

## **The Aery**

In a time before the conflicts of dragon and men The Aery was a massive palace where the kings of the Dravanian spoken population ruled. This period in history came to a close with the betrayal and murder of Ratatoskr by Thordan I and his fellows, and in response Nidhogg descended upon the palace and butchered all within it. He then broke the palace from the ground, levitated it into the air and swathed it in powerful storms, which seem to have filled the area with corrupted lightning aether crystals. He has since slumbered within the fallen palace ever since, leaving only on his infrequent raids against the people of Ishgard. We have now been sent here in order to end the Dragonsong War by butchering Nidhogg himself.

### **The Aery Exterior**

The outer reaches of The Aery is one of great contrasts; beautifully carved and decorated flooring panels topped by twisted rock and absurd amounts of lightning aspected crystals which crackle and fizzle with electricity. Later on these crystals turn from purple to red, which I suspect is the moment that we see the crystals becoming corrupted.



### **Dran Sorn Gahr**

#### *Spoken*

Mortals who consume dragon blood can become an aevis, especially those who hold the bloodline of those who consumed the eye of Ratatoskr. Accordingly the name aevis seems to be the plural of aevum, the state of being that angels and saints belong to, though the Ishgardians seem to have taken the name and twisted it to mean 'devil who flies.' Dran Sorn Gahr translates roughly to dragon army hate, which I suggest comes together to make a hateful dragon soldier. This could mean that the aevis hate their uncorrupted spoken foes, or that they are hated by Nidhogg. I suspect both are true.



### **Aery Wyvern**

#### *Scalekin*

Wyverns such as these are dragons who have matured in such a way as to specialise in flight and all associated matters.





### **Cloud Chaser**

#### *Scalekin*

These dragonflies are not true dragons but instead humble Scalekin. As with many Scalekin, the dragonfly is extremely susceptible to the influence of true dragons and indeed almost the entire family of species under the name have fallen under the control of the Dravanians.



### **Thunderbolt Sprite**

#### *Elemental*

Essentially a mere conjoining of aether and ideal conditions, a sprite is of no relation to the powerful elementals of the Black Shroud, and are in fact as devoid of reason and sentience as the average weather pattern.



### Aery Biast/Drake

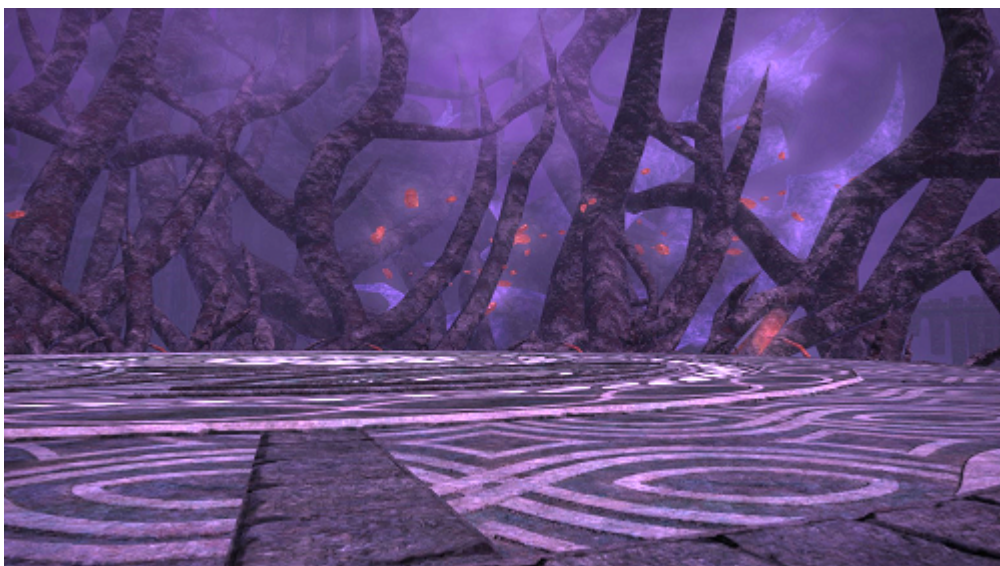
#### *Scalekin*

An unusual variety of drake known as a biast, the biast is a drake capable of exhaling lightning as opposed to the usual fire. Their presence here is unsurprising, as Scalekin are easily influenced by dragons.



### Akh Fahl Lye

A large circular platform with the same beautiful flooring patterns as the rest of this area and a number of dragon statues filled with lightning crystals around the outside of the platform. The name Akh Fahl Lye directly translates to circle/fate, fall/drop, light, which I believe likely comes to mean Circle Where Light Falls or the Fate Of Falling Light. This may seem a little confusing but there are a number of significances here, the first of which is that the inhabitant of this area can call down **lightning** and the second of which being that the statues laden with crystal here may imply that it was used to channel aether, particularly lightning aether.





## **Rangda**

### *Scalekin*

This is a falak, the next step along the flight specialist line after wyvern and then wivre. They have evolved so far into flight that they have lost their legs and can no longer walk or stand on the ground, but can fly extremely fast and wield wind/lightning aether with shocking ability. Rangda in myth is a demon from the Indonesian island of Bali famed for warring against the forces of good and eating children. As a dragon specialised in mobility within the realm of Nidhogg it almost certainly raids the lands of Ishgard, and thus I feel that the significance of Rangda's name quickly becomes disturbingly obvious...



## **The Aery Interior**

We drop down into the interior of The Aery, which seems to be less a relic of the palace of men that The Aery once was and more rock carved out by the dragons. Aether crystals litter the area, as do dragon eggs which themselves glow with accumulated aether. A very odd kind of webbing seems to form a major part of the structure down here, which is less unusual than it may seem at first. We see elsewhere that the resting places of dragon eggs almost invariably have webbing and fabricated structures that seem to have been constructed somehow by dragons, perhaps by manipulating rock melted by fire or some other, even more esoteric technique.



### **Nidhogg Broodling**

#### *Scalekin*

All dragons, no matter how unrecognisable or specialised they may become, start out as these diminutive creatures called dragonets. These ones are evidently a part of Nidhogg's brood, which may mean that they are his children or the offspring of his offspring. It is worth noting that dragons are sexless creatures that reproduce asexually and only choose genders according to their own preference.



### **Slumbering Dragon**

#### *Scalekin*

The generalist middle stage of the dragon lifespan, these are evidently aspected towards fire and either reside here as the parents of the broodlings or as guardians assigned to this duty. That they are slumbering makes me believe that it may be the former.





### **Nehd Sorn Gahr**

#### *Spoken*

Much like the aevis, these are men that have been corrupted by the drinking of dragon blood and are referred to as syrieta. Although the Holy See claims that syrieta are individuals who have committed more sin than those who turn into aevis, scientists conclude that it is instead likely to signify a higher concentration of blood from those who consumed the eye of Ratatoskr. Their name translates directly to leader army hate, similar to the dragon army hate of the Dran Sorn Gahr. I suspect then that this signifies merely a higher rank in this corrupted spoken auxila of Nidhogg's forces, perhaps coming to mean leader of the hateful/hated army.



### **Smoldering Dragon**

#### *Scalekin*

This is similar to, albeit larger and more powerful than, the slumbering dragons found earlier. It is a fairly standard middle-level unspecialised dragon that is seemingly aspected towards the element of lightning.



## **Ten Oohr**

Once again an area constructed by the men who resided in this palace, Ten Oohr seems to have been an outdoors area that was used as some kind of greeting place or entryway to the palace proper. Judging by the name of the area, which translates to depravity's heart, and according to the encyclopedia refers specifically to the acts of men, I'm going to posit the theory that this was where the kings of the palace met with their draconic allies before the betrayal. Hence, the depravity in reference is their duplicity in courting the dragons as allies while they (in Nidhogg's mind) planned the butcher of Ratatoskr.





## **Gyascutus**

### *Scalekin*

This is a brobinyak, one of the specialist forms of dragon, specifically one that has continued the land-mobility focused leanings of the lesser dragon to the extent that although it is now eminently capable on solid ground it can no longer fly or even glide whatsoever. If you were curious about the utility of a flightless dragon living on a rock floating extremely high up in the air you'd have a point, but just as gyascutus' biology is specialised so is his role within Nidhogg's brood. He is Nidhogg's seneschal, the individual who administers to and- in effect- rules The Aery while the great wyrm slumbers or rages against Ishgard. This means that he has no need to leave The Aery and indeed has not done so since his evolution centuries prior, meaning that the Ishgardian records have no mention of him.

It is also noted that he is extremely capable in manipulation of aether, seemingly using it to destroy his foes with corrosive poisons, perhaps created using earth aether. Gyascutus is apparently a term in North American folklore used to refer to a large beast with legs on one side longer than the other, allowing it to roam easily on hills. This is, of course, a tongue-in-cheek reference to the over-specialisation of the draconic Gyascutus.



### **The Aery Apex**

We enter the apex by climbing the stairs once roamed by the men of the palace, noting the obvious similarities to Ishgardian architecture. Numerous windowed sections of the palace can be seen all around, but ruination has unsurprisingly been wrought against vast sections of these structures of man by Nidhogg in his rage. As we continue upwards we find odd crystalline structures that I strongly suspect are creations of the dragons not men, due to their odd, organic-looking nature and what appears to be pockets of embers or even molten stone at their base. To access the upper tiers we have to cross immense, crumbling pillars; architectural marvels in a past life now left to ruin by the sins of man and the ignorant fury of Nidhogg. We see statues of dragons, some truly immense, decorating this palace and clearly demonstrating the positive that the people who lived here had with dragons before the betrayal.

It is also in this area that we see one of the most fascinating and infuriatingly mysterious parts of The Aery; Allagan technology. How this could be here has a number of questions; an off-course projectile from the Fall of Dalamud, something scavenged by Nidhogg, a relic of the Dravanian kingdom or perhaps even a tantalising hint at a conflict between Allag and the Dravanian Horde. It makes little sense, after all, that the Dravanian Horde would simply sit back and allow their Meracydian cousins to be butchered, exploited and turned into tools of Allagan supremacy. We do also know that Allag ruled all of the three continents, and so they must have had at least some degree of power over the Dravanian Horde. Now, the fall of the Allagan Empire does of course immensely predate the elezen founding this castle, but it may explain how the Horde managed to get this piece of technology.





### **Lesser Aery Dragon**

#### *Scalekin*

This is a lesser dragon, a species of dragon semi-specialised for ground travel over flight. These ones are not so highly specialised as Gyascutus and still have wings, but are on the path to become a brobinyak like him or a carapace dragon if they specialise in defence.



### **Aery Diresaur**

#### *Spoken*

Much like the aevis and syrichta, diresaurs were once spoken who have since consumed dragon blood and mutated horribly. An explanation is not given for why this subspecies results, unlike the syrichta, but we can perhaps assume that this represents an even further concentration of blood from those who consumed the eye of Ratatoskr. Apparently diresaurs are especially hated by the knights of Ishgard, and they take great joy in killing them.



### Errn Sorh

A large and wide-open area directly before the centre of the castle that once stood here, Errn Sorh seems likely to have been somehow involved in the courtly life of the elezen kings of this palace. It is now framed by corrupted aether crystals and three pods sit at the far end, radiating what I assume is umbrally-corrupted lightning aether. Errn Sorh translates to Man's Sin, and it is not hard to see why. This is an area directly before the throne room of King Thordan I, where the greed of man came to a head and the plan was formulated to kill Ratatoskr at an amphitheatre just a few minutes walk from the position this palace would have once occupied before Nidhogg tore it from the earth.



### Aery Vouivre

#### *Scalekin*

This is a wivre, the step on the flight-specialised dragon evolution route between a common wyvern and the falaks like Rangda. Vouivre is an alternative spelling of guivre, a kind of venomous dragon in french myth that is rather bashful and becomes dreadfully embarrassed when it sees a naked human. I suspect it is used here merely as a synonym for dragon.





### **Down Wyvern**

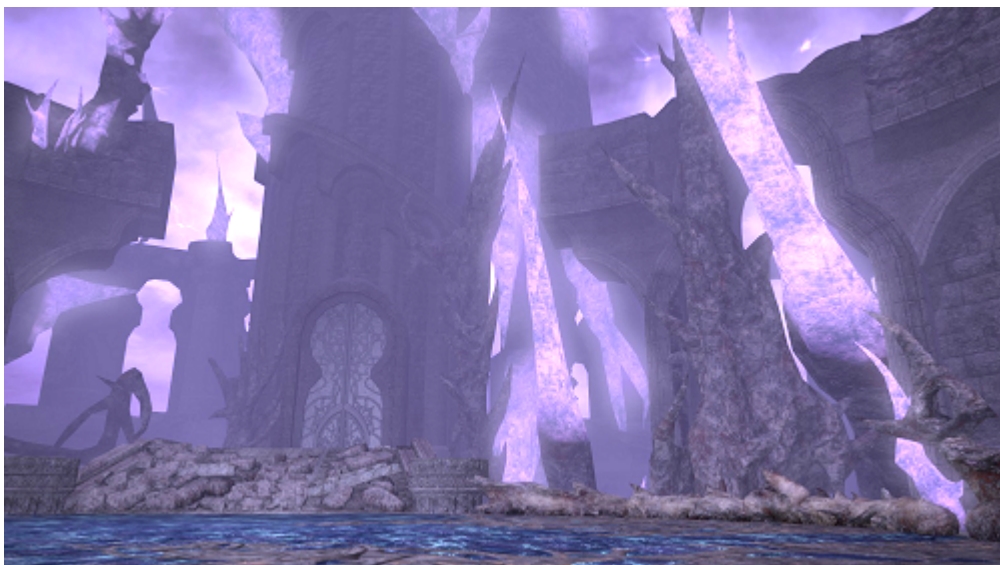
#### *Scalekin*

Yet more wyverns like we encountered earlier, I suspect that the down in these specimens name is an allusion to down feathers, a kind of secondary feather found in many birds but famous for being the only kind of feather that the young of many avian species possess. I posit that this is implying that the down wyvern is merely a wyvern just taking its first steps out of the early dragonet stage of life. So I suppose that we're killing teenagers, but we did kill children earlier so it isn't so much of a surprise.



### **Nidhogg An**

A large circular platform coated in corrupted crystal, Nidhogg An backs directly onto a large (inaccessible) tower with an ornately carved and rather beautiful door. This door and the tower it leads to, I suspect, was the throne room of the Dravanian kingdom. An directly translates to the first person pronoun in dragonspeak (both plural and singular), and I suppose is just a way to denote that this is Nidhogg's personal sanctuary.



## **Nidhogg**

### *Scalekin*

Nidhogg came into existence as one of the first brood, one of seven dragons hatched from the eggs brought to this star by Midgardsormr. After bathing in the immense aetheric charge of Silvertear Lake and maturing the first brood left their home to found draconic communities anew. Nidhogg seems to have been groomed by Midgardsormr for a leadership position amongst the dragons, as well as to fill the role of Hydaelyn's protector. This made him aloof and critical of the star's other inhabitants. We know exceedingly little about what happened to Nidhogg after this point until the Elezen settled in the north, besides that he and his siblings Ratatoskr and Hraesvelgr chose to found their horde in Dravania. In the year 350 of the Sixth Astral Era hyur migrations drove some elezen communities north into the mostly uninhabited lands of Coerthas.

Dravania was directly next to Coerthas, and the Horde there were distrustful of the elezen, who built a village they would later call Ishgard. Five years after settling this village a woman by the name of Shiva (or Sheem, in dragonspeak) fell in love with Hraesvelgr for his wisdom and he with her for her compassion. Knowing that their lifespan could not permit a true life together Shiva begged her love to devour her that the two's aether and souls would join as one. This sacrifice softened the hearts of dragons and men to each other, and the people of Ishgard spread into Dravania where they founded cities and villages in harmony with the Horde. Two centuries later, however, the king of this society, King Thordan I, became greedy and covetous. He and his twelve most honoured knights slew Ratatoskr and stole her eyes, partaking in their power.

Ratatoskr was apparently the only dragon that Nidhogg got on with especially well, providing a clear reason for why her death drove him quite so insane. Nidhogg flew into a rage to rival that of legends, and descended upon the knights in the same coliseum they had slain Ratatoskr within. The battle raged for seven days and seven knights, and claimed the lives of the king and six of his twelve, yet in the end Nidhogg was defeated and his eyes stolen before he was driven away. Haldrath, the son of Thordan, was disgusted in what he and his family had done, and cognizant of the fact that the Horde would not stop in attempting to destroy Ishgard now he stepped away from the throne to devote himself to fighting the Dravanians. Other knights stepped away at this point two, leaving but four of the original twelve kingless. Nidhogg borrowed an eye from his brother Hraesvelgr, and began a millennia long war against the elezen of Ishgard, allowing the dust to settle only to take periods of rest before assaulting once more. Yet Nidhogg and his brood combined were easily capable of destroying Ishgard, and he only held back in order to achieve not a quick death for the traitorous men but an eternity of torment, warfare and grief for them and their children.





### **The Aery Loot Rundown**

The Aery provides a number of weapons with unique names to dig into. The first of which is the black mage arm, Gambanteinn, which we actually have some lore information on. It predates the betrayal of man and was used by the dragons to teach the ancient Ishgardians draconic magics. Its name draws from a sword of the same name famed for its sharpness in Norse myth.



The daggers here are called the hofuds, a reference to the sword of Heimdall, the watchful deity who guards against Ragnarok. I suspect then that this was wielded by a guardian of the palace or perhaps even a bodyguard of the royals of ancient Ishgard, which also seems to line up with the craftsmanship and color scheme of the daggers. We also know a small amount about the conjurer's staff, the Mistilteinn. It is a staff that has existed for over a millennia, firmly placing it in the era of cooperation between men and dragons. The sprig of mistletoe on the end has remained alive for so long due to it having been dipped in dragon blood. The age and the manner of preservation, alongside it being here, fairly confidently allows me to assume that it was a staff carried by a conjurer of the pre-betrayal Ishgard. The name in fact does translate to mistletoe, and was a blade carried by an attendant to a Danish king that in some versions of myth was used to kill the god Baldr.

The axe Skeggiold is named for a valkyrie of Norse myth whose name translates to axe-age. Due to the role of the valkyries as warrior spirits that swept from the sky to retrieve the souls of dead but valorous warriors, I suspect strongly that this was wielded by one of the dragon-riding knights of old Ishgard.



The fist weapons are called Wargfangs, a clear reference to the legendary wolves of Norse myth. I am confident that this is merely a dramatic title given to a particularly famed warrior of ancient Ishgard. Tyrffing is another weapon we actually know something about; it was wielded by one of King Thordan I's twelve knights; Ser Moulignauge, who forced a voidsent to forge him this weapon. The blade in myth, once again Norse, was a cursed blade created by trapped dwarves that brought misfortune to most who wielded it. The parallels are quite obvious here, and it seems reasonably likely that Moulignauge died in battle against Nidhogg. Svalin, the shield in the dungeon, was also wielded by the aforementioned good ser and was lost to Ishgard. We can assume that the Ishgardians had some time to return to the lost palace of The Aerie after defeating Nidhogg, returning their fallen knights there, before Nidhogg took the palace for his own. It is also a famed shield of Norse myth that could deflect even the heat of the sun (but sadly for the knight Nidhogg can breath lightning, not just fire.)



We also know a reasonable amount about Astrild, as it is a bow that mirrors modern Ishgardian bow-crafting techniques but was infused with the aether of dragonbreath, clearly denoting that it was produced by the pre-betrayal society. Astrild is the Nordic term for Cupid, the bow-wielding cherub of classical myth, and I do wonder if it may hint at a romance between the archer and the dragon who blessed the bow. The summoner's tome, Morkinskinna, is a tome I dearly wish I would read myself; it is a record of the wars fought by the Elezen during the founding centuries of Ishgard and contains a number of Allagan incantations and glyphs, proving that the Elezen had somehow retained information on the ancient empire for such a long period (the Allagan tech in The Aery, anyone?). It is named for a saga relating the history of the Norwegian kings from 1025 to 1157.



We are given much less information on the book's scholarly counterpart, the Fagrskinna, but in the real world it was a contemporary of the Morkinskinna, recording the same histories but from the 9th to 12th centuries. I suspect that it is a similarly complimentary tome in the FFXIV universe.



The spear, Grasitha, is yet another weapon wielded by Thordan I's twelve. When Ser Branthuc the Meek's sword shattered upon the scales of a drake he used the pyres of the dead and a warhammer to reshape the remains into the blade of a spear on the very eve of their battle with Nidhogg. It has since been lost, clearly when Nidhogg took the castle. I was not entirely able to find a good real world root for its name. Dainslaif, the two-handed sword, is another dwarven-made sword of Norse myth that inflicted wounds that could not heal and had to kill once drawn. I suspect that this is intended to reflect the darkness of the dark knight class, and it was clearly used by a warrior of old Ishgard, perhaps even one of Thordan I's twelve. We also know plenty about the gun, Gjallarhorn, it was named for a horn that could be heard in all worlds when blown and was a relic of the dragon-elezen alliance, as seen by the draconic decorations covering it. This existence has some odd implications for the timeline of technology in Ishgard, but is actually not all that surprising. The dragons hold an immense amount of knowledge they could impart, and we know that the old Ishgardians had a degree of knowledge left over from ancient Allag, which did have pistols. It is named for a famed horn of Norse myth, as is referenced by it being named for a horn in-universe.



The astrologian's weapon, Muspell, was given by the scholars of Sharlayan to an Archbishop of Ishgard very early within the Sixth Astral Era, a great deal back from our position in the timeline. This being given is perhaps not so surprising as isolationism is only relatively recent in the city-state, but it is worth noting that it is very unusual for it to be found in a castle that was lost before the concept of an archbishop ruling Ishgard was conceived. In that case it must have been lost in battle against the Dravanians and brought back to The Aery as a trophy. It is named for the fiery realm of Muspelheim in Norse cosmology, and thus perhaps may be intended to track the Balance, a star relating to fire on The Source.

Verdun, the rapier, is a tragic weapon that works on many levels lore-wise. It was wielded by a dragon-rider knight who stood with the dragons when his kin turned against them in the betrayal, fighting to the death alongside his draconic companion before being cruelly cut down by his former comrades for daring to advocate for those that had supported him and his kingdom for two centuries. Upon his death his companion, seeking to honour him, breathed fire upon his corpse, crystallising his aether into the red jewel we see as the blade's medium now. It also works on a separate level because rapiers have always been a culturally Elezen weapon and were only cast aside when the Ishgardians betrayed the Dravanians because they were functionally useless in battle against a dragon. This clearly explains why a dragon-loyalist predating the betrayal would wield one. Verdun is of course a French city, which follows the French place name naming scheme of red mage weapons. The katana is named Katayama, which is almost certainly a reference to the name of the smith who forged it and is a real Japanese surname as well as a school of kenjutsu, or sword fighting. I'm not entirely sure how it came to be here, but we do know that Ishgardian nobles have imported katanas out of interest in the past, perhaps old Ishgardians did as well.



I will not delve into the armour sets here in great detail, as they are uniformly named the same- the Orthodox **[role]** set. I will however note that the caster sets carry draconic statues on their belts and the dps sets have scale patterns upon their skirts. These are clearly pre-betrayal Ishgardian sets, and the name orthodox is a delightfully tongue-in-cheek reference to the fact that the original, arguably true Halonic faith of Ishgard took into consideration cooperation and peace with the Dravanians, spitting in the face of the new and utterly intolerant faith that has gripped Ishgard after the betrayal.