

Art & World of ARENA

THE CONTEST



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Tanares

Provinces and points of interest



Kolbjörn

Northarbor Village

Blake Island

Kolbjörn City

Blossom Town

Kolachi City

Outumn

Fisherman's Wharf

Grassroot Island

Ayefall City

Goldraft City

Astérion City

Desdemona Village

Bauron's Denture

Ubel

Stravian

Eb'boria Village

Malland City

Mirare Town

Deverell City

Galley's Town

Bluhaven City

Goldraft City

Ubellian Fire Pits

Seashores

Mustardseed Town

Feargus City

City of Rorth

Ben'net

Cold Valley's Crater

Septentrional Passing

Ironhand Supreme Headquarters

Capital

Skybell City

Bluhaven City

Mustardseed Town

Feargus City

City of Rorth

Tsvetan

Sawyer's Village

Hajal Village

Bak Forest

Bakurve Village

Imperial Capital

Ahimoth City

Arcana

Mystical

Eferhild Citadel

Reginheraht

Nabhendu Monastery

Alkira Mountain

Mesoriver City

Reginheraht's Magical Research Tower

Umay Town

Yama

Yamanoma City

Watchkeeper's Town

Yama Bunkatsu

Sindile Forest Outskirts

Sindile Forest Dephts



The South



Geography

The South of Tanares is hot, inhospitable, and barely civilized. The arid deserts, lava pools and scalding dunes were always difficult to navigate, even for those who lived their entire lives in the region.

The geographical obstacles found in the Tsvetan deserts stimulated the development of maritime sciences and navigation techniques in the Central Sea, specially during the Draconic Age, when the Mystical Kingdom had strong commercial relationships with the West. The intense ship activity from East to West, and vice versa,

has only increased the already accentuated isolation of the South, to the point when nature simply buried many old roads, due to the lack of traffic.

“I think there is another world beyond Bauron’s Denture and the Tsvetan desert, but that cannot be confirmed, as there’s no difference between going too far south and taking a dip at a lava pool.”

- Remnis Ortwhile, renowned cartographer.



Azymor, the Red Dragon

Legend says that a Red Dragon is the guardian of the entire South, though nobody living has ever seen him. No other kind of Dragon would suit the South better, given its intense volcanic activity, rivers and pools of lava - both underground and on the surface -, and scalding heat coming from the Sun.

“In the end, everyone returns to dust. Or ashes, if you find Azymor.”

- Popular saying in the South.

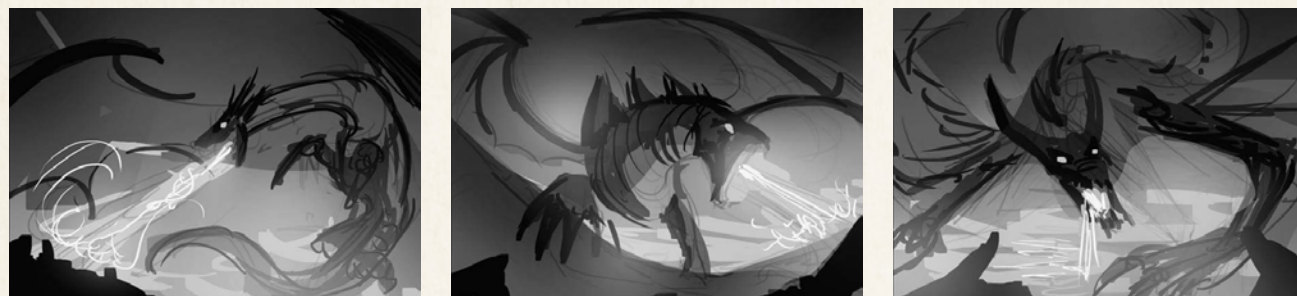
Residents of the Tsvetan Province claim Azymor lives among them, and that he is the reason why it is impossible to survive the heat if one travels too deep into the south, beyond the regions covered by the world maps.



Ubellians, on the other hand, believing in a different story, protect the *Ubellian Fire Pits* as the sacred territory where Azymor hibernates. Protected by a circular mountain range, accessing the interior is difficult (and nobody seems to be foolish enough to try). Ubellians built a sacred cordon a few miles away from the entrances, beyond which it is forbidden to talk or emit loud sounds, and the only activity allowed is leaving offerings to Azymor, considered a deity, as an offspring of the Gods.



The ultra rare dragon scale is sometimes found around the Ubellian Fire Pits, and used to craft expensive gear in Astérion City. In the image, the Draconic Shield.

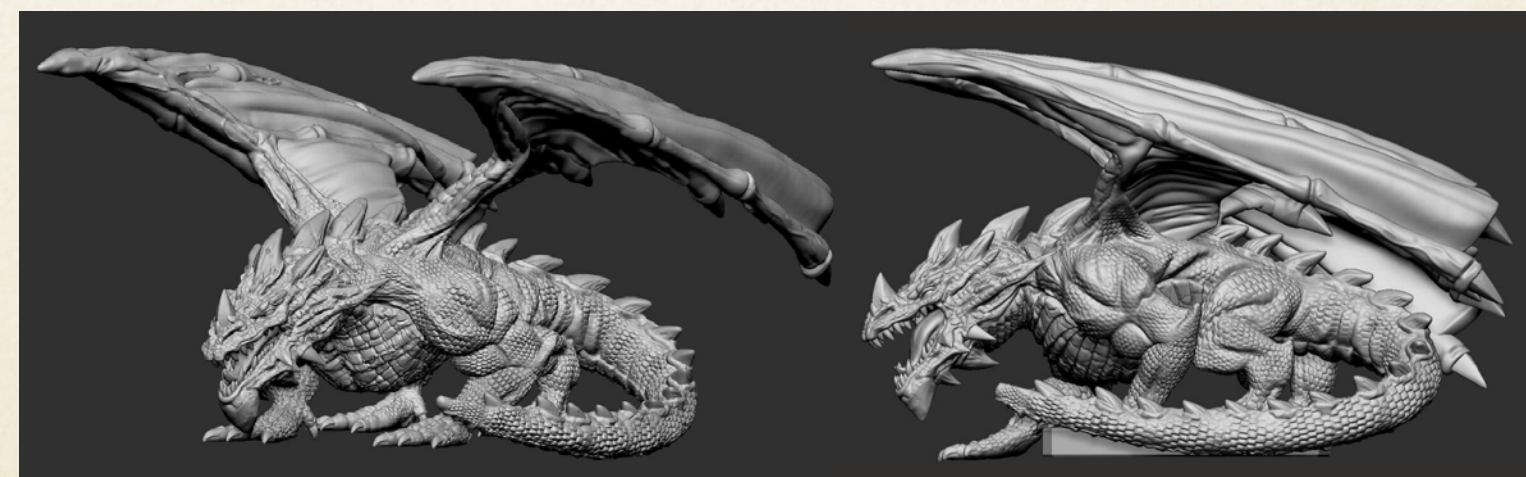


Dragon Miniature



Overestimating our initial calculations regarding the maximum possible height of the dragon miniature coming inside the Core Box, the first model, although already impressive, had a passive stance. It looked like he was waiting for his human owner to mount on him.

Unfitting for a fearsome Boss, we tweaked the original sculpt to open his wings and mouth, and aggressively raise one of his front paws, to reach the final position.



Society and imperial presence

If the strength of the Imperial presence in a region is an indication of how civilized that region is, the South remains in the Ancient Age. The southern people are poorly educated, have almost no contact with Provinces to the north of Tsvetan and Ubel, and they are raised in an environment that requires one to move around and be constantly prepared to pillage unwary travelers, smaller groups, and villagers who were dumb enough to settle down somewhere and stock food.

For these reasons, the rest of the Empire coined an expression that refers to all southern people: **barbarians**.

Given the warlike, aggressive nature of the barbarians, and the impossibility to build large, self-sustainable cities in the South, there are very few records in history books about large southern civilizations.



According to legend, the Gods descended upon Tanares, as Dragons, to decree that massive bloodshed would be punished with natural catastrophes. That became known as The Malrokian Curse.

Nowadays, barbarians spread throughout the entire South in countless small tribes, with little chance to merge and assemble larger groups. The last great barbarian leaders, who managed to unite several tribes, all died in the *Arcana War*.

Recognizing that small tribes can't make large enough wars (the Malrokian Curse was never provoked in the South), the Empire decided not to waste resources sending the Ironhand to improve security there. Instead, the Emperor decided to build large Ironhand outposts in the most important cities located close to the southern borders, such as *Feargus* and *Astérion*, to prevent bold barbarian groups from creating trouble outside their own provinces.



Orcs

It is undeniable that the inhospitable conditions of the South strengthen those who manage to survive. While the human races that dominate Ubel are tougher than those found throughout the rest of Tanares, they still don't come close to the sturdiness that Nature sculpted in the bodies of the orcish race.

Orcs dominate the dark deserts of the southeast, and what is scary about them is that they seem to outperform humans not only in raw strength, but in the ability to organize. While humans never respect their superiors and always plot to surreptitiously overthrow those in command, Orcs respect their stronger

counterparts, because the only way they can conceive removing leaders from their position is through direct life-or-death confrontation.

The largest known orcish group is run by Kor'dal, hands down the strongest Orc living.

Several years ago, his small tribe had no clear leader, but respected the decisions of its three strongest members: Katar, Kaa'mant and Kor'dal. Being longtime friends and not having difficult decisions to make allowed them to run the group somewhat peacefully for a long time.

That is, until they found *The Lava Axe*.



Orcs value upper body mobility, to take advantage of their superior strength, and protection of feet, because one can never guess how hot the ground is in the southern regions (not to mention the poisonous snakes and scorpions found in the desert). That means their chests are always bare and their feet are always covered.





Katar, the Barbarian

“War. Blood. Battle. They don’t need a purpose. They are the purpose.”

Katar had never learned anything but to constantly move with his tribe, sacking travelers and weaker groups while running away from church inquisitors, who seemed to promote large massacres against groups of Orcs in the forgotten South.

One day, Katar and his friends Kor’dal and Kaa’mant sought shelter from a sandstorm at a high cave on a mountain cluster. At night, by the time when it had already gone away, they heard a commotion.

At a distance, by the entrance to another cave, a large group of humans seemed to be celebrating. It would’ve been impossible to see what was happening at that stark, moonless night, but the scene was intensely illuminated by a burning artifact, a magical axe that survived the days of the ancient dwarfs and had just been discovered.

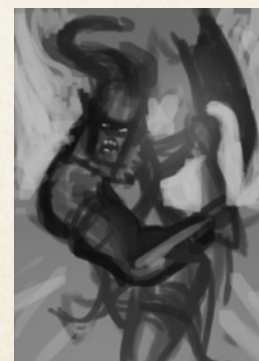
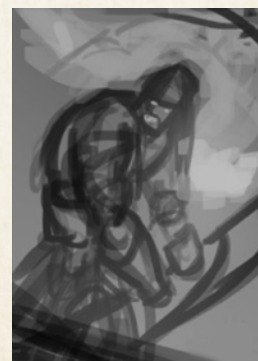
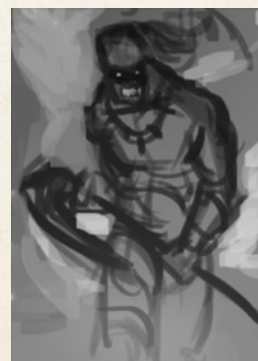


The ancient and mysteriously extinct dwarfs of yore were masters of turning common objects into precious artifacts, abundant in their magical properties. Enchanted with a Fire Gem, the Lava Axe melts its targets, but feels surprisingly cold to the handler.

The tribe leaders didn’t need a debate. They gave each other a look, and without second thought, they rushed to the group of careless humans, weapons in hand.

They used the same old strategy as always: Kaa’mant was the most skilled, so he quickly struck isolated targets with his bow. Kor’dal was the strongest, so he distracted the largest pack of guards. Katar was the fastest, so he rushed to secure the objective. The pitiful human could barely raise that heavy axe against Katar, and that was the last thing he did.

Katar had barely grabbed the axe’s handle when he felt an intense pain at the back of his neck, and passed out. He woke up, half-dead, at the bottom of a pile of burning bodies.



Using the little strength he had left, Katar managed to escape and roll on the sand to put out a fire in his leg.

All humans they had faced were burning. At the top of the pile, he recognized Kaa'mant, dead. His chest was sunken and bruised in a way Katar had seen on countless enemies: it was the mark of Kor'dal's mace.

It was clear Kor'dal had betrayed his friends and would now become King of the Desert. Katar fled to *Feargus City* before anyone found him in that state. Outside of the desert, Katar learned about Arenas and started to fight in Feargus with great success.

Katar's fearsome looks, aggressiveness and survival instincts made an instant impact at the city's fighting scene. The Arenas' sparse fighting schedule wasn't enough for Katar, though. He wanted more. He wanted to become the strongest and exert his revenge, so he ended up founding a Fight Club, composed mostly by clandestine Arena fighters.

With time, Katar became a respected, silent leader. His "club" now has a large number of loyal members. It has come the time for Katar to exert revenge against Kor'dal, the traitor who left him to die in the southern desert. Will he succeed?



Although that doesn't seem like much, behold, above, the major change made since Katar's earliest artwork. We felt Tanares suffered a bit from the lack of contact with races that deviated from the humanoid standard, so we changed Katar's face to a more monstrous shape, with larger teeth, distancing orcs from the largely predominant humans.

To the right, you see different steps of the initial sketch's evolution. The first sketches lack in detail, as their purpose is to focus on different postures. The Art Director chooses one of them considering a number of factors, such as how easily the character's card will be recognized among others. Afterwards, a few details get added to the chosen sketch, such as Katar's maori-inspired bodypaint. The Hero then gets modeled and, finally, colored.



The difference between Katar's fight club and clandestine Arenas is that the former does not intend to solve disputes. Its sole purpose is to increase, through serious fighting, the abilities of those who participate. Those who join the club are required to be willing to shed some of their own blood for the development of another fighter, never taking things personally.

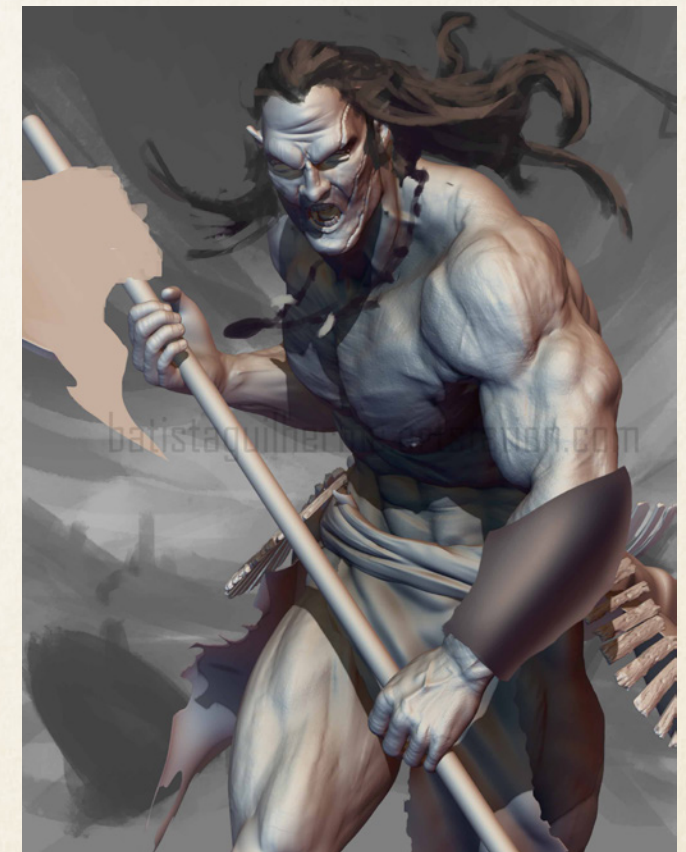


To the left, the first sculpt made for Katar. It was similar to the posture found in the artwork, but we felt that on the battlefield it was too passive for such a strong character. To the right, the reworked version: much more muscular, with maximum opening of legs, and dynamic, aggressive upper body.

Katar was originally conceived on a 3.5 RPG Campaign played for eight years by one of the designers' friends. In that campaign, Kor'dal was his greatest rival.

Katar is the first illustration Guilherme made for Arena: the Contest.

Katar is the easiest Hero to control, being a straightforward combatant that will deal huge amounts of raw damage in almost all strategies you apply. It is in line with Orcs' behavioral tendencies, as they don't formulate complicated tactics, only wanting to hit their targets as hard as they can, and as fast as possible.



Eferhild Citadel

Entrenched right in the middle of the Tsvetan desert, *Eferhild* is the greatest exception to the absence of large cities in the South. That is because the Mystical Kingdom built it hundreds of years ago, at the very edge of the kingdom's old territory, using knowledge and magic that the world lost when *Arcana* fell.

The walls that surround the city block the constant sand storms and heat waves coming from the desert, making it an inhabitable place. That doesn't mean that the city is cool, however, because rivers of lava flow in underground chambers all over the volcanic Tsvetan region, and some of this lava pops out in pools throughout the desert, including inside Eferhild.

Knowing that, the Mystical builders conceived an original defense against potential aggressors: through methods unknown, they magically extracted the underground lava near Eferhild and made it flow in a river that flows all around

Eferhild's outer walls. It is the hot version of castles of yore, which had pools of water or spike pits dug around their walls.



Historians can only speculate as to why the mystics decided to build a city so far south. The creative ones say they studied advanced magic and the mysteries of the world in the lava pools and underground tunnels probably built inside its walls, while the practical ones say it was simply an outpost to detect in advance barbarian groups marching towards the kingdom. If the latter is correct, not only Eferhild was unable to prevent the biggest coalition in history to siege

Arcana, but, ironically, it is now occupied by the Orcs against whom it was meant to defend.

Over one hundred years ago, when an alliance of armies sieged Arcana, the Mystical Kingdom's Capital City, all distant outposts were called to help. That left Eferhild's defenses on low capacity. After *The Demise*, when it became obvious that the reinforcements sent were never coming back to Eferhild, the few survivors ran the Citadel to the best of their abilities, but that left the walls almost defenseless.



They had ties of friendship with the Elves from *Sindile Forest*, who also considered themselves survivors of the Mystical Kingdom, but the elves had to worry about the defense of their own home in the forest and rarely traveled that deep into the desert.

About a decade ago, the Citadel had reached its lowest resident count ever. All of the original survivors were dead, and the new generation had never felt the same fear of threats from the outside world; that left Eferhild exposed to the attack of a large group of Orcs, lead by Kor'dal, who easily conquered the Citadel, killing all of its former inhabitants.

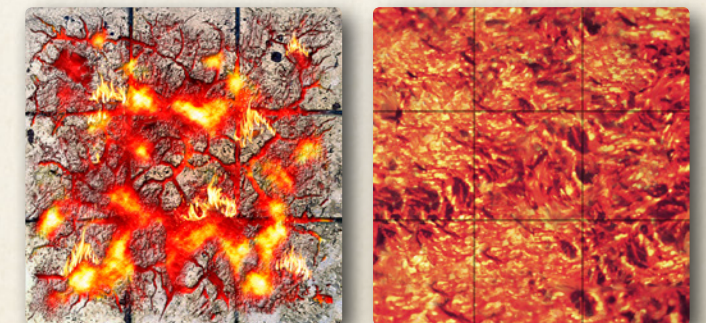


The city also counts on internal magical defenses. This Orb captures and stores the intense southern Sun's rays to shoot periodical arcane missiles into trespassers.



Nowadays, one of the greatest threats to the imperial peace and the avoidance of the Malrokian Curse may be quickly growing up inside Eferhild, where a large number of strong Orcs seem to live, as settling down has made Kor'dal's tribe grow to alarming numbers...

Underground lava may erupt from the ground, or flow freely in rivers of hotness. Below, two different kinds of lava tiles made for the game.





Jorana, the Amazon

"Mercy is not always a good thing; Spare the wolves, sacrifice the sheep."

Deep in the South, almost at the point-of-no-return, where *Bauron's Denture Mountain Range* begins, lies the *City of Rorth*, home of the toughest humans in all Tanares.

These barbarians maintain a big city on scorching, infertile lands, through a method that would shock most tanarians (if they even knew this city existed): they wage war against every single unfortunate settlement around, stealing all the food, killing all males, and kidnapping all grown women, who are forced to reproduce, thus giving birth to Rorth's next generation of men.

The male offspring grows under the toughest of military disciplines, while females, deemed weaker, are simply abandoned at the entrance of a cavern to the south of Rorth, at the foot of *Bauron's Mountain*, where men don't dare enter, because they believe there's

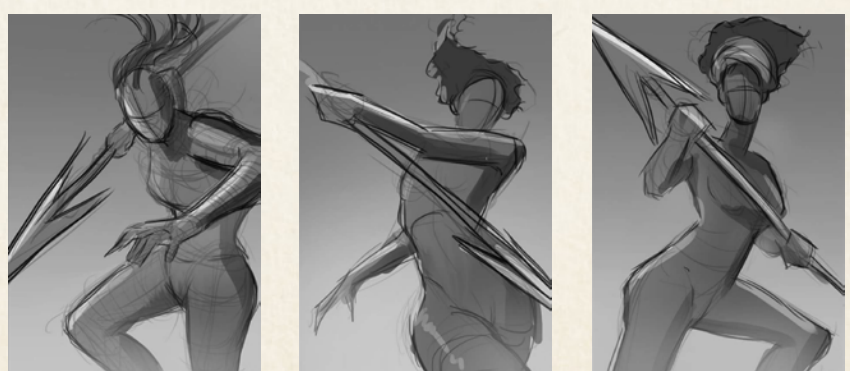
where Bauron, the dark God, lives. Rorth simply cannot afford feeding women that would contribute less to the pillaging of surrounding cities.

Centuries ago, one of these outside women fled the city to rescue her female baby, who had just been cast out. Having nowhere else to go, she entered and explored the cavern, until she eventually found an exit to the other side: a never-explored paradisiac clearing, surrounded by mountains, with fertile grounds, fruitful trees, and water. She called that improbable sanctuary *Amazonia*.

Over time, this founding mother ended up rescuing and raising every single baby left at the cave's entrance, building a large community of amazons. They are all educated in the arts of combat, in case they eventually needed to protect their secluded, secret, blessed home.



Spears are most amazons' weapon of choice, as it is a good defensive choice against the axes and swords preferred by most close-combat barbarians. Some are infused with subtle elemental magic (Jorana's draws the energy of the thunder to emit shockwave pulses).



Their biggest threat came not long ago: a large group of northern dwarf warriors and miners, exiled from *Malland*, decided to settle in Bauron's Denture, to dig its entrails, in pursuit of the legendary *bauronite*; but Rorth would never allow it, as they considered it their sacred duty to protect Bauron's lair.

They reached a dead-lock. As the saying goes, 'nothing is more solid than a dwarf on a mountain', so the barbarians' offensives couldn't expel the dwarfs, while the dwarfs couldn't reach Bauron's Mountain without meeting strong resistance from Rorth.

The dwarfs ended up provoking the Empire, summoning Rorth to an Arena fight for the rights to explore and mine Bauron's Mountain

under the protection of the Ironhand. Rorth accepted with disdain, confident that it would be an easy fight, and scheduled a free-for-all tournament to determine which barbarians would have the honor of fighting for the City at the Imperial Capital.



The Arena of Fate has jurisdiction over the entire world. The result of fights can be enforced by the world's only army - the Imperial Ironhand - to guarantee that the combat winners' disputed interests are met.



Amazons' feelings for Rorth are complex: despite being cast out, unwanted, left to die, they also understand that Rorth is Amazonia's primary defense against discovery and invasion; that's why they all vow to protect Bauron's Mountain and the City of Rorth, if needed.

The amazons, learning about what was going on, were not as confident. They assigned Jorana, the best fighter among them, to a special mission: winning the tournament and the Arena fight, thus guaranteeing perhaps another century of peace for the amazon community.



Jorana disguised as one of the slaves Rorth captured at the most recent pillage, and requested to participate in the tournament. The barbarians only laughed out loud in response, until she knocked two of them down with a single blow, and silence fell.

Before things turned south, the leader intervened and shouted that, if a woman were to win the tournament, shame on all of them, and she would have earned the right to fight for Rorth. What nobody knew is that Rorth's leader was Jorana's father.



Jorana proved her worth by defeating all opponents, getting ultimately elected as the special representative of a city with centuries of history of underestimating the power of women.

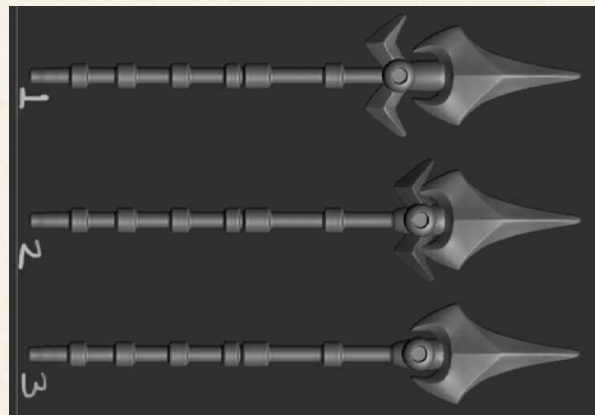
A natural leader, she was also the strategist of Rorth's team in the Arena of Fate, gloriously beating the mighty dwarfs on a bloody battle that ended with Jorana as the sole survivor, and winner.

However, Jorana's sixth sense told her something was wrong. Several barbarians had accompanied her team to the capital, while there

Amazons' stories are a symbol of the power and independence of women. It was of utmost importance that they were not depicted in the nonsensical, although typical, "bikini armor".



were no dwarfs on the enemy's entourage. She immediately pleaded, in public, at the center of the Arena, pointing to the Emperor, an enforcement of the result.



Meanwhile, in Rorth, the dwarfs decided they wouldn't wait on the outcome of the Arena fight, and attacked a city with fewer defending barbarians, many of them injured from the tournament.

After several days of attack, when a dwarf victory seemed certain, Jorana suddenly appeared with a large group of Ironhand soldiers, to save the city of Rorth, and, with that, the amazons' secret.



The name "Jorana" is inspired on one of the designers' favorite fantasy characters: Sor Jorah.

Jorana's concept was voted one of the best in the entire game, making her the character with the highest number of appearances in official products, as she features the covers of the Core Box and Art & World of Arena.



Amazons mine and craft the most incredible and intricate armor, and train their women to fight, should the day come when their sanctuary is discovered and they have to fight for it.