

THE LOST VIKINGS

KITH'S REVIEW AND REWORK



THE LOST VIKINGS IN REVIEW

NOTE: IF YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT THE REVIEW PORTION, PLEASE SKIP TO PAGE 12 WHERE THE REWORK BEGINS.

So, The Lost Vikings (hereafter referred to as TLV). A neat concept – three different heroes in one, featuring a tank (Olaf), a bruiser (Baelog), and a DPS (Erik). They're categorized as Very Hard, and theoretically that's true – no other hero involves controlling three units at once, so surely TLV should live up to their Very Hard label, right?

Well... not really.

The reality of the situation is that it's not difficult at all to play TLV once you recognize their purpose. The combination of a barebones base kit, snowball-prone trait, amazing escape mechanisms, extremely exploitable talents, and the potential to take advantage of Heroes' experience system unlike any other Hero makes them simple to play effectively. Easy, even. And on top of all this, TLV feels unpolished - TLV feels like a proof of concept instead of a full hero.

But before I start saying what I feel should be changed, I need to go over TLV's design and everything that comes with it. I'll kick things off by going over how everyone uses TLV: the Viking Soak.



A THREE-COURSE MEAL: THE VIKING SOAK

The main feature of TLV is that, because they have three heroes, they can be in three places at once. Since most maps have 3 lanes, 99% of the time this means parking one Viking in each lane to soak experience. This provides that player's team with the full experience output of the entire map without requiring more than one player to maintain lane presence, meaning the other four can pursue other objectives at their leisure: mercenary camps, 4-man gank squads, map events, so on and so forth.

The advantage is not purely tactical, however – having TLV on your side will very likely provide your team with a level advantage. There's a lot to be said for missed lane experience when doing other things, but if your TLV is pulling off the Viking Soak you'll be getting that experience while your enemy isn't. This means statistical advantages and a better talent selection in addition to a greater tactical flexibility, and that can be a very difficult thing to fight against. Often times, the team with TLV on their side doesn't even need to secure objectives, just contest them long enough – the delay as the opposing team fails to secure the objective is more time that the Viking Soak has to work its magic, which can lead to some very one-sided fights later on.

On paper, the counter to the Viking Soak is simple: just kill the Vikings. They have lower stats to compensate for there being three of them, so blowing them up should be easy. The reality, unfortunately, is not so straightforward. I'll touch on the escape mechanisms themselves later, but the primary reason that killing any of the Vikings is so hard is that the TLV player has no reason to fight – none of the individual Vikings are going to win a duel, and keeping a Viking alive to continue the Viking Soak is far more important than potentially securing a kill.

Now, there's nothing wrong with the Viking Soak on its own. Splitting up the group to exploit the experience system and get greater returns for the team is clever, and I personally like the concept itself. However, multiple things in TLV's design come together to make it the only thing they're good for.



REINFORCING THE SPONGES: VIKING HOARD

You may be thinking that TLV's entire purpose can't JUST be to soak multiple lanes for the team, but Viking Hoard might as well force you to do so. It increases ALL of the Vikings' Health Regeneration by 0.5/sec for each Regeneration Globe they collect, a net increase of 1.5/sec per globe (and 4.5/sec per wave, assuming each Viking collects one globe from their respective lane on a three-lane map). This trait neatly accomplishes three things with its mechanics:

- **Viking Hoard encourages the Viking Soak maneuver to make TLV as durable as possible.** Because TLV features low health pools, they primarily rely on Health Regeneration for survival (similarly to Murky and his 30 hp/s baseline regeneration). This makes a high Regeneration Globe income vital to TLV's survival throughout the course of a match, especially in the late game when everyone's damage really starts to ramp up.
- **Viking Hoard snowballs, making the Viking Soak easier.** More durability makes TLV harder to kill, and specifically more Health Regeneration makes it easier for TLV to return to a lane after taking damage, so Viking Hoard's effectiveness ultimately loops back around into itself.
- **Viking Hoard directly punishes non-Viking Soak strategies.** Without the high globe income from Viking Soak, TLV's trait effectively accomplishes nothing and they're left with some of the lowest durability in the Nexus while *also* being three times as vulnerable to Area of Effect attacks.

In essence, Viking Hoard makes the Viking Soak the only way to play TLV.



THE STARS OF THE SHOW: STATS AND ABILITIES

Now that we've gone over what the Vikings are used for, it's time to meet the Vikings themselves. Keep in mind that none of the Vikings have any kind of hotkeyed active abilities by default – aside from Olaf's charge, they are entirely driven by passives and stats.



OLAF THE STOUT

Olaf is the most durable of the three vikings, and therefore the most likely to survive via walking away. He has a charge ability that is activated by right-clicking on the target enemy, causing him to zip over to them and hit them with a Basic Attack (which also slows them by 30% for 3 seconds). Additionally, if Olaf hasn't taken damage in the last 4 seconds, he heals for 5% of his maximum health per second (which stacks with his natural health regeneration and the bonus health regeneration granted by Viking Hoard).

Now, Olaf's damage is peanuts, but as we went over in the Viking Soak section, that doesn't really matter. The most important part of TLV is that they're warm bodies to soak experience, and Olaf's ability to return to lane without having to heal at base means that he's amazing at that job.



BAELOG THE FIERCE

Baelog is the waveclearing bruiser portion of the trio. His main claim to fame is that his attacks deal 50% of their damage in a cone behind the main target, making him good for pushing lanes and attacking indiscriminately into teamfights. He's got a lower range than most other other ranged characters in HOTS, but that rarely matters – most of what Baelog fights are minions, who typically don't care about heroes if there are other Minions to fight.

ERIK THE SWIFT

Erik is the ranged DPS of the group, featuring a permanent 10% Movement Speed bonus and an increased Basic Attack range (6.5 vs. most ranged characters' 5.5).

While he's also the frailest of the Vikings, Erik is arguably the hardest to kill due to his distance and mobility advantages – not only does he stay further away from combat than most heroes by virtue of having a longer attack range, he is guaranteed to outrun almost any hero in a basic footrace due to his innate 10% Movement Speed bonus.



HOT TO TROT: GO, GO, GO! AND ITS USES

Instead of having a normal mount, TLV comes with Go, Go, Go! (hereby referred to as GGG), a sprint effect that increases all Vikings' movement speeds by 30% for 4 seconds. GGG is one of the major reasons why the Vikings are so hard to kill off because, unlike normal mounts, attacking or being attacked will not cancel GGG.

On one hand, GGG is global: if you blow it to save Olaf, Erik and Baelog are going to have to eat the cooldown too.

On the other hand, it's very difficult to kill off TLV because of it: GGG makes taking out all three Vikings a major hassle because it's very difficult to catch them. On top of that, TLV can use GGG to chase down nearly any target with ease because GGG cannot be interrupted by anything.

Ultimately, coupled with their talents and Viking Hoard, GGG nearly guarantees that at least one of the Vikings will escape – a very significant thing, given their most popular Heroic ability.



OH BOY, HERE WE GO: TALENTS AND HEROICS

So I've mentioned talents and escape mechanisms a few times previously, and now is finally the time to speak about them. I won't be going over all of TLV's talents, just the most popular ones that are chosen because... well. You'll see.

LEVEL 1: VIKING BRIBERY

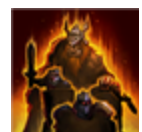
Viking Bribery gives the player Bribe stacks based on the Vikings being near dying minions. This is fairly standard as far as Bribe abilities go, but the catch is that ANY Viking can generate charge and ANY Viking can use them. This means that Olaf and Baelog can continue soaking their respective lanes while Erik runs off to grab a Mercenary camp (typically the enemy team's, given that Viking Soak's advantages allows the team an enormous amount of pressure potential) with only a minimal (or non-existent, if another player is covering Erik's lane) loss in experience income.



Ultimately, there's nothing wrong with Viking Bribery in a vacuum, but combined with Viking Hoard, it's just another brick in the wall forcing the Viking Soak into prominence.

LEVEL 4: MERCENARY LORD

Yeah, whatever, it's Mercenary Lord. We've heard it all before, right?



Well, TLV's version of Mercenary Lord works regardless of if it's one Viking near them or all three, so having any of them nearby will net you the full benefit of this talent (effectively tripling its value).

LEVEL 4: ERIK THE SWIFT

Grants Erik a permanent 10% increase to Movement Speed (for a total of 20%) and restores (roughly) 4.6% of Erik's Maximum Health per second while moving.



Wow.

Erik the Swift is an amazing, amazing talent. Not only does it make Erik's passive movement speed higher than any other hero in the game (as a permanent effect!), but it also gives him amazing durability while he's running. A player that takes this talent is given an Erik that can outrun practically anything and heal for an enormous amount, causing the effort investment required to kill him to skyrocket.



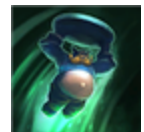
LEVEL 7: SPIN TO WIN!

Spin to Win! is weird, because instead of providing a passive effect or a secondary active like most talents, Spin to Win! makes its home on the Viking's primary ability row. When activated, it causes all living Vikings deal damage to nearby enemies. Despite its weirdness, it's the go-to option at Level 7 – not only is it good for wave-clear and a supplement to the individual Vikings' relatively low damage output, but because the damage from each individual Viking stacks, making TLV surprisingly effective in fights when grouped.



LEVEL 10: PLAY AGAIN!

After a short channel, Play Again! summons, heals, and revives all Vikings. This, right here, is one of the major reasons why TLV in general is nearly impossible to completely kill. If you don't get all three (and between Viking Hoard, GGG, Olaf's beef, Erik's mobility, and Jump!, you are extremely unlikely to do so), whoever survived can just use Play Again! and the trio will be right back in action.



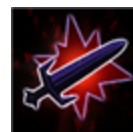
LEVEL 13: JUMP!

1.5 seconds of invulnerability for all Vikings, plus non-collision (so they can pass right through other units and are therefore immune to body-blocking). The most reliable way to dodge nukes and aid in escapes, Jump! more or less guarantees that you'll never lose the whole crew ever again.



LEVEL 16: IMPATIENCE IS A VIRTUE

It's Battle Momentum adapted for TLV and it means more uses of Spin to Win and Jump. Considering that the former is a great source of DPS and the latter is one of the most useful tools that TLV has available for staying alive, it's basically the best talent that TLV has available at 16. Honorable mention goes to Olaf's Large And In Charge, which adds a stun to his charge attack. Stuns are of course always useful, but the cooldown reduction given by Impatience Is A Virtue is more valuable pound-for-pound.



LEVEL 20: FURY OF THE STORM

One of the few characters Fury of the Storm is a good choice on, TLV's version comes with an individual activation for each Viking. It allows them to put out a surprising amount of burst damage, making them much more effective in teamfights and granting some of the best wave-clear in the entire game. Granted, waiting until 20 for amazing wave-clear isn't that great of a feature, but due to Viking Soak it's very likely that TLV's team will have 20 at least two levels before their opponents (and that's assuming the game lasts that long).



META MADNESS: TLV'S SUPER-NICHES

So at the end of the day, TLV features three surprisingly resistant pieces of a whole that can (and are expected to) provide their team with an enormous experience lead, along with every advantage that entails. On most maps, they're frustrating but manageable, but there are some maps that they REALLY shine on, such as...



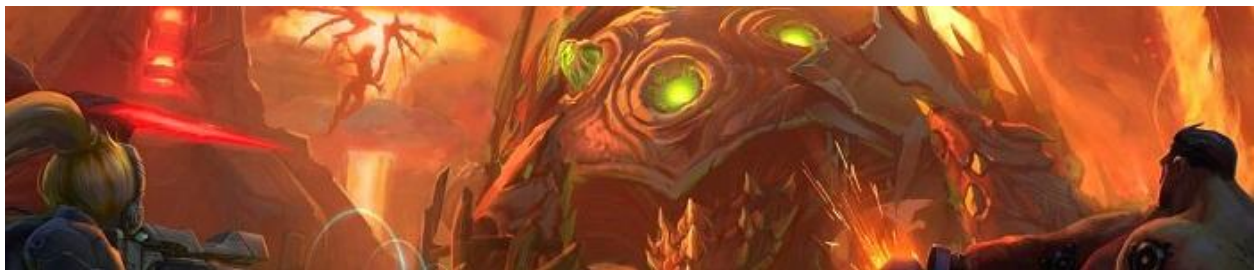
GARDEN OF TERROR

Easily TLV's most powerful map. Neutral Garden Terrors usually take at least two team members to kill off, so the opportunity to comfortably commit four other players to down one quickly without loss of experience income is a major advantage. Even better, when their team has collected enough seeds, TLV can take control of the Terror using only one Viking – the other two remain outside of it, fully controllable, and fully able to continue the Viking Soak while the Terror... well, terrorizes.



VOLSKAYA FOUNDRY

Volskaya offers many of the same opportunities that Garden of Terror does, but to a lesser degree. The objective requiring a teamfight to contest makes the Vikings slightly less valuable as full team participation in contesting the point is important, but the experience lead and map pressure granted by Viking Soak can easily overcome the importance of securing the objective. The Protector is arguably stronger than the Terror in this case, however, and you still only need one Viking to pilot it.



WARHEAD JUNCTION

On any large map, the Viking Soak is extremely effective – the longer a team takes to get from place to place, the more opportunity the Vikings have to get ahead in experience. Warhead Junction in particular is especially bad about this because of how the Warheads spawn (randomly and enormously spaced out) and how the map is laid out (lots of side passages to sneak through to Bribe Mercenaries safely), and the objective is uniquely suited to the Vikings themselves. The Vikings have many excellent escape tools and are ultimately disposable, so sacrificing one to get off a good Nuke is effective and easy.



FLAWS IN THE FACADE: TLV'S OVERALL PROBLEMS

Despite their effectiveness, TLV feels incomplete – beyond “there’s three of them”, they don’t feel very inspired as a design. I’ve nailed down my three biggest complaints with the trio:

- **TLV lacks gameplay complexity.** There are few cooldowns to manage and no abilities to aim and your only goal is to avoid combat while soaking the lane. The most difficult thing you’re going to be doing for the majority of the game is flipping between the lanes, and you’re going to be doing that a lot because...
- **TLV lacks playstyle diversity.** Every single game, you Viking Soak until it’s not useful anymore and then you start doing whatever you want. However, “whatever you want” isn’t really that much, because...
- **TLV lacks talent diversity.** 1 and 4 are dependent on if you want mercenary support or if you want Erik to be unkillable. Always take Spin to Win, Play Again, and Jump. 16 and 20 are less set in stone, but Impatience Is A Virtue and Fury of the Storm are almost always your best options.

All in all, TLV is just not that difficult to play once you get the hang of managing the three of them (which is not hard if you’ve played RTSes before) and you understand what their primary purpose is (abusing the experience meta). Once you do that, I would go so far as to say that TLV is one of the easiest heroes in HOTS because performing the Viking Soak is so straightforward (have a Viking in each lane, pick up Regen Globes, prioritize survival over combat) and its rewards so powerful. Given their unique concept, that’s a huge disappointment to me.

What I want to see is a TLV that really makes use of the three-in-one hero concept. I want to see a TLV that pushes the envelope of what’s expected of the player, like HOTS’s other unique designs like Cho’Gall and Abathur. I want to see a TLV that can still perform the Viking Soak, but also one that isn’t required to. And overall, I want to see something *cool*. So here’s a rework:



KITH'S LOST VIKINGS REWORK

REWORK GOALS

- **Increase viability of grouped TLV play.** This is currently TLV's largest weakness - there's just no reason to have them together unless it's super late in the game.
- **Maintain the viability and effectiveness of the Viking Soak playstyle.** The Viking Soak is wholly unique to the Vikings and I don't hate it in a vacuum - I only hate that the current TLV is more or less forced to do it. While I want to ensure that other playstyle opportunities are provided, I don't want what's currently viable to change.
- **Push the unique traits of The Lost Viking design by using source material as a guide.** The Lost Vikings gave each Viking a unique ability, and I want to see the same applied to TLV in Heroes.



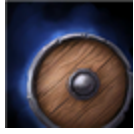
TRAIT: Teamwork! (D)

Each Viking has an aura that provides passive benefits to other Vikings and allows use of an Active ability.

Olaf's **Stoutness** grants 10 Armor.

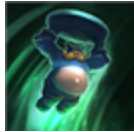
Baelog's **Fierceness** causes Basic Attacks to reduce Basic Ability cooldowns by 0.25 seconds.

Erik's **Swiftness** increases Movement Speed by 10%.



OLAF THE STOUT (1)

Olaf regains 4% of his Maximum Health per second when out of combat for 4 seconds.



ACTIVE: Jump! (W)

Cooldown: 30 Seconds

Vikings with **Stoutness** leap into the air, becoming Invulnerable and able to pass over enemies for 1.5 seconds.



BAELOG THE FIERCE (2)

Baleog's Basic Attacks deal 50% splash damage to enemies behind his attack target.



ACTIVE: Spin To Win! (Q)

Cooldown: 10 Seconds

Vikings with **Fierceness** deal 101 (+4% per level) damage to nearby enemies.



ERIK THE SWIFT (3)

Erik has +2 Sight Range.



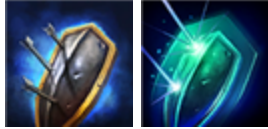
ACTIVE: Go, Go, Go! (Z)

Cooldown: 30 Seconds

Vikings with **Swiftiness** gain 30% increased Movement Speed for 4 seconds.

LEVEL 1 TALENTS: E IS FOR EXPANSION

All of these occupy the E slot, which is locked until an ability is chosen (so how it normally is with the Vikings).

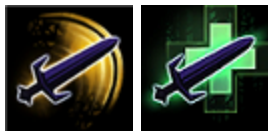


OLAF: Runic Shield (Modal)

Toggle to swap between armor types.

While **Vanguard** is active, Olaf gains 20 Physical Armor.

While **Spellward** is active, Olaf gains 20 Spell Armor.



BAELOG: Raid and Plunder (Modal)

Toggle to swap between bonus damage and healing.

While **Raiding** is active, Baelog's Splash Damage is increased to 100% against Non-Heroes.

While **Plundering** is active, Baelog's Basic Attacks and Splash Damage heal Baelog for 20% of the damage dealt.

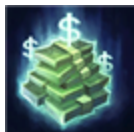


ERIK: Spy Games (Modal)

Toggle to swap between stealth and vision.

While Sneaking is active, Erik becomes Stealthed after being out of combat for 3 seconds.

While Scouting is active, Erik can see over walls and obstacles and detects Stealthed units.



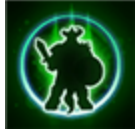
TEAM: Viking Bribery (Unchanged)

Enemy Minions or captured Mercenaries killed near The Lost Vikings grant stacks of Bribe. Use 40 stacks to bribe target Mercenary, instantly defeating them. Does not work on Bosses.

Maximum stacks available: 200. If a camp is defeated entirely with Bribe, the camp respawns 50% faster.

LEVEL 4 TALENTS: TEAMWORK TIME!

Upgrades the various Vikings' auras with additional effects. Talents are noted on the Teamwork! Trait.



OLAF: Norse Force

Stoutness grants a shield equal to 2% of a Viking's maximum health per second after they have been out of combat for 4 seconds. Stacks up to 5 times.



BALEOG: Viking Attack Squad

Fierceness increases Attack Speed by 1% for 4 seconds for each Viking Basic Attack made within range, stacking up to 30%. Stacks decay rapidly after 3 seconds of not attacking.



ERIK: Speedrun Tactics

Swiftness grants 5% increased Movement Speed per 20% missing health.



TEAM: Mercenary Raid

Stoutness grants Mercenaries 25 Armor.

Fierceness grants Mercenaries 25% increased Damage.

Swiftness grants Mercenaries 25% increased Attack Speed.

Note: It is important to note that Damage and Attack Speed are multiplicative increases in DPS when combined instead of additive - so a 25% increase to Damage and Attack Speed factors out to a 56% increase to DPS instead of being added together to make 50%. While one Viking alone cannot achieve the same level of effectiveness that the old Mercenary Lord could, two or more can surpass it easily.

LEVEL 7 TALENTS: SPIN TO WIN!

I wonder if the Vikings ever get dizzy.



OLAF: Burning Calories

Olaf's Spin To Win causes Olaf to deal 35 (+4% per level) damage per second to nearby enemies for 10 seconds.



BAELOG: Death Blossom

Increases Baelog's Spin To Win radius by 50% and triggers Baelog's Basic Attack Splash Damage on enemies hit.

Note: Death Blossom does not actually hit enemies with Basic Attacks, it just causes them to behave as if they were hit (so they would deal damage to other units behind them). The Splash Damage effects created by Death Blossom benefit from Raiding and Plundering.



ERIK: It's A Sabotage!

Erik's Spin To Win deals an additional 300 damage (+4% per level) over 10 seconds to Structures.

Note: Yes, I'm well aware of how much of a buff I gave to It's A Sabotage!'s damage. My reasoning behind that is:

- It's not ranged anymore
- It's not applied by a Basic Attack anymore
- It requires Baelog to be near Erik

So it got a hefty boost in damage to encourage people to try to use Erik to punch buildings.

LEVEL 10: HEROICS

Play Again! Is unchanged, but Longboat Raid! has recieved pretty significant changes:

- **Summons all living Vikings to Longboat location on cast.** This will give the Longboat more tactical opportunities for use, such as summoning all of the Vikings into a single lane to push it in significantly.
- **No longer has a Mortar Ability.** While I liked the Mortar, it muddies the waters in terms of what the Longboat is actually doing.
- **Each Viking in the Longboat provides a unique upgrade.** Instead of scaling up the Longboat's health for each Viking present, each character upgrades the Longboat in a unique (and thematic) way.
- **DPS increased substantially (from 112 to 180).** This is mostly to make up for the loss of the Mortar, but also to give the Longboat some usability upgrades in general.



Play Again!

Cooldown: 100 Seconds

Summon, fully heal, and revive all Lost Vikings at target location after a Viking channels for 2 seconds.

Only one Viking may attempt to summon at a time.



Longboat Raid!

Cooldown: 100 Seconds

Summons all living Vikings into a 1500 Health Longboat that can fire at nearby enemies for 180 damage per second. The Longboat gains special upgrades for each Viking in it, but if the boat is destroyed by enemies, all Vikings are stunned for 1 second upon exiting.

Olaf: Longboat gains 30 Armor.

Baelog: Longboat attack gains 50% splash damage.

Erik: Longboat becomes Unstoppable.

Lasts for 15 seconds.

LEVEL 13: GO, GO, GO!

gotta go fast



OLAF: Outta my way!

While Go, Go, Go! is active for Olaf, Olaf will knock away nearby enemies on contact and stun them for 0.25 Seconds. Each enemy may only be knocked back once per use of Go, Go, Go!



BAELOG: Pursuit

While Go, Go, Go! is active for Baelog, Baelog's Basic Attacks will deal bonus damage equal to 2% of a Hero's Maximum Health and will refresh Go, Go, Go!'s duration with every Basic Attack.

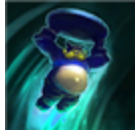


ERIK: Escape Plan

While Go, Go, Go! is active for Erik, Erik is Unstoppable.

LEVEL 16: JUMP!

It's like a safety bubble, but upwards.



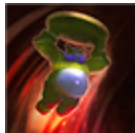
OLAF: Heavy Impact

When Olaf lands after using Jump!, nearby enemies are Stunned for 1 second.



BAELOG: Attack Formation

When using Jump!, Baelog can continue using Basic Attacks. Attacks made during Jump! have an additional 2 range and hit up to 4 additional targets.



ERIK: Falling With Style

Erik's Jump! lasts 33% longer.

LEVEL 20: STORM

THE HOME STRETCH. Fun fact, the runes painted on the Vikings' equipment actually mean things!

- The rune on Olaf's Shield is Inguz, for good health.
- The rune on Baelog's sword is Isa, for challenge.
- The rune on Erik's slingshot is Raido, for travel.

And now you know.



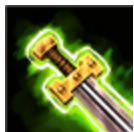
The Sequel!

Reduces the Lost Viking's Death Timer and Heroic Cooldown by 50%.



Stoutness of the Storm

Stoutness evenly distributes 50% of damage taken between Vikings. Damage will not be shared if it would be lethal to the recipient.



Fierceness of the Storm

Fierceness causes Viking Basic Attacks to deal 50% of their damage as splash to enemies near their target. Each enemy hit by this splash damage reduces the cooldown of Basic Abilities by 0.25 seconds.



Swiftiness of the Storm

Swiftiness causes Vikings to charge into Basic Attack range and deal 50 additional damage on hitting their target. This effect has a 5 second cooldown.



IN CONCLUSION

The stated goals of the rework were:

- **Increase viability of grouped TLV play.** I feel this has been accomplished by the Teamwork auras and the ability to have access to the Viking's full set of active abilities when grouped.
- **Maintain the viability and effectiveness of the Viking Soak playstyle.** While TLV no longer has global access to their abilities (except for Viking Bribery), each Viking has gained a significant amount of default strength by gaining access to an ability immediately. Additionally, the Longboat Raid! Heroic has gained significant tactical value due to its ability to summon all living Vikings.
- **Push the unique traits of The Lost Viking design by using source material as a guide.** The Lost Vikings was a game driven by the revolutionary concept of playing three characters with a single controller. Each Viking had their own unique set of abilities and strengths, but the only way to achieve victory was to use all of them in tandem. By giving each Viking their own ability but allowing it to be shared with the others, a similar effect can be achieved.

After about a year's worth of working on and off, I'm happy enough with The Lost Vikings Rework to call it done. It's probably not perfect, but for now it's close enough, and I'm excited to finally be able to delete the "UNFINISHED: TLV" shortcut off of my desktop.

Now, if only I could land a job with Blizzard doing this for real...

-Kith