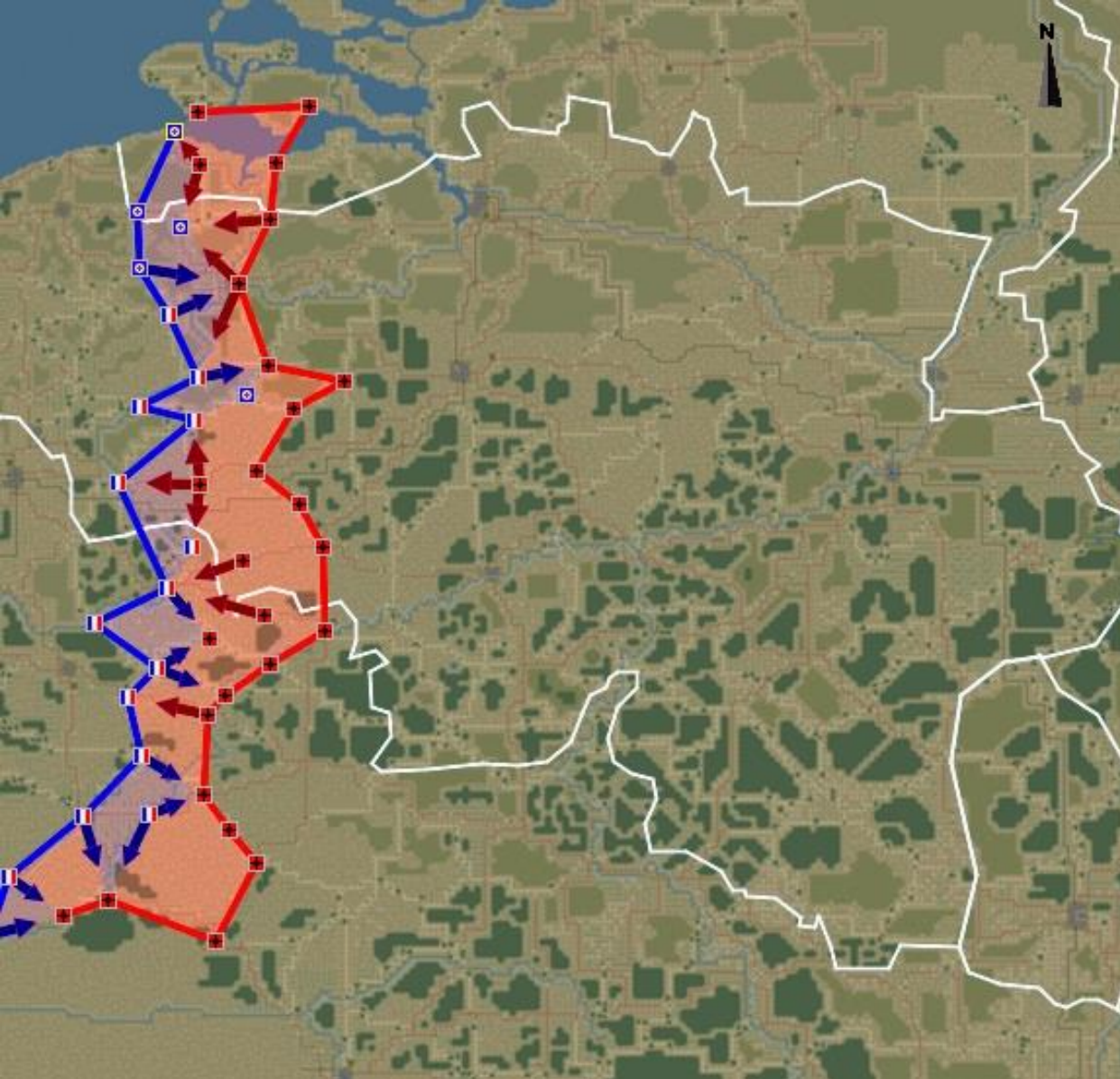


Shadowbane Political Map.





WW2 Online Belgian Front, Friday



WW2 Online Belgian Front, Saturday



# TERRITORIAL CONTROL DESIGN CHALLENGES



PVP

Endgames based on it have to take PvP problems very seriously.

# THE SIX GOLDEN RULES OF PVP

- \* PvP Endgames always excite the imagination more than PvE Endgames.
- \* Players aren't as hardcore as they think they are.
- \* 5% of your population can destroy the other 95%.
- \* Teamwork and numbers dominate.
- \* Fairness matters more than in PvE.
- \* Losing repeatedly sucks.

# THE ZERG

Superior numbers shouldn't trump all.





# LOSERS

Most people will not pay \$15 a month, and log in daily, to be on the losing team.



It's fun to be a Harlem Globetrotter.

Not so much to be a Washington General.



# STALEMATES

Locked world states are no fun for anyone.



Find a way for game mechanics to reset your political map.

# RESET BUTTONS



World War II Online declares a winner every two months or so, and resets the game.



Shadowbane's recent wipe was actually seen as a positive to most fans.

# RAID ENCOUNTERS

# WHAT ARE RAIDIS?

PvE Endgame, usually 10+ players

Usually some amount of 'trash'

Punctuated by Raid Encounters (Boss Fights)

Usually for Phat Loot

# WHY DO PEOPLE RAID?



**Explorers** like to see new places, fight new enemies, and try out new and different strategies.

# WHY DO PEOPLE RAID?



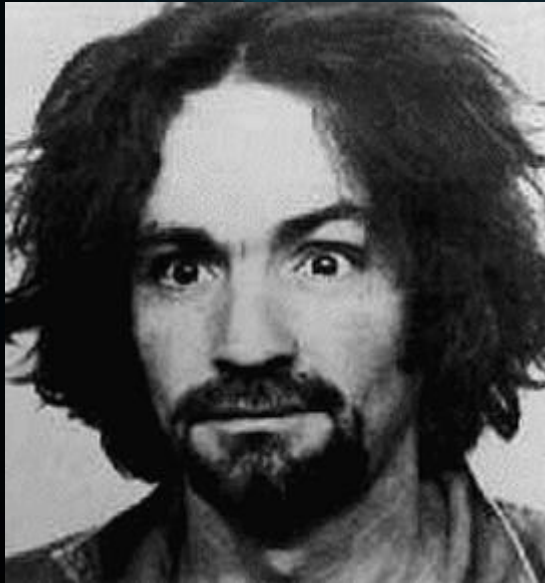
**Achievers** want the notch in their belt. The phat loot is good too.

# WHY DO PEOPLE RAID?



**Socializers** like activities that bring the whole guild online.

# WHY DO PEOPLE RAID?



**Killers** like beating raid activities before other guilds.

# WHY DO PEOPLE RAID?

Because winning as a team is awesome.



# DESIGNING RAID ENCOUNTERS

Starting point: they're puzzle bosses.

Just like Mario, only with 25 people.

# PUZZLE BOSSES

Contrary to public belief, few are 'tank and spans'. Most require tactics, teamwork and personal skill to beat.

The fact other people are required is what makes them hard.

# SHARED MECHANICS

Puzzles all players take part in require tools that all players have.

Tools all players have:

- \* Health
- \* Threat Management
- \* Ability to use acquired items
- \* Ability to use world items
- \* Positioning (Ability to Move and Jump)

# VENRIL SATHIR

(Everquest 2)

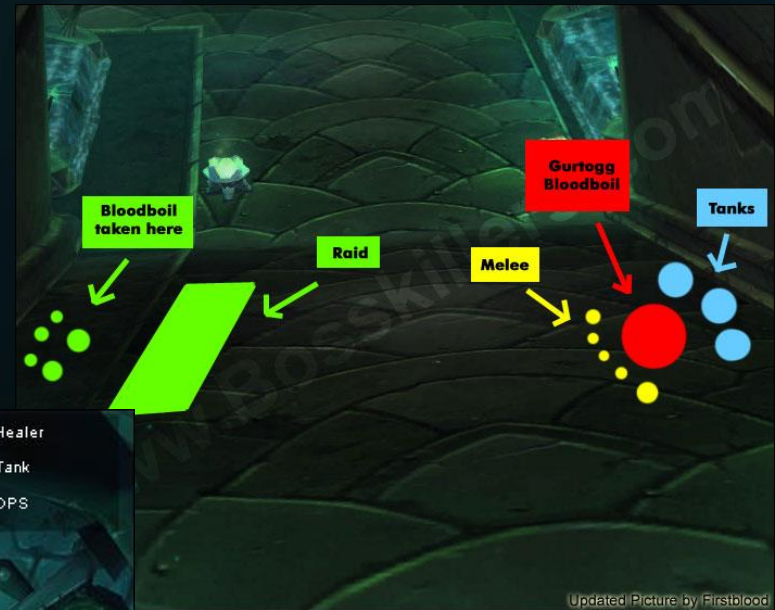
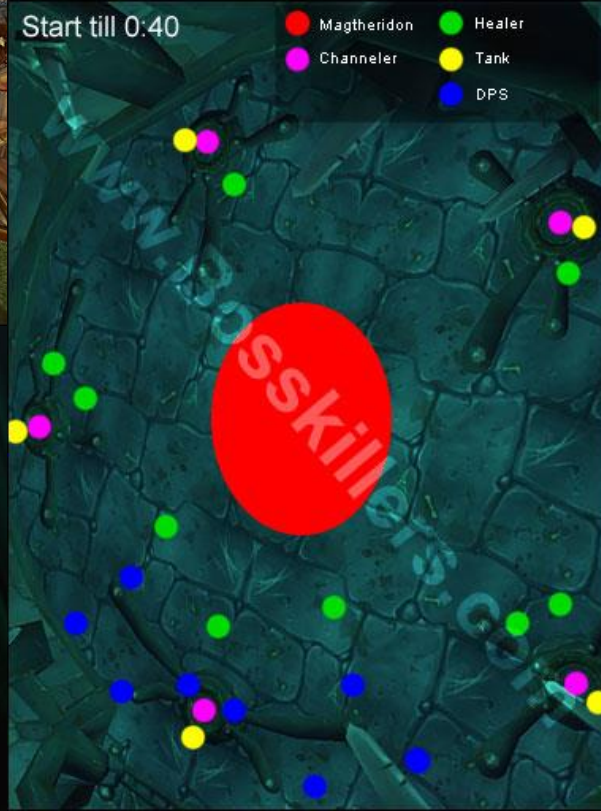


\* Summons 'adds' if any player has more than 60% or less than 20% power.

\* Applies a debuff that increases power consumption on ability use.

# POSITIONING

Positioning is the most common shared mechanic, and is used heavily in most raid encounters.



(WoW positioning pics from Bosskillers.com)

# ENDURANCE

How long can you keep it up?



# SLEEPER

Everquest



The first raid.

200 players. 10 billion HP. 4 hours.

# RANDOMNESS

Forcing players to react is fun.

No-win random combinations is not.



# PRINCE MALCHEZAAR

(World of Warcraft)

- \* Randomly sets non-tank hit points to be 1 HP for 7 Seconds.
- \* Randomly drops totems that deal damage to nearby players.



# CREATE NEW ROLES



Specialized jobs not needed all the time, but that go beyond 'main tank' and 'healer' to force unusual people to step up and go outside their comfort zone.

# HAMIDAN

(City of Heroes)



Requires Add Tanks to pick up spawns.

# VASHJ

(World of Warcraft)

Serpentshrine Cavern  
Lady Vashj

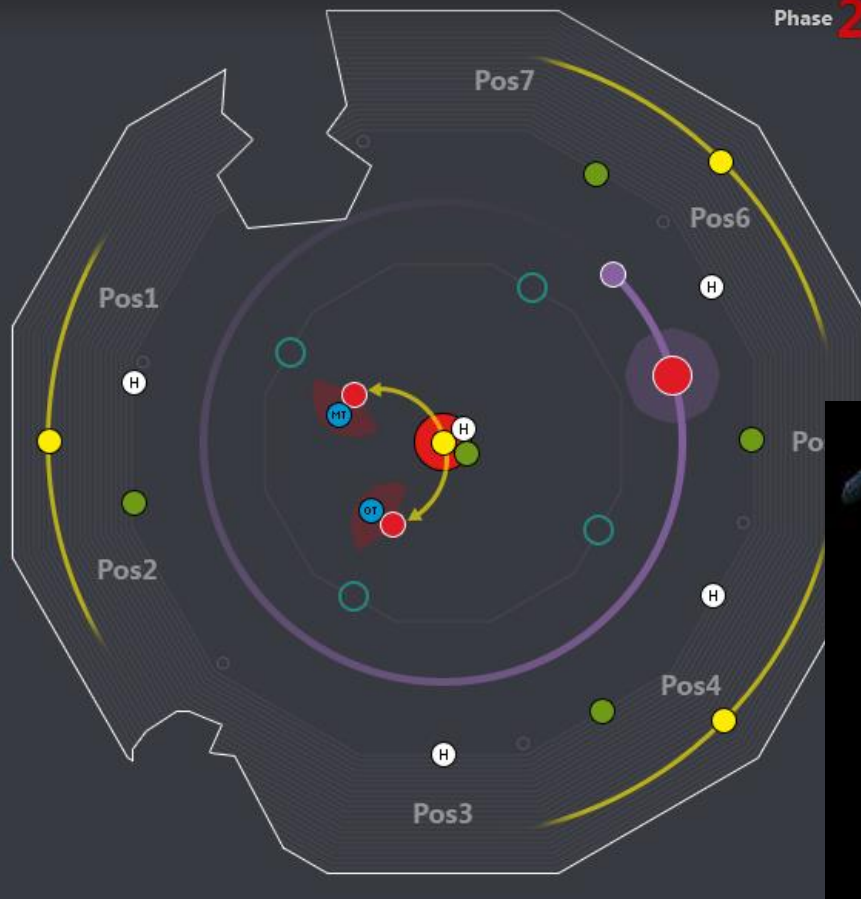
Phase 2

● Strider  
● Warlock Tank  
— Strider Kite-Path

● Naga Elite  
MT Main-Tank  
OT Off-Tank

● Melee DPS  
● Ranged DPS  
● H Healers

Start



- \* Striders spawn with Fear Aura.
- \* Must be tanked at range.
- \* Must be kited away from other players, especially tanks and healers (represented here by purple arrow)



# TOLERANCE

How many player deaths can occur before the attempt just falls apart?



# ARCHIMONDE

(World of Warcraft)

- \* Randomly throws players in air for falling damage.
- \* Randomly DOTs players (must be decursed).
- \* Randomly drops flame trails to avoid.
- \* If anyone dies, the raid takes 3500 damage.



# ISSUES WITH RAIDS

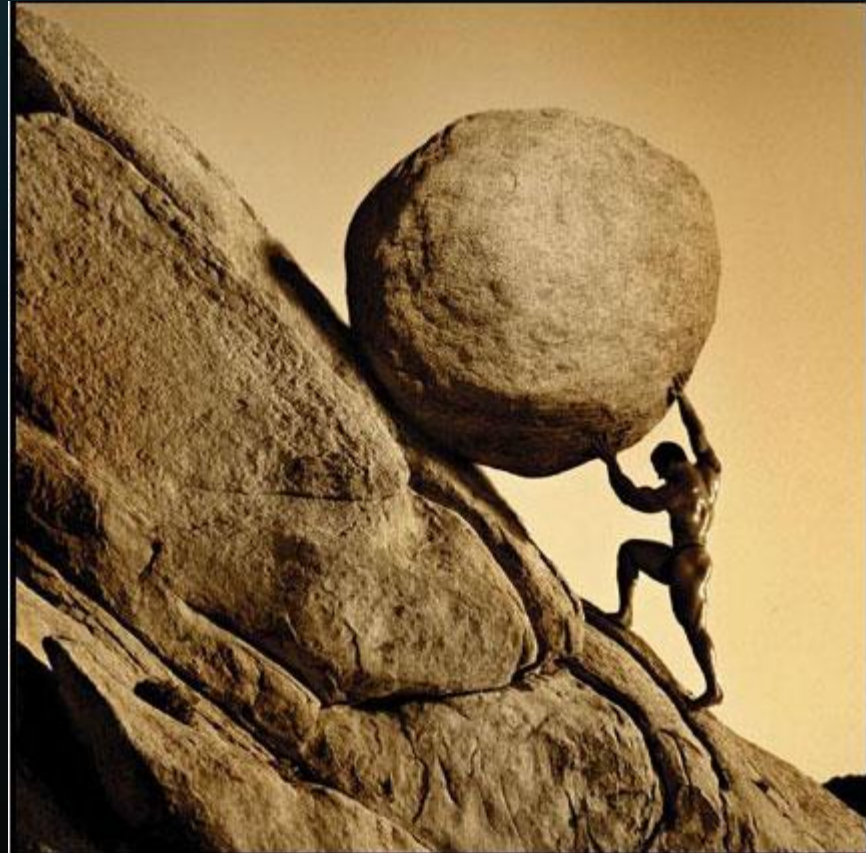
# CONTENT-HEAVY

Making a raid game means committing to racing to get frequent content out to your players.

# REPETITION

Puzzles by their nature become pretty uninteresting once you know the trick.

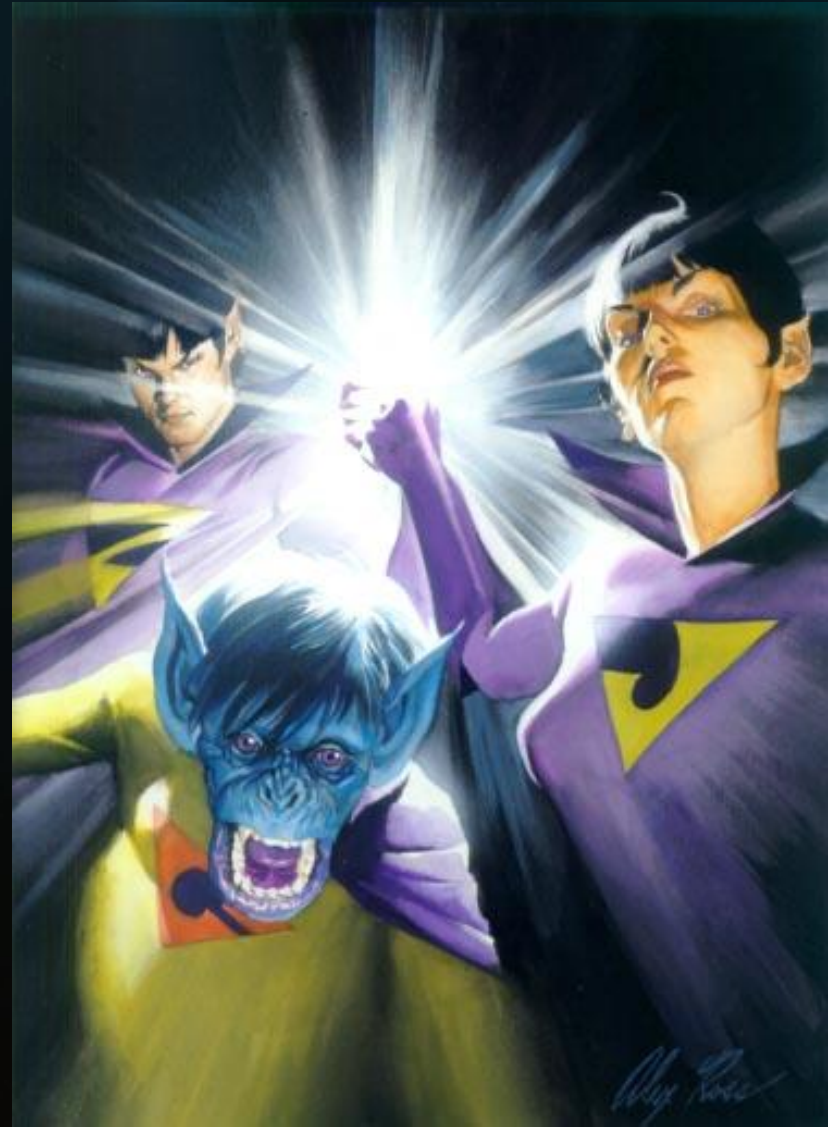
Moreso when everyone's got the loot.



# PLAYER STRATIFICATION

The more players are spread out in terms of gear and levels, the thinner the recruiting pool.

At that point, you're forced to let just about anyone into your guild.



# THE BENCH

If 25 people are needed to raid, the guild needs at least 35.

This results in 10 people with a “put me in, coach!” attitude.

Good guilds need a deep bench, but players won't benchwarm forever.



# OVERPOWERED CLASSES

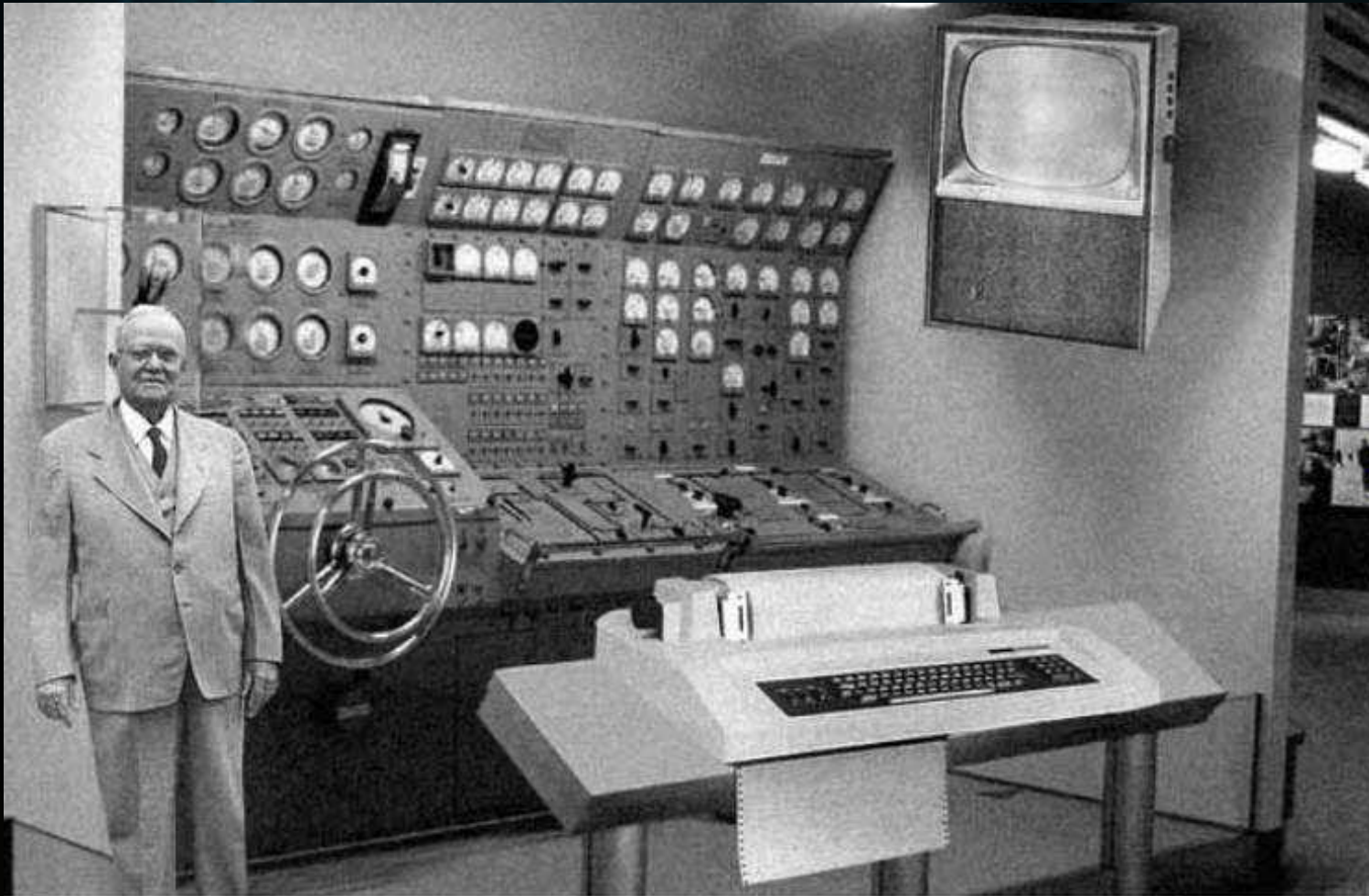
If there are a limited number of slots, certain classes perceived as vital or overpowered can take more than their fair share.



# ELDER GAME DESIGN CHALLENGES

# TECHNOLOGY

Can your servers even handle 100 people in  
the same space? Can the player's client?





# TESTING

How to Balance and QA a game meant to take  
100 people weeks before tomorrow's hotfix?

# FRAGILITY

Endgame content often hinges on a couple of key people, especially leadership. If they have to take a night off, the guild may as well.

If they burn out and leave, the guild itself is threatened.



# CRITICAL MASS

Your elder game may be unplayable without enough players.

This becomes especially a concern once the game starts to age.



# INTERFACE

GUIs designed for newbies fall apart.



World of Warcraft Basic UI

Group 1

Lokos

Setrinos

Hurtmemore

Ceropegia

Laluna

Decursive P S X

Fathom-Lord Kar...

Knight-Captain Chatterbox  
<Impulse>

Hurtmemore  
<Impulse>

Montyro  
<Impulse>

Nathrezim  
<Impulse>

Knight-Lieutenant Shamon  
<Impulse>

Sultanhonen

Delucia

Setrinos

Eltopee

Shamonu

Hurtmemore

Landoe 505

Ankelgnas...

Hadess

Oakenfold

Montyro

Nathrezim

Ceropegia

Nekari

Koyotee

Altena

Ferel

Laluna

Jikozani

Lillesol

Gregaurius

Kakarott

Groingnas...

Lokos

MT Targets

Setrinos's Target	<No Target>
Hurtmemore's Target	<No Target>
Groingnasher's Target	<No Target>
Jikozani's Target	<No Target>
Groingnasher's Target	<No Target>

Healing Done R S X

1. Carsel	449440 (15%)
2. Lokos	418590 (13.9%)
3. Oakenfold	416705 (13.9%)
4. Gregaurius	390668 (13%)
5. Ferel	370213 (12.3%)
6. Hadess	357202 (11.9%)
7. Shamonu	288047 (9.6%)
8. Hurtmemore	49625 (1.7%)
9. Setrinos	48426 (1.6%)
10. Jikozani	37630 (1.3%)

Resurrection Monitor

16 40 1 0 1 82 19

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 C-F C=C

Omen - Fathom-Lord Karathress

Name	TPS	Threat	%
Omen			
Skinner			

New version available! r.55457 (Montyro)

52 fps 47.2 MiB

74% Bartender3 Prat2.0 SWStats2Fu Big Wigs

3665 37 56 cyCircled

20:36 [Guild] <Delucia:3>: didnt dare to move a inch :o

20:36 [R] <Shamonu:4>: like landoe

20:36 [R] <Shamonu:4>: WIN

20:37 [Guild] <Litsaki>: what he dropped then ??^^

20:37 Dominique has gone offline.

20:37 [Guild] <Delucia:3>: can link

20:37 [Guild] <Delucia:3>: 3 sec

20:37 <Dominique> has come online.

20:37 Your share of the loot is 4 Silver, 65 Copper.

20:37 [Guild] <Delucia:3>: [Ranger-General's Chestguard] [Fathomstone]

20:28 [S] <Delucia:3>: ur calling me a liar? : (

20:28 [S] <Jikozani:2>: now accept :p

20:28 [S] <Delucia:3>: why? :O

20:28 Hurtmemore licks Setrinos.

20:29 [S] <Delucia:3>: ?

20:29 Jikozani gently pats Delucia.

20:29 [S] <Landoe:5>: im here

20:29 [S] <Hadess:2>: here

20:33 Altena cries on Serpentshrine Parasite's shoulder.

World of Warcraft Advanced Raider UI (Fan developed).

Name	Threat	%Max	TPS
Dershivar	16.5k	100	687
Getafix	11.2k	68	788
Oloth	3009	18	0
Force	2956	18	269
Sanctus	2855	17	90
Timbre	1604	10	0
Beliz	1524	9	95
Silantha	714	4	0

KTM 19.6  
1 1 / 8

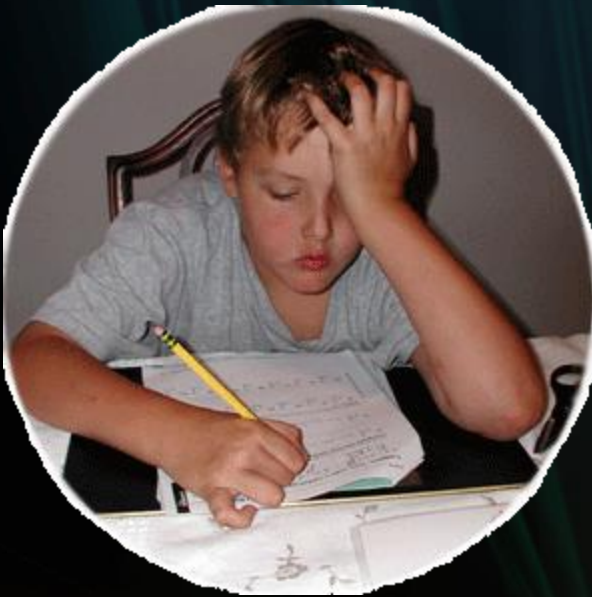
# REQUIRED APPS

Should you balance with the expectation  
all players are using Voice and Threatmeters?

Is your elder game playable if you break them?

# HOMEWORK

Beware of creating repeated 'required' work before the player can play –  
especially consumables.



# GUILD MANAGEMENT

Pity the guild master who has to keep his motley crew together. And give him some tools.





# MATCHMAKING

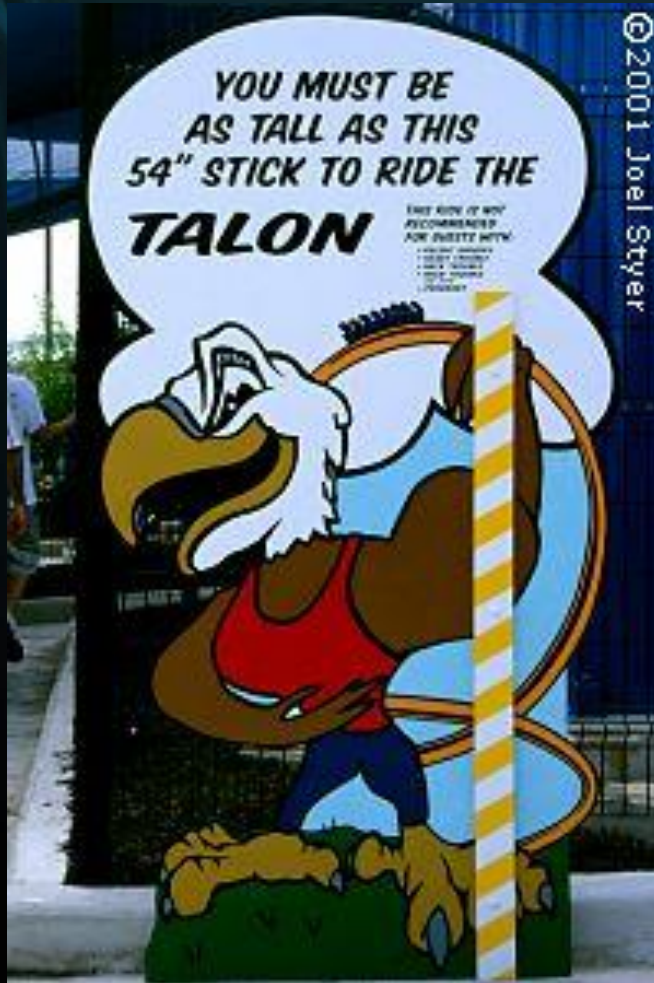
The game will be stickier if the player is in a guild he likes.

Don't depend on serendipity.

# PREP WORK

What if players don't have the patience to grind to the endgame they really would rather play?

What if they have to do it a second time?



Do massively multiplayer games need elder gameplay?

YES

# WHY?

“Massive” is our unique selling proposition.

Features that embrace that tend to capture the imagination.

Questions?