

The legend of Urth's Fount and Odin

General Odin

Allagan Army General Odin was a fearsome figure, made immensely tall of stature and strong of arm through Allagan genetic enhancement treatments, and clad in an ebon-black powered combat suit forged of Allag's most advanced synthetic and Void-borne materials. General Odin preferred to be present on the front lines, despite Late Allag's ability to rely on entirely-synthetic armies of Clockworks and Chimaera.

Protected by his incredibly-advanced combat armor, General Odin was in little physical danger, and he found this direct oversight of the battlefield both more effective, and far more thrilling and satisfying.

A well-learned man with a fascination for history, General Odin had become especially-intrigued by the tales of ancient days in which Man rode upon steeds not of mechanical nature, but biological... especially an ancient hooved mammal that Allagan ethnographers and paleontologists had uncovered amongst their many explorations into the distant past.

It was thus at General Odin's request that the six-legged Sleipnir chimera was recreated from the ashes of primordial time by Allag's advanced bio-engineers, despite criticism from figures such as General Garuda that it was little more than a wasteful personal hobby project from a "vain landwalker".

Yet the Sleipnir creations proved to be a remarkably-durable and hearty transport for those willing to learn to ride them, and did not suffer from many of the vagaries of mechanical travel: the need for power, the need for maintenance, difficulty in certain terrain conditions, the risk of breaking down... and so on.

Thus, the Sleipnirs, once derided as an indulgent whim, eventually saw extensive deployment to Allagan colonies located on the farthest fringes of the Allagan Empire, where maintenance crews might be nonexistent, and replacement parts could take weeks or months to finally arrive.

Especially, Allagan outposts in the easternmost steppes of the Allagan Empire's domain grew quite comfortable with Sleipnir usage, and many were sent there as a cheaper alternative to expensive airships, hovercraft, or ground vehicles.

In time, the people of that area — including many "beastmen" that had been exiled there by Allag's Hyuran supremacist government — also came to adapt to the use of the Sleipnir, and rely upon it for travel and transport.

General Odin's fearsome battlefield command and efficient use of Allagan Army forces earned him much recognition from Xande and his government, and so General Odin was summoned to put down uprisings from rebellious territories throughout Allag again and again during the time when Xande was focussing the bulk of Allag's efforts on brutally finishing the war in Meracydia. Eventually, General Odin was summoned to oversee Allag's response to an uprising amongst the residents of the Eastern colonies that had broken out due to a recent operation conducted in that region by Allagan central government researchers that had caused extremely wide-spread and permanent environmental damage to a large swathe of land, rendering it uninhabitable, and displacing hundreds of thousands of colonists and native residents without compensation. Whilst order was swiftly and brutally reestablished, at the height of the operations General Odin had taken to the field himself to quell a particularly-stubborn force of residents that was occupying the northern steppe regions.

There, General Odin had been challenged to a duel by a tribal warrior wielding a blade that was exquisitely-forged using primitive smithing techniques.

The warrior stood impressively-tall, and was of beastman descent — with clawed digits, vividly-ringed eyes, great horns curving from his head, much of his body covered in glistening scales, and a thick, reptilian tail extending from the base of his spine.

The warrior declared that his blade was named Zantetsuken, and that he swore upon its honor that he would put an end to the destructive invasions of General Odin's people. General Odin accepted the duel — and was caught off-guard by how furiously hard-fought the duel proved, despite General Odin's significant genetic and technological advantages.

The warrior was ultimately doomed of course, and General Odin slew him and emerged victorious, putting a final end to the Eastern uprisings — but not before the warrior had managed to make a single deep scratch upon the nigh-impervious surface of General Odin's combat suit.

Deeply-impressed, General Odin discarded his Allagan aetherblade and took up the fallen warrior's weapon instead, as an act of honor and respect from one hardened warrior to the memory of another.

Subsequently, General Odin's skill with the impeccably-forged Zantetsuken blade became legendary throughout Allag.

General Odin was recalled to the Allagan capital during a time of increasing civil unrest that had developed after the final victory over Meracydia and the continued inroads that Urth's troublesome rebel faction — and its various ever-expanding splinter groups — were all wreaking upon Xande's once-absolute authority.

Thus, General Odin was summoned to the capital to assist General Garuda and other military leaders in establishing martial law and putting down the insurrectionist forces.

However, upon arriving, General Odin gradually became disturbed by the ruthless treatment of Allagan citizens by Xande's government, and the complete stifling of all dissenting views and concerns.

But General Odin wisely kept his doubts to himself... at first. Eventually, General Odin was deployed on a mission to lead a strike team to a detected resistance cell in the remains of the northern forest, where it was suspected that Urth herself was hiding.

There, General Odin did indeed find Urth — or, rather, she found him.

Urth had deliberately allowed herself to be "tracked down", in the hopes of drawing forth an Allagan leader that she might try to negotiate her cause with... and she was fortunate indeed that it was General Odin that was sent to apprehend her.

Urth's Echo triggered upon encountering General Odin, and the two quickly gained a deep understanding of each other's pasts, beliefs, and principles.

Moved by Urth's genuine love of her people and nation, and her desire for a better fate for them than what Xande's government had created, and awed by the mysterious power and light that seemed to suffuse Urth, General Odin was convinced to break ranks and side with the rebels — becoming a champion of the people alongside Urth's dissident faction.

For many months thereafter, the turncoat General Odin proved both an immense embarrassment to Xande's government and authority, and a significant threat to Allagan operations: he knew much of Allagan strategies, security codes, layouts, military installations... and was a ruthlessly-accomplished Army tactician and leader besides.

As well, General Odin had pledged his blade and steed to the absolute service and defense of Urth, and through his might and tactics was Urth's group shielded from Allagan strike teams again and again.

Thus, Xande became seething and livid about these constant reports, and General Odin became one of the Allagan government's number-one priorities for assassination.

At last, after many months of this, one of Xande's most elite groups of trackers managed to ambush Urth's faction whilst they were in the process of rotating to another safehouse within the woods.

In attempting to defend Urth's group from this attack in the dead of night, General Odin was at last overwhelmed and slain — but his dying battle bought Urth and the other rebels time to vanish into the woods and evade capture once more.

In the aftermath, the blade Zantetsuken was seized from General Odin's dead hand by the Allagan forces, and subsequently destroyed in a public ceremony broadcast to all Allagan citizens as proof of General Odin's death — a stark warning of the consequences of defiance, and a crushing blow to the morale of the rebel factions.

Urth's ritual

Despite their successful escape, Urth's group realised that Xande's forces were becoming more determined, and getting closer and closer to succeeding. They realised that they had little time left before they would inevitably be hunted down.

It was during those terse and uncomfortable deliberations that a traveling sage, clad in black robes and hidden behind an ornate mask, chanced to stumble upon Urth's group whilst the sage was wandering through the forest.

Image

The sage professed to holding a similar distaste for the ways of Allag, and explained that was why he hid his features, and wandered the woods — he, too, dared not risk partaking of Allag's corrupt society.

Moved deeply by the tales of Urth and her followers's plight, the masked sage offered to teach Urth's group a magick spell that he had been working on, but as yet unable to successfully perfect... a spell by which they might make their very imaginations manifest, and thus be able to stand against the power of their Allagan overlords.

Urth's group — filled with desperation, and fearing their dooms imminently approaching — all-too-eagerly agreed to hear more about the mysterious sage's spell.

The sage readily explained the principles and incantations necessary... and then hastily departed, explaining that he feared remaining in one place for too long, lest Allag chance upon his trail.

Urth's group did not hesitate further — aware that Xande's forces could strike at any moment, the rebels hastily went about preparing the necessary requirements that the sage had listed for the spell, including moving to the deepest, most aether-rich portion of the surviving forest.

There, the desperate rebels believed that they were using a sophisticated and experimental spell to weave together a machine far faster than normal engineering and industry could assemble it, and without needing the necessary Allagan factory infrastructure that they had no access to.

But unbeknownst to the desperate rebels, the ritual that they conducted actually resulted in the creation of... a Primal.

Yet, it was like no Primal ever before known upon the surface of the Star: the rebels, being atheistic Late Allagans, had little personal belief in gods or divinities... and so, the resulting creation was like no prior concept of "divinity" at all.

Instead, the Primal was essentially a magical Allagan Synthesis Node: a wondrous thing, for like a true Synthesis Node, it was capable of producing that which a user requested... but quite unlike the very realistic physical limits of a true Synthesis Node, this Primal "Node" was blessed with the ability to produce absolutely anything that a believer requested... so long as a sufficient price in aether was paid.

Urth and her desperate followers, gripped by panic and fear, were subconsciously fervently wishing for another champion and protector as great as General Odin... and this colored their intentions, unrealised, when they decided to test their new "Synthesis Node" by requesting that it "synthesize" a perfect copy of General Odin's Zantetsuken.

The Primal "node", upon receiving the wishes of its believers, immediately complied — at a cost of ambient aether that immediately darkened the surrounding skies, shadowed the air, sapped the atmosphere, withered the trees, and sent the Elementals of that era into a sudden wailing of agony as their very essence was ripped forth to fuel the creation of the blade.

One of the rebels reached out to touch it...and cried out in a shocked of surprise and pain, as he suddenly underwent a frightening process the moment that his flesh came into contact with the blade: his very body bubbled, warped, and then transformed into an exact duplicate of the late General Odin... and the individual now seemed convinced that he was General Odin.

Confused, and quickly becoming increasingly-wary and increasingly-dreadful of that which she had helped wrought, Urth immediately ordered the rebel forces to see that the magical "node" was sealed within a stone tomb... and never again used.

She then asked the "new" entity looking like "General Odin" to relinquish the Zantetsuken that the "node" had produced... but he adamantly refused, stating it a great insult to even suggest such a thing... and then steadfastly insisting that he must remain and protect them, as his honor demanded.

To this end, he soon took notice of a nearby antelope stag, and swiftly advanced upon it. As soon as his armored hand grasped the beastkin's neck, its body warped and transformed into a perfect copy of General Odin's Sleipnir.

Shortly thereafter, the rebels's fears were realised: Xande's trackers found the group.

But the trackers were swiftly massacred to the last man by the frightening power of the new "General Odin", who seemed just as fearsomely-capable as the man he had been modeled after.

Sinkingly-realising that they could not possibly hope to survive without "General Odin's" protection, Urth and her followers thus relented from their horror and confusion, and reluctantly accepted the recreated "General Odin's" guardianship... even as they felt increasingly-fearful of what unnatural things their desperate ritual had created.

Infuriated by the reports of the failed attempts to apprehend Urth and her rebel group, Xande ordered more forces sent — and as one unit after another fell to the otherworldly "General Odin", it soon became apparent to the experienced Allagans's eyes that they were dealing with an Eikon that had been Summoned by the depraved rebel scum.

Thus, increasingly-desperate for results against the creature, a unit of Allagan Summoners led by Lady Wiyu was roused from stasis, conscripted, and dispatched to the eastern edge of what still remained of the northern forest, in order to lend their expertise and support to the Allagan military forces attempting to contain and put an end to the latest sighting of the Summoned abomination.

However, the Eikonic creation proved far more powerful than the Late Allagan government had expected, and the entire massive deployment was routed — including Lady Wiyu, who sacrificed her own life to buy the remaining soldiers time to retreat and escape.

Urth's fount

It was around the time of that event with Lady Wiyu and her Summoners that Urth began to realise that "General Odin" had taken a strange hold over Urth's fellow rebels: they were developing a fanatical devotion to him, bordering on obsession.

With sinking heart, Urth began to realise that the masked sage's ritual had led her and her followers to create an abhorrent "Synthesis Node" that actually produced creations that were not true physical objects, but instead slumbering Eikons imbued with the desires of those who had requested the object — and that her beloved comrades were now likely forever hollowed-out in their souls and Tempered... a fate that she had escaped only by virtue of her Echo.

Further, Urth began to sinkingly-realise that the constant wailing of the forest since "General Odin" had "returned" was the result of "his" presence acting as a constant drain upon the aether of the forest and land.

With a heavy heart and deep burden of guilt, Urth resolved that she must correct this grievous mistake at any and all costs.

First, she attempted to persuade "General Odin" to lay down his blade, hoping that he would obey and do so at her behest.

Yet the Eikonic "General Odin" was ultimately unable to think outside the programming that had been remembered, imagined, and defined by his "believers" when Zantetsuken was recreated by the magical "node"... and thus, "he" was ultimately incapable of accepting any of Urth's reasoning or requests: no matter what turns their conversation took, it would only ever end with his Primal mind resetting, and insisting that he must remain and protect Urth at all costs. ...thus did Urth at last make her next, fateful decision.

With her choice resolved, she traveled to the southern fringes of what remained of the decimated forest, where she knew that Xande's trackers would easily find her... and where she knew that "General Odin" would uncontrollably follow her.

Thus, she intentionally led the two powers to find each other, and she waited patiently as a massive number of Allagan anti-Eikon military forces swept into the area, engaging in a furious and titanic clash with the power of "General Odin", whose every otherworldly attack drained the land of ever-more aether and sent the dying Elementals into agonised spasms and shrieks.

At last, despite heavy losses, Allag's forces attained victory through sheer attrition, and "General Odin" finally stumbled, fell from his steed, and perished into a cloud of released aether — for Allag's Eikon-containment experts had found themselves inexplicably unable to capture the Eikon, despite wielding sophisticated and well-tested technologies. And that is when Urth at last took action.

She had, by then, deduced that it was not "General Odin" that was the true Eikon... but instead the recreated Zantetsuken that the magical "node" had synthesised at the request of Urth and her followers.

Knowing painfully-well just how much aether had been drained from the forest when that new Zantetsuken had been created, Urth suspected that it would be almost impossible to contain its power... and further, she feared that "General Odin" might immediately be reborn anew if any foolish Allagan soldier or researcher came into contact with the otherworldly pseudo-blade.

Thus, feeling it her duty and burden for what she had inadvertently wrought, Urth stepped forward swiftly, placing herself between the fallen blade and the surviving Allagan forces.

Then, Urth produced her Crystal of Light... and uttered a final, heartfelt prayer to the Goddess Hydaelyn.

A heartbeat's moment of palpable silence and hesitation suddenly settled over the air of the region, every individual present feeling a moment of intense thought inside their very souls...

Image

...and then a blinding white light filled the area, turning the vision of all present pure and blank for a few intense moments—

Image

...and when the light faded, Urth was no more, and the area was covered by outcroppings of intensely-glowing crystalline fragments that radiated an eerie, calm sense of power.

And where Urth had stood just moments before, there was a great crystal of immense size — and the fallen Zantetsuken was entrapped within its core, outside the reach of Man.

During the long course of the conflict between Mhach and Amdapor, the Amdapori were repeatedly pushed to desperately attempt to find solutions to counter the Mhachi's incredible talent for innovating new methods of destruction and chaos in an ever-escalating magical arms-race.

As such, early on in the conflict, shortly after innovating White Magic from their study of the Mhachi's Black Magic, the Amdapori began to desperately scour their vast territory for any tools or resources that might lend them an advantage — or possibly allow them to end the war decisively.

The Amdapori, in their desperation, at first attempted to once again commune with the Elementals of the northern forest, begging their aid in stopping the Mhachi threat.

The Amdapori's priestly envoys attempted to argue to the mysterious Elementals that the Mhachi would not stop with Amdapor's conquest — that if the Mhachi were left unchecked, their ruthless ambitions would someday come to threaten the Elementals and their beloved forest just as much as Amdapor's vast plains.

The Elementals, however, dismissed the discussion almost immediately.

The abstract beings viewed the growing conflict in Eorzea as entirely the affairs of Man, and of no relevance to themselves — and they wanted no part of it.

Thus, once again, the Elementals offered a peaceful but terse warning to the Amdapori: stay away from the sacred wood, and the Elementals would stay out of Amdapori territory and affairs.

The Amdapori, being in no position to force the issue, thus withdrew in frustration, and whilst the bulk of the Amdapori priests continued to meditate, research, and study within the vast halls of Amdapor, some of the Amdapori's mystical experts were instead assigned to continue scouring the Plains of Amdapor for anything that might give them an edge against Mhach.

Now, remember that in the 5th Era, the Elementals had not yet reacted with the rage that had caused them to unleash their energies and spread the Black Shroud's borders far and wide through Eorzea — that was a Sixth Era event.

As such, at the time of Amdapor, a certain location covered in crystals was located in a lightly-wooded region some distance outside the thickly-grown bounds of the Elementals's claimed domain.

Image

Whilst the location was distant and isolated, and had also been considered taboo to dwell or harvest in by countless generations of superstitious Eorzeans since the fall of the Allagan Empire, it was still not outside the reach of the Amdapori — and thus, the Amdapori's intense explorations of their territories eventually led them to begin investigating the thrumming power of the crystals within the strange location.

The Amdapori were unable to determine exactly what — or who? — had created the crystals, nor why.

But it was quite plain to the Amdapori and their newly-born White Magi that the crystals hummed with intense Astral energy, and brimmed with powerful Light aether.

Yet there was something strange within the largest crystal — some sort of Umbral flaw or "contaminant", that rendered the greatest crystal to not have the same impossibly-perfect purity of Light that the surrounding smaller crystals did.

As word spread in Amdapor of the discovery, more and more Amdapori magi arrived to study the strange location, confounded that none of the records that they possessed anywhere in their halls offered any explanation for the location's history or origins.

Subsequently, through months of study and meditation, the Amdapori priests came to conclude that the flaw within the largest crystal was actually some sort of trapped entity.

An intense and heated debate thus began amongst the Amdapori, with some arguing that they should use their White Magic to free the being — that it might be brought to serve Amdapor as repayment for its liberation, and thus possibly turn the tide against the hated Mhachi!

Others, however, argued that such an idea was ridiculously foolish and dangerous — that the being's aether was clearly dense and powerful, and that they had no idea where or how the unknown entity might direct that power should it be freed.

They cautioned that whatever was within the crystal, it might have been imprisoned for a reason...

At last, as a compromise, attempts were made to meditate and commune with the being within the crystal, that the Amdapori might assess and determine its mind and intent.

However, the crystal that was sealing the being was of a density and richness the likes of which no Amdapori had ever witnessed before — it was such a solidified concentration of pure Light and Astral energy that it insulated the tainted core almost impenetrably, acting as a sort of "interference" to all attempts that the Amdapori made to reach out with their own aether and touch what was within, or to receive aetherial feedback from the inside.

Indeed, to the Amdapori, it seemed almost as if the great crystal was somehow intentionally-formed to ensure that the being within could not communicate with those outside its prison, or reach them with its aether...

Thus, even the most expert of the Amdapori priests could only manage to pick up the vaguest, faintest aetherial emanations from deep within the crystal... and even then, only if they strained their magicks to the very limit, to attempt to pick up on the nearly-imperceptible emanations from deep within.

And what those straining magi could hear was a single aetherial "word":

"Urth..."

...repeating again, and again, and again — filled with a quality of obsessive longing and determination.

The Amdapori present thus misinterpreted "Urth" as the being's name, and so the location became called, for lack of any better historical identification of the place, "Urth's Fount". Becoming intrigued by this mystery, a dedicated selection of Amdapori scholars and priests soon began a full-time study of the phenomenon, attempting to find ways to better-communicate with the being inside.

Over months of effort, they managed to gradually make progress in devising ways to navigate the aetherial matrices that formed the crystalline prison, and to slowly find channels by which aether could be more clearly sent and received to and from the crystal's core.

Whilst they proved unable to establish much further communication, they did manage to pick up some additional concepts in the background of the ever-repeating cadence of "Urth" — such as "protect", "stop", and "defeat".

The Amdapori priests thus came to believe that the being within was some sort of ancient guardian-being — and so they became ever-more-intrigued by the idea of harnessing its strength for themselves.

Eventually, the Amdapori researchers's attempts managed to successfully navigate all the way through the complex matrice of the crystal, and pierce a direct line of communication to the mysterious core.

To their excitement, a clear message was sent back in response from deep within the crystal, far louder and more direct than any other before it: "Odin".

Whilst still vague, it gave promise to those studying the crystal that the creature within might be reasoned or communicated with. The other messages perceived had felt more like eavesdropping — like listening in on a slumbering person's murmurings in their sleep. But this latest word — the tone was crisp and clear and direct, like a waking statement from someone making direct eye-contact.

In response to this development, a new debate broke amongst the scholar-priests: was the entity "Urth", or was the entity "Odin"? Perhaps "Urth Odin"? Or "Odin Urth"? Perhaps "Odin" was its former homeland?

...And so on, and so forth, on and on, for quite some time, and quite some detail.

The topic became so intriguing and challenging that the scholars and priests began to make it their life's work to try to decipher the mystery.

Indeed, over time, the handful of Amdapori scholars and priests that had originally begun investigating the matter seemed to become entirely-obsessed with the topic of the being within the crystal, ultimately refusing to accept postings to any other location, or to consider any suggestions of withdrawing from their research.

And eventually, they began to speak of almost nothing except finding ways to see the being inside freed from its prison...

Upon receiving one too many increasingly-unsettling reports about the circle of magi investigating the so-called 'Urth's Fount', Amdapor's highest overseers and leaders began to suspect that something might be amiss, and ordered all investigations of the location to be ceased until thorough evaluation of the situation could be conducted.

This was met with intense agitation by the scholars at Urth's Fount, and they subsequently outright-refused all orders to depart from their research camp.

In response, fresh Amdapori magi were sent by Amdapor's leadership to escort the scholar-priests away from the site of the crystalline prison. These new magi were met with violent resistance by a now-fanatical research team, repeatedly proclaiming that "Odin" must be "freed". An intense altercation broke out, but ultimately, the scholar-priests were subdued and removed from the research site.

To their fellow Amdapori, however, even upon being returned home, the researchers seemed to remain outright-crazed, being utterly-unwilling to accept the idea of ending — or even just temporarily suspending — their research, and constantly attempting to violently escape and return to Urth's Fount.

Unable to find any way to remedy this bizarre and inexplicable obsession, the Amdapori authorities were ultimately forced to place the individuals under permanent house-arrest until such time as their condition improved — resulting in every single one remaining imprisoned until the day that they died of age decades later. Even on their deathbeds, with their final breaths, they each still desperately rambled about and called out for "Odin".

Perhaps in more ideal times, in response to such a grotesque incident, the Amdapori leadership might have simply sealed-off the area where such an ominous affliction occurred, and then forbidden access forevermore — or some other kind of cautionary response to such a dangerous outcome occurring to those who made contact with the crystal at the center of that area.

However, the latter days of the Fifth Era were hardly ideal times, and instead, the threat of Mhach was escalating more with every passing day. And so, the Amdapori leadership instead decided to redouble their efforts to study the phenomena at Urth's Fount — instituting only the precaution that any attempts at direct communication with the unknown entity within the great-crystal were forbidden entirely.

Simply put, the power that the Amdapori could plainly detect within Urth's Fount — both from the crystals, and the mysterious being itself — was far too powerful a potential advantage for the desperate Amdapori to conscion entirely-abandoning.

Thus, the location and knowledge of Urth's Fount was kept secretive from both the Amdapori public and the other nations of the Fifth Era, even as ever-more Amdapori priests, magi, and scholars were deployed to study the phenomena found there — all under the anxious directive of finding some way, any way, to somehow harness the great power within...

So-forbidden from direct interaction with the trapped being, and likewise terrified of sharing the same fate as their predecessors, the progress of these subsequent Amdapori research expeditions was far slower.

Indeed, most of Amdapor's intelligentsia and tacticians eventually lost interest in the chronic lack of developments from the efforts, and moved on to other avenues of investigation.

And so the studies at Urth's Fount faded into the background of Amdapori thought — continuing stubbornly, but quietly, for many generations.

Eventually, however, the periodic upsurges in attacks by the Mhachi began to intensify further and further, and Amdapor came under renewed pressure to escalate its own military development to be able to continue to stand against Mhach — as White Magic alone was beginning to struggle more and more to counter the Mhachi's ravenous and relentless taste for destructive innovation.

It was during such a time that necessity drove the Amdapori to ingenuity, and a breakthrough of White Magic research and progress was made. One of the magi stationed and studying at Urth's Fount one day came to an epiphanous idea: as White Magic drew upon the ambient environment to harness greater power than more common magicks could achieve, perhaps White Magic could also, in return, affect the environment, rather than merely consuming it?

Over years of careful and quiet research and experimentation, this mage empirically-demonstrated that White Magic could be carefully-directed to shape the very land, and even life itself.

Essentially, this mage noted that White Magic's basic mending incantations were used to direct the shape of flesh, and to quicken the natural processes of healing.

Thus, she hypothesised that the same principles could be applied to direct and accelerate the natural phenomena of subjects other than Man — such as plant-life, or even the very stones and soils that formed the environments that White Magic drew upon.

Putting her ideas to practice, she proved that, with proper concentration and incantations, White Magic could indeed be used to not just draw from, but actually redirect ambient flows of environmental aether.

In particular, she focused on a study of using White Magic to pour aether into plant-life, and force it to grow at a highly-accelerated rate — growth which could also be guided, sculpted, and shaped to meet the desires of the White Mage invoking the magicks.

Furthermore, this effect could be extended to the land itself, allowing for the sculpting of soil and even rock to suit the whims of a White Mage.

To her dismay, however, interest in these results amongst the Amdapori leadership ultimately proved middling, at best. In the minds of most Amdapori, theirs was — by then — a culture built upon gleaming spires of white stone, and the holy power of Astral Light... not dirt, vines, rocks and leaves. Furthermore, the vast, fertile Plains of Amdapor already provided them near-limitless building materials and agricultural bounty alike — what need had they to shape or adjust it?

Indeed, they asked, what purpose did any of her dabbling play serve? How would changing the shape of a rock, or growing a seed faster, give advantage in the unending war with the Mhachi? Whilst she had reported her findings full of hope for acknowledgement and promotion, she instead found her peers castigating her for wasting time, and abusing the power of White Magic to childish ends at a time of war.

Despite all of that, however, this particular Amdapori mage stubbornly continued her research into these applications of White Magic — at times driven almost more by sheer spite for her hecklers and detractors, rather than any true passion for the subject.

And so her efforts silently continued, unnoticed and unacknowledged — until one day, the tone of her peers changed rather abruptly... and dramatically.

At last, she had presented the Amdapori leadership with an ambitious plan: she believed that the mysterious power within Urth's Fount could be safely-harnessed by channeling it through a grand, carefully-grown... tree.

Initial laughter gave way to serious contemplation as she defiantly continued her presentation.

This mage had, in her long decades studying at Urth's Fount, come to notice that the crystals at the location were possessed of unusual properties compared to typical crystal phenomena: not only were the Urth's Fount crystals incredibly-dense in aether and power, but they also resonated with an unusually-intimate connection to the land itself.

Whilst she struggled to put her findings into words, her best attempt to explain what she meant was that the crystals at Urth's Fount seemed to be almost "born of the very Star itself", rather than displaying qualities more characteristic of every-day, naturally-forming crystals.

Indeed, she noted, the crystals at Urth's Fount resonated with the Ley Lines pulsing through the land in a distinct way — it was nearly perfectly-synchronous, perfectly-resonant, perfectly-harmonious. And that, she hypothesised, is what lent these particular crystals their unusually-immense aetheric density.

Thus, she concluded that these crystals were connected to the Star in some strange way that was far beyond the properties that would be expected by their crystalline appearance and structure.

But this mage-researcher was also well-aware of the inherent danger that had been proven-out when the prior researchers had attempted to directly-harness the strength of the being imprisoned within the heart of the greatest of the crystals at Urth's Fount — that it seemed, somehow, to render mad any Man who tried too keenly to know its thoughts, or touch its power.

Thus, combining all of these insights, she proposed a new approach: using the power of White Magic to grow a massive tree of special purpose, form, and biology, whose roots would entwine with the great crystal at Urth's Fount.

This tree, then, would serve as an intermediary by which the Amdapori could manipulate the power of the crystals — and the prisoner within them — without risking coming into direct aetherial contact with the being.

So this innovative and ambitious plan was fully-presented to a bewildered Amdapori leadership, who were shocked that two long-dismissed efforts — centuries of research at Urth's Fount, and one mage's peculiar obsession with using White Magic to influence the growth of nature — had finally produced a potentially-dramatic benefit to Amdapor.

Unable to find flaw in her studies or arguments, her plan was thus sanctioned, and subsequently enacted by a procession of Amdapor's greatest White Magi — following her meticulous guidance and lead.

As fuel for this immense ritual, the Amdapori White Magi drew upon the aether of the mysterious and powerful crystals at Urth's Fount, and the location's rich concentration of Ley Lines. With this, their collective White Magic made a great tree rise from the ground and rapidly grow to maturity, spreading its roots and trunk over the great-crystal at Urth's Fount, and extending its canopy high into the air above the opalescent location.

The Amdapori then titled this new great-tree Irmin — an approximation of the Amdapori language's corrupted, phonetic interpretation of the aetherially-whispered word, "Odin".

The mage's theories then subsequently proved startlingly-accurate: the floral matter of the enormous "Irmin"-tree that the Amdapori had grown was, indeed, able to act as a conduit for the powerful Astral Light energy radiating from the crystals at Urth's Fount — and also to tap into the smoldering sliver of contradictory power that lay imprisoned deep within the largest crystal.

A flurry of excited Amdapori research thus commenced upon this new Irmin at Urth's Fount, and over several intensive years of collective study and development, the Amdapori magi soon devised a way to channel the powers buried within Urth's Fount into a purpose — a vast spell.

Essentially, what the Amdapori White Magi innovated, using the Irmin, was a White Magic incantation on a scale and magnitude previously-unseen in history. The Irmin was used as a conduit and mediator by which to draw upon both the powerful and unique crystals at Urth's Fount, and the smoldering power of the being trapped within them.

It is perhaps telling of the differences in Amdapori and Mhachi cultural psychology that the Amdapori leadership chose to make the purpose of this great spell not a weapon that could annihilate Mhach once and for all, but instead a shield — to cast, essentially, a massive Protect spell over the entirety of the Amdapori territory.

And so it was — a shimmering magical barrier rose from the land itself, and encased the Amdapori civilisation in a radiant curtain that was nigh-impervious to penetration by either steel or spell. And it could be raised and lowered only at the behest, and through the collective wills, of Amdapor's greatest White Magi.

Subsequently, those Fifth Era cities and states that pledged allegiance to Amdapor were, in turn, allowed to enjoy the Irmin-curtain's borders being extended over their own territories, as well — granting them freedom from Mhach's posturing and aggressions.

Using the power of the Irmin in this way, however, left no room to direct its energies in any offensive manner. And so, the single, powerful spell that the Amdapori chose to weave with the Irmin's power only allowed them to shield Amdapor against Mhach — it offered no solution for, or progress toward, actually stopping or defeating Mhach.

For the Amdapori, however, the ability to decisively-preserve the beauty and peace of their vast lands and city was the far, far greater priority.

And so was Mhach once again stymied, yet also undefeated, by the White Magic of Amdapor.

And so was Fifth Era Eorzea's political situation yet again stalled into another tense period of absolute stalemate.

As a separate, parallel line of research within Mhachi aetherobotanical studies, its researchers had also long-struggled to successfully imitate the Amdapori's Irmin, the creation of which, and its subsequent demonstrated power, had motivated the entire Mhachi counter-endeavor to begin with.

Alas, they were never able to use Black Magic alone to grow a tree that could even-remotely mimic the power of the Irmin and its nation-shielding magick.

It was not known with certainty by the Mhachi whether this failure was due to their own insufficient innovation, or simply a consequence of the Amdapori having a far more powerful fuel source that was outside the reach of the Mhachi.

Sawteeth

Obviously, the development of the vast and shimmering Irmin barrier could not, and did not, escape the notice of Mhach — but the Mhachi were also aware of many other developments within Amdapor's borders, as well.

For generations, amongst many other details, Mhachi spies within Amdapor had been reporting to Mhach about the studies undertaken at a so-called "Urth's Fount".

However, again and again, the Mhachi leadership determined that the "Urth's Fount" information was not worth acting upon.

Firstly, the location of this potential power source was far too deep within fortified Amdapori territory to be worth the inevitably-grievous cost that would come from trying to seize and exploit it.

And secondly, the Mhachi strategists saw little potential in the Amdapori knowledge about Urth's Fount that had been thieved to that point: all data suggested that the mysterious, and admittedly-intriguing, "sealed entity" was encased within such an effective prison that it would almost certainly be a net resource-negative for Mhach's magi to bother attempting to free the being, or to otherwise tap into its power.

Thus, to Mhach's spymasters and upper echelons of leadership, Amdapor's "Urth's Fount" faded into the background of the information streams, becoming perceived as little more than another of hundreds of ultimately-unimportant curiosities of the era.

As for the studies of using White Magic to rapidly grow plants and shape the environment, well... it would be an understatement to say that this initially met with amusement from the few Mhachi who had even paid attention to the information, and continued to be sneered away whenever spies would update the Mhachi about the "progress" in this "field" of magic.

The rapid and sudden development of the Amdapori Irmin, however, caught even the usually-brilliant and visionary Mhachi off-guard, and rather immediately changed their attitudes about the Amdapori previously-laughed-at "plant magic".

As such, the Mhachi — ever being more ruthlessly-organised in their scholarship than the more spiritual and meditative Amdapori — took their surprise in stride, and rather than dwelling on missed potential, Mhach's foremost thinkers simply and immediately initiated a new circle of Black Magi who were tasked with studying all knowledge that Mhach's spies had been able to obtain about the methods, principles, and magicks used by the Amdapori to grow that new, powerful, magic-channeling great-tree — as well as any details about the vivid aetherial sources from which the so-called Irmin's surreal roots drank.

Through these efforts, the Mhachi researchers determined that Black Magic could, indeed, also be used to redirect and pour aether into fueling the rapid growth of natural life.

However, Amdapori White Magic resulted in simply accelerating the growth and size of the plant-life into which it was directed, making it heartier and sturdier. Essentially, in the absence of any intentional 'sculpting' by the Amdapori magi, their White Magic simply created a grander and greater version of what the plant would have naturally grown into anyway.

Mhachi Black Magic, in stark contrast, was instead found to result in the plant-life that it was poured into becoming decidedly deadlier — its form warped chaotically, rapidly developing new brambles, spikes, maws, and other offensive measures, whilst its saps and fluids became saturated with increasingly-potent toxins and poisons.

Continuing down this path of study, the intrigued Mhachi researchers eventually found that, with enough Umbral Darkness-aspected aether forcibly-channeled into a plant, the mutating flora would abruptly begin to warp dramatically-further, becoming both motile and semi-sentient.

Further 'treatment' with Black Magic would then cause the plant to begin to become inherently aggressive toward living things, and finally, seemingly begin to constantly hunger for aether — from any source.

Image

Perhaps this need not even be said, but rather than being horrified by these gruesome developments, the Mhachi researchers — and their superiors — were only intrigued and delighted.

However, their initial excitement about the research quickly faded, as their initially-rapid progress suddenly reached a dead-end: for all the potential danger that these warped forms of plant-life exhibited, they ultimately suffered two major limitations that rendered them all-but-useless militarily.

Firstly, the warped plants were still structurally-fragile enough that they proved little threat to any intelligent opponent that could act to intentionally shatter wood, rip leaves, and crush stems.

Secondly, even with copious and heavy Black Magic poured into their growth, the warped plants still seemed to develop no true sentience.

Thus, they still proved far too mindless to actually be effective for deployment as weapons, because even at their worst, the corrupted plants simply wandered aimlessly in search of sustenance, and only attacked reactively when perceiving a direct danger to themselves — it was far too easy to simply evade them, and destroy them from afar.

Yes, they could probably wreak a bit of amusing havoc here-or-there amongst unsuspecting Amdapori civilians... but the warped plants were ultimately determined, by Mhach's foremost strategists, to show little-to-no promise as anything more than an aetherially-expensive nuisance on the grander scale of battles and wars.

Thus, for a time, the early Mhachi excitement about researching the Amdapori "plant magic" bled away to disappointment, and was largely-forgotten about. Only a very small handful of stubbornly-dedicated Mhachi Black Magi, who simply found the subject interesting and satisfying for the sake of itself, continued to attempt to refine the art further — but nearly no further progress was ever made.

Everything changed for the field of Mhachi aetherobotany, however, after the coming of Mhachi Void Magic.

The vast developments provided by the power of the Void that were rapidly sweeping over Mhachi society and magickal methods did not pass the notice of the few Mhachi researchers that were still stubbornly-engaged in attempting to refine the application of Black Magic upon living things.

Thus, over the ensuing years, it was gradually-determined that plants that had been correctly-accelerated and warped by Darkness aether could serve as potent and appealing potential vessels for Voidsent. And, indeed, it seemed that some of the unnatural souls of the Void even explicitly preferred such vessels — and these Voidsent entities were actually quite pleased to discover the existence of already-prepared, Darkness-saturated floral vessels simply waiting for them within the mortal world of the Source.

Subsequently, the Mhachi researchers were delighted to discover that, once a Voidsent had possessed one of their experimental plants, the Void-soul now occupying the floral structures caused a dramatic change to take place in the way that the corrupted flora responded to Black Magic — the Voidsent seemed to somehow serve as a "core" by which the infusion of Darkness could be dramatically-amplified, producing results both unseen and seemingly-impossible when using only traditional Black Magic.

The end result of these new efforts was the production of entirely-new varieties of horrifying, deadly plant-life — possessed by Voidsent, and shaped by the chaotic consequences of being submerged by the power of Black Magic into new depths of Umbral Darkness aether saturation.

Thus did the days of the Mhachi "plant magic" researchers being sniggered and sneered at by their peers come to an abrupt end: truly terrifying weapons of war had finally been birthed forth into the world as a result of their stubbornly-continued research.

Amongst the greatest and proudest creations of these new Mhachi aetherobotanical specialists was an extraordinarily-complex arcane design that produced a specific type of monstrous floral mutation that was considered by many within the rapidly-growing field to be their single-greatest accomplishment — the Sawtooth.

Image

The Sawteeth monstrosities seethed with twin ravenous hungers — that of their naturally-warped cravings, and that of the Voidsent inhabiting their floral bodies.

But unlike the early, 'failed' experiments of Mhachi aetherobotany, the Sawteeth, like other second-generation Mhachi floral monstrosities, were also possessed of basic Voidsent-level cunning and intelligence — making them genuinely-deadly creatures, far more like a clever, prowling animal than the mindlessly plant-like behaviors of the earlier research efforts.

Furthermore, the presence of the Void allowed Darkness aether to warp a Sawtooth's plant-flesh into a form that was far more unnatural and corruptive than anything that Black Magic alone had managed to accomplish: rather than becoming merely a more dangerous part of nature, the Sawteeth were warped into being something that was quite clearly entirely outside the natural order of the Source's ecosystems.

As such, everywhere that a Sawtooth went, its very presence sapped the land of its fundamental vitality — draining the soil all of nutrients, life, and balanced aethers, and leaving in its wake a barren and poisonous dust that was not just useless for agriculture, but also outright-toxic to life itself.

The Mhachi Irminsul

As a separate, parallel line of research within Mhachi aetherobotanical studies, its researchers had also long-struggled to successfully imitate the Amdapori's Irmin, the creation of which, and its subsequent demonstrated power, had motivated the entire Mhachi counter-endeavor to begin with.

Alas, they were never able to use Black Magic alone to grow a tree that could even-remotely mimic the power of the Irmin and its nation-shielding magick.

It was not known with certainty by the Mhachi whether this failure was due to their own insufficient innovation, or simply a consequence of the Amdapori having a far more powerful fuel source that was outside the reach of the Mhachi.

Either way, however, the creation was attempted of countless "Black Irmin" — or "Irmisul" in Mhachi tongue — again, and again, and again in the long decades after the Irmin barrier had appeared around Amdapor. Yet not a single "Irmisul" had ever succeeded in being anything more than an embarrassing disappointment, instilling another source of bitter resentment toward the Amdapori magi within the prideful Mhachi.

But once again, the arrival of Void Magicks to Mhachi society abruptly changed everything about this dead-ended research, too: under the guidance of high-ranking Voidsent, combined with their own rapid studies and innovations, the Mhachi eventually managed to create a "true" Irmisul.

In imitation of the Amdapori, a great and immense tree was rapidly-grown to maturity through infusions of Darkness aether, warping and twisting its trunk, roots, and branches into a disturbing and decrepit-looking sight, resembling far more the immense husk of a long-dead great-tree than anything still-living — but live it did, in its own chaotically-twisted way... blackly and vibrantly.

Image

Into this teratotized tree was bound a powerful and high-ranking Voidsent that had been ambushed and betrayed by the Mhachi for this specific purpose — and who subsequently seethed in fury at his new, inanimate prison within the mortal world. But as the smirking Mhachi Void Magi had planned, this Void Lord was unable to take any action to escape or retaliate — his new wooden "flesh" rendering him deaf, mute, and powerless.

Thus, what the Mhachi had — quite-intentionally — created was something akin to a bleak, blackened mirror of the Twelveswood Elementals and their Great Trees — a (somehow) still-living tree, possessed throughout by a being composed purely of incredibly-powerful aether.

And so the Mhachi could use this trapped Void Lord as their own version of the unattainable "fuel source" that they suspected to be empowering the Amdapori Irmin — and the new Irmisul tree as the "conduit" by which dangerous power could "safely" be drawn with indefinite impunity. Thus empowered and emboldened, the Mhachi overseeing the Irmisul then malevolently-mirrored Amdapor yet-further, by using the Irmisul conduit to invoke a great spell.

However — as one might perhaps already expect — in true Mhachi fashion, they chose not to erect an equivalent barrier of protection over their own civilisation... but instead to create a powerful weapon of offense and destruction.

Around the Irmisul was created a field of intense, nullifying Black Magic — essentially, in a dark reflection of the Amdapori's use of the Irmin to create a vast Protect spell, the Mhachi Irmisul was used to radiate an enormous Dispel magick.

The Irminsul had quite-intentionally been grown to maturity within an immense pot of soil — and thus the Irminsul, quite unlike the Amdapori's Irmin, could be transported.

And it was through that devious advantage that the opening of the final dark decades of the War of the Magi did begin.

Under cover of night, the Mhachi deployed an elite, tactical army to the edges of the Amdapori's Irmin barrier — transporting with them, held aloft by powerful Black Magic incantations, the immense Irminsul within its great magicked pot.

And just as the Mhachi had calculated and anticipated, the Amdapori's once-impervious barrier was rendered null in a great radius around the Irminsul — and so the Mhachi slipped, unstopped and unopposed, across the border of Amdapor, and into its complacent and unsuspecting territories.

From that entry point, under cloak of darkness, the Mhachi infiltrators marched for long, midnight hours across the Plains of Amdapor... until they at last arrived at the location known as "Urth's Fount".

There, the stationed Amdapori White Magi, scholars, students, and researchers were all caught entirely off-guard. Ambushed in their sleep, they barely even managed to rise to their own defense before being slaughtered to the last by the merciless Mhachi infiltrators.

Thus, at last, was the Amdapori Irmin left entirely-undefended.

At the rear of the Mhachi army's march to the Irmin had been sent a terrifying number of Mhachi Sawteeth — with their savage and feral desire to consume the lush and fertile lands of the Amdapori having been just-barely kept in ravenous, snarling check by the power and concentration of the Mhachi unit's accompanying Void Magi... because allowing the Sawteeth to indulge their base hungers too soon would have risked alerting the Amdapori to the infiltrators's presence far too early.

But now, with the Irmin's location reached, and all of its guardians and observers slain, such concerns no longer applied.

Thus the accompanying Void Magi released their aetherial leashes, and the horde of Sawteeth under their watch immediately fell upon the great Irmin tree as a massive, ravaging swarm, steadily-devouring and consuming the vast Irmin's flesh and aethers, and infesting its roots and branches with virulent toxins.

By the time the Sawteeth were done with their ravaging consumption, the Irmin had been completely-destroyed — and so the conduit with the powers of Urth's Fount was severed, and the curtain of Light protecting the nation of Amdapor, and all of its vassal states, abruptly collapsed.

As the Mhachi had planned, the Void Lord within Irminsul then could not resist partaking himself of the bounty placed before him, and began to drink deeply of the aethers still present — not

just of the plentiful souls of the slain Amdapori guardians and students, but also of the mysterious power that lurked within the great crystal that had been exposed anew by the Sawteeth's consumption of the Irmin.

Thus empowered, the Irminsul was then commanded by its Mhachi controllers to dramatically-expand the radius of its Dispel magick — wiping away what shimmering flickers had still remained of the Amdapori barrier, and further nullifying countless other Amdapori rituals, incantations, glyphs, and other protections.

So, as the Amdapori awoke in the middle of the night, and scrambled to understand what was occurring within their borders, Amdapor itself was suddenly left nearly-defenseless in every way — and the first concentrated Mhachi assault upon Amdapor in centuries subsequently quickly began, leading to immense losses of life and territory in the opening hours, before the disoriented Amdapori could regroup and retaliate.

The Sawteeth, meanwhile, were then deliberately unleashed by their Void Magi handlers, and intentionally released into the Amdapori countryside — to run amok, and to destroy the pristine landscape at their own ravenous pace.

And, indeed, in the ensuing years, the Amdapori would constantly-struggle to not just locate, but also to successfully destroy, those horrifying new Mhachi plant-beasts —and thus their near-unchecked rampages led to the devastation of Amdapori agriculture, as vast portions of once-lush and fertile plainlands were rendered into toxic, infertile wastelands.

Present-day historians now estimate that the ultimate toll upon Amdapori lives just from the unleashed Sawteeth, in terms of hunger, sickness, famine, and starvation, likely climbed into the multiple tens of thousands by the closing days of the war.

The Amdapori's first response to all of this — even as they simultaneously fought to stem the tide of Mhachi forces crashing against Amdapor's suddenly-exposed borders — was to immediately and urgently deploy a vast contingent of White Magi to Urth's Fount, to see to the protection of the Irmin, to determine why the barrier-spell had failed, and to reactivate it immediately.

At Urth's Fount, however, the horrified and grief-stricken Amdapori witnessed only the smoldering corpses of their former comrades, and the deteriorating, mangled remains of what was once the great Irmin tree — as well as coldly-clinical Mhachi infiltrators that were still carefully-examining and recording all of the data that they could extract.

The Amdapori forces thus fell upon those Mhachi infiltrators with a surge of unrestrained hate and fury, and the startled Mhachi were quickly slain to the very last.

However, the Mhachi only laughed even as they died — boasting that naught could undo what they had wrought that night, and smugly proclaiming that Amdapor was now doomed by those Mhachi's own proud hands.

Worse, with its masters now slain, the Irminsul continued to absorb unchecked every newly-fallen soul into its ever-swelling darknes — and even the elite Amdapori White Magi quickly found themselves powerless to stand against the disturbing and surreal power that was radiating out of the strange, unholy-looking new tree... if it could even be called such a thing... that had appeared within Urth's Fount.

Those White Magi that still bravely attempted to stand against the strange thing found themselves quickly surprised, ambushed, surrounded, and brutally-slaughtered by the empowered Sawteeth that the Irminsul had called forth and controlled to defend itself — and so these White Magi's souls only fueled the abomination-tree to even-further depths of aetherial power.

Thus witnessing these confusing horrors, the distraught Amdapori forces were at last driven to effect a despair-filled retreat.

The Irminsul and the Void Ark

By the time that Amdapor had re-stabilised its position, and driven back the initial Mhachi waves from its borders, a subsequent army unit deployed to Urth's Fount found that the dreaded tree-monstrosity, and its unnatural plant-beast servants, had all vanished.

But in truth, during Amdapor's prolonged distraction with trying to re-secure its borders, the Irminsul had been sent for and carried safely back to Mhach by another expedition of Mhachi elite forces, under explicit orders from the highest Mhachi leadership.

Whilst the original plan had been to intentionally leave the Irminsul within the borders of Amdapor as a powerful disruptive force upon the nation, the Irminsul had instead eventually been explicitly-recalled by the highest echelons of Mhachi leadership.

This change was due to the secretive Void Ark scheme that the Mhachi's highest ranks and nobility were already beginning to develop.

Despite their official public statements about such matters, the Mhachi elite had actually foreseen the coming of the Calamity of Water far earlier than they ever admitted, and so as the War of the Magi crept towards its devastating climax, the Mhachi leadership were already quietly pouring state resources into a clandestine project by which they and their families would be spared the increasingly-likely aetherial catastrophe.

To power this massive device, the Mhachi elite intended to use the harnessed energies of countless imprisoned Voidsent souls — and so they began gradually, quietly reserving and

recalling as many of the most powerful of Mhach's bound Voidsent as they believed that they could without jeopardising the war effort against Amdapor.

But the placement of the Irminsul, specifically, within the Void Ark was also intended to serve another purpose: its powerful, radiating Dispel magicks would provide the visionary craft multiple further benefits.

Firstly, it would protect the Void Ark from whatever raging aethers might be occurring outside its hull if the hypothetical catastrophe came to pass.

Secondly, it would protect the Void Ark from any possible Amdapori assaults as it ascended into the clouds.

Thirdly, it would serve as a fail-safe against any Voidsent containment failures.

In their great hubris, however, the Mhachi elite failed to accept the possibility of their own mortal limitations, and thus made the arrogant decision to use the Shadow Queen Scathach herself — one of the singularly most powerful Voidsent ever known to not just the Mhachi, but even still to present-day scholars — as the primary fuel source for the Void Ark's engines.

Image

As the High Void Mage Cessair had herself pointedly argued, this measure was not even necessary by the specifications of the craft — it was merely desired by the Mhachi elite, because they were too tempted by the fact that Scathach's fuel would allow the the Void Ark to move faster, ascend higher, and generally perform better.

In short, the Mhachi elite used Scathach within their engines simply because they could, and they wanted to — not because they, technically, needed to.

This decision, specifically, would prove the catalyst of their undoing.

Of course, the Calamity of Water eventually did indeed begin, and so the Void Ark did indeed eventually hastily ascend into the skies — evacuating the Mhachi elite before the catastrophic floods could consume their civilisation, and leaving the remainder of the Mhachi commoners to stare upwards in confusion as the previously-unknown craft suddenly departed.

Brimming with triumphant overconfidence at the plain success of their meticulous engineering and planning, the Mhachi elite leading the Void Ark began to demand that the craft accelerate quicker and rise higher, lest the craft risk being caught within the swirling aetherial turbulence that was rapidly breaking-out across Eorzea.

The immense strain of operating the ambitious craft's engines so close to their theoretical limits, however, soon put far too much strain upon the bindings of Scathach — and so the seethingly-enraged Shadow Queen, who had been patiently biding her time since first being bound by the Mhachi, began to unravel those bindings piece-by-piece, one tiny arcane thread at a time... even as concerned expert Void Magi, such as Cessair, began to notice, and struggled to keep the bindings in place, and constantly reapply each new rune that unraveled.

Alas, the Mhachi leadership refused to accept Cessair's desperate request to temporarily shut off the engines, and allow the Void Ark to drift, until the bindings could be restabilised. Cessair was instead haughtily-dismissed, and told to simply "do her job" — and to carry out the duties that, in the eyes of the Mhachi elite, were the only reason that she had even been granted the privilege of passage aboard the vessel.

Thus the Void Magi under Cessair's direction continued to struggle to replace one binding after another as it was continuously undone from the other side — but as the Void Ark's engines were driven ever-harder by its pilots, the struggle eventually reached a point at which even the most expert of the exhausted Void Magi could no longer replace the tiny threads of aether faster than Scathach was unraveling them.

And so, once Scathach had finally pulled open enough of a gap in her arcane prison, she was able to begin extending her aetherial will and influence throughout the Void Ark's halls — using it to gradually free more and more of the lesser Voidsent from their bindings.

This led to a cascading effect — with each new minor Voidsent that came unbound, the Void Magi were forced to direct more and more of their forces and attention away from the engine and Scathach's bindings... and thus Scathach's prison began to unravel faster and faster, and thus her influence spread further and further, releasing even more Voidsent... and so on... As panic began to spread amongst the Mhachi passengers, the bindings upon the Irminsul were eventually located by Scathach's searching mind, and also unraveled.

Immediately, the spiteful Void Lord trapped within the Irminsul began eagerly turning his powerful Dispel magicks upon the Mhachi themselves — nullifying the effects of their wards and spells at the time when they most desperately needed those magicks, as loose Voidsent rampaged in ever-greater numbers through the halls of the vessel.

In desperation, the overwhelmed Mhachi attempted to directly-destroy the Irminsul by simply hacking it to pieces with hatchets and blades.

In response, the vengeful and enraged Voidsent Lord imprisoned within the Irminsul reached out with his aether and seized upon the crops being grown upon the Void Ark — pouring his nigh-boundless Darkness aether into them in a dire imitation of the Mhachi's very own techniques... and then rapidly fusing the warped plant-life together into a monstrosity bound to the Irminsul's control.

The Irminsul then reached out with its aether, and seized one of the thousands of Voidsent souls that were now running rampant upon the Void Ark — forcibly binding it within the floral monstrosity, and thus creating a Sawtooth in a malevolent imitation of the Mhachi's own aetherobotanical arts.

With a nudge from the Irminsul, the new, ravaging Sawtooth quickly set upon the overwhelmed Mhachi defenders, whilst the Irminsul itself, smoldering with silent malevolence and craving

unending vengeance, used its own imbued Dispel magick to keep their Mhachi's spellcraft impotently-suppressed — and so they were slaughtered, consumed by the endlessly-hungering Sawtooth, and their souls made fuel for the ever-strengthening Irminsul.

With the Irminsul thus free to direct its smothering magicks throughout the Void Ark, and its freshly-made Sawtooth now rampaging across the decks, consuming all who its maws could grab ahold of, Scathach's insurgency easily spread completely out-of-control — ultimately leading to the grisly demise of every last Mhachi that had boarded the Void Ark, including all of its civilian passengers that were being ferried to the "paradise" at Dun Scaith.

The legacy of the Irmin

Meanwhile, the Sixth Calamity of Water swept over the surface of Eorzea below, taking with it the civilisations of the Fifth Era, and their lands, monuments, structures, and accomplishments.

So was the great nation of Amdapor, too, washed away, and the toxic wastelands of the scarred Plains of Amdapor mercifully-cleansed of the consequences of the Mhachi onslaught.

Most knowledge and memories of Amdapor vanished beneath the floods, as a new age of ignorance descended upon the tattered survivors of the Star.

However, many centuries later, the word "Irmin" would be preserved in Gridanian culture, via the Padjali and the White Mage soul crystals that the Elementals sanctioned them to wield and learn from.

Embedded deep within the crystalline lattice of many of the White Mage soul crystals were the etched memories of countless Fifth Era spells and innovations — including, in some, the invocation of the great veil that had protected Amdapor for a precious time.

The Padjali, attempting to decipher the lost memories of a people long-extinct, could only recognise within this spell the word "Irmin", and that it was associated with some sort of great and powerful invocation of protection — one that, astonishingly, could cover an entire land, if fueled sufficiently.

So the word "Irmin" came to have a mystical meaning to the Padjali Seedseers, and eventually, the Gridanians in general — as a great and mythical protection, somewhat akin to other legendary terminology, such as "aegis".

Of course, it was lost entirely on the Padjali and Gridanians that they were, in fact, using a corrupted form of "Odin" to refer to their greatest protective magick, for they knew little and less of the complex linguistic interactions of the Amdapori tongue, nor even of the existence of the fell being that it obliquely referenced.

However, the Seedseers and the Elementals did recognise that the "Irmin" spell had once, somehow, used a great tree as a conduit to unleash a magnificent and grand defensive magick — and so they felt an immediate affinity for it, and it was amongst the Amdapori spells that was most-quickly entered into the collective teachings of the Padjal.

Most importantly, perhaps, was the fact that the spell seemed reproducible — if only a sufficiently-incredible quantity of aether could be found to fuel it.

But for the Gridanians, that incredible aetherial power did exist — within their Elemental guardians.

Yet they knew that it would come at immense cost to the beings, and so the magick was never used — but the knowledge was always maintained, and the rituals for unleashing the spell practiced, in case a dire day should ever come when the Seedseers and Elementals alike grew so desperate as to need to resort to invoking it.