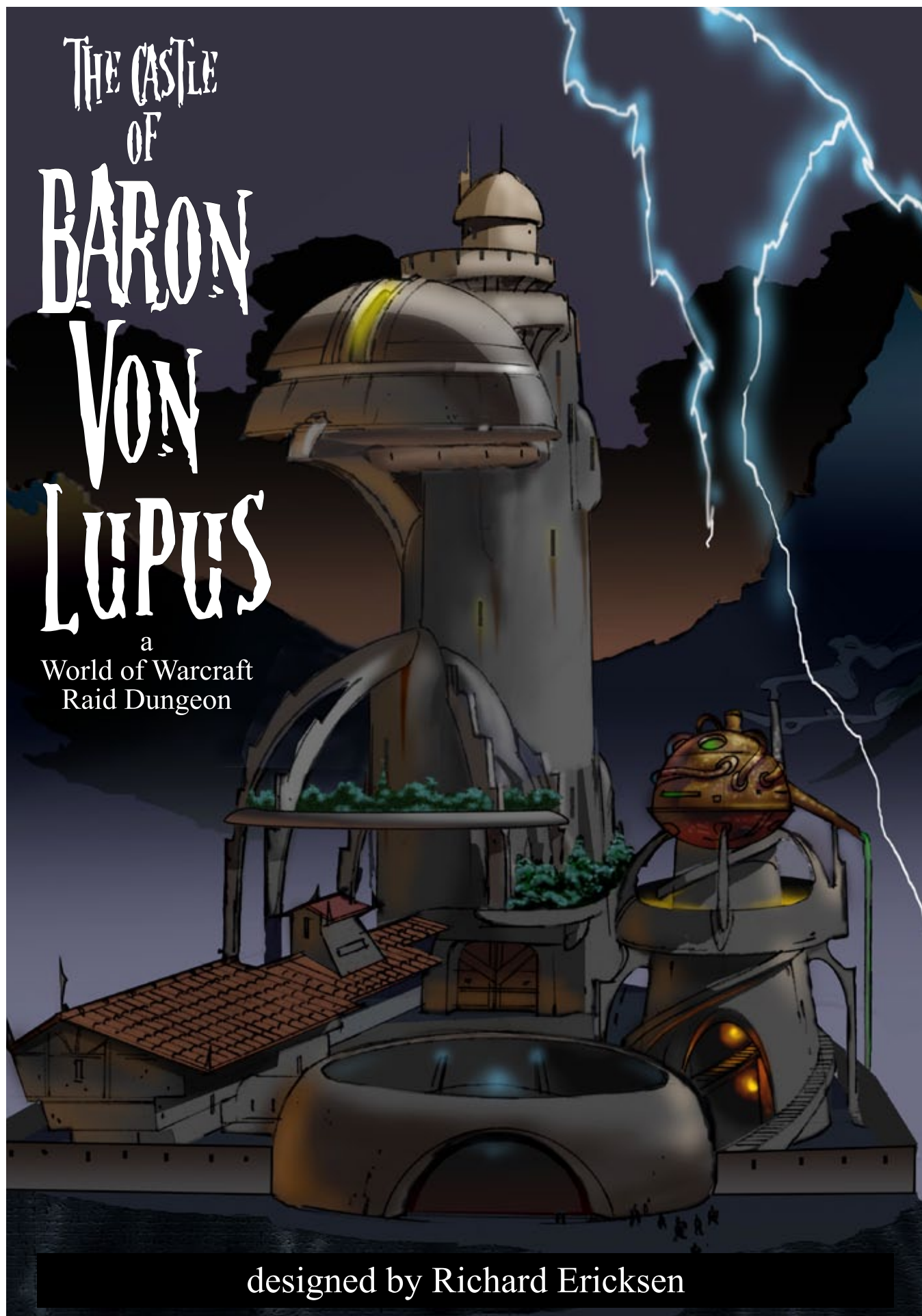


THE CASTLE OF BARON VON LUPUS

a
World of Warcraft
Raid Dungeon



designed by Richard Ericksen



My name is Richard Ericksen. This document serves as an example of a fully fleshed out WoW raid dungeon that I have designed from the ground up. Everything from the background story and lore, to character dialogues, fight mechanics, and dungeon pacing, are found within this guide.

I've just returned to America from five years in Japan, and find myself with an opportunity to really think hard about what I want my next job to be, instead of just taking the next thing that falls into my lap. At this point I'm going straight to the top of my list, and pouring everything I have into making it happen. I want to make games. More specifically, I want to join the Blizzard design team, and help maintain and expand the World of Warcraft universe; adding new and exciting areas for the player base to explore and conquer.

I've always *known* that that I wanted to work in the games industry, but it was a bit of a secret desire, like wanting to grow up and become Superman. Like when little girls tell you they want to grow up to be princesses; you smile and say "that's nice, honey". The fact is, while I may have to accept that I will never be shot from Krypton to Earth in a meteorite, securing a position in the gaming industry is something I feel confident I can achieve.

I've played MMOs since WoW's closed beta, and immediately fell in love with the genre itself. I feel that this is the next step in gaming evolution, and I want to be a part of driving the genre forward. In any gaming situation, I strive to *understand* a game instead of just play it. What makes some games fun? How could a certain aspect be tweaked to make it different, or take it to the next level? I've tanked, healed, and DPSed my way through so many dungeons, encounters, and quests; from the days of leading forty man raids over vent, to soloing dailies, or just functioning as a small cog in part of a larger guild. I feel that I have an understanding of the core of what WoW *is*, and what it's evolving *into*. I *get* it. I want to take that knowledge and give back to the genre that has been a part of my life for these past years. That this would also land me a job in the games industry, at Blizzard, perhaps the most respected firm in the industry, is icing on the cake.

Thanks for taking the time to take a closer look, and please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have for me. A brief resume and list of references can be found inside the back cover.

Thanks again for your time,

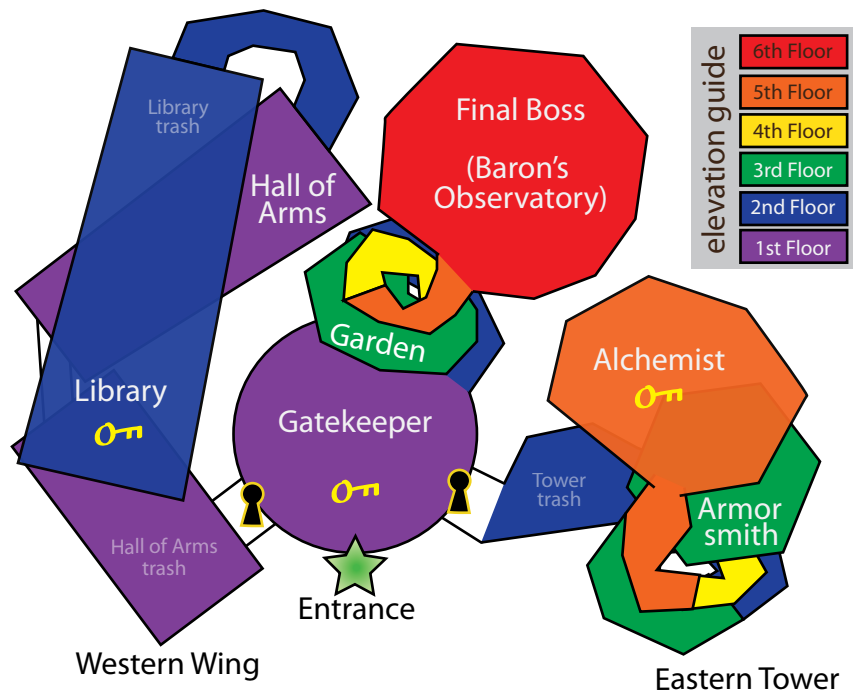
CONTACT INFO EDITED OUT (maybe someone has made a torrent of the original, lol?), because people want to tell me how i'm ZOMGDOINGITRONG. email me at ixobelle@gmail.com with any legitimate questions you may have.

DUNGEON MAP AND FLOW



The Baron's castle is comprised of three distinct wings. There is a courtyard, or Inner Ring, that players enter upon zoning in. There they are immediately confronted with their first obstacle, The Gatekeepers. Upon defeating this encounter, players are given a key that will unlock one of two lower wings, allowing for non-linear clearing of the zone itself.

The final boss of each of these two wings will drop 'the other key' so players are forced to finish a full wing (of their choosing) before moving on to the other lower wing. This prevents people from farming 'the first boss of each wing', and gives players a sense of accomplishment after having cleared one, and been granted access to the second. Once both minor wings are cleared, final access to the Baron's tower is granted, allowing the raid to cleanse the Garden on the way to the final showdown.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

There are two main sections for each zone or area I've outlined in this guide.

The full color pages, typically on the right, give a small sample of the action taking place in each encounter or area, and present a more general overview of the dungeon.

On the backside of each full color page are more intricate descriptions of fight mechanics, phase shifts for the fight, trash mob descriptions, or background story and lore I've come up with for that zone. These feature a muted color palette, and will include schematics where necessary.



All of the storyboards and finished art were conceptualized and sketched in rough form by myself, then passed on to an illustrator I brought on to complete the final color drawings. In this manner, I worked with my own 'internal art department' to bring my initial conceptions and designs to full color for added impact. All of the dungeon design and art direction was my own, and the fight mechanic diagrams or room and castle layout work in Illustrator, as well as the final construction of this document in InDesign were handled by myself.

A basic resume and list of references can be found inside of the back cover.

THE INNER RING

The Inner Ring is the raid's first step into the Baron's Keep. The center of the area is dominated by the Gatekeeper sister; a white, priestly apparition done up in the theme of the Spirit of Redemption. Long flowing robes billow slowly outward, and she gives off a shimmering blue radiance that pulses outward weakly. She's watching the raid, but quiet and unmoving for now. Everywhere you turn, her eyes are silently upon you. Her brother, as yet unknown to the raid, remains hidden, but mocking laughter can be heard over the howling wind that races between the towers overhead.

The ground is rough and worn, with sparse grasses growing up from the cracks. The only objects of note are two crystal structures, one to either side of the priestess. They glow softly, pulsing gently every 20 seconds. This pulsing plays an important role in the fight itself, but for the time being, it's just barely visible.

She lies in wait, her brother unseen (and unknown to beginner raids).



Western Wing

Eastern Tower

INNER RING MECHANICS AND DUNGEON PROGRESSION AT A GLANCE

The instant they zone in, a raid is confronted with the Gatekeepers, the initial gearcheck of the zone. There's no trash beforehand; the instance starts directly with the encounter, similar to how Razorgore was the first thing you saw upon zoning into Blackwing Lair. The main area of the inner ring is pretty barren, except for the guardian herself, and her two crystal pylons pulsing gently.

Like Naxx, just zoning in will give you an immediate indication of how 'finished' this Raid ID is. With Naxx, there are the little glowing eyes that light up when a particular wing is cleared. With the Baron's courtyard, while the pylons themselves play a part in defeating the Gatekeeper, once defeated, they also play a role in opening the final (northern) tower entrance.

The Gatekeeper herself drops a 'small key' that can be used to open either of the minor wings of the dungeon. The raid chooses which to open, but *can't open both*. Once they've chosen, they need to clear that entire wing. Another small key will drop off the final boss of the wing they choose, allowing them to open the other minor wing.

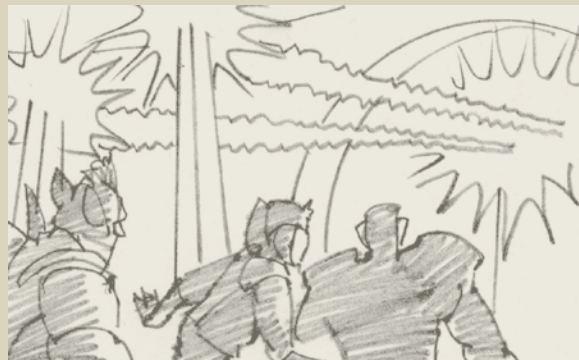
As the final bosses in each of the minor wings are defeated, a lever is flipped that allows for the *activation* of the pylons in the courtyard below. These emit beams that focus on the final tower's doorway, nullifying a magical barrier that surrounds the door, and allowing it to finally be breached.

Thus, zoning in and seeing the Gatekeeper



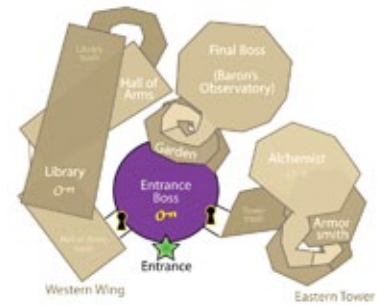
tells you the instance is fresh. Zoning in and not seeing her, but not seeing any beams yet, indicate that she's dead, but neither of the sub wings have been cleared yet. One beam up means one wing down, etc.

If we wish to have even greater granularity,



once we enter the west wing the western pylon could glow faintly, indicating that wing has been entered (but not cleared yet).

THE GATEKEEPERS



Raid: *"We have come to put the Baron out of his misery. It would be an act of mercy, which is more than he rightfully deserves. We come on behalf of those whose lives he tramples daily in an effort to wield powers which are beyond his ability to contain, much less manipulate. He has brought this upon himself, now stand aside so that we may cleanse this land of his unearthly taint!"*



The gatekeepers are twins that guard the entrance to the Baron's Keep. The sister is a holy/discipline priest, and draws power from two pillars that play a major role in the encounter.

Her brother, a warlock, tends to linger back for much of the fight, and only appears from time to time to punish sloppy gameplay on the part of the raid. He also acts a wildcard; a variable in an otherwise smooth and steady encounter. An intelligent raid will learn to avoid his tricks, and focus their fire-power on the sister.



Both archetypes are familiar to players, with the warlock casting fears and DoTs, and his sister focusing on priest spells from the discipline or holy talent trees.



The fight itself is a measure of a raid's ability to put out focused DPS, and serves as a gear check for entrance the to the zone proper. There is no attunement to enter the castle, but without the gear to make it past these two, your raid will crumble without having set foot within the castle itself.

GATEKEEPER FIGHT MECHANICS

The tank initiates the fight by talking to her (dialog seen on previous page) when everyone is good to go. Once engaged, she immediately casts a Power Word: Shield upon herself, and begins to draw power from the crystal structures to either side of her. Powerful beams shoot forth from the pylons, and attach to her, making her glow much brighter than before. A normal priest's Power Word: Shield is fairly faint, but hers glows powerfully.

Her number one overpowered boss talent is this bubble. Her Power Word: Shield doesn't have a 'wear off timer' on it, and absorbs ridiculous amounts of damage. While it also leaves her with a Weakened Soul debuff, the debuff only lasts for 5 seconds, then she throws a brand new shield up and you're back to square one. The point here is that she throws a new one up every 5 seconds, and there's no way that a steady stream of DPS is ever going to wear it down within that 5 seconds, and get to where you can actually hit the boss with anything.

It's a huge mystery, until someone realizes that you can shoot one of the targetable crystals behind her; but that doesn't appear to do much either... in fact, it just absorbs the damage thrown at it, too. Then the crystal *pulses*, with an arcane explosion style blast, and she gets hit for the stored up amount of damage all at once. It still isn't enough to break through her shield, though.

The fight basically works like this:

Tank goes in, and initiates the fight. The bubble goes up, and she begins attacking the tank and raid using holy and discipline priest spells. Smites on the main tank, Penance on the offtank (2nd threat), Holy Fire on random raid members. She's a priest, but one of the white flowy ones... she'll throw a Shadow Word: Pain in a pinch, but isn't casting Mind Sear or anything overtly 'shadowy'.

The DPS ignores the boss, gets into position, and waits for a crystal to pulse. After it does, they rip into it, as hard as they can. Healers are even spamming Smites or Wraths when they can afford spare GCDs. After 20 seconds, it pulses again, and all that damage that was stored in the crystal blows outward and hits the boss. While the plink plink plink-ing is enough to be ignored as a constant minimal stream, stored up like this it can't be out-regenned, and it removes the shield (plus inflicts a good chunk of collateral damage). The boss is left vulnerable with a 5 second Weakened Soul debuff. This window of opportunity is the chance for the raid to chuck up DoTs (or just nuke), and then another shield is cast. During this window, she could also cast an interruptable Greater Heal.

Her basic cast routine is to refresh the shield every 5 seconds (when her Weakened Soul debuff wears off), so she would be refreshing the shield at 20 seconds, then the stored up charge hits, and she still has a 5 second debuff before she's able to

put the shield back up again. It's completely pointless to attack her shield at all, since she's putting a brand new one up right before the blast. All DPS should focus on a crystal. This is the basic mechanic.

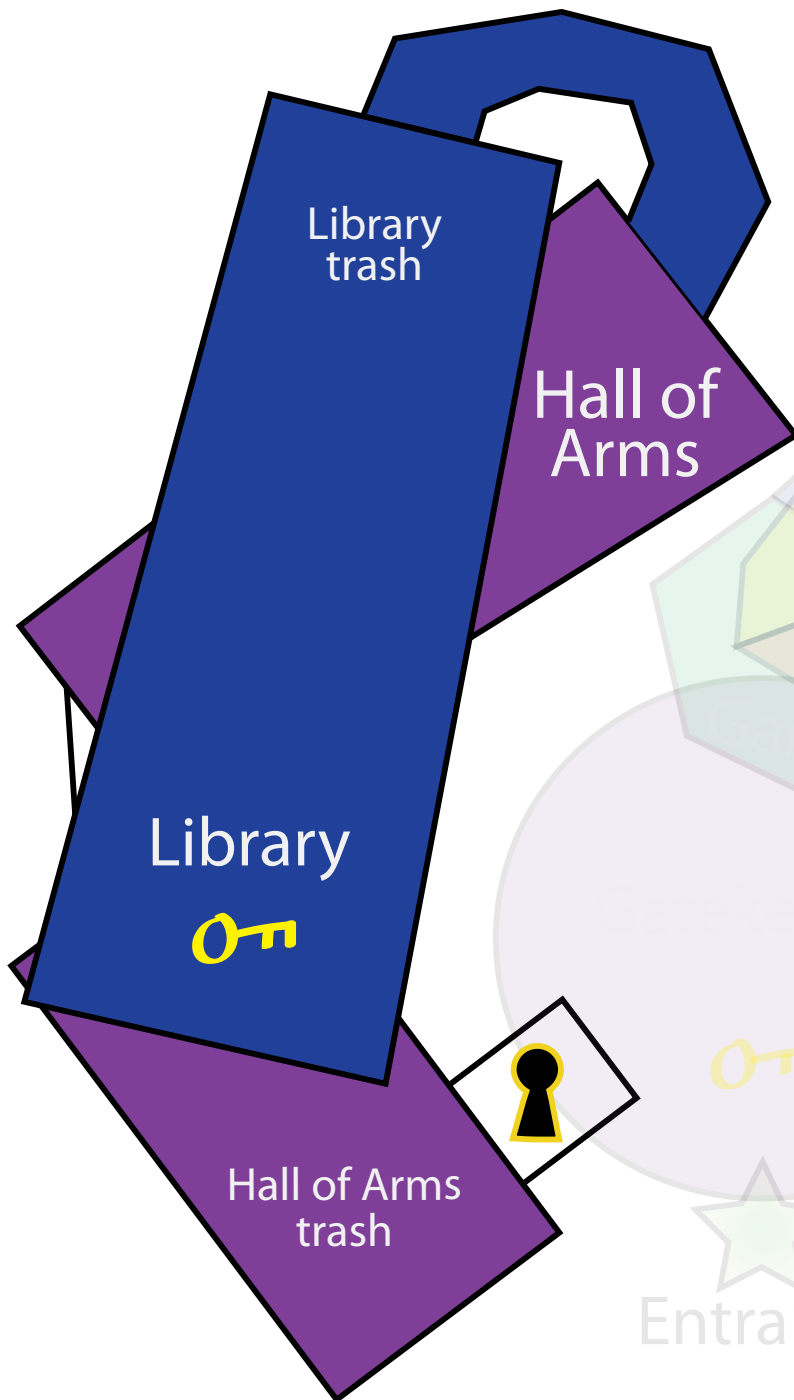


The other aspect of the fight concerns her brother, the warlock. For the most part, he's mostly just a nuisance, and the raid focuses on his sister. If, however, at any time there's two people standing within 5 yards of one another, he pops out of the nether instantly, and slashes you with his scythe ("Grim Strike"). You're walking past another person, and suddenly the two of you are hit and stunned for one second, and his apparition is already fading out from in front of you. The whole animation of the actual slice is about a quarter of a second long, the fadeout takes a second, and then you aren't stunned anymore and can spread out with a lingering four second daze. Staying spread out in the first place totally negates this effect; it's completely avoidable if you know not to trigger it. This forces melee to be aware of each other and not step on each others' toes for the crystal DPSing, but isn't 'random' at all. You *learn* to avoid it, and then it becomes a non-issue. This is also a reason to spread melee DPS out across the two crystals. They both pulse, and the damage done is the sum of both pulses. If you have a melee heavy raid composition, just put four on one and five on another.

As you fight the girl, and wear her down, the brother realizes she may actually be in danger and finally makes an appearance in earnest when she reaches 25% of her HP. At this point, he needs to be picked up and kept from interfering with the crystal DPS. When either Gatekeeper dies, the other enrages, and needs to be put down ASAP. It's good to drop him and his sister at the same time, by timing a pulse to go off while she's at like 5%. They're both clothies, so from the time he appears (with 100% HP) while his sister is at 25%, you need to catch him up, and then whittle them both down together.

He takes damage normally (no PW:S of his own or anything), but you still need to do the crystal thing with his sister. He's a basic warlock, for the most part, and casts DoTs around the raid, as well as Deathcoiling and casting Seeds of Corruption. While a raid member runs in fear from the Deathcoil (or runs to avoid a SoC), his Grim Strike move still applies. To lighten the load, and fit with the warlock theme, he's stunlockable (with diminishing returns, of course). From a tactical standpoint, you just nuke up the crystal for one last good wallop to her, then stun lock him and let the blast finish off his sister. He enrages (stunlocked), and the raid finishes him off.

THE WESTERN WING



The western wing is a dominantly wide, low structure, in direct contrast to the north- and eastern towers that comprise the rest of the dungeon.

The entrance is unlocked with a small key, attainable from either the Gatekeepers in the inner ring, or the Alchemist from atop of the eastern tower, depending on which route the raid takes.

The Librarian at the end of this wing also drops a small key, which can in turn be used to unlock the eastern tower, if needed.

Both encounters within the western wing, the Hall of Arms, and Library, have 'gauntlet' style events that must be completed before facing off with the bosses located at the end of each floor.

Entrance

Western Wing

WESTERN WING TRASH MECHANICS

The two encounters of this wing are the Hall of Arms and the Library, and both of these encounters are gauntlet style events. Rather than having preliminary trash packs of their own, their rooms *are* the events. Thus, beforehand, we should take an opportunity to expose the raid to the types of mobs they will be encountering in these gauntlets, so that when the gauntlet begins they aren't caught off guard with brand new mob types. For that reason, I propose the following mobs be present in this 'warm up' (aka Trash) area:

Hall of Arms / Armor Suits:

Heavily armored suits standing on pedestals along the walls. They come in various 'flavors', and each of these flavors are experienced again during the Hall of Arms gauntlet.

2h weapon (be it sword, mace, or axe) = Arms Warrior - has a Mortal Strike, and stacks bleed effects on those he hits. Thunderclaps to affect melee DPS, and Bladestorms occasionally.

1h weap + shield = Prot Warrior - Has a Shield Slam maneuver that removes (recastable, not flask) buffs, Concussion Blows and Shockwaves stun the tank and raid, and Sunders on the tank reduce armor values. Spell Reflects occasionally to keep casters on their toes.

Dual wielding 1h = Fury Warrior - Flurries, and has a Whirlwind attack that occurs after a short 'powering up' channeling animation. Uses a basic Cleave attack that causes damage in a frontal cone, and Intercepts lowest on threat from time to time. Enrages occasionally, which can be Purged, Traq Shot, removed via Anesthetic Poison, or just ridden out.

Also, any of them are free to cast Intimidating Shout, and will begin to Execute the tank if he falls below 20%.

As mentioned, the suits of armor line the walls at designated intervals. After a while, people will avoid pulling these, which is fine. They're there to get your feet wet, and understand what's coming in the Hall of Arms. There, you'll be fighting these same mobs with a twist. Blizzard has moved away from rep grinds inside dungeons, which is fine, so there wouldn't really be a reason to clear this entire room. Below, I propose a possible solution to that in the form of a repeatable side quest.



Library / Undead Packs:

The Library area contains packs of undead minions that rush through mazes of bookshelves during its event, so here would be a good opportunity to introduce them, as well, in a more basic premise.

Shrieker - Your basic 'ghostly apparition' that shoots spirit bolts and drops fear bombs. They never travel alone, and are susceptible to Shackle and Turn Undead. They can be handled first, or last, but are a huge hassle when loose, especially when one can fear the group into an extra pull it's not prepared for.

Deathly General - These definitely *should* be handled first, because they will raise any nearby corpses to join back into the fray. This is a one second (kickable) AoE cast. If not silenced or interrupted, you'll be back in the middle of everything you just killed.

Castle Keepers - Basic grunts. Can come in the humanoid spellcasting or undead melee variety, and basically 'fill out' the trashpacks.

Library Staff - silly little skeletons that run to and fro in the room from bookshelves that are placed along the walls. They can chain two pulls into one if the raid isn't careful. They're easily destroyed, but will flee towards another group when alerted.

These library packs patrol around inside the room, or are statically placed in between the entrance and exit doors of this trash area. The armor suits line the walls.

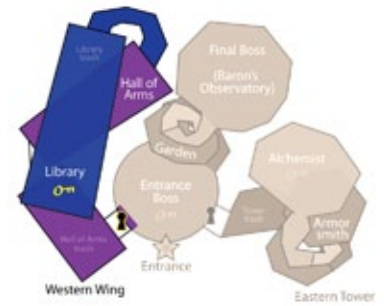
As mentioned, the basic premise of the trash is to get the raid comfortable with the mobs they'll be encountering shortly in the gauntlet events ahead. Raids will eventually work out how to skip certain pulls, but that's in the nature of the game.

Sidequest - "Overdue Book"

An interesting quest idea would be to have a missing book somewhere in the wing, and a bulletin board at the entrance listing the title of the book. Similar to Karazhan, looting the wrong book would give you a curse or debuff, while finding the correct book would grant access to a reward from the Lost and Found... one extra item, for going through the hassle of finding the book. The book's mouseover tooltip could indicate the title from afar, or the raid could need to clear all the way to each book they see on the ground. Perhaps the raid doesn't even know what book they're looking for until they defeat the Librarian and can check all the books they've collected along the way against the 'missing books' post at the end of the wing.

Regardless, it's an option, and gives incentive to not skip trash pulls earlier on.

HALL OF ARMS



The Hall of Arms is the first encounter in the western wing of the dungeon. While the Baron's northern tower and the tower to the east with the Alchemy Lab are tall and jut up into the sky, the Library and Hall of Arms are wide, squatting buildings on the western side of the keep.



The Hall of Arms actually rests underneath the library, and the trash leading up to the encounter itself is as much a part of the area as the final boss himself. It's a gauntlet of sorts, but a slow and methodical one.

*Perhaps our **daring** travellers have come across the Black Knight guarding the end of this particular hallway in a previous life? Sharpen your **dirks**, and try not to get **singed** on the floor tiles leading up to the final showdown...*



Lead on, adventurers. Your quest awaits!

HALL OF ARMS FIGHT MECHANICS

The Hall of Arms encounter takes place in a long, wide hallway with a large tiled checkerboard floor, and suits of silver and gold armor lining the walls on raised pedestals. The final boss is visible from the start, and is a large Black Knight in a nod to the original Dragon's Lair arcade game, and will have the boss beginning the encounter by noting how DARING everyone is for confronting him here.

He then thrusts his sword tip into the ground to begin setting the event in motion.



As the party makes their way down the hallway, sections of the floor light up (anti void zones, light blue instead of black), in a noticeable and repeating pattern. The ground flashes momentarily before the surge hits, to give groups a chance to react, and move out of danger.

The group needs to make their way down the hallway itself, avoiding the charged sections of floor, all while the suits of armor activate and engage (based on either static timers or tank face-pulling proximity). Each armor suit is a basic, hard hitting variation on Warrior talent specs (see page 10 for more in depth explanation of the various suit types), with the twist that if the suit happens to come into contact with the 'activated' section of the floor --in addition to the raid's fear that their tank is standing there and taking a large hit of damage from the floor-- the mob itself becomes charged with energy, too, and hits harder. Anyone hit with the floor charge takes damage, and is dazed for a few seconds, reducing movement speed, and compounding the issue of moving off the charged sections of the floor.

The boss himself is a huge black knight, as noted, and the fight begins once the group has made their way down the hallway to him. Depending on the amount of healing required to make it this far, there could be a short stairway leading up to the boss proper, giving the raid a chance to break and drink before the actual fight.

Once engaged, the fight is done in a similar fashion as the lead-up, with a few major twists regarding the floor tiles.

The ground pulses --then activates-- similar to before, but while anyone caught in the activated tiles take large damage spikes, they also stack a debuff that increases electrical damage done to them. The boss has the opposite effect, where stepping onto a floor tile gives him a stacking buff that increases the damage done his main electrical attack -- the Arcing Smash. From time to time, he will emote, and wind up an especially powerful Smash that hits the ground in a Thunderclap animation, knocks targets caught in its range backward, and breaks the floor tiles it hits, leaving them permanently charged. The raid should be especially wary of the floor tiles dazing the tank, as the boss's normal melee strikes hit extra hard on dazed targets.

All of this together adds up to give the fight a semi-soft enrage timer. The boss will never begin swinging for 2000% of normal damage 'for no reason', but between the stacking buff gained on the boss, the stacking debuff on the raid's tank (both of which are gained by coming into contact with the floor, and both of which are both avoidable with intelligent play), and the shrinking area that the raid has to work with, it's just a matter of time until there's nowhere left to run.

Two tanks are absolutely required, as every so often the Knight will grab the person with highest threat, and hurl him down to the beginning of the hallway. This throw leaves the tank with 5% HP when he lands, but will never kill him outright. The secondary tank picks up the boss while the MT works his way back to the group, avoiding the floor charge-pattern as usual. The adds are already dead; he just needs to watch the floor on the run back, but it's compounded by the fact that he has 5% health, and one or two missteps will

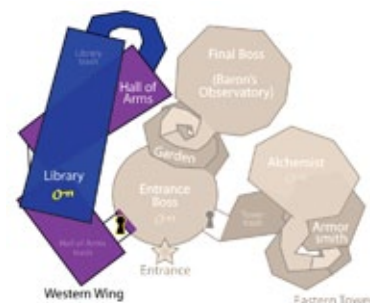


be enough to kill him. Whether he wastes time bandaging himself before the run back is his choice.

It's a mobility fight, with the tanks having to kite the boss around in little circles to avoid the floor charges, healers and DPS needing to shift accordingly as well. General boss abilities include the "flurry or enrage on floor tile activation" (if he's standing on the charged section), the "MT toss", a basic split cleave to keep melee on their toes, and the floor itself.

When the boss dies, the floor flickers out, and becomes safe.

THE LIBRARY



"THOSE WHO SEEK KNOWLEDGE FROM THE LIBRARY MUST BE WILLING TO MAKE A **SACRIFICE**. YOU MUST CHOOSE ONE OF YOUR OWN TO SERVE AS YOUR **GUIDE**. THE CHOSEN WILL LEAD YOU THROUGH THE DARKNESS, AND SEE WHAT OTHERS CANNOT. PUT YOUR FAITH IN THIS ONE, AND CHOOSE CAREFULLY. THEY WILL SERVE AS YOUR EYES, AND GUIDE YOU TO A FINAL CONFRONTATION IN THE INNER CHAMBERS..."



Entering the Library, the raid is confronted by a sprawling maze of bookshelves.

Monster packs lie in wait amid the myriad dead ends, eagerly waiting to ambush and slaughter those who wander aimlessly.

Once out of the maze, our heroes' journey is far from over. Battling the Librarian, and emerging victorious from the Western Wing, will bring them but one step closer to the final showdown with the Baron himself. He awaits them in his observatory, high above; watching, waiting...

Surely no living being could navigate such a treacherous area, without a guardian angel watching over them from above?



THE LIBRARY FIGHT MECHANICS

The raid is greeted by a wandering spirit inside the entrance to the Library. They are told that they must sacrifice a raid member that will act as the guide to lead them through the maze towards the confrontation with the Librarian.



The chosen person steps onto a platform, and the raid channels a spell to kill the player and release their spirit. The chosen raid member's spirit disappears (through phasing), and has the 'Frodo-while-invisible' effect applied to their screen. This ghost has the ability to fly high above the room and look down on the rest of the party as they work their way through the maze of bookshelves. There are constant swarms of mobs charging thru the corridors at any given time (mob descriptions found on page 10), as well as dead ends with switch levers which slide bookshelves out of the way. Behind the dead ends are either more packs of mobs, or 'the correct way' to pass through the maze (some are both... the correct way, but also mobs to fight through). Having these packs given dynamic spawn points, if possible, would add to the variation each time the encounter is done. It wouldn't always be "straight, right, right, left, straight, whatever". The raid would need to actually have the ghost scout ahead.

The person in ghost form guides the group through voice comm or chat, telling them "the door to your right" or "straight ahead, activate the blue shelf", etc. The ghost has a few unique abilities, too, so they don't feel completely useless during the encounter. There are a few relatively overpowered abilities with longish cooldowns. The ability to drop void zones, one shot single mobs, or daze/shackle entire mob packs. There's also a timer involved; the ghost is losing X% of their health every Z seconds, so the raid has to hurry or the group will lose their eyes. Another mechanic would need to be for every raid member that dies, the ghost loses 1/25 (or 1/10) of their max HP as well, so the raid never ends up with a situation where the group wipes, and everyone is waiting for the ghost to trickle out with no way to kill him or herself.

Once finally through the gauntlet portion of the library, they reach a channeling stone that will revive the ghost player, as well as open a gate to the beginning of the maze. Should the team take too long, or suffer deaths, this is the way for them to recover players from the beginning of the encounter that have to run back.

The Boss:

The gauntlet itself is just the warm up to the main event, in which the spirit comes forth to actually do battle in her inner sanctum. Her end of the Library is a large separate room, and the boss has the ability to rip out and throw bookshelves down on the raid, or summon tornadoes of books and loose pages. Anyone caught in a tornado takes massive damage, and gets stuck in a cyclone type CC for a few seconds (also similar to cyclone, they can't be healed, pot, or cast). A few loose pages begin swirling in mid-air where a cyclone is about to form, giving a visual indication that you should move before it goes off. She also has a small loose 'cloud' of books hovering behind her,

which she pulls from to throw individual books at casters to interrupt their casts and stun them momentarily. Other more basic attacks include a spirit bolt, and mana burns and drains. Other than that, it's a basic tank and spank, though, while avoiding the cyclones, falling bookshelves, and having healers deal with the book stuns.

Overall Notes:

Variations on the 'ghost scout' theme have the person in the phase be the only one able to activate the bookshelf switches.

For all intents and purposes, the person chosen could become completely isolated from the group through phasing (can't chat, although Ventrilo would trivialize this). Even if they *are* able to talk, the mechanic still works. The ghost moves silently thru the maze with the group --on the ground-- but able to pass thru the walls to peek ahead, and the switches are only available in the ghost phase. The group just sees bookshelves opening, and a pathway being formed, but they don't do the lever flipping themselves. I could see this being an issue for someone who doesn't want to be stuck being the ghost every week, so that's why I provided the special ghost abilities available to them. I think the ability to drop a void zone would be more impressive from 'up above looking down' than just chucking one 'over to the side' at normal player elevation.

Alternatively, the group could be completely blinded. By giving everyone in the group a phasing effect similar to the coastline in Borean Tundra, but limiting its range to be much more drastic. Visibility extends only one foot in front of each person, and the ghost *truly* becomes the eyes of the group, telling them to move north, or east. In this situation, you could have hazards (spike pits, immolation traps) right out in the open that they wouldn't see unless they edged through the maze at a snail's pace, which isn't realistic with mobs swarming and the ghost's health constantly ticking down.

Another option would be to have hazards like void zones that only the ghost can see. Everyone else can see just fine (no Borean mist effect), but certain void zones are just invisible to anyone but the ghost. People would see when they began to take void zone damage, but wouldn't know *where* was safe to run to unless directed by the ghost.

The ghost mechanic is flexible, and could be handled in numerous ways. It also gives a chance for undergeared players to remove themselves from the encounter, while still providing a valuable role in the gauntlet. If that's frowned on, we could make the ticking health a flat value (instead of a percentage), and have an offtank fill that role, with their increased health pool.



Ascending the steps to the Eastern Tower gives our adventurers their first real glimpse of the Baron's Tower looming overhead. This is no liesurely stroll up a staircase, though. Every moment is a struggle, as enemies swarm down to hinder our party every step of the way.

The Armorsmoth stands hunched over her anvil, pounding out wares for her master; while the Alchemist and his companion, Lucy, attend to their concoctions.

A proper welcome is in store for our heroes, and always, overhead, an ominous light shines from the slit in the Baron's Observatory.

Western Wing

Entrance

Alchemist

Armor smith

Tower trash

Eastern Tower

EASTERN TOWER TRASH MECHANICS

The cramped quarters of the Eastern Tower don't give a whole lot of leeway for swiveling the camera around, so people will need to stay zoomed in a bit, unless the diameter of the tower itself is made large enough to accommodate. Rather than one sweeping spiral staircase going all the way to the top, it's more of a pagoda layout, similar to what Bruce Lee fought his way up in *The Last Dragon*. You take a stairway up a flight, fight a pack of mobs, make your way to the next stairway, fight some more. Going with this sort of setup, you could add as many (or few) trash pulls as desired to set a proper pace, and have some sections between flights where you do actually make a full loop or two around the tower, fighting mobs on the stairs.



The stairs wrap around both internally and externally. This gives you a chance to see the Baron's Observatory in the distance on your loops around the outside of the tower, and could have a few scary knockback mechanics that could conceivably chuck you over the railing if you aren't careful. If that's too punishing, the railing on the external staircases could be a loose latticework (that would keep you from flying over the ledge, but still allow you to see out), or invisible walls could be used to keep the people on the stairs. I've always felt that invisible walls are a poor constraint mechanic, especially in an area like the beginning of Magister's Terrace, where you couldn't leap over the 3 foot shrub to tackle the third boss directly... understandable, but lame. Again, this would only really be necessary on the external wraps, since internally, you would only fall as far as the last landing that you just cleared, and would be easily rezzable if the distance was too great to survive impact.

Trash mobs in these areas serve a similar purpose as in the Western Wing, to prepare you for the area, and give you a feel of what you're working your way up to fight. These two encounters aren't gauntlets, though, so they don't need to be the exact same mobs you'll be up against later, and are able to be mixed and matched liberally.

Mob Types:

Gnomish Alarmbots - The classic standbys from Gnomeregan, they blare and make noise, and are generally a nuisance. They summon flying adds that came flying down from 'nests' mounted within the tower. You never need to actually engage or destroy these probe nests, but having them there gives the player an indication of where they're coming from, rather than just 'from nowhere'.

Flying Probes - I'm thinking something similar to the thing Han Solo blew up on Hoth, or the thing that Darth Vader used to interrogate Leia. They doesn't need to look anything remotely like those in the end, it's just a general idea to get the point across. Lots of little antennae poking off it, and it shoots chain lightning bolts and sleep darts while hovering around and being a hassle, while you deal with the other trash packs.

Gnomes - various flavors. These come wearing different types of armor, and behave like the respective classes they represent. Rogue gnomes wearing leather that stealth around and stunlock/ambush, plate wearing little DK or Ret Paly gnomes that generally wreck hell, or little clothly gnomes that nuke, AoE, and CC. They can come in little packs of three or four. These make a later appearance in the Armorsmith encounter, and it would give the tower a feeling of being more vibrant to have these little guys and girls putzing around inside the tower chatting or whatever as they take a break from crafting gear with Mrs. Smite. They don't necessarily have to be gnomes, but gnomes make good little 'generic helper dudes' and who doesn't love killing a gnome or six?

Gelatinous Abberations - Mishaps from the Alchemy Lab. Experiments gone wrong. The Alchemy lab has us dealing with various debuffs, and they come color coded (more on that page's explanation). Orange ones spread diseases, green ones are poisonous, and purple ones have a curse associated with them. They give these debuffs on attack, and leave puddles of goop in their wake when they die that gives the debuff as well. Anyone dying to the debuff suffers an extra penalty, similar to the debuffing flasks in the Alchemy Lab (read more about the debuffs in the Alchemy fight mechanics).

THE ARMORSMITH



Those landlubbers were tougher than Mr. Smite thought, so, like many men in history, the task of dealing with these meddling do-gooders has fallen squarely in his wife's lap to handle. She's awaiting us in her Armory, and she's been hard at work with her gnomish servants (pirates make for horrible full time staff), forging all kinds of treats.



The Armorsmith encounter has us revisiting (the wife of) an iconic character from the World of Warcraft's history, but while Mr. Smite was a man who loved his weapons, his wife is a bit of a fashionista, and the fight focuses on the various armor classes and how they work together with one another.

People who roll on gear outside of their main armor class will feel a strain during this fight, with the various phases focusing on debuffing cloth, mail, leather, and then plate.

ARMORSMITH FIGHT MECHANICS

The room is divided into four sections representing the four armor classes. Anvils are arranged in the plate and mail areas, with skins and looms in the leather and cloth quarters.

The overall idea here is that the fight penalizes classes that roll on gear outside of their spec range (warriors with leather, shamans wearing cloth, etc). I know that won't sit well with resto shamans or fury warriors, but that's kind of the point. Blizzard has stated on various occasions that they have very little sorrow in their hearts for plate wearing classes complaining about survivability while they choose to neglect the benefit provided by wearing plate. This fight is basically telling you "if you wear mail AND plate AND leather, get comfy, because your superstar mix of DPS gear is about to earn you a superstar timeout in the corner". It's the same for healers. No priest likes getting outrolled on cloth gear by a resto druid, etc. This, however, is not the place for that argument. Basically, *given* this fight's mechanic, how do we incorporate it into an interesting encounter?

The fight begins, and we engage her in the cloth area, by the looms. For the first thirty seconds, everyone does their thing. Tanks drag her to a position they like, DPS settle into their rotations, and everyone thinks it's just a normal tank and spank. Then she warstomps, and equips a set of cloth armor that's sitting on a countertop. This gear change routine follows her husband's of warstomping and grabbing another set of equipment.

At first, I had a basic idea that each class is affected with certain debuffs, but the more I thought about it, the more problems began to crop up with tanks and healers.

Initially, it looked like this:

100% - begin the fight
80% - dons cloth, and clothies are silenced (see below)
60% - dons mail, and mail wearers' attacks are absorbed
40% - dons leather, and leather wearers' spells and attacks miss
20% - straps on plate, and plate wearers attacks are reflected back at them

The problem here is that we can't make tanks or healers unable to perform their role, but we *can* make their lives miserable. Plus, three of the four tanking classes wear plate. While I'd love to just say "you need to bring a druid to tank the plate phase", that's going against the basic design principles Blizzard is trying to put in their encounters. They want to actively move away from 25 man Razuvivous, where you NEED two priests.

That said, this encounter would be impossible, then, if you only had priest healers, and clothies were completely

silenced. For that reason alone, instead of a straight silence on clothies, Mrs. Smite's robe could just reflect offensive clothies' spells back on them with X-hundred % damage, while at the same time we inflict a massive debuff on healers to say that 'healing spells cast by cloth wearers are only 20% effective'. That way, if all healers are cloth, the fight is *doable*, but a challenge. Having just one 'other armor class' healer lightens the healing load considerably. The multiplied damage penalty is to make sure overzealous DPS Death Knights don't just continue to spam attacks, and demand that the healers just heal them through it. The damage is overwhelming, and forces them to pause.



A glaring issue still involves tanks and threat generation during their phases. I've intentionally put the leather second to last, with plate at the final phase. By the time the plate phase rolls around, plate tanks should have enough of a head start on threat to just ride that phase out? Misdirects and Tricks of the Trade, plus Vanishes and Soul Shatters, assure that threat intensive classes are able to stay low, but it might not be enough. Maybe we could arrange it so that during the leather and plate phases, she equips a ranged weapon, and it's possible for a warlock to tank with Searing Pain, or another ranged class to step in and help for that phase.

All throughout the fight, adds are spawning as well. The gnomes from the pulls leading up to this encounter are back in full force, with each armor class being represented. The plate phase has gnome warriors and paladins running loose in the raid, leather has rogues and little druids. The question of whether they share Mrs. Smite's reflective power would need to be playtested. If not, then the chosen armor type could be on add duty while everyone else handles the boss, but I really like the idea that during any armor call, some people are just dead weight in the raid. If you have a DK wearing leather pants and mail greaves, he's a complete waste of a raid slot for 75% of this fight. It would be better for him to go barefoot, and wearing no pants at all, than to wear his fancy rogue and hunter gear for this particular encounter.



THE ALCHEMIST



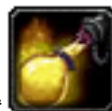
double health pool
mortal strike debuff



increased mana regen
movement speed slowed



doubled energy regen
reduced chance to hit



"QUARANTINE?! I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR SUCH NON-SENSE! I'M VERY BUSY WORKING ON A CURE FOR THE MASTER! LUCY, TEND TO THIS NUISANCE QUICKLY SO WE CAN RESUME WITH OUR WORK!"



The Alchemist is one of the more technical fights in the dungeon, second only to the Baron himself in overall complexity. All sorts of buffs and debuffs are being thrown around (literally), and the raid needs to stay on their toes (again, literally) in order to pick up the correct buffs, while avoiding the more unforgiving concoctions.

The Alchemist himself is a crazy leper gnome, assisted in his workshop by a robotic Laboratory Utility Construct rev. 13 (LUC-13, or Lucy.)

Lucy has a mind of her own, and

fighting these two will test the raid's ability to work together as a unit, covering for each other's mistakes. A hard wipe timer exists, and any single person can prove to be the group's downfall.

In the Alchemy Lab, mistakes are costly, and can easily spell failure for our heroes.

poison
spreads on contact



disease
causes corpse explosions



curse
spawns shades



ALCHEMIST FIGHT MECHANICS

Setting:

The alchemy lab is the last boss in the Eastern Tower. The boss himself is a little gnome, riding around on a mechanized abomination, a la 'MASTER BLASTER' in Mad Max, Beyond Thunderdome. It's a fight that gets the work floor messy as it wears on, and deals with some fairly intricate buffs and debuffs being thrown around. This is *not* a decurse heavy fight, but there will be some light decursing required to avoid certain situations or to recover from player mistakes.

The Alchemy Lab's *shape* has no impact on the fight mechanics, but the *size* of the work floor is crucial (more on that in a bit). For simplicity, we'll imagine that the room has a circular layout, with pipes and tubes running all over the place, and draping down from the ceiling. We approach the boss while he's hunched over a workbench built into one wall.

When we first engage him, the door slams shut behind us, red sirens mounted over the door begin spinning, and a robotic voice drones over a PA system about a security breach in the Alchemy Lab, and that quarantine will commence in 5 minutes. This is our wipe timer. He's a crazy little bastard, and mumbles to himself and his robot, Lucy, constantly throughout the encounter:

The Mech itself is an overly large robot contraption, with the gnome riding him perched in the cockpit. In addition to having a basic set of steering controls (which he doesn't really use, the robot tends to have a mind of its own), there are all sorts of tubes and vials arranged around the cockpit area. The gnome uses this robot in his research; it's more of a traveling workbench than an actual combat mech, but that isn't to say it can't hit like a stack of bricks. Think of Sigourney Weaver battling the mother alien in *Aliens* using the 'forklift robot', but with a gnomish twist.

The Fight:

The quarantine countdown begins (and is constantly droning on in the background), and the gnome runs up the stepladder to mount the Mech. A single tank encounter, the tank grabs him and DPS begins. Every 10 seconds or so, the gnome throws a flask down upon the raid, and it breaks on the ground. This can be a permanent stain, or the potion could leave a color coded gas cloud that expands and eventually dissipates.

There are 6 different kinds of potions, and they offer various buffs/debuffs. I've color coded the potions to "make sense" for the most part:

Red - doubles your HP pool, but inflicts a Mortal Strike debuff on the imbiber.

Blue - Doubles mana regen, but reduces movement speed.

Yellow - doubles energy/rage/runic regen, but reduces your chance to hit by 20%

Green - Poison DoT. Makes you barf, and spreads to any others that you happen to barf on (also incapacitated while barfing). You start puking, and have to spin your character away from others to avoid puking on them. No positive side effect. If you die while under the effects of poison, you leave a large poison cloud on your corpse that inflicts the same effect on anyone coming into contact with it. Cleansing this is in the raid's best interest.

Orange - Disease that slowly builds up over time (+X%/sec) slowing walking/casting/swing speed. If you die under the effects of the disease, your corpse explodes, and spreads the disease. No positive side effect. Cleansing this is in the raid's best interest.

Purple - Curse of Doom or some other curse that inflicts a debuff that either MCs or stuns/disorients (similar to a mob's conflag). No positive side effect. If you die while cursed, you spawn a powerful Shade to be dealt with. Cleansing this is in the raid's best interest.

An important point is that the affected players actually turn red and green and yellow, so you'd know without having to look at your buff icons if you 'got it' or not.

Some of the debuffs have positive side effects, as well. With the energy regen one, you can spam instant attacks, but your chance to hit is affected. This isn't a huge deal, since the yellow swings will still be hitting, just your white damage ones will miss. Wowwiki states: *A "soft" cap is the point at which your yellow attacks will always hit and more hit rating has no affect on them. A "hard" cap is the point at which your autoattacks will always hit and more hit rating does absolutely nothing for you.* The yellow debuff, then, just needs to find that middle ground... enough to screw up white attacks, but since your energy regen is through the roof



it doesn't matter, since you're spam, spam, spamming instant yellow attacks anyway. Mana regen from the blue pots is doubled, but your walking speed is reduced. For casters, walk speed isn't really a huge problem anyway, but if a rogue runs through it on accident it's an annoyance. The red buff specifically plays a vital role...

After a certain amount of time (and we guarantee the red buff has been dropped somewhere in the room; it's up to the tank to grab it, though) Lucy grabs the tank, holds him, then begins to wind up a huge flurry of hits. Since the tank has a double health pool, he can survive this flurry, but the MS debuff makes it hard to refill the damage (...but casters have huge mana incoming, so mana isn't an issue). The reason it isn't a single huge hit is so priests can't just pop Guardian Spirit on the tank and trivialize this portion of the encounter. Lucy channels this power punch for 2 sec, then slams the tank in the face a few times for 75k, or whatever a realistic "even with double HP pool it's still gonna hurt" value would be. The windup is the healer's chance to spam heals to top him off. The tank gets plowed, then there's a quick two second pause (to bring the tank back up from 5%) before resuming regular attacks. The two second pause can be integrated into the fight, and has the gnome flipping a switch on Lucy that vents built up exhaust out of her rear vents to cool her back off after popping her into overdrive (look out melee DPS!).



Lucy also charges random raid members and cleaves them, hitting them and anyone standing near them. This charge can knock them back into another potion cloud on the ground if they aren't careful about positioning. If that feels too random, then we can make her discharge a powerful chain lightning from time to time. It would have the same effect (hitting people too clumped), without having the knockback involved, while still fitting in with the 'robot operating at overload capacity' theme we have going. This also serves as the dangerous 'I can be killed at any moment if not topped off' moment that would trigger the 'if killed under the effects of potion X, then Y occurs' effect of the bad potions.

The fight is a mess since the gnome is flinging pots around, and the area is becoming quickly covered in crap all over the ground... but even with the enrage timer, everyone feels pretty ridiculously overpowered with huge health pools on the tank, and tons of mana/energy/rage regen... perhaps the red pot adds threat generation as well, if needed. It's a bit like Vaellestraz in Blackwing Lair; where everyone just goes nuts, but it's not a tunnel-vision Patchwerk-style fight where

DPS can just focus on their GCDs. You still need to be aware of the pots being flung around, and picking up your class specific positive one while avoiding the negative ones.

For the most part, there are no phase shifts... it's just a flat out burn race, with the occasional hiccup for the tank getting his teeth kicked in.

When downed, the boss drops a keycard that must be quickly looted and used on a control panel to deactivate the quarantine countdown.

Final Thoughts:

I don't really see any glaring issues with this fight. The one issue might be that everyone jumps in the red cloud to get huge health pools. The MS debuff wouldn't be a huge deal, since the tank is the only one it will really affect (receiving spam heals). It would also give everyone in the raid a huge cushion for incoming damage, which should be a conscious choice made, instead of everyone just saying 'woohoo, double HP for this encounter with no real drawbacks'. For this reason, we should make the three "good potions" mutually exclusive. You can't have the blue and red and yellow all up at the same time. Stepping into a red cloud will overwrite your yellow buff, and rogues would prefer to have the yellow one over the red one any day. That would also force the tank to be especially aware of his surroundings, so he doesn't accidentally step into the yellow buff right before a flurry from Lucy.

As pictured on page 20, the pots can either permanently stain the ground for the entire duration of the fight (and have a texture that looks like someone spilled a paint can on the floor), or they can be gaseous clouds similar to Grobbulous' clouds that start small and slowly expand to a predetermined "maximum radius" (and then either stay there, or fade away). Given a 5 minute wipe timer, pots being thrown down every ten seconds, and actual layout size of the room, we could figure out the maximum radius of a potion cloud versus total square footage of the room, and decide on a good balance while still giving the raid room to maneuver.

The coloring of the individual stepping in potions is crucial, I think. There will be lots of running around, so being able to see 'you got your buff' without needing to look for its *icon* (especially with raid buffs up) will help people to keep their eyes on the action, and not on their buff bars. Perhaps the three 'good' potions could color the individual himself, while the three 'bad' potions could give off a misty aura. So, for example, on a warrior with the red and green potions up, his body would be red with a green cloud about him. Then again, the bad potions *aren't* mutually exclusive of one another, so maybe only the three positive effects (red, blue, yellow) need to be accounted for visually.

THE FINAL TOWER

The Baron's Tower is the final stretch. The two lesser wings need to be cleared before you can even enter this wing, in a similar fashion to how Sapphiron's lair in Naxx works now. The door has a magical barrier surrounding it, to prevent early entry.

The inner circle area where the raid first zones into the dungeon contains the two pylons from the Gatekeeper fight. These two pylons are re-activated at the end of each of the lower wings, and channel beams into the door. Once both beams are active, the door is able to be opened.



*This final tower contains two more encounters: The Garden, and the final showdown with the Baron. The Garden event is similar to Karazhan's opera, in that there's a few different options for which fight will appear per raid ID. There's the **Tree**, the **Green Dragon**, the **Rock**, or the **Jar**. This random fight is chosen as the raid zones in, and is held in the background while the raid clears the lower wings. Once finished, and the beams from the pylons have deactivated the barrier for the final wing, the raid is swarmed with various adds as the doors to the tower are thrown open.*

If the Tree is the active fight for the week,

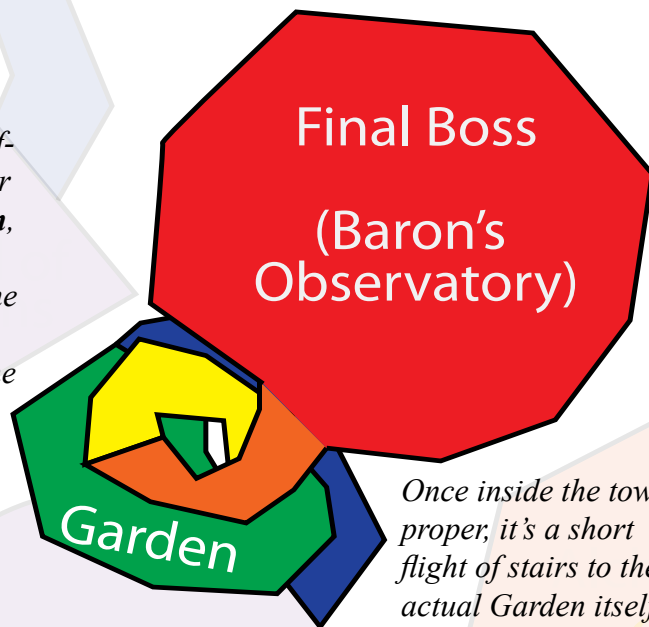
then a swarm of treants piles out of the final tower's doorway as the doors are opened (25 adds for a 25 man, 10 for a 10 man). The Dragon encounter has whelps piling out, the Rock has rocklings, and the Jar encounter has an army of slimes oozing out of the open door. These mobs all have abilities that reflect the upcoming fight in the garden...

whelps sleep attackers when hit, the slimes have stacking poison effects, the rocks hit

hard, and the treants have an effect similar to Nature's Grasp that has a percentage based chance to root attackers (melee or ranged, equally), and inflict bramble damage.



*This won't be some huge ordeal to overcome; it's just a variable that you won't know what's going to come rushing out of the door, but once you **do** see what it is, you know what the Garden holds in store for you that week.*



Once inside the tower proper, it's a short flight of stairs to the actual Garden itself, and a quick chat with a druid before the fight begins...

THE GARDEN



"WAIT, YOUNG ONES! BEYOND THIS DOOR LIES A FORCE BENT TO THE WILL OF THE BARON, BUT IT IS A FORCE ACTING AGAINST ITS OWN WILL. THE CREATURE YOU WILL ENCOUNTER IN THE GARDEN OF THE BARON IS **NOT** AN EVIL ENTITY, BUT ONE THAT IS MERELY LASHING OUT IN DESPERATION AT EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH. LIKE A CORNERED BEAST THESE SPIRITS OF NATURE ARE SIMPLY EXHAUSTED AND FRIGHTENED. THE GARDEN MUST BE CLEANSED, BUT I'M AFRAID THE ONLY WAY LEFT TO DO THAT IS TO PURGE THE EVIL THAT HAS INFECTED IT, AND HOPE WE CAN BEGIN ANEW.

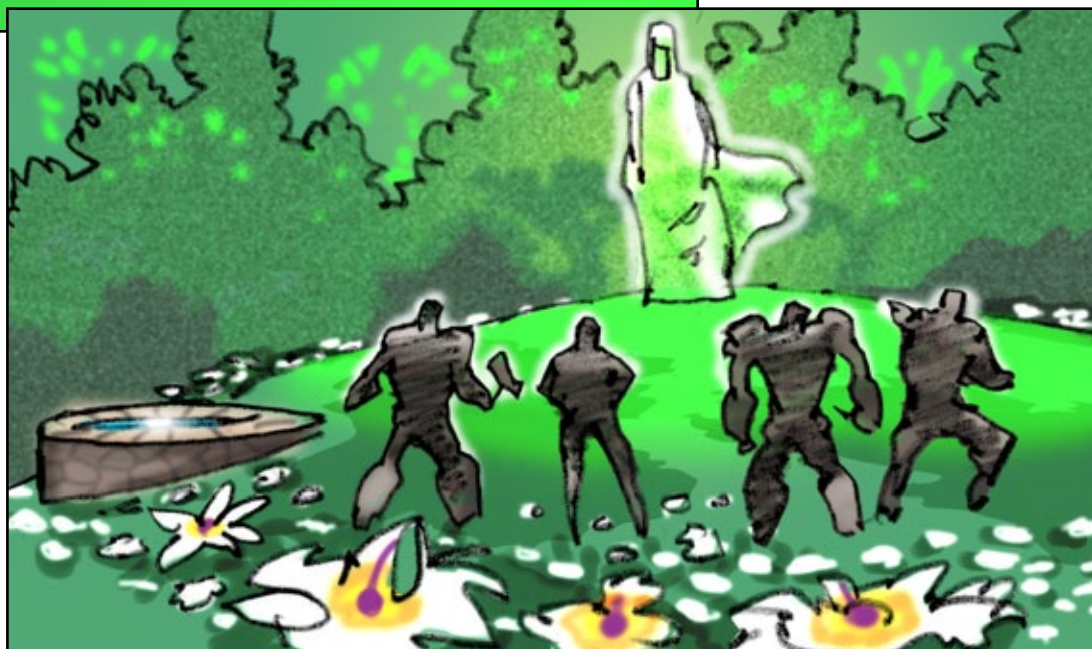
IF YOU BRAZENLY STRIKE FORWARD INTO THE GARDEN YOU WILL SUFFER A DIRE FATE, I FEAR. THE BARON HAS AMPLIFIED THE MAGICS AT WORK HERE, AND THEY MUST BE PUT ASUNDER BEFORE WE CAN HOPE TO STAND A CHANCE.

WITHIN THE GARDEN GROWS MANY PLANTS AND HERBS. COLLECT TEN DEATH LOTUS THAT GROW WITHIN, BEING CAREFUL NOT TO ENGAGE THE SPIRIT OF NATURE PREMATURELY. WHEN YOU HAVE ALL TEN, BRING THEM TO THE WELL AND HURL THEM IN. I WOULD ADVISE YOU TO BE QUICK ABOUT THIS, AND THROW THEM ALL IN AT ONCE, AS THE SPIRIT WON'T TAKE KINDLY TO THIS AFFRONT, AND WILL LIKELY TRY AND PUT A STOP TO YOUR MEDDLING.

THE DEATH LOTUS WILL WEAKEN THE SPIRIT ENOUGH FOR YOU TO STAND A FIGHTING CHANCE, I BELIEVE. GO NOW, AND CAST THE BARON'S SHACKLES OFF OF OUR FRIEND INSIDE. IT WON'T BE EASY, BUT I BELIEVE YOU CAN DO IT. I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN INSIDE, ONCE YOUR TASK IS COMPLETED---

A druid meets our party at the entrance to the Garden, beseeching them to show mercy on the benevolent spirit within...

Three of the four possible bosses located within are not our enemies, but simply beings bent to the will of the Baron. The fourth, however, is a wretched creation of the Alchemist that must be put down.



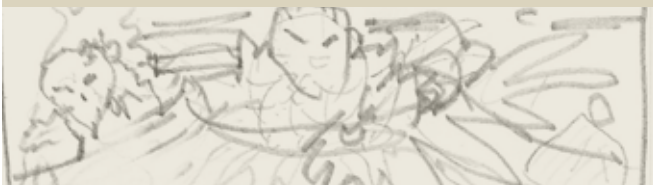
GARDEN MECHANICS

The Garden area itself is worthy of its own explanation. It's a changing encounter, similar to Karazhan's Opera event. There are four different options for the bossfights, all of which are directly explained on their respective pages, following.



The area itself, though, is a walled garden area with trees surrounding it, which obstruct any clear views into it before breaching the final tower. This is to prevent the raid from seeing down into the garden and knowing what boss awaits them prematurely. The basic landscape, regardless of the encounter, is unremarkable; with a gentle sloping rise in the center of the area, and a single well off to the side of the raid as they enter the garden's main door.

This well serves as a means to taint the garden. The Baron, in his quest to find a means to harness the powers set loose inside him, has subjugated Cenarion Druids and bent them to the task of trying to harness a cure through their close contact with nature itself. The spirit form of one of these druids reaches out to the raid as they near the garden door, and calls out them through the Emerald Dream (see dialog on the previous page). Death Lotus is mentioned as a way to taint the well found within, and to push the creature within over the edge, spurring it into combat.



The raid carefully navigates the outer ring of the garden, looting plants that are *unique*. One raid member can carry one such herb, and as the druid mentioned, there's kind of a timer involved from when the first one is thrown in the well. Basically, ten people go loot a flower, then come back to the well and wait for the signal. Once the first person goes, everyone has five seconds to throw theirs in as well, and then the boss activates. The 'ten herbs' gives a percentage scale that can be tuned for an achievement... only throwing five into the well weakens the boss halfway ($5x = 50\%$)... perhaps there could be an achievement where only 3 herbs (or one?) are thrown in the well, but the raid is still victorious?



Once the specific boss of the garden is defeated, the Spirit we battle slumps down... exhausted, but otherwise 'cleansed'. We don't actually 'kill' them, so much as 'overpower' them (down to 1%, where they go green), and break the spell the Baron has placed on them. A swirl of leaves coalesces into a vision of Malorne, which kneels by the fallen Spirit. The druid we met outside in spirit form is joined by others who form a ring around the fallen boss, and they channel a spell that sweeps the spirit's fallen body together into a tornado which flies high up into the sky, and then twirls back downward as a shining seed which plants itself into the soil of the garden. The druids complete their ritual, and a sprout appears.

"Malorne is pleased with your help; the garden is cleansed. New life has begun untainted by the reach of the Baron. We of the Circle are in your debt, and wish to grant you these gifts from the gods."

The final barrier to the Baron himself has been removed. Go quickly, ascend this final tower, and rid this land of his evil once and for all!"

The druids and Malorne all fade away, leaving a large Cenarion Satchel on the ground, which serves as the raid's loot chest.



THE TREE



A lush version of the garden area. The center is dominated by a huge oak tree. It's big, in full bloom, and has long branches reaching high up into the sky. The floor of the garden is also very grassy; all gives the appearance of being a very peaceful area, except for closest to the tree. A patch of blight forms a ring where the roots dig into the soil. The tree is in bloom, but darkened to autumn colors. Orange and red leaves, where the rest of the garden (away from the tree) is still vibrant and green. Scattered around the area are the stumps of trees that have been cut down.

We run around the outer edge, collecting Death Lotus to begin the tainting. The Lotus is thrown in, and death swiftly spreads out from the well. The grass dies, and the earth left behind sours and withers.

Eventually this blight reaches the tree itself, and it shudders as it drops all of its leaves on the ground. Where once the tree was in full bloom, it's now a twisted shadow of its former self. There's rumbling from within the earth, and a voice calls out, condemning the raid for their foolishness and wanton disregard for the balance of nature...

"I GROW TIRED OF YOUR GAMES. YOUR INCESSANT DISREGARD FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE FOREST ANGERS ME TO THE POINT OF BREAKING. YOU WERE FOOLISH TO BRING ME HERE, AND MORE FOOLISH TO SACRIFICE MY YOUNG ONES IN YOUR QUEST TO HARNESS NATURE'S WRATH. I HAVE STOOD BY IDLY, BUT THE TIME TO ACT HAS COME. PREPARE YOURSELVES! I WILL CUT YOU DOWN, AND USE YOUR ESSENCE TO SOW THE SEEDS OF MY FOREST ANEW!"



THE TREE FIGHT MECHANICS

After tainting the well, a face appears on the tree, and it begins to uproot itself. Immediately several things happen. The leaves dropped from the tree during his monologue sprout forth into lasher mobs, one for every member of the raid (10 or 25). Each of these lashers has a unique raid member aggro; one lasher per raider. It's in the raid's best interest to start the event clumped up so that consecrates, thunderclaps, demo shouts, or death and decay can grab aggro. Once each mob has taken at least one point of damage (i.e. has trained on to a tank), the boss activates.

His first ability is to shoot seeds in the air (5 for 25 man, 2 for 10), which swirl around and land in the ground. At first I thought it would be interesting to have them give no indication of where they landed, and that you would have to mentally remember their locations, but perhaps that's not a good idea. Instead, their 'landing spot' could be designated by some green, grassy growth or a tiny sprout sticking out of the ground. He then engages the tank, and casts basic 'naturey' spells around on the raid. Insect Swarm, kickable Regrowths, and has buffs applied to himself like Thorns and Nature's Grasp. Tree stuff, right?

After a set time, he casts Barkskin, and sinks his roots back into the earth. This is the phase shift. His roots travel through the ground (out of sight), and whoever is standing closest to each of the sprouts gets hit with an Entangling Root that isn't dispellable. This is where I thought it would be interesting to be forced to remember the sprout locations manually. Having a grassy area on the floor kind of trivializes this part of the encounter.

The root ticks with Bramble damage, but the big issue is that the sprouts pop up and begin wailing on whoever is rooted. They are untauntable, and have a good chunk of threat to overcome before they'll pay attention to anyone other than the rooted individual closest to them. It's in the raid's best interest to have tanks run to the sprouts as soon as the Barkskin is about to go up on the boss. Also, what sprouts out of the ground is a toss up between a large, heavy hitting single 'ent' type unit, or a swarm of smaller treants. Perhaps there could be some indication which will sprout based on what the sprout itself looks like (1 large bud or 3 small sprouts), but I like the idea that you don't know until it happens. Not like it makes a huge difference; it's either a lot of little rapid hits to whoever is there, or a few big hits spread out over time. It *would* make a difference

if the tank wasn't there to pick them up (big mobs one shooting clothies, or little ones interrupting casts), but the way Blizzard has homogenized tanks won't make or break the encounter if the DK or Druid gets one or the other, etc.

Once you've killed a certain sprout's ...sprout... then the roots holding that player in place wither, and the player is free to lend a hand with the rest. After a set amount of time, the boss reactivates regardless of whether or not the raid is ready. Him standing back up removes the roots cast on players, but the adds still need to be dealt with. He stands up, shoots more seeds around the area, and the fight progresses.



He has another skill that has branches reaching down and plucking up raid members to be held aloft, out of the fight. The tree branch holding a raid member is attackable, but the member falls back to the ground when freed in this fashion. Slow Fall or well timed Levitates (paly bubbles, ice blocks) can counter this fall damage. It won't kill you outright, unless you're at low health to begin with. If that feels too 'slow' then he could simply pick raid members up and throw them straight up in the air to land for fall damage.

At 15% health, he does a special emote, and blows his bark outward. This is unavoidable, and hits for a flat percentage of health. After this, he enrages, and hits much faster, but is much more vulnerable to damage with his armor gone.

The raid burns him down to 1%, he goes friendly, the druids cleanse the garden, the Lewts are distributed. Huzzah.

THE ROCK



"MMMMMM----- WHAT IS IT NOW?! I WISH ONLY TO SLEEP! WHY MUST YOU PITIFUL LITTLE CREATURES CONTINUE TO TORTURE US SO? HAVE YOU NO RESPECT FOR THE EARTH? LIKE GNATS, YOU BUZZ ABOUT ME DAY IN AND DAY OUT. MY ANGER RISES, AND SOON, IT WILL--- EXPLODE!"



From deep within the bowels of the planet, a terrible force of nature has been awakened. The Rock and his six companions grow weary of the constant harassment, and are overflowing with a burning desire to drown our party in molten lava once and for all.

The very ground shakes before their wrath; but stand strong, the Baron's observatory is but one stop from this scorched wasteland...

THE ROCK FIGHT MECHANICS

The garden has various large boulders staggered around the play area, and the 'gentle sloping rise' area featured in all of the encounters resembles a shallow volcano in this iteration of the garden. The Rock sits in the caldera, apparently asleep. There are mini 'gutters' or troughs that run down the side of this slope that will become small lava flows once the event begins.

After throwing our Death Lotus into the well, the Rock awakens to condemn us for our foolishness (see previous page for dialog) while the ground begins to tremble. Pressure builds up, and the rumbling intensifies until the shallow volcano in the center of the hill erupts and blows the boss into the air. A circular blast wave of lava blows outward from the volcano, rippling outward towards the garden walls. I imagine a graphical element similar to Sarrathion's lava churning, but moving in an outward facing, growing circular motion instead. This can be avoided by standing behind the boulders. Lava also fills the 'gutters', and remains there for the rest of the fight.

Meanwhile, the boss has been launched into the sky. He comes crashing down to the ground, triggering a large Thunderclap animation which also throws a circular blast wave, but this time of rocks and pellets (same idea, different texture / shape, not as intense). Again, this debris can be avoided by taking cover behind a boulder, or by simply being out of range. Those caught in the actual Thunderclap area are dazed, take a damage spike, and have their armor values reduced. I'm thinking either a stacking debuff that lasts a long while (10% reduction, stacks 10 times, 5 min duration), or a more intense, but shorter one (75% reduction, lasts 10 sec). The second one favors a quick OT and MT juggle when needed, and keeps both tanks on their toes the whole time. The first allows the MT to hold him until he can't take it anymore, then pass him off to the OT to finish the fight. At any rate, the tank picks him up, and DPS begins.

From time to time, he repeats this motion of jumping in the air and landing in a Thunderclap explosion of rocks and debris, but occasionally he will choose to instead jump back in the middle of the area, kicking up the lava wave, which hits considerably harder. This happens at quarterly HP intervals (75%, 50%, 25%).

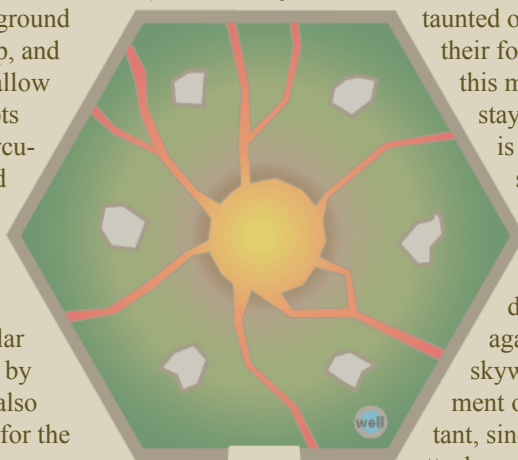
The lava waves also inflict a long duration Fire Buffet debuff that multiplies fire damage taken, making hopping over the little lava streams, and avoiding contact with another lava wave that much more important.

When he lands in the middle, he lays dormant again, while the 6 boulders spread around the room activate, and 'stand up', becoming rock giants. These are slow moving elites that hit for a ton, but are easily kited.

They focus on a random raid member, and cannot be taunted or otherwise swayed from their focus. They march towards this member, and he or she just stays out of melee range. This is a good opportunity to regen some mana or bandage if you aren't being watched. The ground begins to shake again, the elites 'lay back down' and become inert rocks again, and the boss is launched skyward once more. The placement of these rock giants is important, since avoiding many of the AoE attacks requires hiding behind these boulders. You obviously don't want them all clumped up in one corner.

The last 'flavor' ability of the boss itself is a paralyzing Gaze it uses, similar to the Crystal Gaze ability of random Basilisks found in the wild. He focuses on a raid member, and they have 5 seconds to break line of sight (again, behind a boulder) or they get turned to stone. This effectively removes them from play. They're dead, but not in the normal sense where they can ankh, soulstone, or be Reborned by a druid. This is the boss's trump card, but is avoidable by staying near a boulder at all times. Getting hit by the Thunderclap daze doesn't help, either, so it's good to avoid that as well.

If the fight is too easy, the last 25% could see a more frenzied enrage type event, where the volcano is constantly erupting every 5 seconds or so, or perhaps at each quarterly interval, one more of his rock giants just remains active. They could switch focus from time to time, so they aren't always stuck on the tank or whatever, but it would eliminate things to hide behind (or clever players could still use them to break LoS if that's possible to do behind a moving target).



THE GREEN DRAGON



The raid enters to find a dragon slumbering on the rise of the hill. He's chained to the hillside, held tightly down. Loud snoring can be heard, and the air above the dragon has a distinctively green tint to it. The raid makes quick work of collecting Death Lotus, and subsequently throwing them into the well. The instant this happens, the dragon jerks his head awake, and bellows out a challenge:



"THE **AUDACITY** YOU DISPLAY, YOUR WANTON DISREGARD FOR NATURE ITSELF IS APPALLING! YOUR REPEATED ATTEMPTS TO HARNESS THE POWER OF THE EMERALD DREAM WERE LAUGHABLE IN THEIR **FOOLISHNESS**, YOUR GRASP OF THE POWERS YOU WISH TO UNLEASH UNIMAGINABLE TO LESSER BEINGS SUCH AS YOU! UNCHAIN ME THAT I MIGHT SHOW YOU THE POWER YOU WISH TO REIGN IN FIRST HAND!"

The blight spreads from the well, and the dragon's struggles continue to grow more and more frantic. When at last the blight reaches his location on the hill, he finally bursts loose and rears back on his hind legs.

"**FOOLS!** I WILL BE DONE WITH YOU! YSERA HERSELF CANNOT CALM THE RAGE GROWING INSIDE ME! PERHAPS I SHALL LET YOU LIVE, IF ONLY TO MAKE YOU **SUFFER** THROUGH ENDLESS NIGHTMARES OF MY OWN DESIGN!"

THE GREEN DRAGON FIGHT MECHANICS

The dragon awakens, and engages. It's a basic dragon tank and spank for phase 1. This lets everyone get into their rotations, and begin the fight. Most dragon phase 1s are like this. Nightbane, Onyxia, Sartharion, the world dragons. People know what to expect when a dragon trains onto a tank, and that sets up a nice sense of familiarity that people can appreciate for the first 20 seconds or so of the encounter. Sometimes it's good to expect something to happen, and have it actually turn out that you're right.

There are other green dragons out in the world that can be killed, and they share some common "green dragon rules".

All four dragons share the Sleep, Noxious Breath, Tail Sweep and Mark of Nature abilities. Each time a dragon loses $25 \pm 5\%$ of its life, they perform a unique ability.

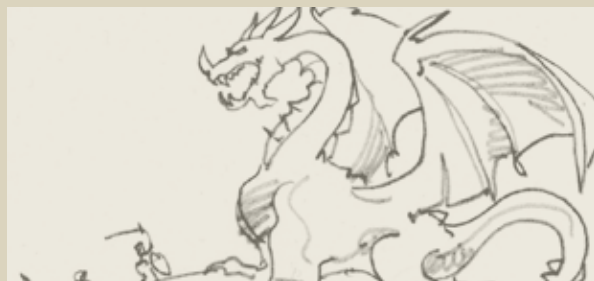
If I remember correctly, Emeriss, Lethon, and Taerar have clouds that float around sleeping people for 4 seconds. My encounter favors the clouds, as well, as it fits with the rest of the fight. They would give a stacking debuff that slows casting and attack speed by 20%. If the debuff reaches 5 stacks, then you sleep it off for 6 seconds. Basically: watch the cleave, don't get tail whipped, melee DPS attack the hind legs, dispel the drowsy debuff or just avoid the gas clouds altogether.

Phase 2 is where things get interesting, though, as the tables are turned, the dragon beats its wings, and throws out a huge cloud of sleep dust that can't be avoided.

*"I grow weary of your foolish games! Let us see how **you** enjoy the prospect of being harassed by a swarm of tiresome insects!"*

The whole raid slumbers, and phasing kicks in.

Our screen briefly fades to black, and when we 'awaken', we find we're suddenly a member of the green dragon flight, with a 25 (or 10) man raid attacking us. Technologically speaking, this has been done in various 5 man dungeon bosses, so the mechanic is there. It just hasn't been done for the effect of turning us into dragons with 25 man raids beating on us. Threat tables are ignored for simplicity, and we take out the healers, dps, and tanks (likely in that order). Spawned copies of the raid probably won't play them very effectively as it is (priest healers casting smite or mind sear, whatever), so this phase is pretty simple actually, and fun. Cathartic. Once you manage to wipe the raid, you regain control of your character. Any damage you suffered during the dragon phase is transferred to the players themselves (percentage based), and you have a chance to bandage while you wait for the rest of the raid to finish. The whole phase is timed, and anyone that can't overcome the odds dies, or is infected by some sort of 'overcome with nightmares' debuff... maybe a green whelp erupts from their body, killing them? Maybe the eruption doesn't kill them, but just hurts *really* bad. After the time limit is up, the Green stops channeling the nightmare phase, and the tanks pick her up again for phase 3 (phase 1 over again). This happens at 75, 50, 25% HP, or less frequently if desired (66, 33%).



THE JAR



The Jar encounter is extremely rare. The other three bosses are pretty straightforward, and are the normal three choices presented each week. But once in a blue moon, the druid that meets the raid will be simply flabbergasted at the appearance of the Jar. I'd like to think that people don't even know about the Jar for a good month or so after the dungeon's release, but data mining would put an early end to that, I suppose. When you think about rare loot drops, with .1 or .01% chance of dropping certain items, this boss has such a chance of even spawning in the first place. It's a special occasion.

Where normally, the druid outside the door tells the raid that the creature inside the garden is a 'good spirit turned by the will of the Baron', when the Jar is spawned, she describes the creature behind the door in a different light.

"BE WARY, TRAVELERS. BEYOND THIS DOOR IS AN ABOMINATION OF NATURE. I HAVE NEVER IN MY TIME SEEN SUCH A TWISTED... CREATURE... AS THIS, AND I HAVE NO POWERS OVER IT, NOR DO ANY OF MY KIND. THE BARON AND HIS MAD ALCHEMIST HAVE WROUGHT A DARK FORCE BEHIND THIS DOOR, AND ALTHOUGH I ATTEMPTED TO WALK THE EMERALD DREAM TO GET A CLOSER LOOK, I FEAR IT NOTICED MY PRESENCE, AND I FLED BEFORE IT COULD ENSNARE ME IN ITS... GRASP.

THE CREATURE BEFOULS ALL THAT IT COMES INTO CONTACT WITH, BUT FEEDS ON **PURITY** TO SUSTAIN ITS INSATIABLE HUNGER. I NOTICED THAT THE WELL WITHIN REMAINS UNTAINTED, AS THE CREATURE BEYOND THE DOOR LIKELY FEEDS ON ITS PURE WATERS TO SUSTAIN ITSELF.

I HAVE FAITH THAT, WHEN THE TIME COMES, YOU WILL KNOW WHAT TO DO..."



THE JAR FIGHT MECHANICS

Upon zoning in, the raid is presented with a drastically different garden than it's used to seeing. The entire place is corrupted, and there are festering puddles of muck spread around what appears to be a large... jar... sitting atop the rise. Within the jar, the pale grey face of the beast can be seen, leering at the raid, and a low and steady laugh drones on in the background. Quivering tubes feed out of the jar into the ground, and pulse gently as it pumps its corruption into the soil of the garden. One hose runs out of the well to an input valve on the jar, the clear blue water inside a stark contrast to the other maroons and sickly greens of the surrounding blight.

The raid collects its Death Lotus in the same fashion as before, and taints the well to begin the event.

The Fight:

Upon tainting the well, we see the clear blue water turn red, then brown, then settle on a dark green. The boss itself undergoes these color shifts, shortly after the hose changes colors, and he ends up taking on a dark green hue as well. There's a general rumbling, and cracks appear in the jar itself. The jar finally shatters, and the entire area is flooded with a thick green ooze. It continues to puddle out of the jar, until the raid is waist deep in it. The boss raises his head out of the middle of this flow and throws his head back to laugh. His head throws back so far as to resubmerge him back into the goop, and the fight begins.

The first thing that immediately happens is that a large wave of the sludge starting in one corner of the map sweeps across the raid. The boss is pushing the goop around the room at will, and creating huge currents within the mess we're all standing in. It starts small, reaches its peak as it reaches the

center of the room, and peters off again on the far side. The raid has to be aware of it coming, and run to the 'furthest' corner from where it started. As soon as that one is done, another immediately starts up, and the raid has to run again to avoid wave two. Wave three does its thing, and

the boss head re-emerges to engage the raid, along with two other copies. After a short channel, he releases an unlimited range frontal AoE vomit cone that poisons anyone caught in it. Similar to a Grievous Wound, this person must be healed to full to counter the ticking damage done. The tank has to pick the head up, and point it away from the raid so that only he takes this initial blast. The copies launch similar attacks,

but do only a regular poison DoT that doesn't require being healed to full to ride out. The other heads continue to submerge, re-emerge, and barf in this fashion until burnt down, while the main tank wrestles with the 'real head'.

After a set amount of time or health percentage, the real head submerges, and the three wave splash pattern is repeated. There's another randomized variation on the wave that has a whirlpool forming in the center of the room, and people just have to run to an outside edge of the garden in order to avoid a large circular blast from the center of the whirlpool. It's similar in practice to the Shade of Aran's infamous 'suck, and then blow' move from Karazhan.

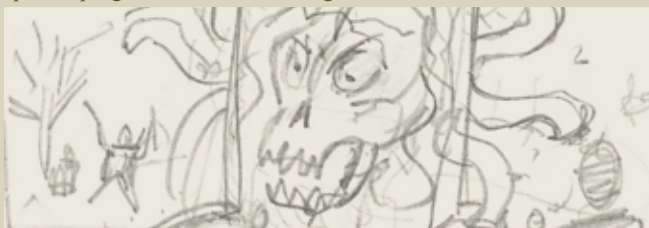
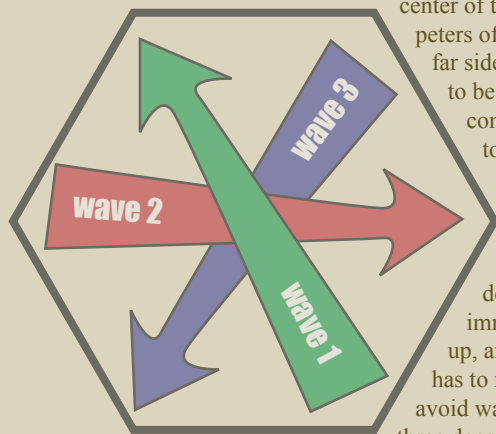
50% sees the boss submerge, and raise the level of muck in the room to about 10 feet deep. People can no longer run freely, but instead have to swim to avoid the waves and whirlpools. The fight is becoming a sloppy mess.

The final 20% sees the boss raising the level of the muck 'to the roof' and the wipe timer becomes how long the raid can hold their breath. Underwater breathing potions, Warlock's Unending Breath, as well being undead can all come in handy here, but at this point the fight gets really frantic. The boss no longer pukes (we wouldn't be able to really see a vomit cone underwater in the murk), but instead is just biting the tank with his skull head, and floating around freely in the pool of muck.

The wave mechanic is dropped entirely, and the whirlpool now becomes the regular AoE mechanic. In a move similar to Malygos' Vortex, the loose bones of the boss are spun around on the rinse cycle and beats the entire raid for a good chunk of damage before slowing, and reversing direction. This 'slowing and reversing direction' is the only window healers have to top people off before it comes again. They're no longer racing against Grievous Wounds, though, but this last leg of the fight is pretty hectic for everyone involved. Visibility in the sludge is pretty limited, swim speed is decreased, you're running out of breath, and everyone is taking damage. Save your Bloodlust/Heroism for 20% ;)

When the boss is defeated (you actually *kill* this one, instead of *exhausting* it like the other benevolent spirits of the garden), the gloop quickly drains out of a grating in the bottom of the jar, and the raid is left waist deep in the muck again.

The druid reappears, with her cohorts, and they channel a spell to purge the muck from the garden.



THE FINAL ASCENT

Once the Garden event is completed, the raid is ready to tackle the Baron properly. With none of his cohorts to draw power from, he should be weak enough to engage head on.

(No Model.)

A. MILES.
ELEVATOR.

No. 371,207.

Pat

We ascend from the garden to the observatory through a series of elevators. The elevators themselves offer one final challenge before you make it to the showdown. I doubt this would go over well on the official WoW forums, but I'd really like to see some very basic platforming element come into play. Whether this is a simple 'jump across the gap from Elevator 1 to Elevator 2', or something more intense like 'leap from Elevator 1 that's moving quickly to Elevator 2 or 3 that are moving slowly to the right and left, and then immediately onto Elevator 4 before Elevator 3 bursts in to flames, and 2 smashes into a wall of spikes' is up in the air. We could even throw simple bats that daze or slow into the mix for extra mayhem.

Again, I can already imagine the amount of crying this would incite on the official forums, but some of the more simple platforming elements of WoW are the ones that get people talking in vent during raids. The guy who always fails during the jump to Thaddeus, or that one guy who invariably fails at frogger after Patchwerk. The little gap in Wailing Caverns that you had to leap, or the other one in Blackfathom Deeps that, if missed, would require you to swim back around and give it another go. The Heigan dance is a pretty simple concept, but many people dread being killed and 'on display' for the duration of the fight if they die early on.

We could make it as crazy or simple as we like, but having it **there** provides one last little check before you move on to the Baron.

There's also a small break before entering the final area, where we have a short chat with Chromie of the Bronze Dragonflight (see the next page), so anyone that didn't make it could try again while the raid waited, or be summoned up. We could even have a failsafe elevator in place so as long as **someone** made it up, they could lower down the 'failelevator' for the noobs. Although, were that to be the case, I would imagine that people would just afk while someone made the trip up and they all waited for the safe elevator to come down. An achievement could be implemented: "Elevator Action - Have the full raid enter the Baron's Observatory without summons or the use of the dumb waiter".

A MEETING WITH CHROMIE

There needs to be a story hook in place as to why, when we fight the Baron, the day and night cycle is in flux (as shown soon). The day and night cycles are intertwined in the fight, and signal the phase shifts. At first I had imagined him giving a monologue, and then setting a sundial type apparatus (with each half indicating night and day) above his throne into motion, but I've decided that the idea that this is something we do --perhaps even against the Baron's wishes-- makes for a more compelling and 'hands on' approach to the fight setup.

*The final setup, then, is this: his room is a large observatory, and there's an apparatus dominating the upper area of the room. This planetarium type object tracks the moons and stars, and we are given an item right before entering the chamber from Chromie (of the Bronze Dragonflight) that will speed up night and day cycles, and put the device into overdrive. Understand that it isn't **the device itself** we're speeding up, but the **entire flow of time**. The device is just a fancy clock, basically, and spins faster to reflect the speed of time around it. She explains why altering time in this fashion is necessary:*

"WAIT, YOUNG ONES! I BRING HELP FROM THE BRONZE FLIGHT.

JUST AHEAD LIES THE CHAMBER OF THE BARON. HE IS A MAN ETERNALLY AT ODDS WITH THE TWO FORCES STRUGGLING INSIDE OF HIM. BOTH FORCES DESIRE TO DEVOUR HIS SOUL ENTIRELY, BUT ARE ALSO EQUALLY AT WAR WITH ONE ANOTHER.

ALTHOUGH ONCE A GREAT MAN, HE HAS NOW SUNK TO SUCH LEVELS OF DEPRAVITY THAT ENDING HIS EXISTENCE IS THE ONLY OPTION LEFT. DO NOT PITY THE BARON, FOR HE BROUGHT THIS UPON HIMSELF; HIS LUST FOR POWER DRIVING HIM TO TINKER WITH POWERS BEYOND HIS UNDERSTANDING, OR ABILITY TO CONTAIN. FOR NOW, HE WAITS. SEARCHING FOR A CURE, OR MEANS TO HARNESS THIS ENERGY, ENLISTING THOSE HARBINGERS OF SUCH KNOWLEDGE TO HIS TASK FORCE... THOSE YOU HAVE VANQUISHED ON THE PATH TO THIS FINAL CONFRONTATION.

TAKE THIS ROD. NOZDORMU HAS GIFTED IT WITH THE POWER TO UNRAVEL TIME FOR A SHORT TIME, AND ONLY FOR AN AREA WITH A LIMITED RADIUS OF ITS ACTIVATION POINT. PERHAPS BY TURNING THE TWO POWERS WITHIN THE BARON AGAINST HIM IN SUCH QUICK SUCCESSION, WE CAN WEAR HIM DOWN AND TRIUMPH.

WHAT POWERS ARE THOSE, YOU ASK? YOU SHALL SEE VERY SOON, MY FRIENDS. I CAN SEE ALREADY IN THE FUTURE THAT YOU HAVE TRIUMPHED, BUT PERHAPS THIS IS ONLY THE *FINAL* RESULT I'M SEEING..."



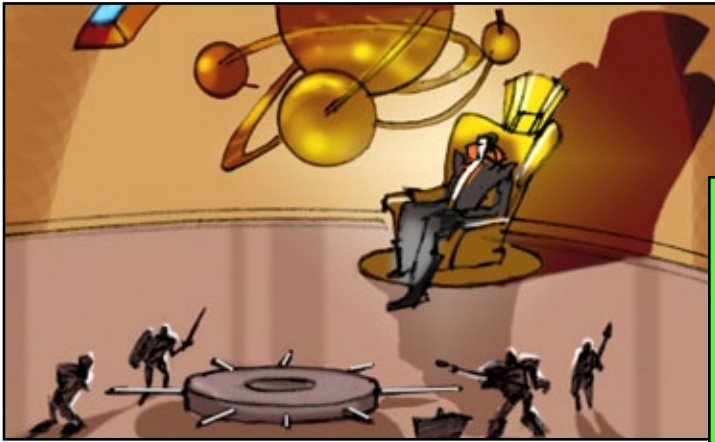
... we take the rod, and prepare for the final showdown...

BARON VON LUPUS



Rod in hand, our party creeps cautiously through the door to the Baron's inner sanctum. There, he sits, on the far side of the room.

Brooding.



Watching.

Waiting.



"YOUR COMING WAS FORETOLD BY THE STARS, AND THE STORY OF YOUR DEMISE BEGINS HERE AND NOW. YOU CANNOT HOPE TO THINK YOU CAN WIN, WHEN THE POWERS WITHIN ME ARE GREAT BEYOND YOUR WILDEST IMAGININGS. I WILL ENLIST YOU IN MY ARMY, ONE BY ONE, UNTIL NONE ARE LEFT TO OPPOSE ME. YOU HAVE FOUGHT VALIANTLY TO MAKE IT THIS FAR, AND WILL MAKE WORTHY REPLACEMENTS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FAILED ME TODAY. PREPARE YOURSELVES, THE SUN SETS NOW ON YOUR LIVES AS YOU KNOW THEM. WHEN IT RISES AGAIN TOMORROW, IT WILL BE ON THE THE FIRST DAY OF AN **ETERNITY** OF SERVITUDE IN MY ARMY!"

THE BARON FIGHT MECHANICS

Room Layout:

The fight has the raid entering into a large circular room with a domed ceiling dominated by planetarium device hanging from the center, planets and stars twirling about on central axes. A large telescope looks out through a slot in the ceiling. There is a large crank in the center of the floor.

The floor itself is circular, and made of smooth and uniform tiles. The Baron's throne rests at the opposite end of the room.

Above his throne is a large clock. From 12-6 is day, and 6-12 (up the other side) is night. The dial's initial time can reflect the real time of "server time" to begin the encounter, similar to how Brill's town hall clock tower works, or can be stopped altogether. The starting time isn't important. When the raid activates the rod given to them by Chromie, the dial twirls forward to 12 exactly, ready to begin the first full 'day' cycle. As mentioned, the roof is domed, and has a large slit cut into the radius, similar to a telescope observatory.

The Encounter:

Phase 1: The DAY phase

The boss is engaged, and he stands up and gives his monologue (as shown on the previous page). The raid uses the rod given to them by Chromie, and sets the time unraveling mechanic into motion. This begins Phase 1 (a.k.a The Day Phase, a.k.a The Vampire Phase). During this phase, the room is brightly lit to indicate it's daytime, and a powerful beam of sunlight shines through the open slit in the ceiling to land on the floor. The boss is untankable in this phase, and instead teleports or flies around the room to various locations, casting various 'vampirey' spells:

Vampire Skills:

- Minor, instant cast, fire-and-forget DoTs thrown on random raid members
- Raid wide enfeebling stat reductions (more on this in a bit)

The crank in the center of the room rotates the ceiling, to 'aim' the sunbeam. It acts as a vehicle mechanic. Manning the crank will put your toon 'leaning into a pole', while moving forward or backward will then turn the crank clock- or counter-clockwise. To abandon the crank, and resume control of your toon, click the 'eject from vehicle' button. The boss is immune to all damage except when the sunbeam is on him (which weakens him). He also casts undisPELLable 'uber life drains' that appear as a red beam from him to the raid member, and tick for a flat percentage of his health on raid members (2 in 10 man, 5 in 25). These raid members also need to run and stand in the sunbeam to nullify the effect of said drain. Again, he isn't tanked in this phase, he moves freely, and ranged DPS do their thing.



During this phase, he summons bat adds (of two types) that need to be handled by the tanks and melee DPS. Normal Bats are just to be off tanked to the side, similar to the phoenixes in the Alar encounter of Tempest Keep. Visibly larger and uglier Vampire Bat adds do massive damage (through stacking bleed effects), and need to be tanked and destroyed as soon as possible. Killing *any* type of bat enrages the boss, transforming him into a large bat himself, whereupon he bites a raid member, turning them into a vampire themselves. Phase 1 will have one Vampire Bat spawn. Phase 3 (the second day phase) will have two, etc. Since killing *any* bat will turn a raid member into a vampire, it's in the raid's best interest to choose the Vampire Bat as their target to kill to eliminate the damage they do from the healers' burden.



A bitten raid member becomes a vampire themselves, with a new action bar and various 'vampirey' abilities (including a taunt), and a **greatly** increased health pool. During the day phase in which they are bitten, they have no control over themselves, and they run rampant in the raid; beating on clothes and generally being a nuisance. Various forms crowd control could apply to simplify the management of these.

Phase 2: The NIGHT Phase

The dial in the room eventually makes it to 6 o'clock, and this begins Phase 2 (a.k.a the Night Phase, a.k.a the Werewolf Phase). The lighting in the area changes dramatically as the day phase goes on towards dusk, so no one is forced to 'watch the clock' to know when night is coming.

The boss has a short animation of transforming from a vampire to a werewolf. Upon transforming, he immediately charges the oftanked 'normal bats' and destroys them (werewolves hate vampires, duh). Anyone standing in range takes huge cleaves. The sunlight streaming through the roof is now moonlight, and if the boss comes into contact with the moonlight, he enrages, whirlwinding in a typical 'Bladestorm' fashion for 6 seconds. That's not good. The raid needs to be aware that he's going to charge the bats straight off the bat (zing, straight off the BAT, oh god, I kill me), and try and position the sunbeam so that the boss won't be passing through the beam to get to the bats for the night phase. Afterward, the crank in the center of the room can be ignored for the night phase, as long as the tanks are aware of its final positioning, so they don't drag the werewolf through it on accident. This frees up the raid members manning the crank to engage the boss for this phase.

During the Night Phase, the vampire raid member(s) that were bitten in phase 1 gain control of their toon again and *are used to tank the Werewolf*, keeping their newfound vampiric life drains up to help the healers fill their huge health pools, and weakening the boss with new debuffs they've gained as a result of being bitten. This is the phase where the majority of damage is done, since you aren't messing around with the crank, or dealing with loose adds to pick up, and all forms of DPS (ranged, melee) can basically go nuts.



Werewolf skills:

- Split Cleave (see below)
- Bleeds
- Flurry
- basically hits like a truck, but is tauntable (perhaps only by the given vampire taunt, though)

When the clock reaches 12 again, the wolf goes back to vampire phase, and the raid member(s) that were bitten die (vampires and the sun, right?). The Vampire boss now summons more bats, and *two* larger Vampire Bats that need to be destroyed to create two tanks for phase 4. The Werewolf boss has a cleave that splits damage among tanks in front of him, but the first night phase is solo-tankable (i.e. healable). Phases 4, 6, 8 (etc) see his damage output doubling and tripling, so two and three tanks are needed for subsequent night phases. This creates a spiraling effect in that you need to kill off more raid members in order for the wolf phase to be tankable, and yet, with three bitten members running rampant in the third day phase (plus having to man the crank again), everything gets more hectic the longer the fight goes on.



10 man variations could include one tank being sufficient for the first *two* night phases (two tanks for the next two), and having the crank only require 2 or 3 people to operate.

Achievements could include not using the rod given to the raid by Chromie at all, and 'riding out' one phase all the way to completion. An interesting twist to this achievement would be that the dial in the room would initially reflect actual server time, so in order to get both achievements ("Day Walker" and "Insomniac") you would need to schedule two separate day and night time raids.

Other possible achievements could include not using Vampire Tanks during the night phase, or ignoring the crank completely. The day phase has him weakened by the sunlight (and immune to damage completely unless in it), but the phase shifts aren't boss health percentage based, they're timed. You could just heal through day phases, and then do your damage at night time only. Or he could take 'normal' amounts of damage all the time, and 2 or 3 times the amount if weakened by the sun. There would need to be play testing done to see if the negligible amount of damage done during day phase is worth not hassling with the crank in the first place. If that's the case, and people ignore the crank mechanic altogether, then the achievement could be "Tomorrow's Another Day -

Defeat the Baron before the end of the first night cycle", requiring the damage multiplier of the sunbeam to achieve.

Alternatively, if people *still* continued to ignore the crank, even while not going for the achievement, then we could give him an enrage timer of 25 seconds. If he doesn't come into contact with the sun beam before then, then it's GG and a wipe. I mentioned 'raid wide enfeebling stat reductions' early on the previous page. Perhaps if he's out of the sun-beam for long enough during a day phase, all stats are reduced by 25%, stacking four times.

Possible problems with the encounter:

The main issue I see with this fight is that it's the final showdown of the place, and yet -- tanks are totally worthless, except for handling bat adds. That's not going to go over well in the tanking community. By having the boss bite raid members, and having said members become super duper tanks in the next phase, it basically allows anyone to be the tank for this fight. Perhaps dual spec will alleviate this, and allow tanks to just DPS this phase? That's a pretty lame 'solution'.

A better way to handle this would be to have the tanks be the ones that get bitten, and have 'the tanks become the tanks' for the next phase. One thing I really like about the bite mechanic is that it's random, and allows a mage (for example) to be a tank for this encounter. Not just a 'mage tank' like they've done before for High King in Gruul's Lair, but a 'get in the mob's face, take huge hits, and hit your taunt button when you need to' tank. If the randomness was taken out of the equation when a vampire bat was killed...

- the boss could enrage and bite highest on threat
- the boss could enrage and bite the player with the biggest health pool (yum! lots of blood!)

... then you could 'aim the bite' at various raid members, and it becomes a predictable and strategic element of the encounter. Or the boss could just be tauntable, and when he enrages, a tank needs to hit the taunt and take it for the team. That's very 'tanky' behavior, and would suit the role.

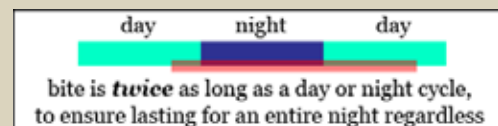
Commenters on my blog mentioned how they wouldn't like being the bitten member, because 1) you lose control of your toon for the remainder of that day phase, and 2) you die automatically come the next day phase. I think this is balanced by playing a fun, crucial role during the encounter (tanking the night phase), and I really like the idea that it's a fight of attrition, where you need to sacrifice your own raid members in order to be able to tank the night phases.

If people cry too loudly about having to die on the next day phase, then that aspect could be altered. Make the 'deadly bite' a disease, and have someone dispell it right before it would kill them for the next phase (but not before they have a chance to tank night phase).

Alternatively, just make it a time based debuff. They get bitten, and are 'not normal' for 4 minutes (assuming 2 minute day/night cycles). This goes for the remainder of the day phase they

get bit (running around out of control, needing to be stunned or CCed), the subsequent night phase (tanking), and then into the next day phase (running around again, but eventually wearing off). If they got bit right at the end of day phase 1, it would wear off right at the end of day phase 2.

The ramification here is that they lose control of their character for an entire day phase (in the example above, 30% of day one, and 70% of day two), but 'they live'. The main point I'm trying to make is that there's about fifty different ways we could go about this, if one option or another needs to be tweaked.



RESUME AND REFERENCES

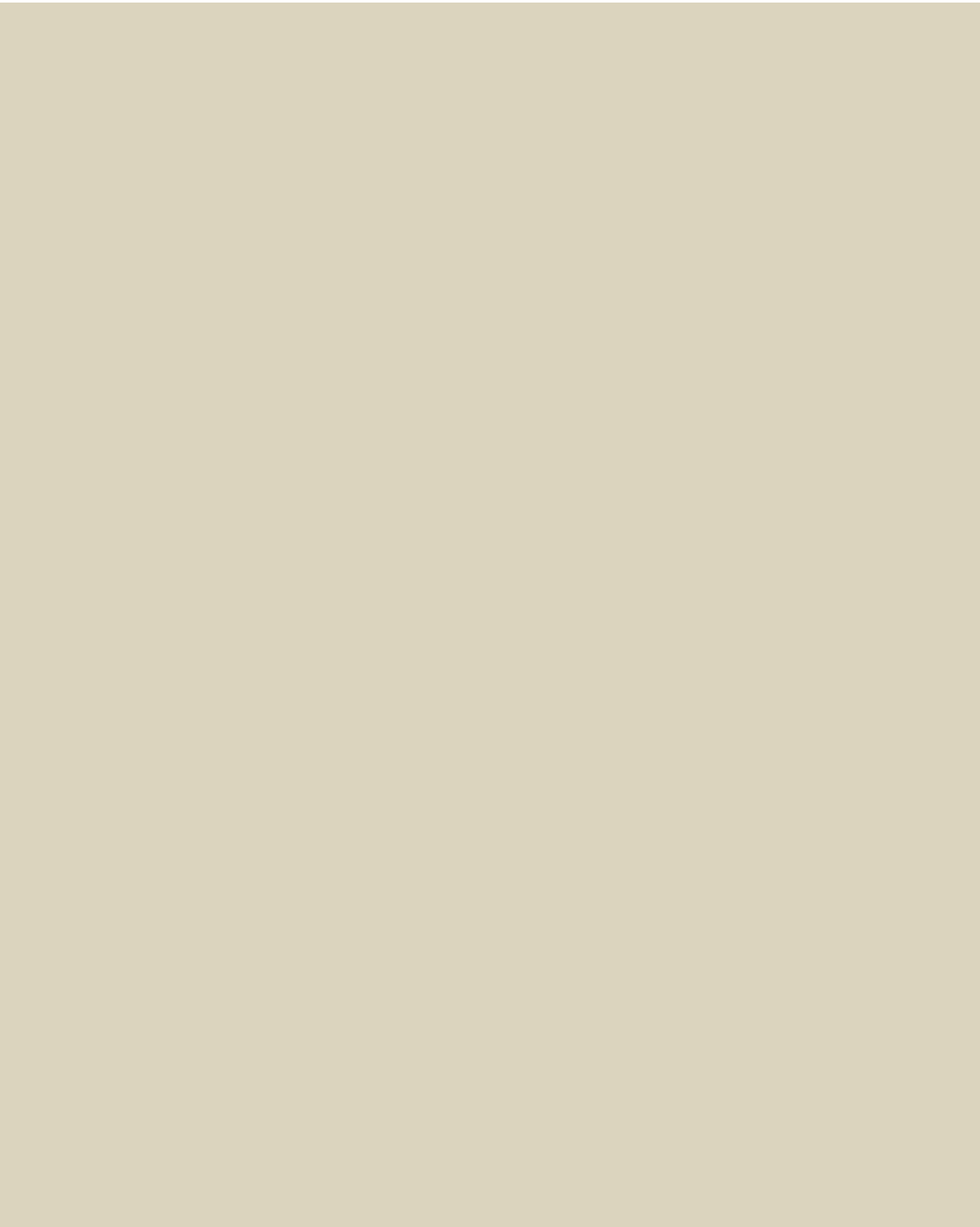
These two pages removed, because people got WAY too focused on

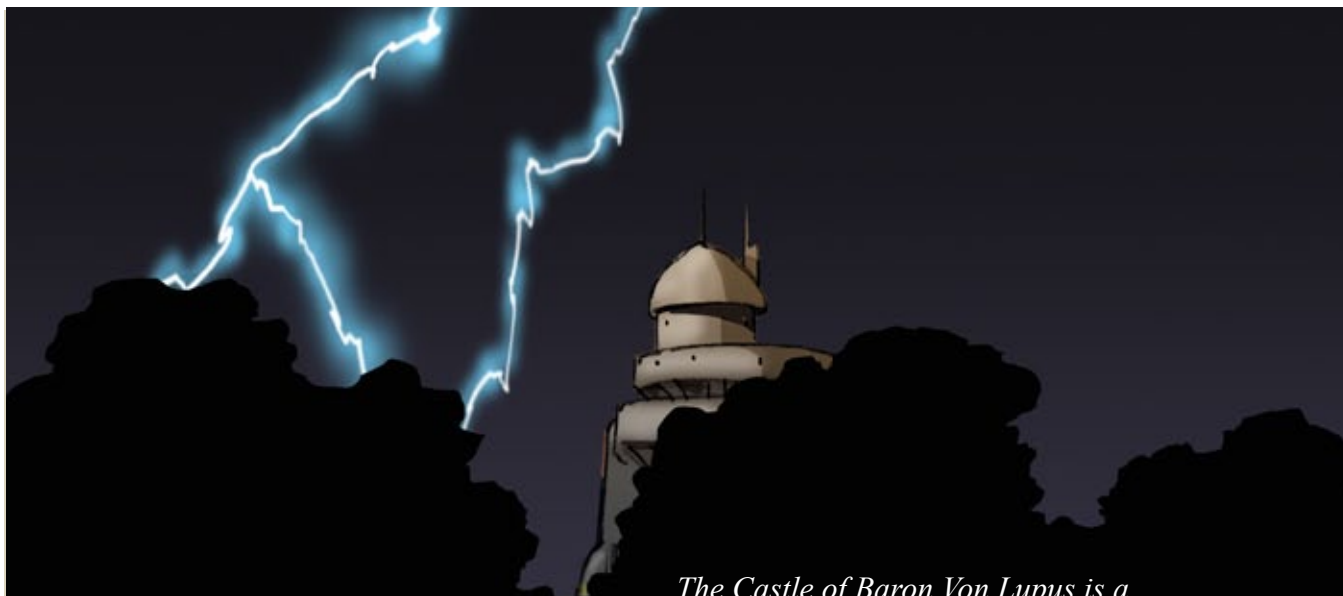
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pages, and forgot that this was a raid dungeon writeup that I was sharing with the world.
If you have an actual question for me, email me at ixobelle@gmail.com

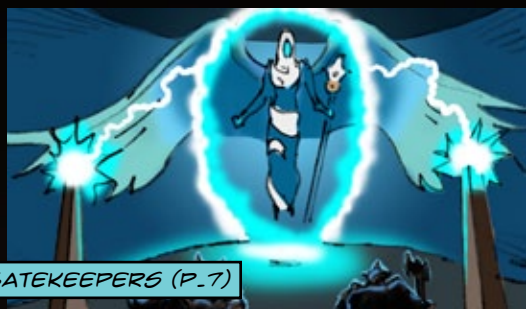
Cheers.

ixo



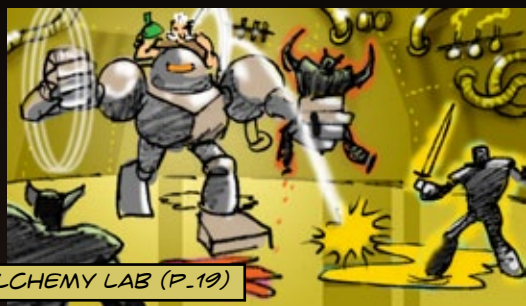


The Castle of Baron Von Lupus is a World of Warcraft Raid Dungeon as imagined by Richard Ericksen of Ixobelle.com.



GATEKEEPERS (P.7)

From the initial encounter with the twin Gatekeepers, through the Hall of Arms and Library gauntlets...



ALCHEMY LAB (P.19)

From the familiar faces that await in the Armory, to the dramatic clash of the maniacal Alchemist and his powerful robot companion Lucy...



BARON VON LUPUS (P.35)

From the friendly dragons and druids you'll meet, trying to lend a hand, to the confrontations with devious minions of evil...

All will be revealed on the way to the final showdown with the split personalities of the Baron himself.

Do you have what it takes to restore peace to the lands he has ravaged in his mad quest for power?

All fights, encounter mechanics, and background lore are provided within.