THE ART OF DAUNTLESS™

Phoenix Labs

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INTRODUCTION

Making this book was a journey back in time for us. Four years ago, *Dauntless* was just an idea. We knew we wanted to make a cooperative action RPG but visually, there were few stakes in the ground. Making an artistically unique and identifiable game was important to us, as we wanted *Dauntless* to stand out both at home and abroad. But otherwise, the sky was the limit.

One of the first images we ever had a concept artist make was this battle scene; it's still up on the wall in our office (and it'll stay there until Jesse makes me take it down).

You'll probably notice this looks nothing like our game. We've got a party of high-fantasy adventurers: an axe-wielding dwarf, a beefy warrior with fists the size of his chest, and a long-haired knight errant, all wailing on a mean-looking dinosaur creature that's spewing blood all over a barren landscape.

It may not look like the *Dauntless* you're familiar with, but this image did get the first conversations started about the game. We discussed the differences between a mere "monster" and a *Dauntless* Behemoth, and why those differences arose. We talked about the importance of equal representation when it came to gender and race in our character roster. We talked about how we didn't see value in excessive gore, about how cartoony vs. realistic we wanted our characters to be, and about keeping a scene readable by controlling frequency of detail.

Those were our first steps into the world of *Dauntless*. And in this book, we're going to show you what came next.

—Glenn Barnes
Art Director, Phoenix Labs

FOREWORD

There's a scrap of paper that I've kept on my desk since the early days of Phoenix Labs. A year or so into development, ideas were forming up and congealing into the experience that we knew would spark the imaginations of our future community. Endless skies, lethal Behemoths, and badass gear. This was our passion and our future. Now all we had to do was name it.

Naming a thing makes it real. It pulls it, along with all associated hopes and challenges, into the daylight. One day you're in "pre-development" and the next day you're telling people the name of the project that's going to be keeping you up for the next three years.

In sitting down to name this game, we realized that we were giving form to the immense amount of work ahead of us. Late nights, challenging decisions, a responsibility to a passionate community, and the huge creative risk of giving this game our all. It dawned on us that these challenges were not so different from the challenges that face the Slayers of our world. We were on the cusp of embarking on a journey that would challenge our skills and push us to our limits, and we would be doing it with fearlessness and devotion.

And that's when we knew that any name that didn't capture this passion just wouldn't cut it.

It has been an amazing four years, and that scrap of paper still bears the single word we chose to define the experience we set out to create. If you are holding this book in your hands, you are no small part of this game, and we are eternally thankful for your support. From all of us at Phoenix Labs, welcome to *Dauntless*.

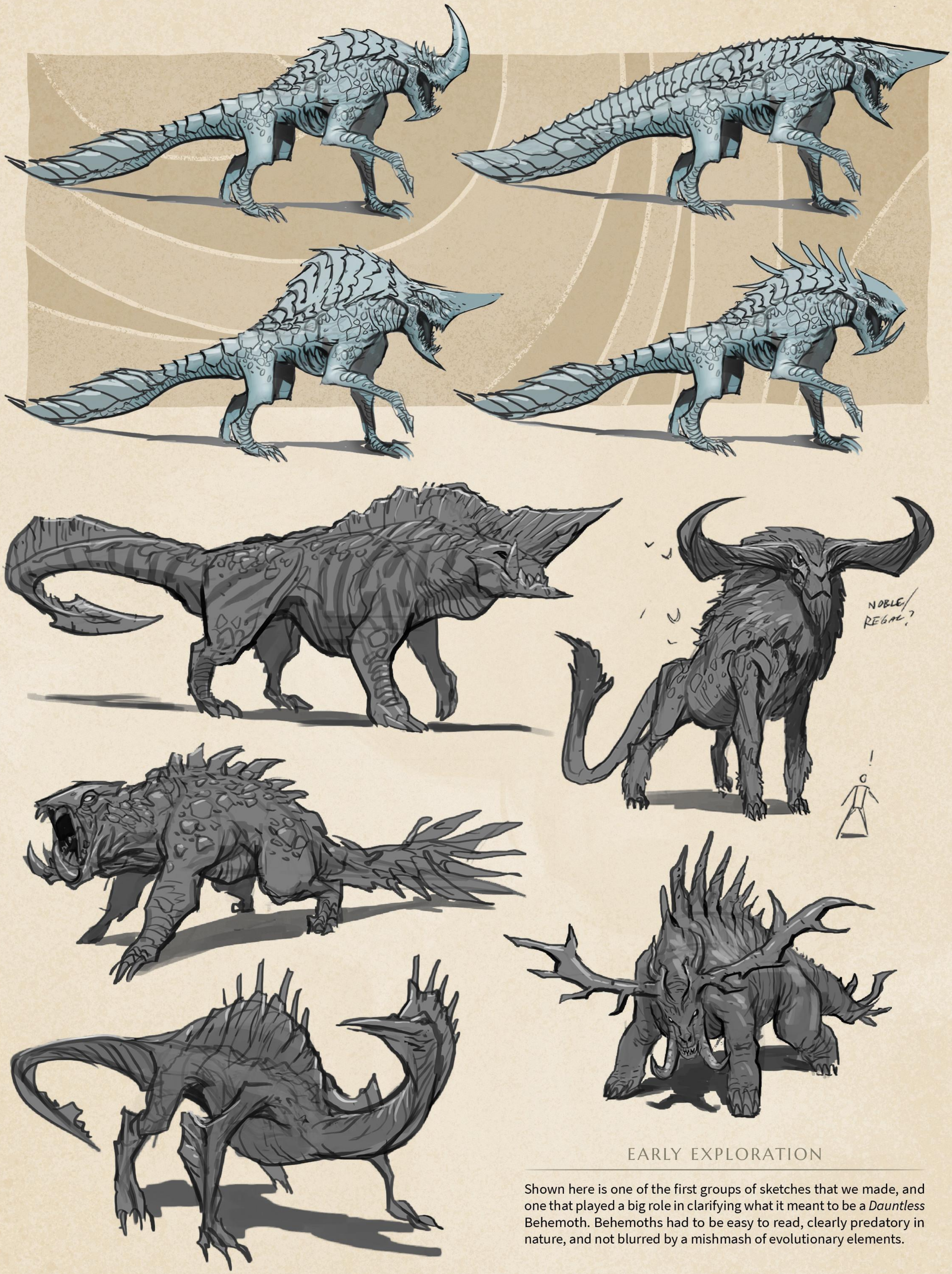
—Jesse Houston
CEO and Co-Founder , Phoenix Labs

CHAPTER 1

BEHEMOTHS

GENESIS OF A BEHEMOTH

Each Behemoth design begins as a sheet of thumbnail sketches; a broad net, cast in search of not just general appeal, but of that special blend of ferocity and majesty that makes it a part of the *Dauntless* universe. A clean yet distinct silhouette, with at least one stand-out feature that differentiates it from the rest, will often make the cut. Anything overly alien, nightmarish, or mutated is eschewed in favour of physical plausibility, prideful power, and a countenance that hints at the instinctual cunning of a predator. While most may fear a Behemoth's power and hunger, Slayers revere and respect it. They know that the second you underestimate the beast is the moment you become its prey.

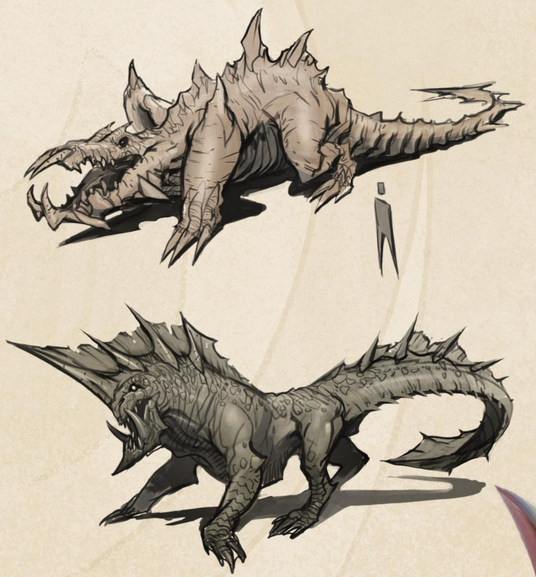


EARLY EXPLORATION

Shown here is one of the first groups of sketches that we made, and one that played a big role in clarifying what it meant to be a *Dauntless* Behemoth. Behemoths had to be easy to read, clearly predatory in nature, and not blurred by a mishmash of evolutionary elements.

DRASK

The Drask (then known as Fulgar) was our first playable Behemoth in *Dauntless*. It helped us not only to establish a baseline for gameplay design, but also to explore aether's effects in the world of *Dauntless*. Because the Drask was the first Behemoth, it included several redesigns. We started drawing inspiration from fish, reptile, and alligator species, then pushed their evolution and physical proportions in savage and sometimes startling directions. Large claws, sharp fangs, and iconic silhouettes all come together to make a ferocious, imposing beast.



HEAD STUDIES

Once we settled on the Drask's head shape, we experimented with its fangs. We wanted it to feel a little more primordial so we gave the Drask an underbite and larger bottom fangs.

COLOUR EXPLORATION

We tried a couple different colour variations to break the expectation that all reptiles are green. While we ultimately decided to stay with green for the base version, this work would help us define the rogue and other variant versions.

SHRIKE

For the Shrike, our second Behemoth, we went with a completely different body type. While Drasks are quadrupedal, the Shrike easily switches between two and four legs. Covered in fur and feathers, with wings capable of short flights, the Shrike proved a complicated beast, but helped ensure we didn't back ourselves into an artistic corner when designing Behemoths.

The Shrike's eyes are a key component of its visual appeal, affording a visceral connection between the player and their foe when they turn and flash at a pursuing Slayer. The Shrike's eyes show cunning and awareness that breathes life and intelligence into every hunt.

VARIANT EXPERIMENTATION

In the process of designing the Shrike we applied the "owl + bear" formula to many different species of owls. Each experiment yielded a unique feel. Even though we didn't choose it for the Shrike, the snowy owl species resonated strongly with the team and directly influenced the Skraev's appearance.

SKRAEV

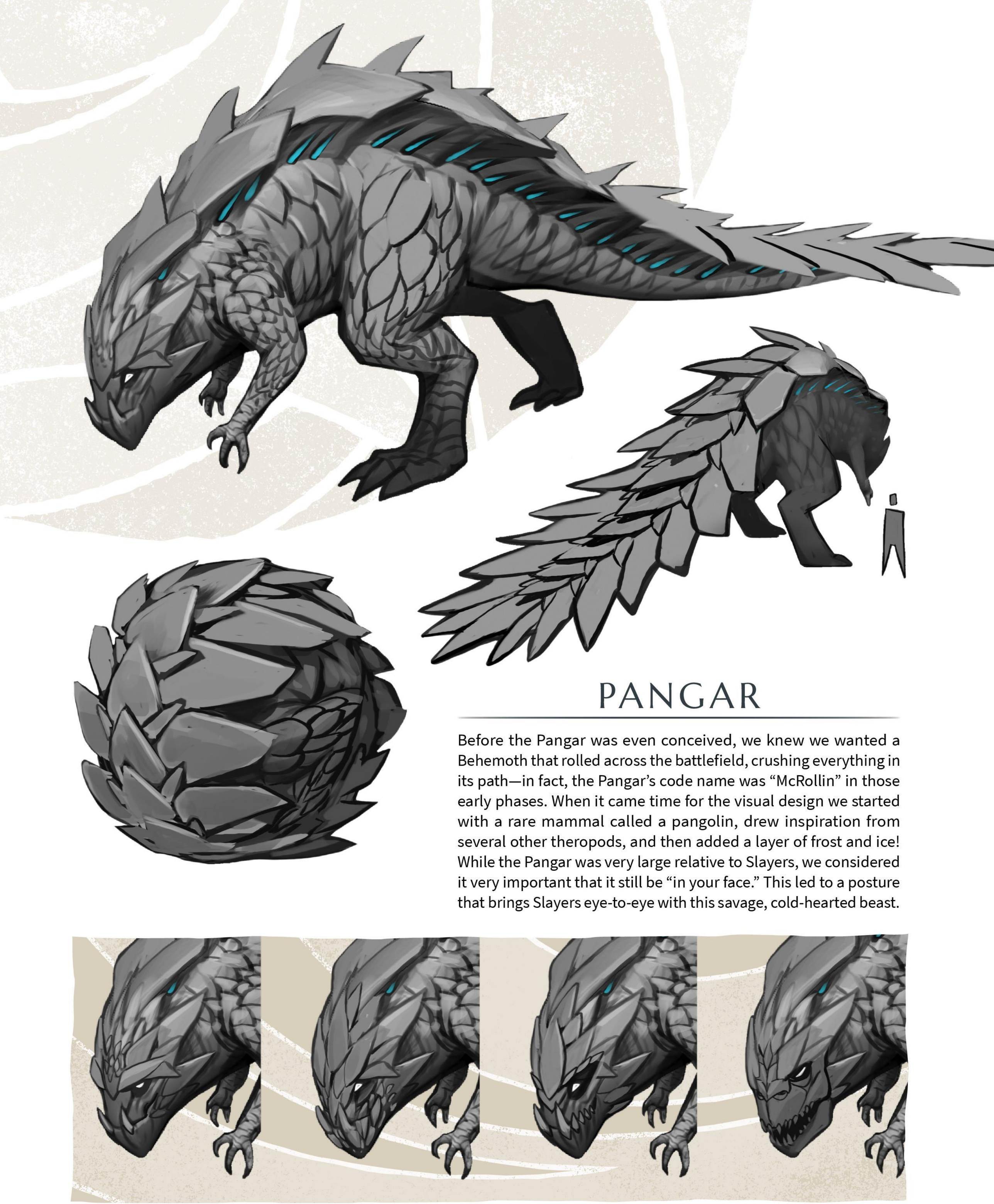
Throughout the Shattered Isles are different environments and biomes. Some are arid desert, others frigid glaciers. What would happen if a Shrike migrated to a colder climate? How would ice, snow, and subzero temperatures shape its colouration? Its physiology? The way it harnesses aether? Such questions were the impetus behind the Skraev, a cold-adapted Shrike variant with unique attacks, strengths, and weaknesses.

KHARABAK

The Kharabak's initial inspiration came from the idea of an assassin-style Behemoth. Something agile and airborne that would pick off its prey with high precision and lethal attacks. The concept of a wasp also really resonated with us, so we took that basic form and then covered its carapace in the deadly, razor-sharp knives of a cold-blooded killer. Its codename, "Scissors," referenced its large pincer claws.

GNASHER

The Gnasher is the first Behemoth that players see, so it was crucial to nail its look and feel. We based the Gnasher's appearance on the beaver—but far more ferocious and savage. Fueled by rage, the Gnasher throws temper tantrums when angered. Bright fur lines its back in a mohawk, huge webbed feet crush bone, and its tail can pulverize even the strongest armour.



PANGAR

Before the Pangar was even conceived, we knew we wanted a Behemoth that rolled across the battlefield, crushing everything in its path—in fact, the Pangar's code name was "McRollin" in those early phases. When it came time for the visual design we started with a rare mammal called a pangolin, drew inspiration from several other theropods, and then added a layer of frost and ice! While the Pangar was very large relative to Slayers, we considered it very important that it still be "in your face." This led to a posture that brings Slayers eye-to-eye with this savage, cold-hearted beast.

DAMAGE STATES

The Pangar allowed us to explore damage states for Behemoths. It featured a unique gameplay element where Slayers had to break aetheric ice from its plates before it gathered too much power. To reflect progress in the fight, we set out to create multiple damage states for the Pangar.

HELLION

Like the Skraev, the Hellion is an elemental variant of another Behemoth—the Pangar, in this case. Instead of ice, the Hellion harnesses the power of blaze aether. The scales on its back smoulder with heat, dripping dangerous lava pools across the battlefield, and its fiery rage can immolate the boldest Slayers without warning.

EMBERMANE

The Embermane was another early concept for us. The original version was blue in colour and slight of form, meant to be quick and agile like a cat, darting around picking off Slayers one at a time. As we needed another blaze Behemoth at the time, we coloured him orange and made its mane more reminiscent of flickering flames. The first in-game version was coming across too skinny and weak, so we beefed up its limbs, and started to refer to it as “swole-cat” around the studio.

QUILLSHOT

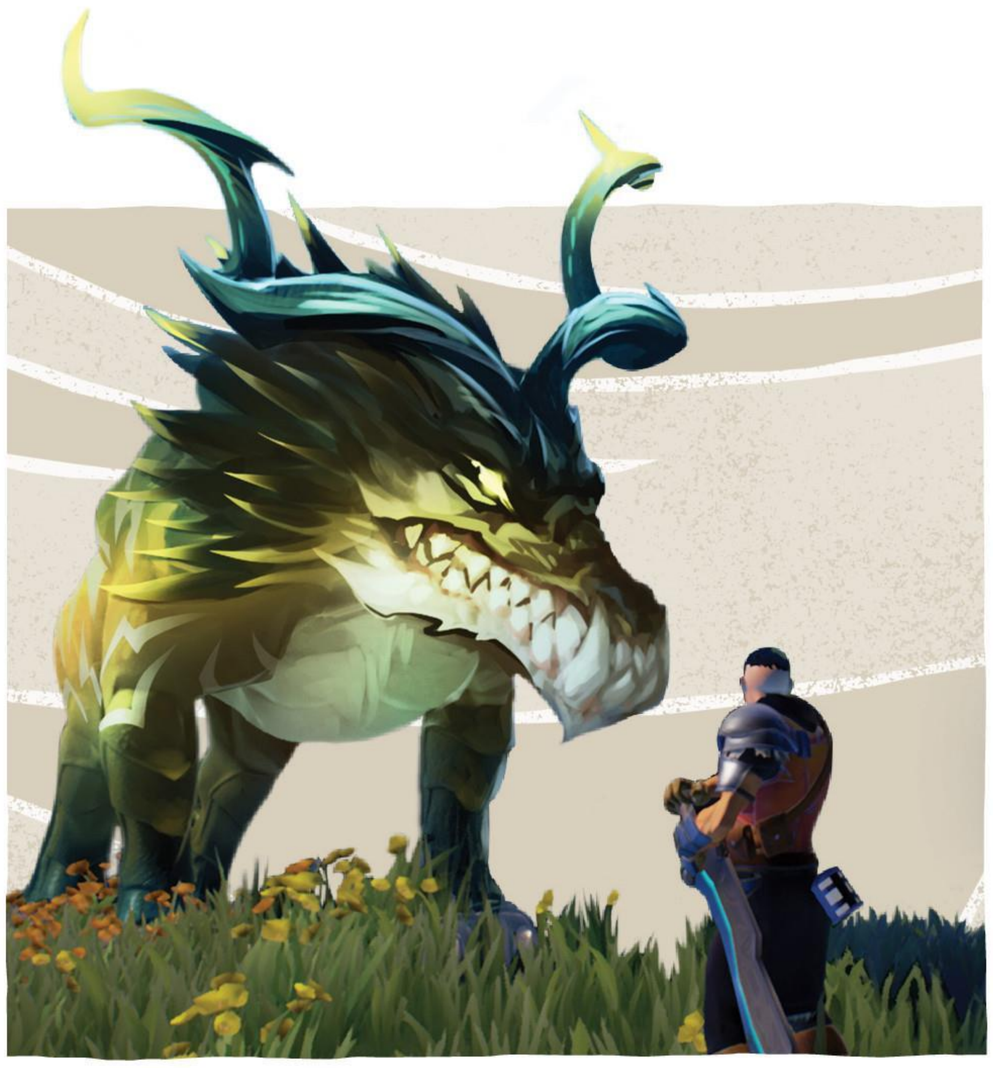
Who doesn't like porcupines? The Quillshot was born from a desire to create our first long-range Behemoth. Up to that point, we had only experimented with close combat. The Quillshot would prove that no hiding place was safe. We started with its spines and experimented with a variety of different body types. The idea of artillery fire had a lot of appeal to us so, with that in mind we settled on a larger, slower body type that would plant and unleash a barrage of spines.

DESIGN EXPLORATION

The Quillshot went through a variety of different body types, ranging from porcine to almost dragon-like.

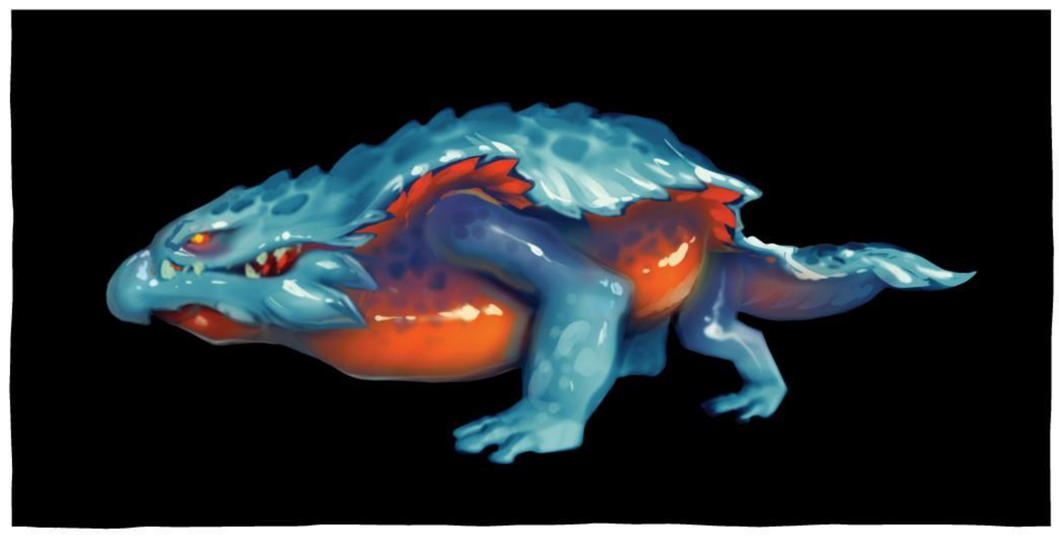
STORMCLAW

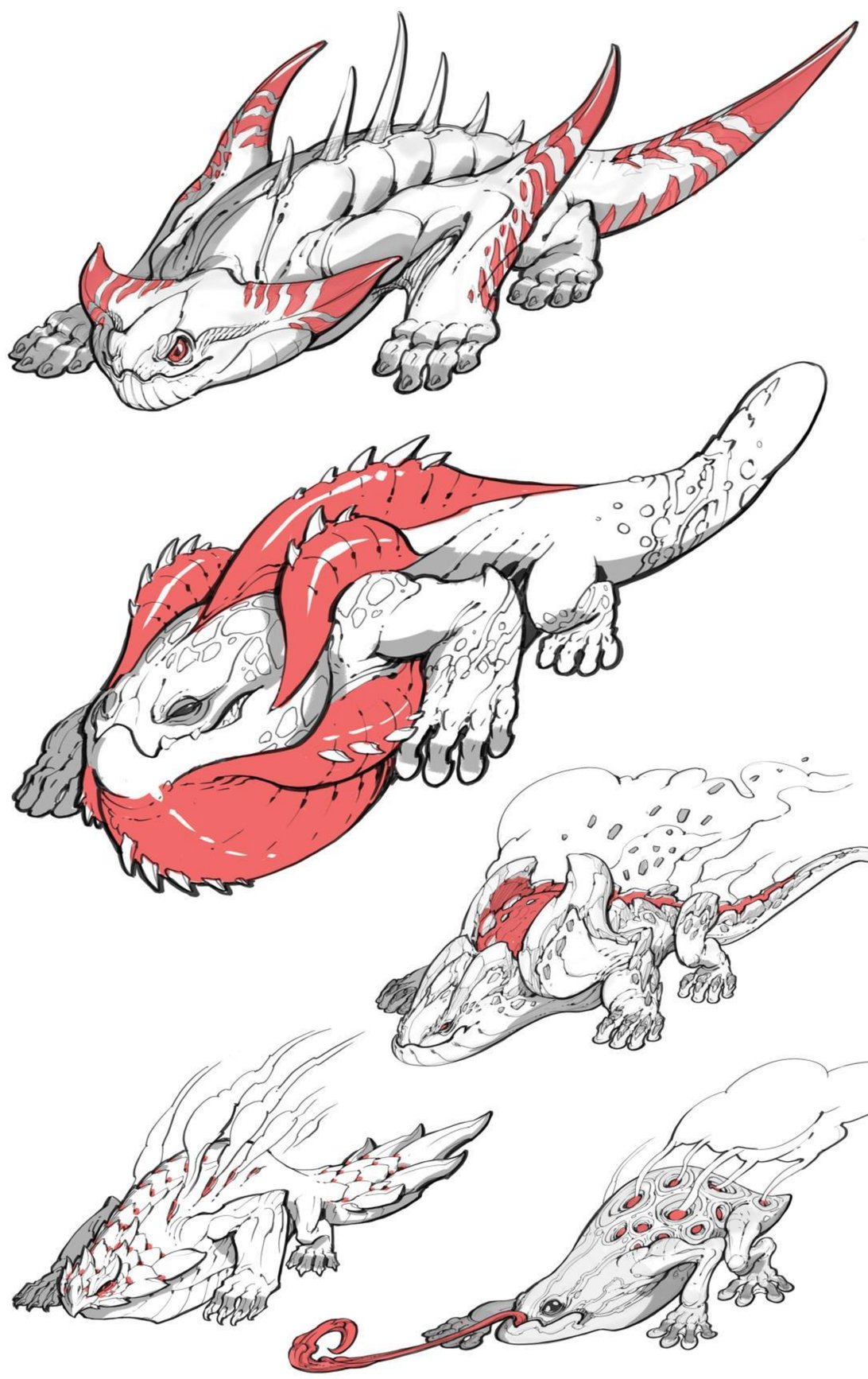
As we started experimenting with different Behemoth variants and elemental affiliations, we came up with a shock aether version of the Embermane—a "Shock-mane," as we initially called it. The Stormclaw boasts an impressive crown of electrified horns. Crafting an organic look for the electrical coils was a challenge, but we finally found a good balance. It's these horns that enable the Stormclaw to bend shock aether to its will.



NAYZAGA

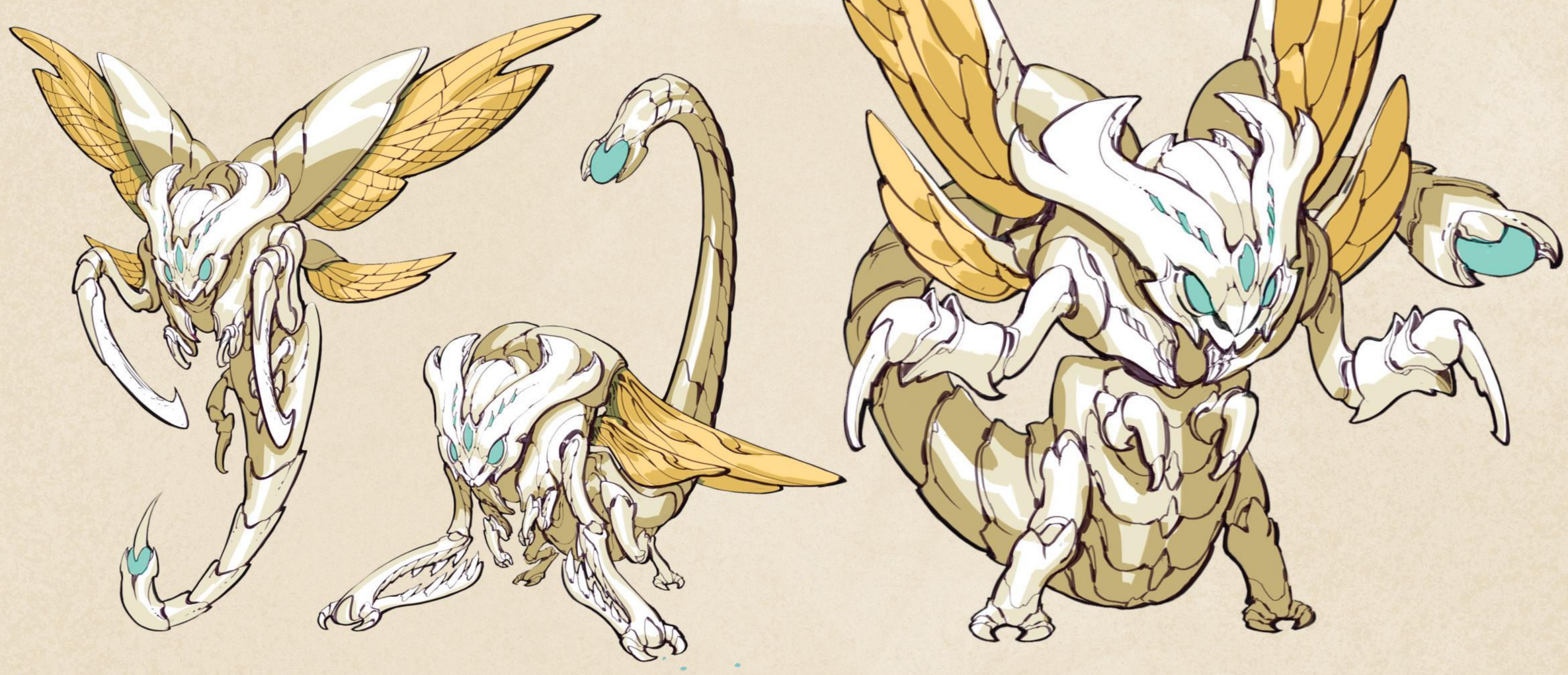
After developing the Quillshot, our design team had a question: “What if the Quillshot’s quills were lightning rods?” Meet the Nayzaga. This Behemoth became a great opportunity to push the Quillshot’s visual design into creepier territory while maintaining some of its core features. More reptilian in nature than its counterpart, the Nayzaga’s profile is defined by its hollow eyes, crocodilian head, and slithering serpentine movement.

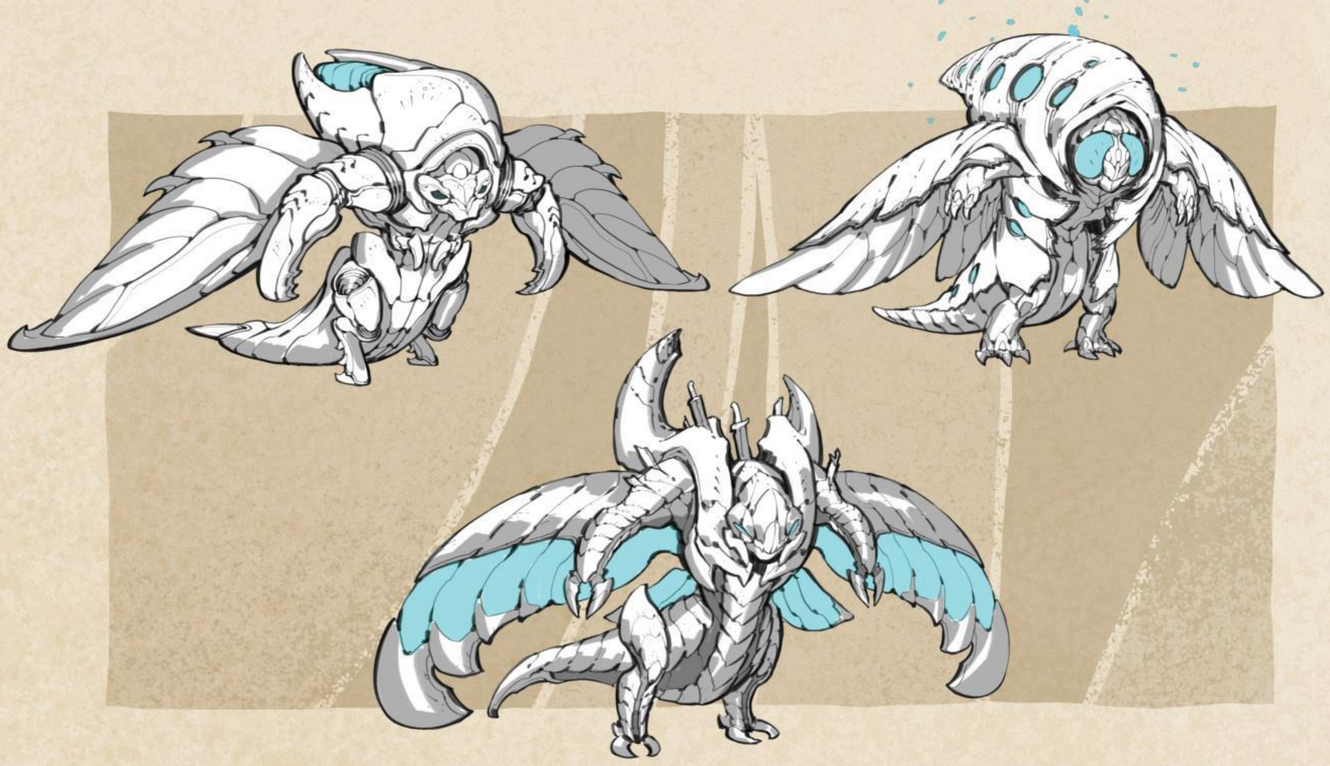




CHARROGG

The Charrogg began with the idea of a fire-belching amphibian, complete with sacs of incendiary fuel. Originally called “Sally” (from “salamander”), the Charrogg took shape as a lumbering goliath—one capable of puffing up its sacs and belching jets of fire at everything around it.





REZAKIRI

The Rezakiri was the first insectoid Behemoth we developed and was also our first radiant Behemoth. Bright lights, luminescence, and translucent wings define this beast. Radiant aether is essentially hard light so we wanted Rezakiri to feel futuristic, almost mecha-like. We also wanted Rezakiri to be the first primarily airborne Behemoth, which meant dialing down its body mass and shifting the focus to its thorax and tail.

SHROWD

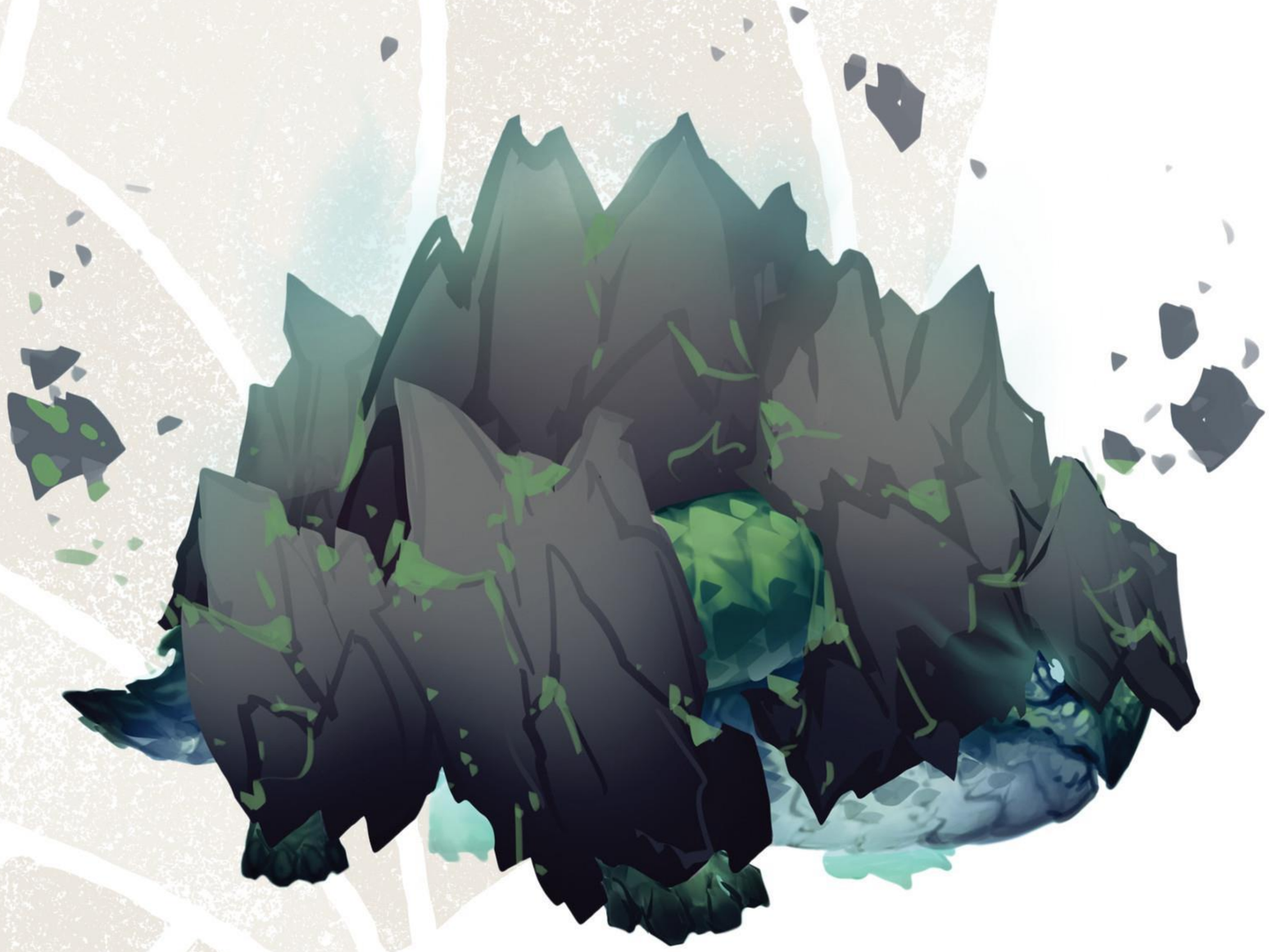
The Shrowd is the yin to the Rezakiri's yang. Dark, mysterious, and shadowy, the Shrowd wields a type of energy known as umbral aether. The Shrowd represented a chance to see how far we could push the Shattered Isles into the realm of nightmares. Instead of facing you head-on, the Shrowd sticks to the shadows, striking out from the dark with otherworldly attacks. This assassin-like behavior inspired its current "shrouded" appearance.

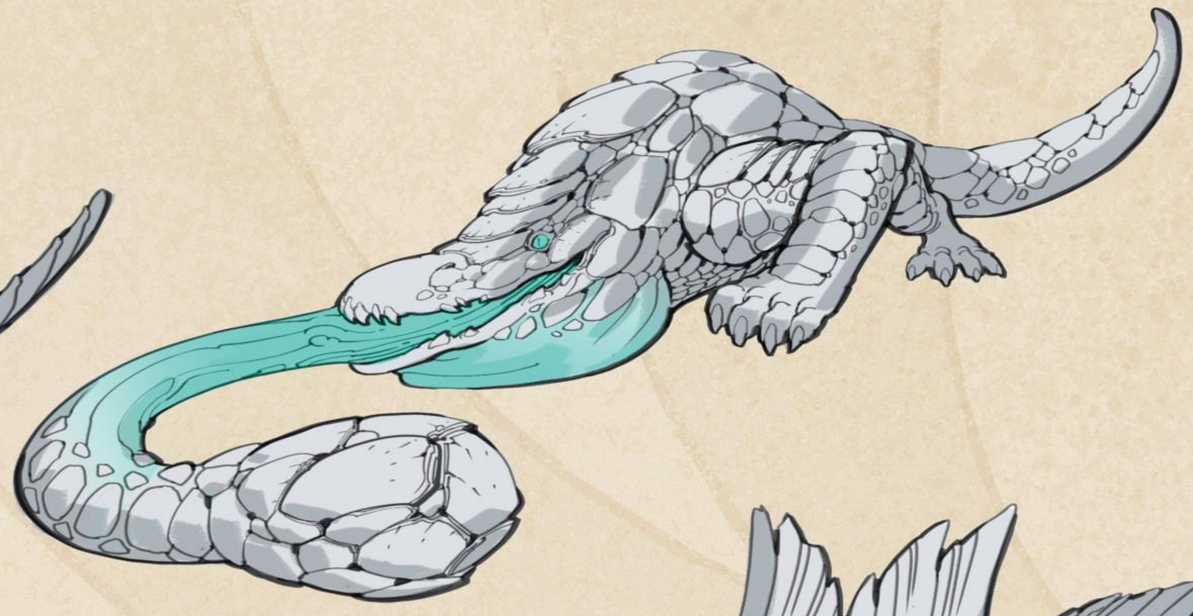
UMBRAL AETHER

One of the many types of aether found throughout the Shattered Isles, umbral aether is yet to be fully understood. It is mysterious, inky, and brimming with dark power.

SKARN

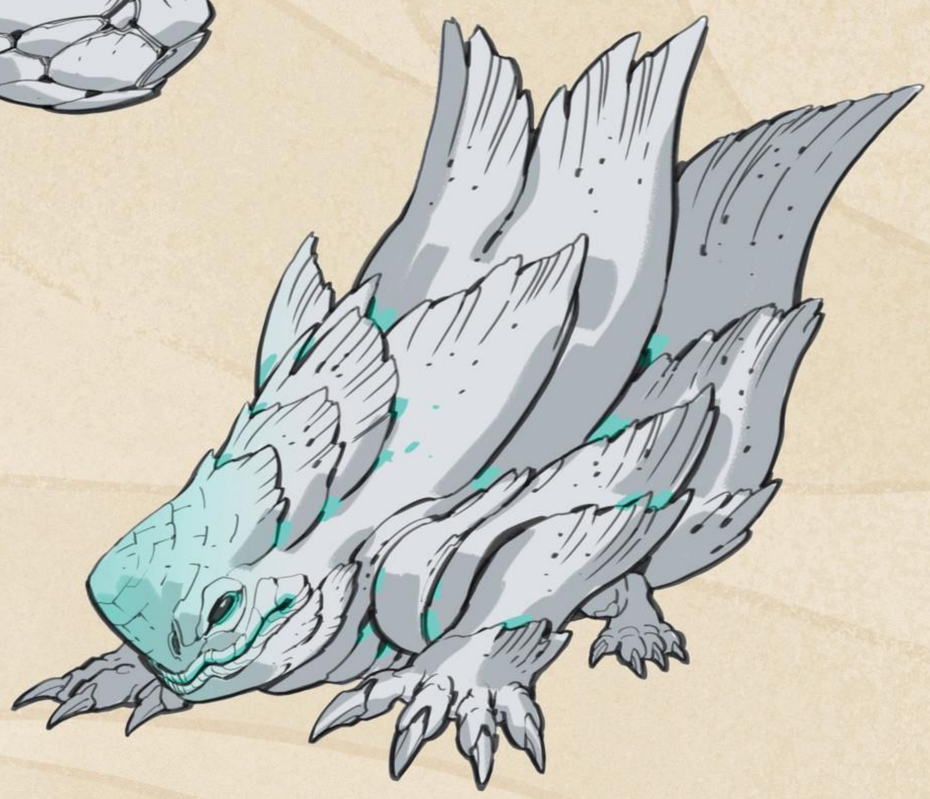
With the Skarn, we wanted to hit a combination of thick armour plating and reptilian scales. The Skarn's hide is scaly like a lizard's, but it uses aether to surround and protect itself with a makeshift "suit" of stone armour. This opened new opportunities for this Behemoth's combat design too, as any Slayer who has been caught up in a swirling "Skarnicane" of stones and boulders will tell you.

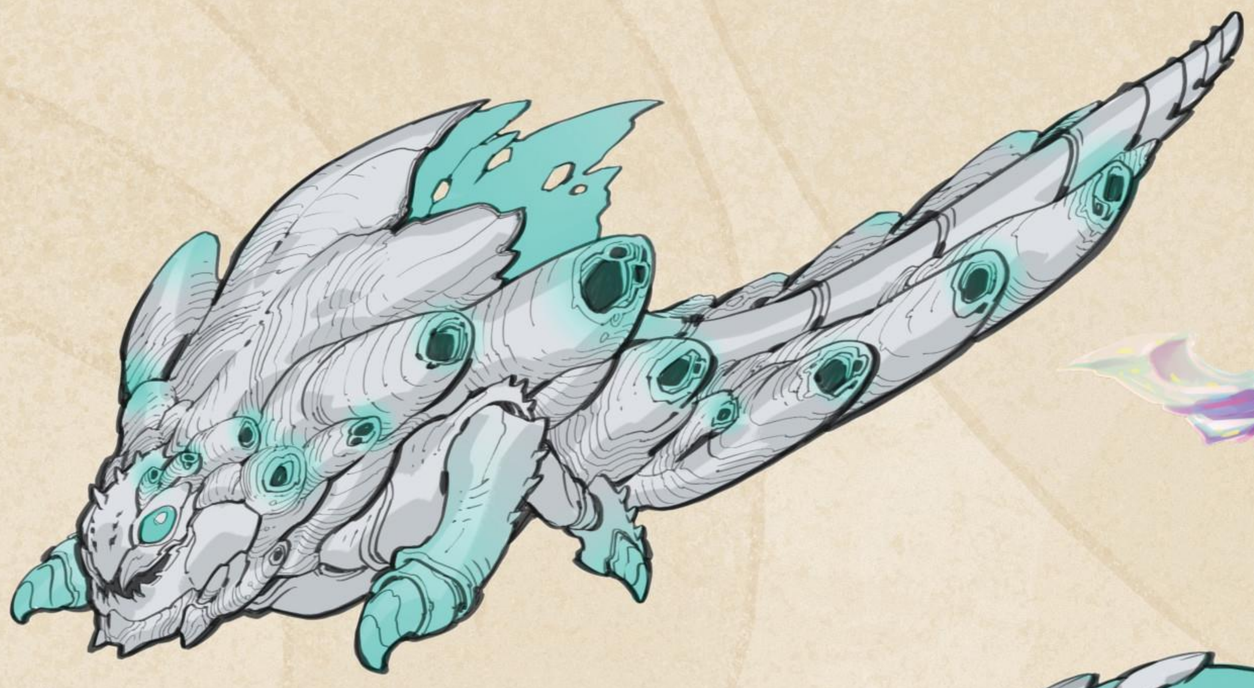




SKETCHES

The Skarn began as a creature of living stone. Since this "rock golem" approach didn't fit within the plausibility constraints we'd set for our Behemoths, we instead opted for a version that would use aether to manipulate earth and stone.



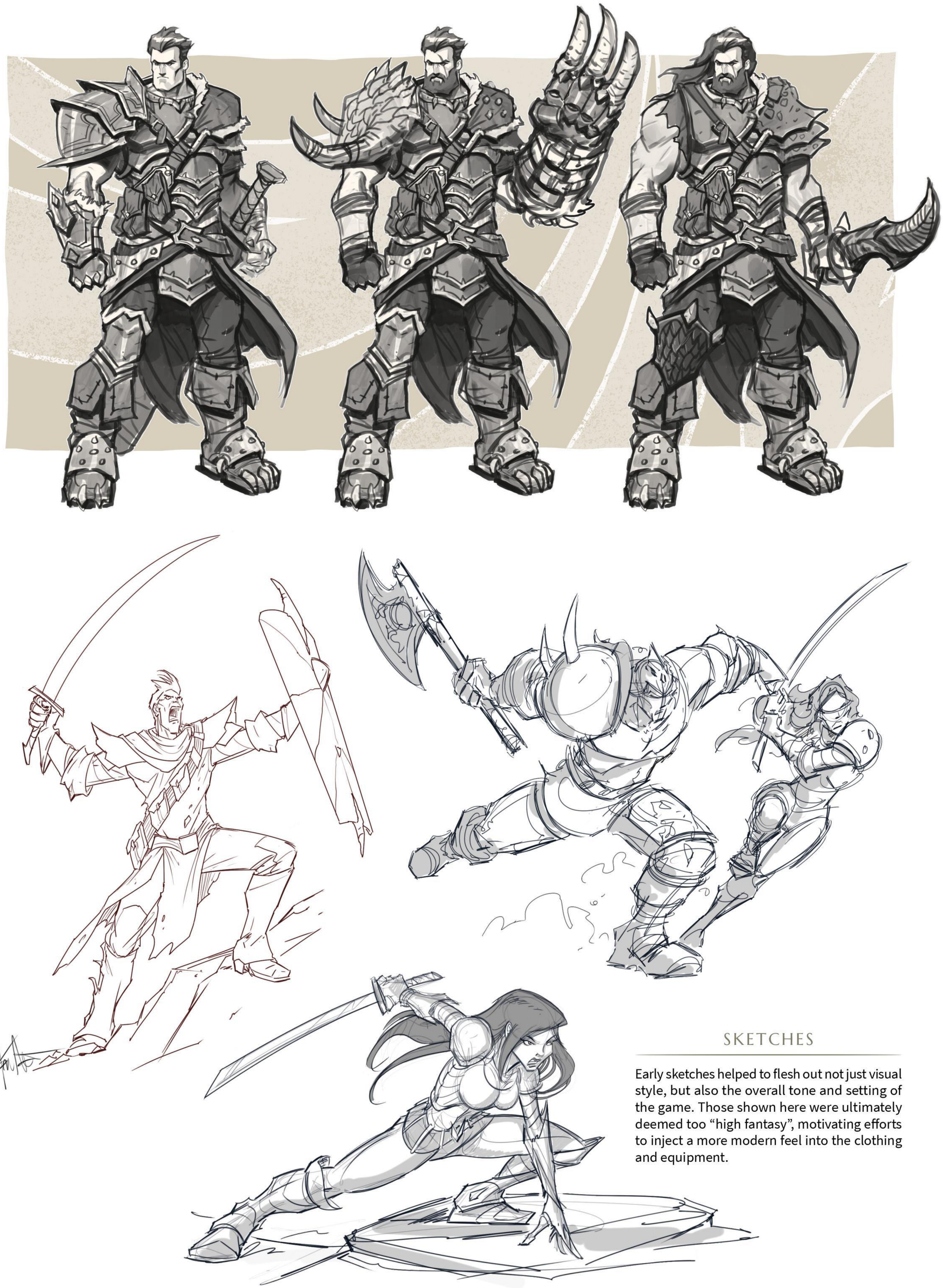


CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERS

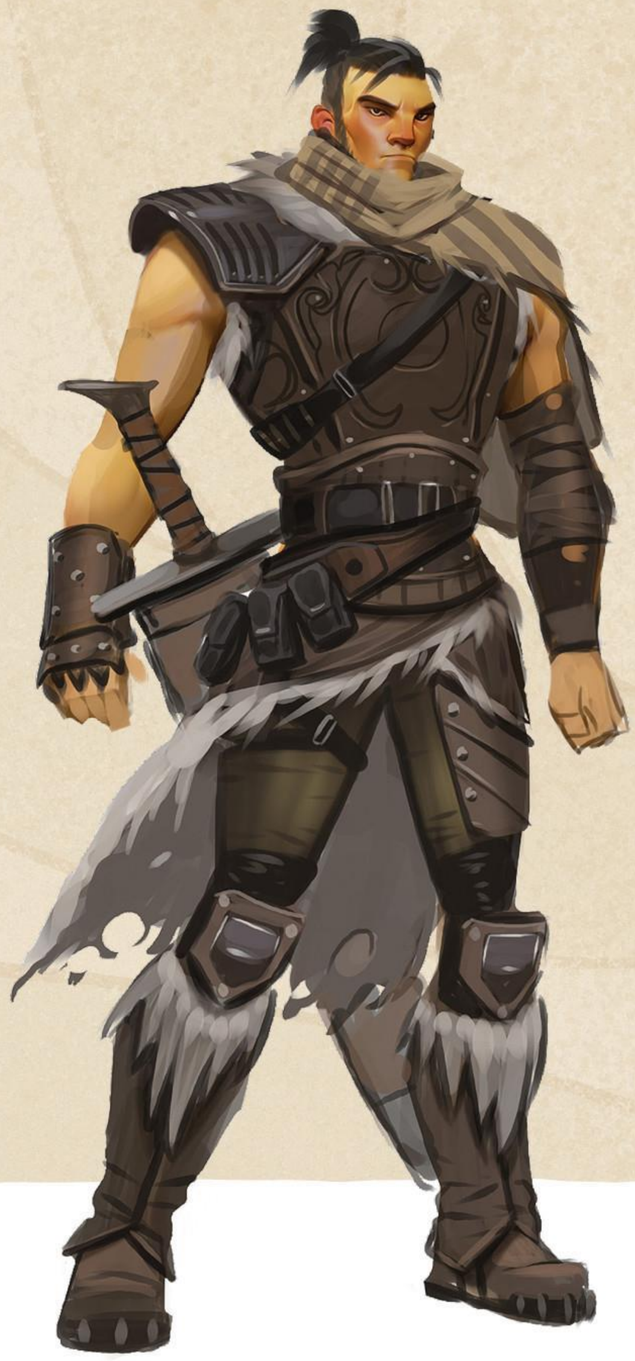
PLAYER CHARACTER

Dauntless is all about forging your legend. That's why it was so important to us that players be empowered to live out their story, customize their appearance and armour, and play the way they wanted to. While all Slayers are gritty warriors in battle, each one has a unique story to tell.



SKETCHES

Early sketches helped to flesh out not just visual style, but also the overall tone and setting of the game. Those shown here were ultimately deemed too “high fantasy”, motivating efforts to inject a more modern feel into the clothing and equipment.



HEAD STUDIES

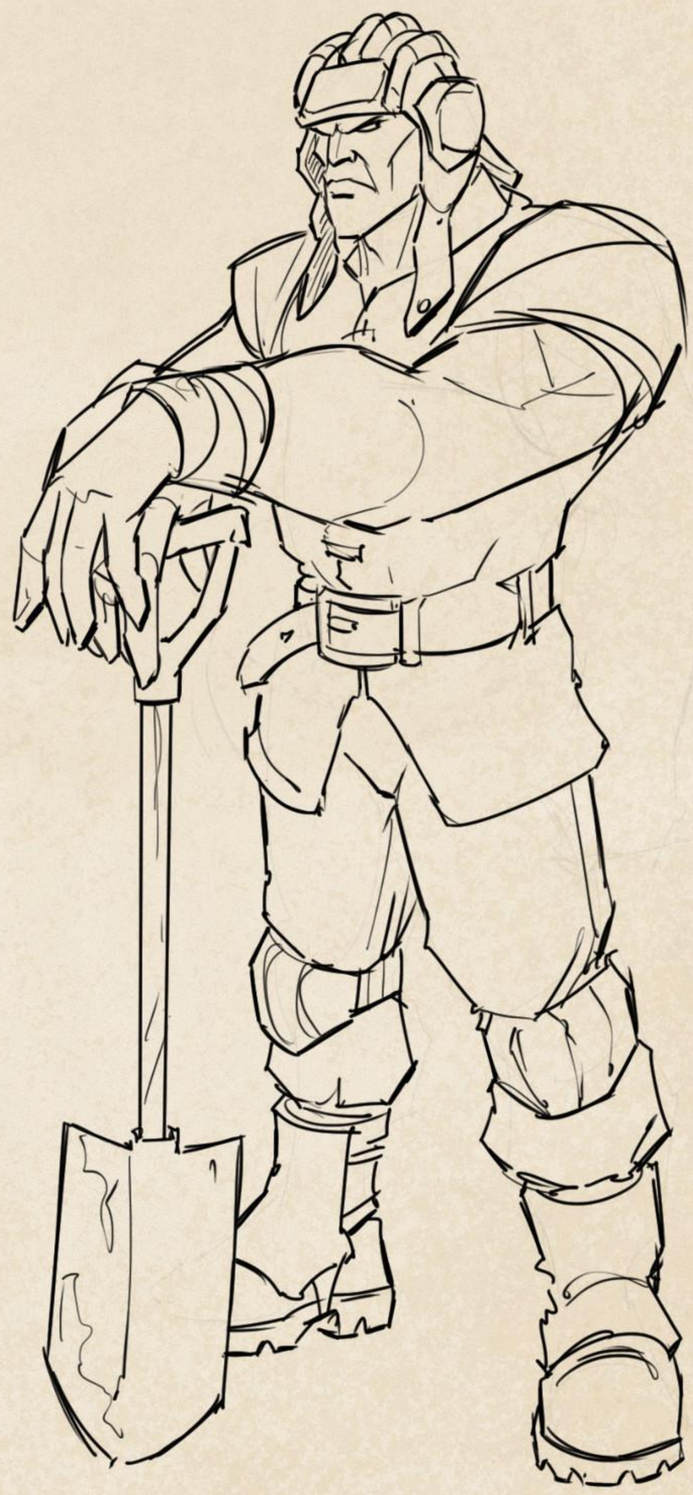
The sculpting style of *Dauntless* characters relies on chiseled surfaces that create hard-edged but easily readable shading. This approach posed challenges for the facial customization system, requiring creased lines to be thoughtfully placed so as to not lose their sculptural look when blending different ancestry heads. Female and youthful faces were a difficult target initially, until we determined which parts of the face could be made more chiseled without sacrificing softness or femininity.

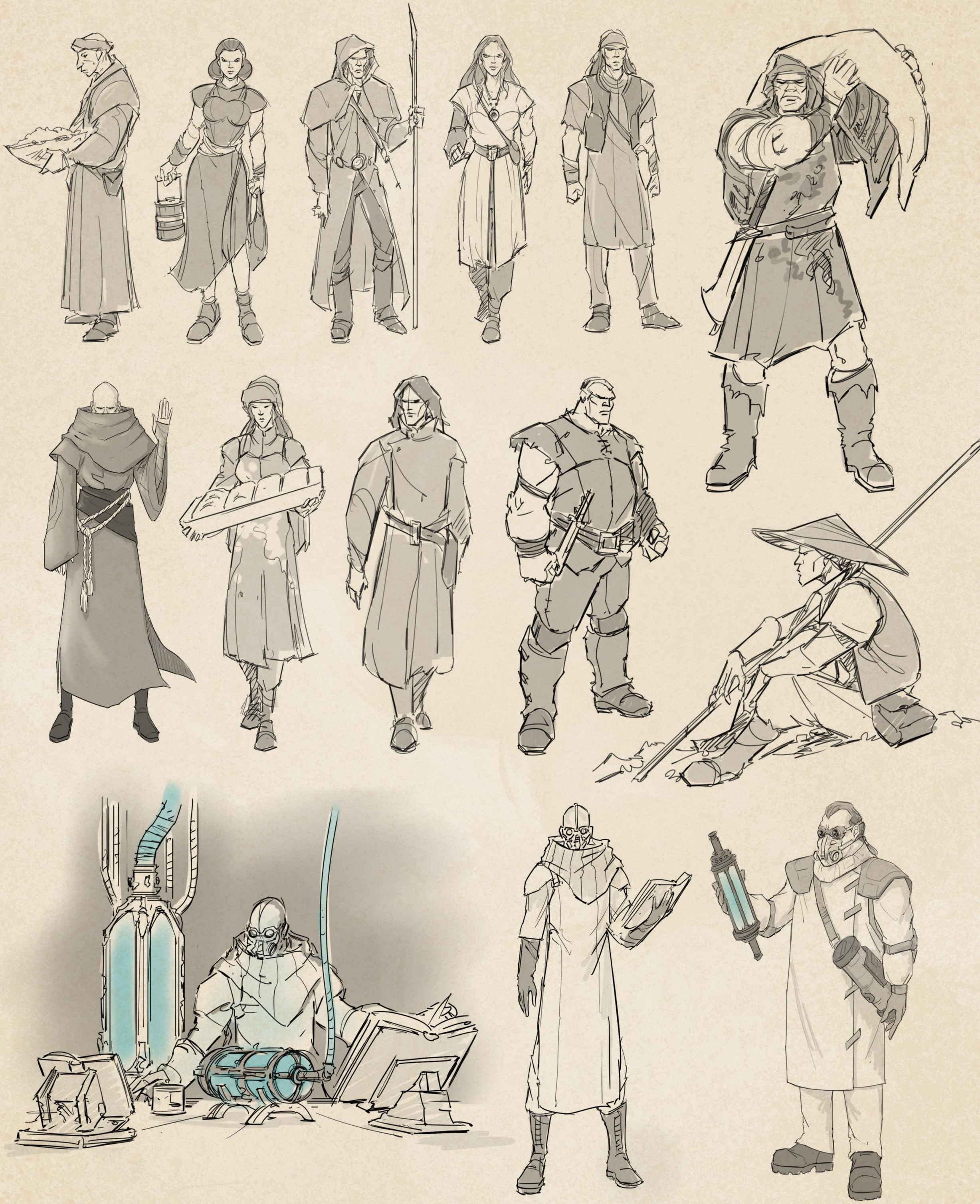
SPECIAL HAIRSTYLES AND MAKEUP

A key part of a Slayer's personal aesthetic is their choice of hair, makeup, and other facial features. We wanted to launch the game with a strong variety of distinct hairstyles and makeup looks which, when combined with the detailed facial feature editor, would allow every player to create a look of their very own.

EARLY NPC SKETCHES

Long before the current denizens of Ramsgate were complete, we knew the world of the Shattered Isles would be populated by more than Slayers. While none of these specific designs appear in the current game as they are shown here, the careful thought put into their costume elements, tools, and technology survived to inform armour sets and transmog sets to this day.





THE BOSUN

A skilled airship sailor (and talented amateur alchemist specializing in combat tonics), Bosun Markus Boehr pilots the player's airship from Ramsgate into the Shattered Isles. While Kat trains players in the Slayers' arts, Markus ensures they're ready for everything else.

THE AETHERSMITH

Arkan Drew joined the scholars of the Orrery to escape what he saw at the time as a life of boredom in St. Avellaine. Now he studies the aether currents themselves and forges their energies into powerful lanterns for the Slayers of Ramsgate as the resident aethersmith.

THE CARTOGRAPHER

Cartographer Gaius Copperwheel is a genius with little practical understanding of people and society, though he does have an abiding love of the world and its wonders. Quick and perceptive but lacking wisdom, he is a naturally inquisitive character that delights in observing and understanding the world around him.

THE STYLIST

Stylist Gregario Flynt is the most fashionable man in Ramsgate. Saturated in elegance and sophistication, he's the ultimate arbiter of taste, but is never arrogant or dismissive. Rather, he simply knows that he knows what looks best, and if others don't agree, that is their loss.

THE MENTOR

A legendary Slayer and airship captain, Katerin "Kat" Sorrel is the premier trainer of new Slayer recruits in Ramsgate. She's also the proprietor of the Broken Blade, the central tavern in the city. Get to know her and she'll reveal a droll sense of gallows humour—and the secrets to being a great Slayer.

THE FARSLAYER

The sole survivor of an airship crash that ended her childhood, Xelya grew up a feral hunter on the fringes of the Shattered Isles. Relying solely on her instincts and natural skill, she became a Farslayer—hunting the rarest Behemoths across the most dangerous skies.

THE WEAPONSMITH

Wils Bormen is the Ostian proprietor of the finest weapon smithy in Ramsgate. Proud of his heritage and the techniques of his home islands, he is always pleased to share some Ostian wisdom while forging deadly tools for every Slayer.

THE ARMOURSMITH

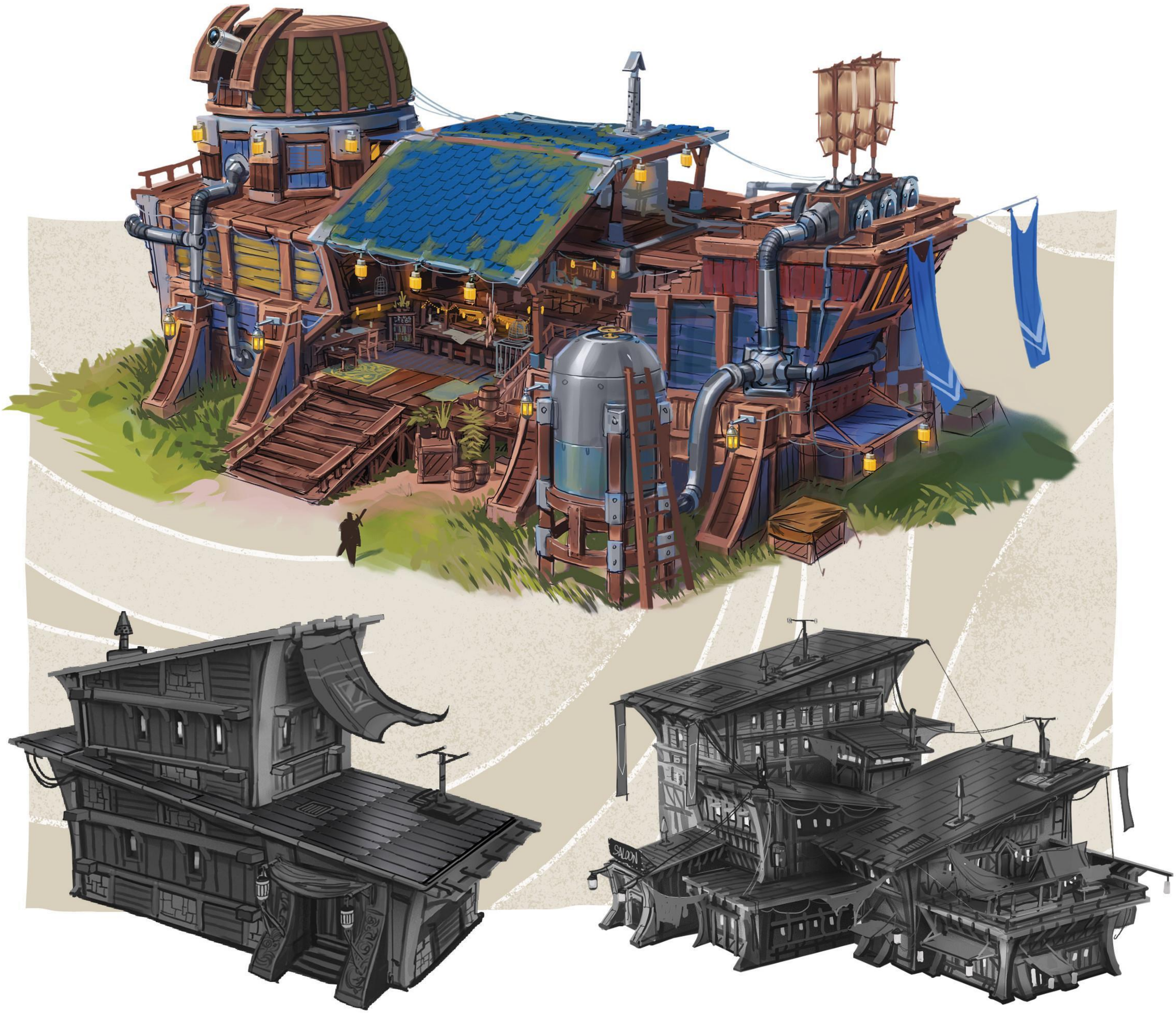
Moyra's mother, Varya, let her start helping out in the smithy when she was only five years old, and eventually she took over the Heigsketter smithy when Varya passed away. Her workshop in Ramsgate is usually filled with new creations in various stages of progress.

CHAPTER 3

RAMSGATE

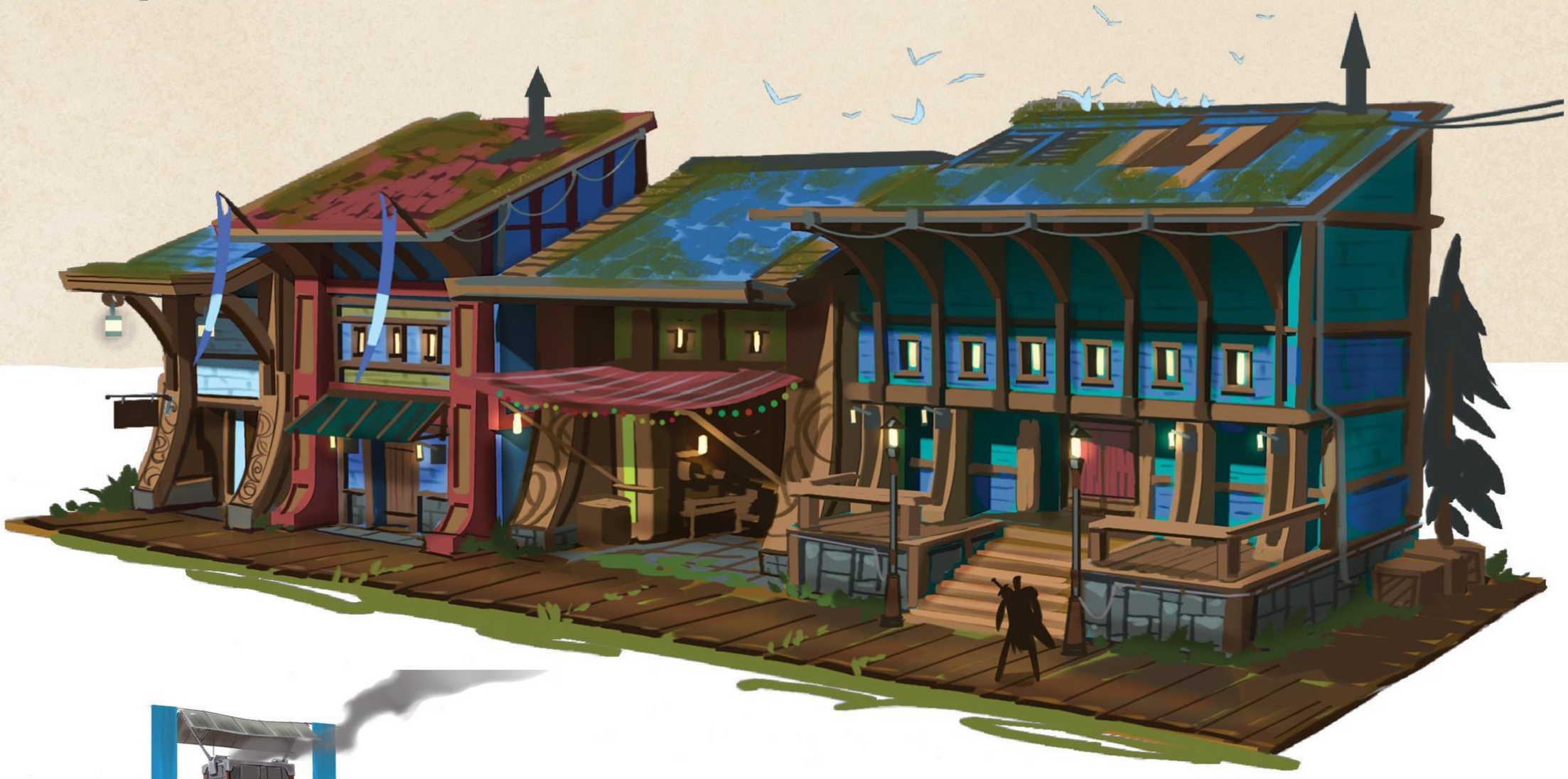
SAFE HARBOUR

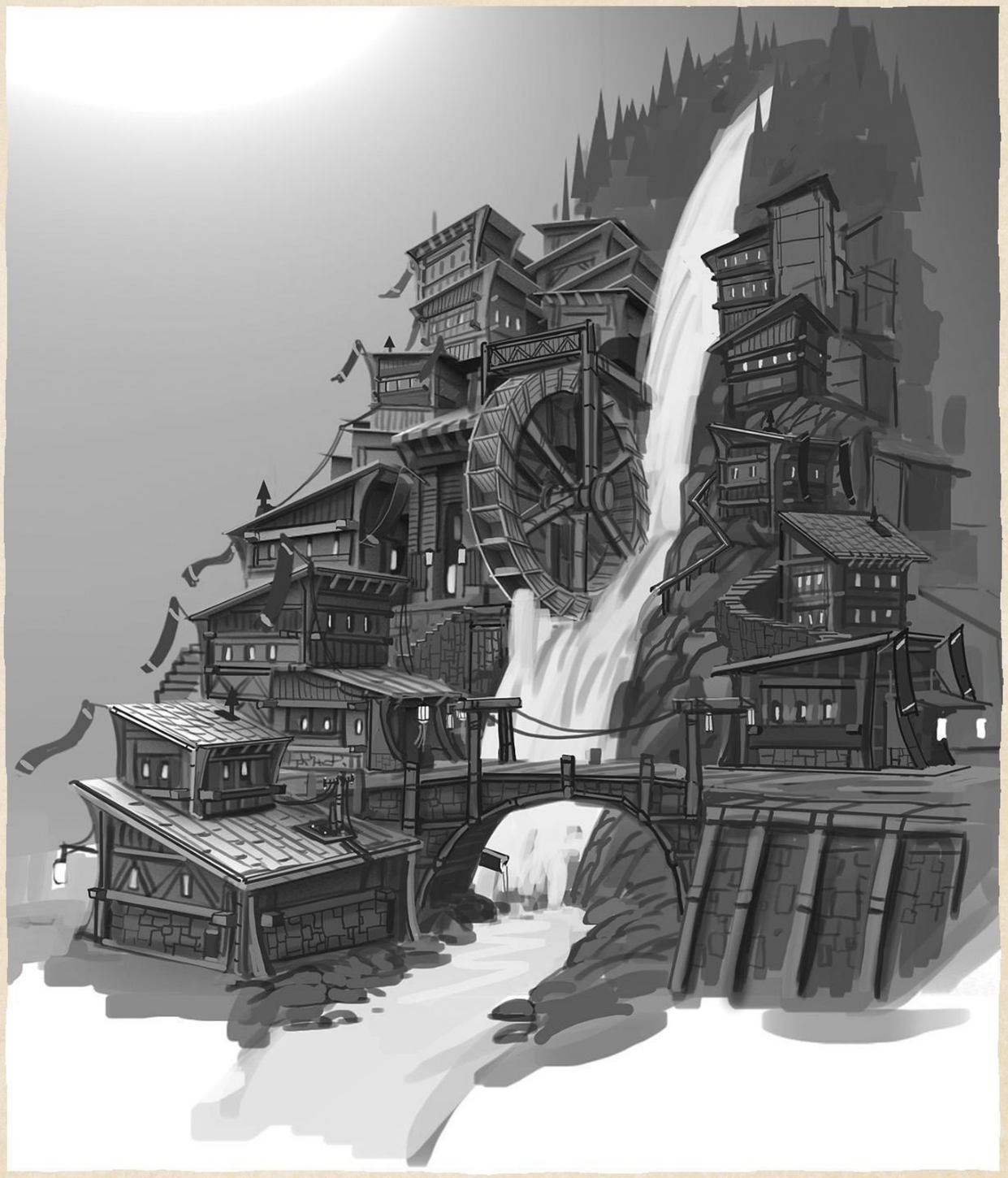
Nestled in a rocky cove, Ramsgate is a haven from the hostile skies. Even when viewed from a distance, the city's defining themes of wind and open skies are evident; they're conveyed through flapping flags and banners, narrow docks that extend toward floating offshore landmasses, and waterfalls descending into the misty sky below.

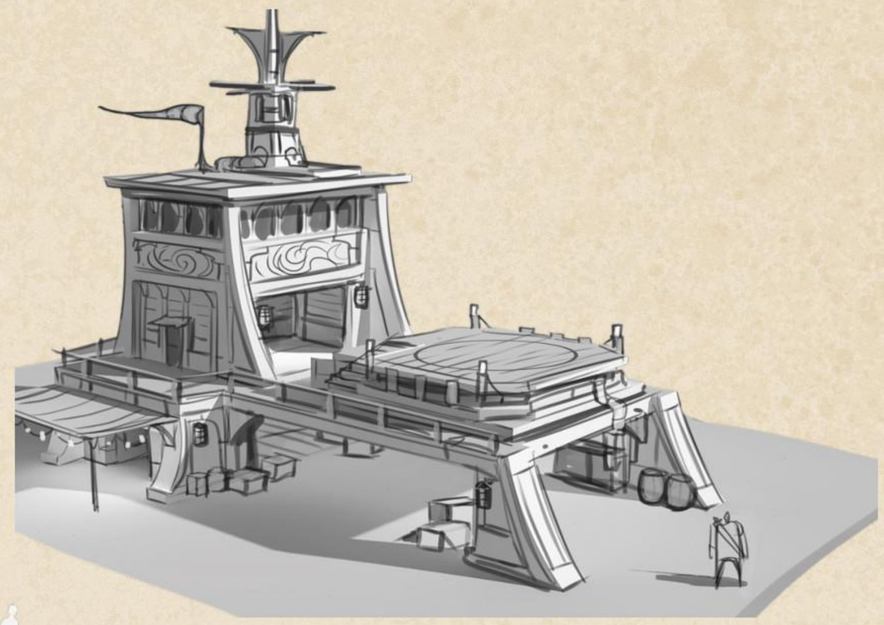

SALOON

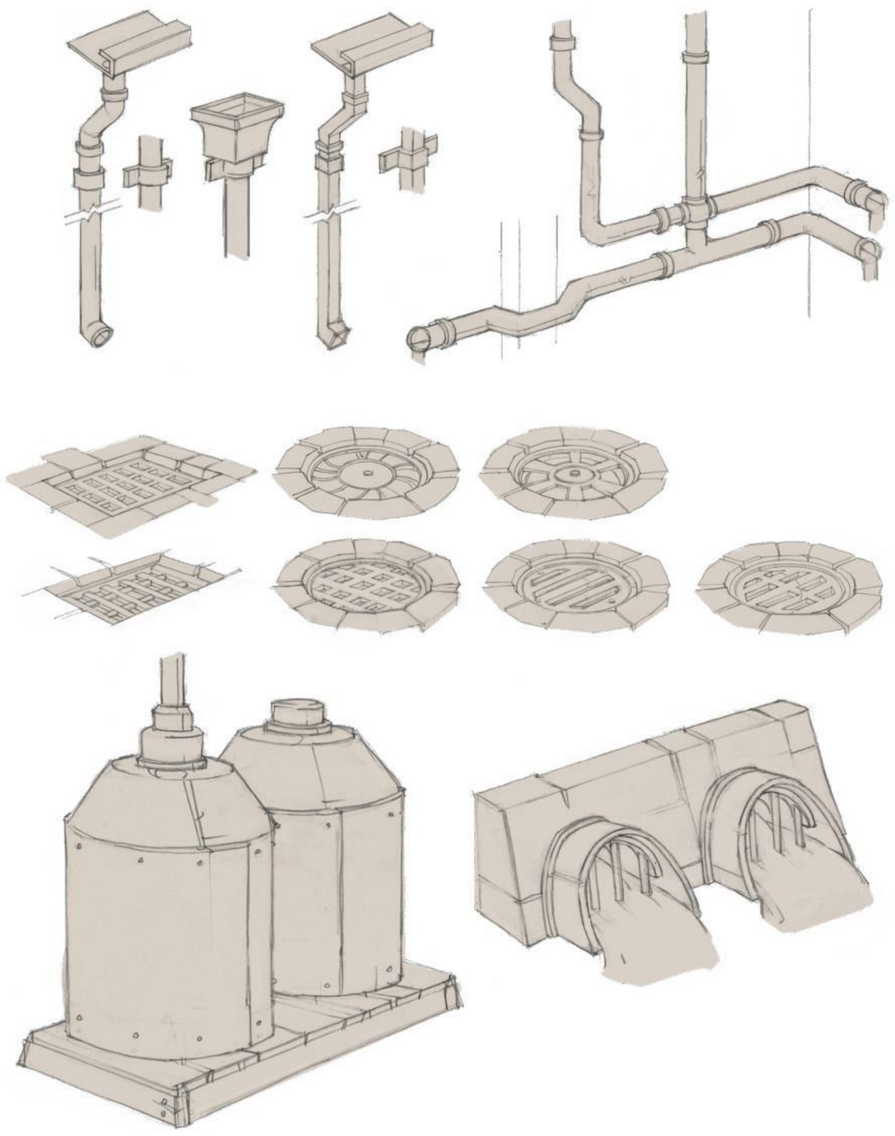
ARCHITECTURE

We invested a great deal of effort into defining the core architectural style of Ramsgate, taking into account the climate, available materials, and technology level to create the city's look. This uniquely identifiable design for a basic building (above)—one that was neither medieval cottage nor modern home—became the seed that grew into every building and architectural element seen in Ramsgate today.



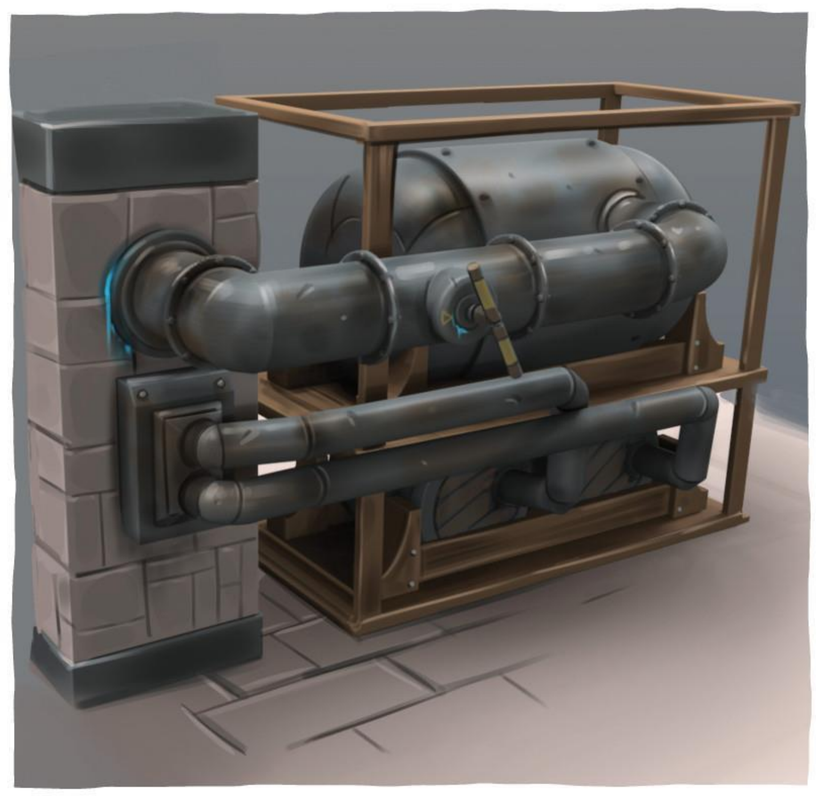






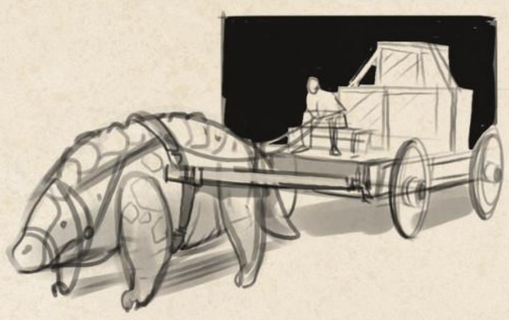
MODERN DESIGN ELEMENTS

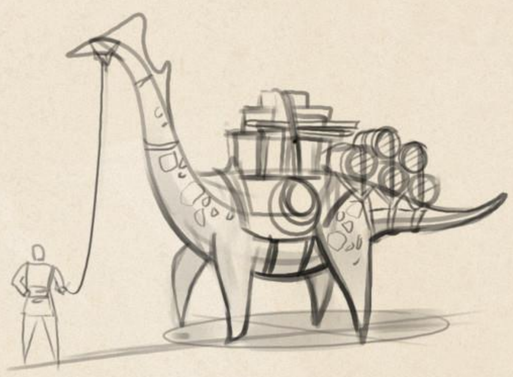
As the city took shape, it started to look more and more like a medieval fantasy village instead of a science-fantasy pioneer settlement. We chose to add modern elements—a hydroelectric water wheel, electric lights, power cables, drainage systems, and aether tanks—to pull the setting forward in time.

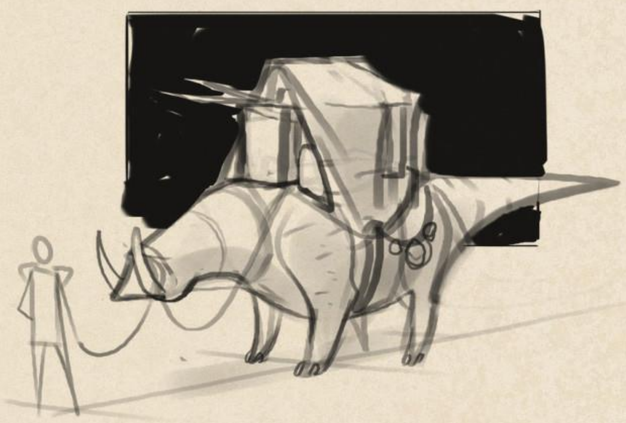


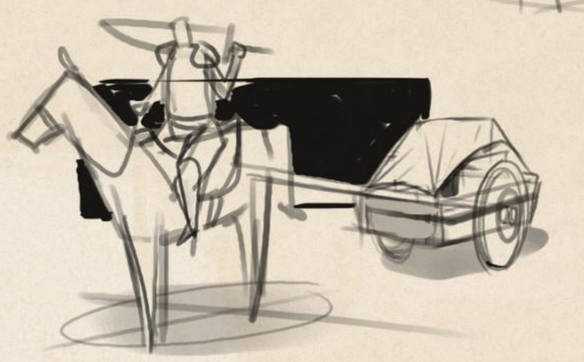
HEIGSKETTER SMITHY

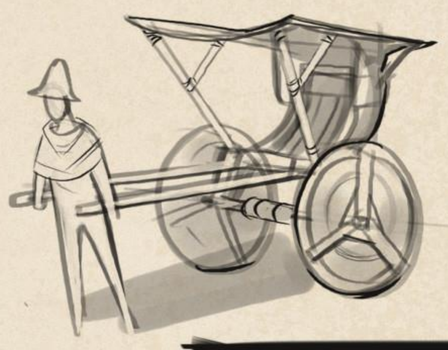
The armoursmith's shop was designed to be accessible from all sides, allowing multiple players to use it at once. Here Moyra Heigsketter imbues her armour with otherworldly strength and abilities, thanks to the harvested aetheric power of slain Behemoths.

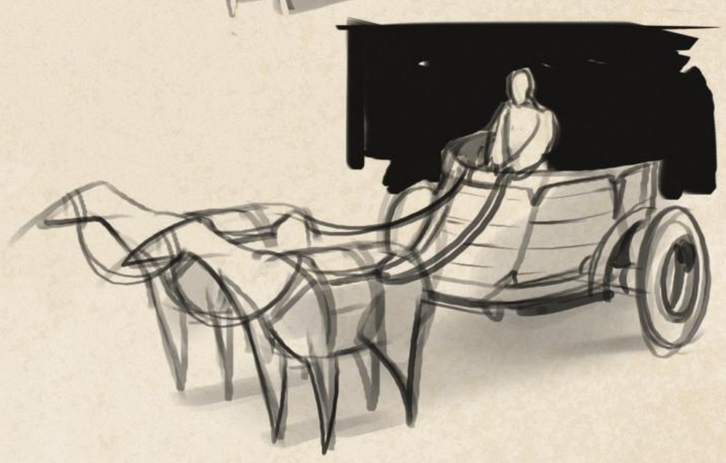


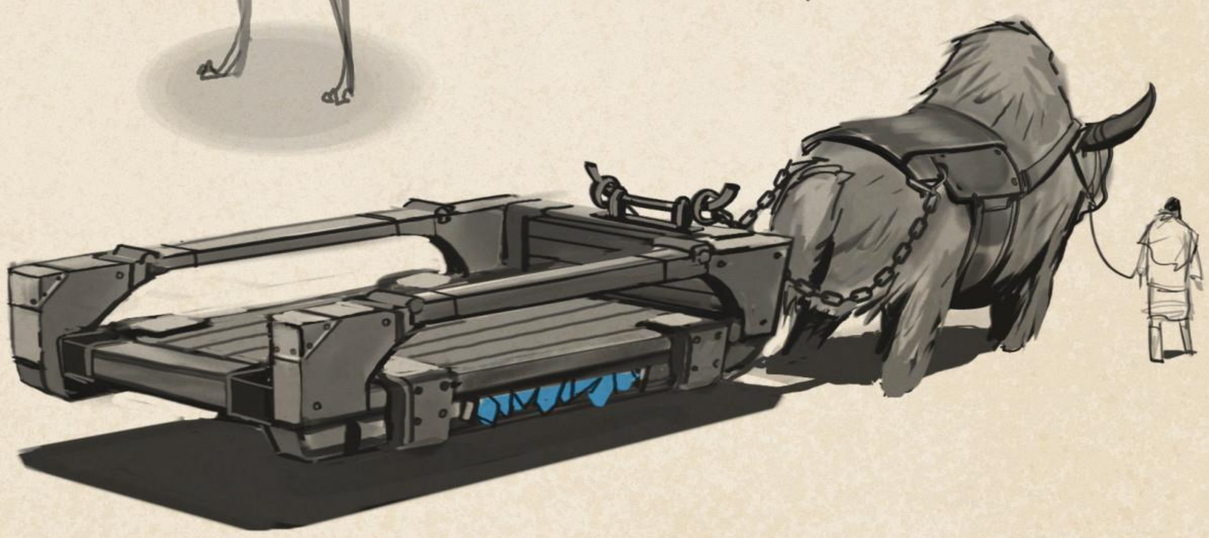






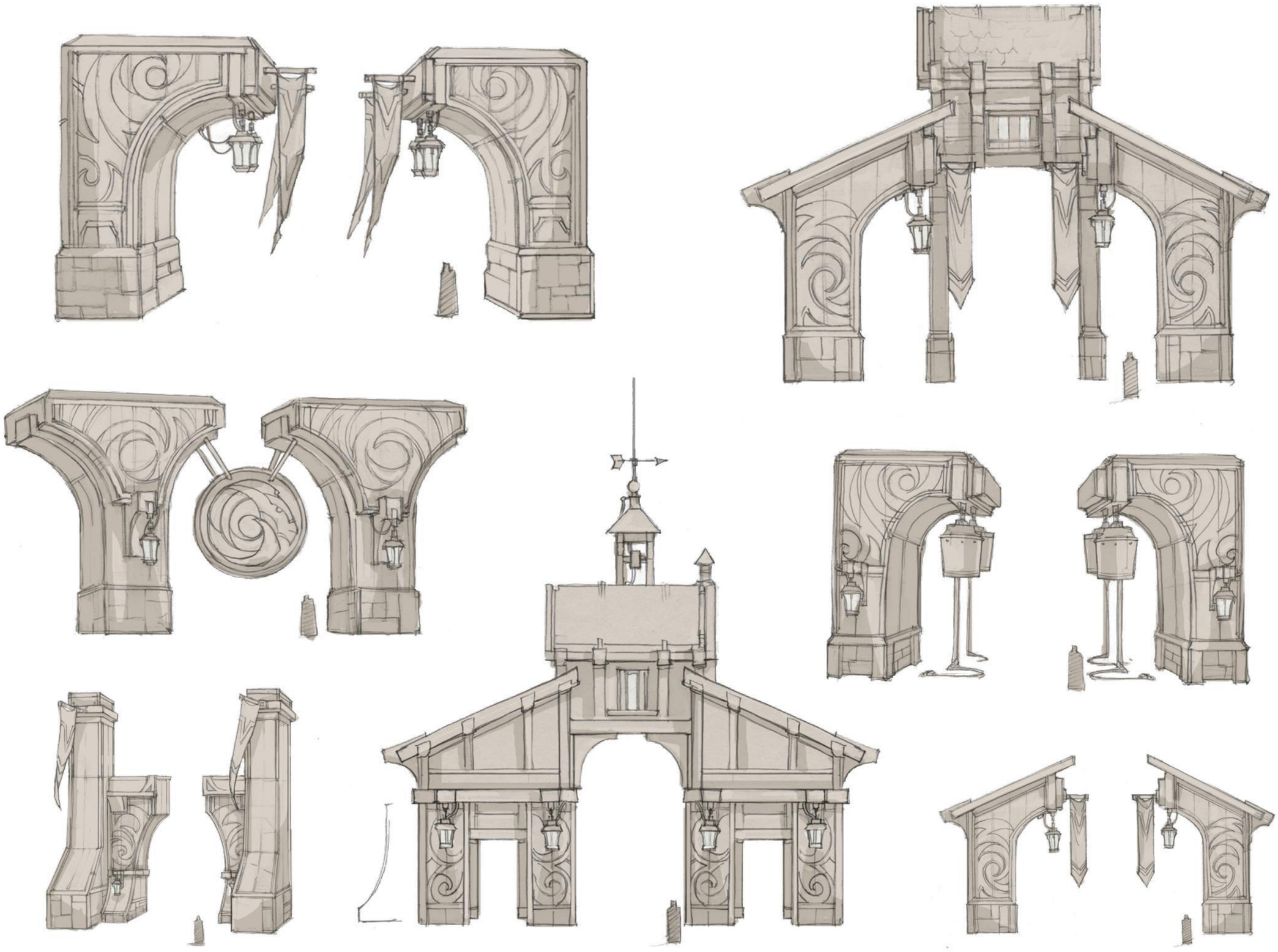


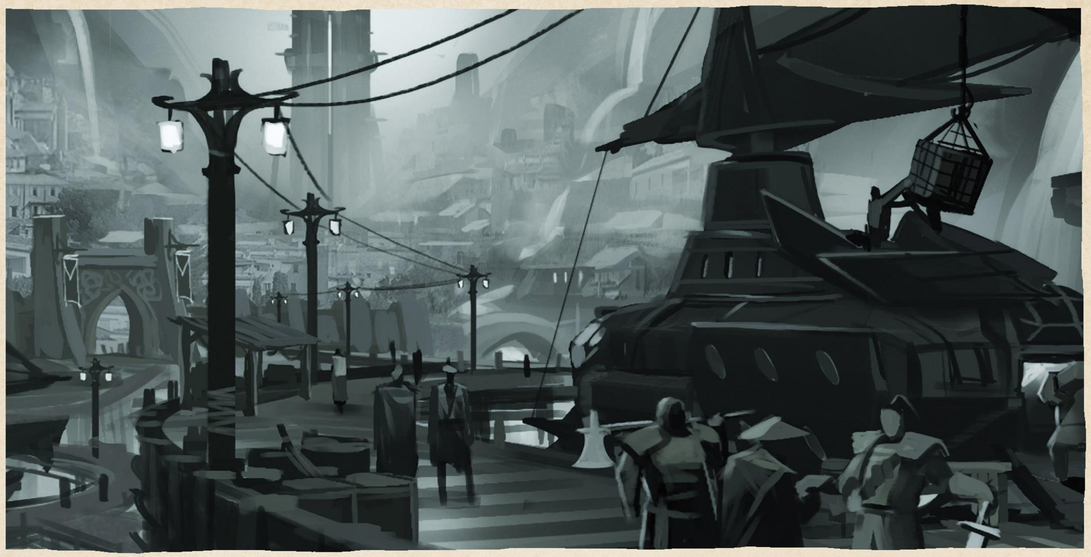


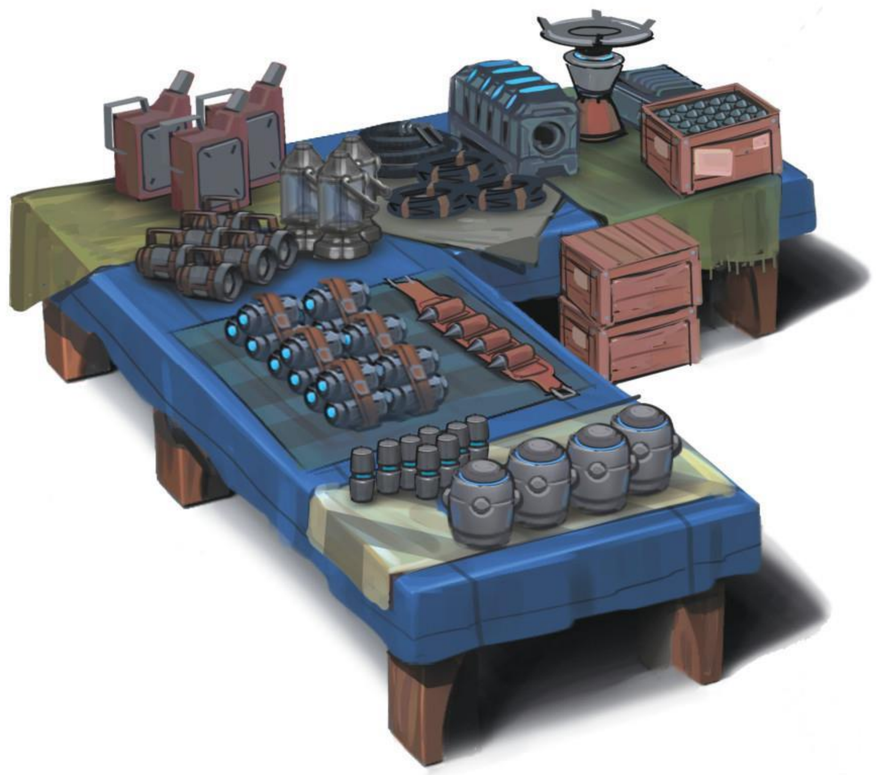


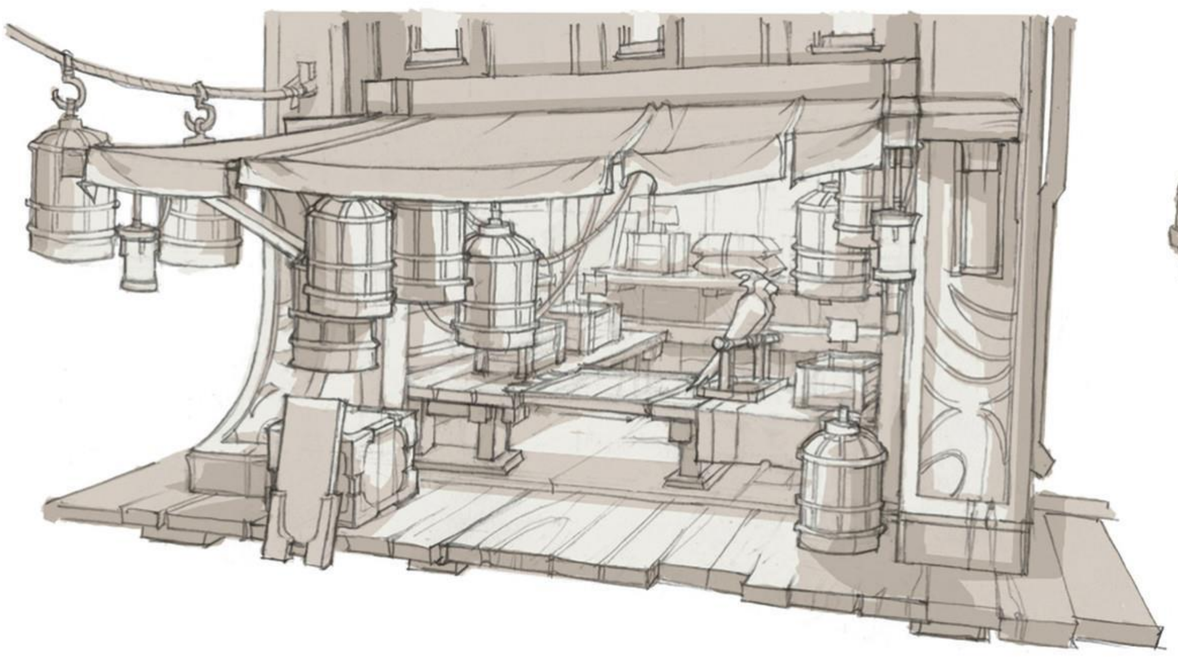
CITY LIFE

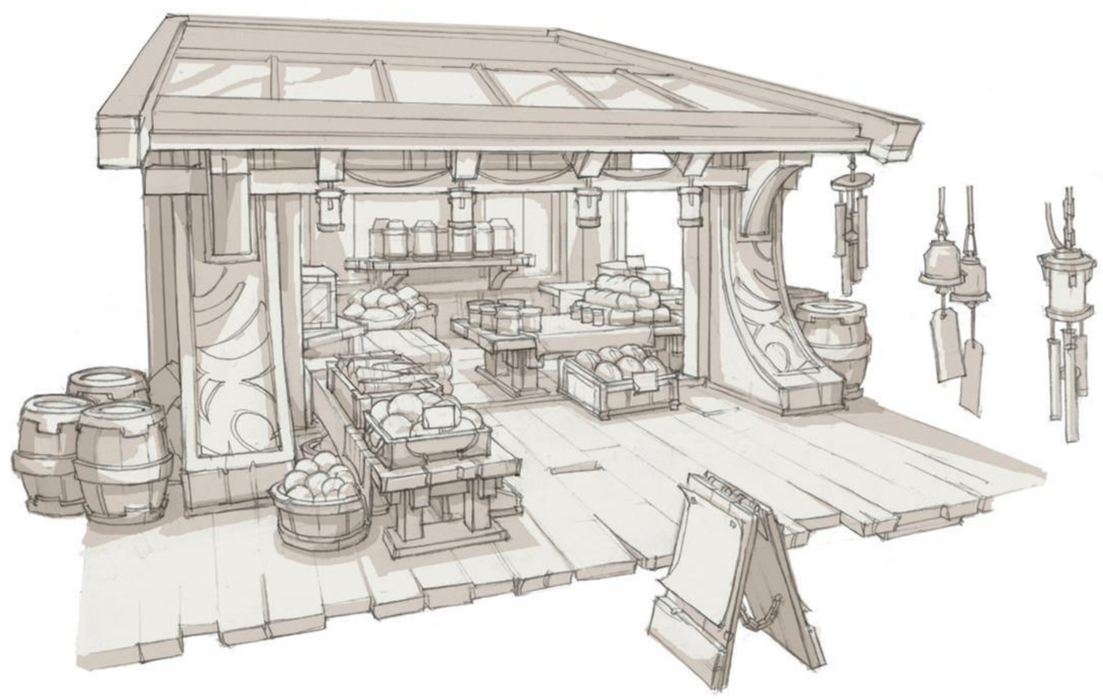
Ramsgate is a thriving port town on the move. After extensive experimentation with all manner of beasts of burden, carts, and floating aether platforms to help flesh out the daily life of the city, we settled on our town mascot: the eponymous pack ram of Ramsgate.

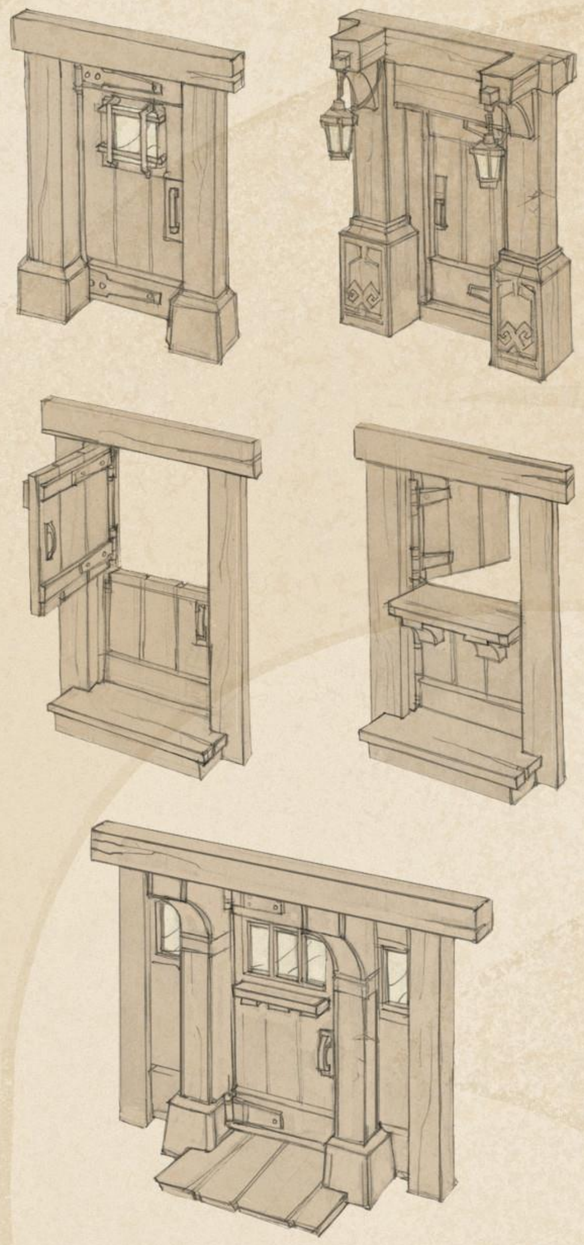






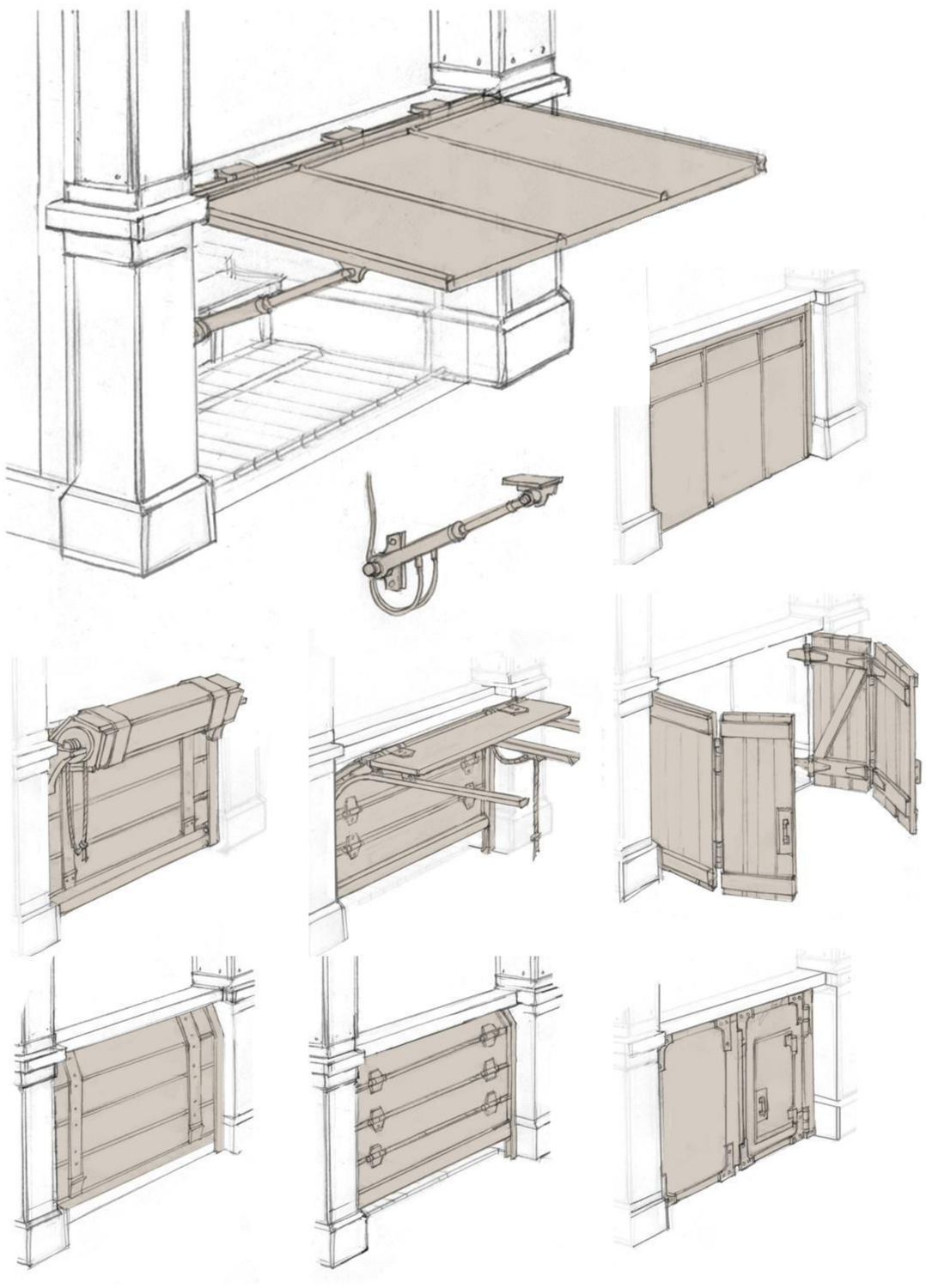


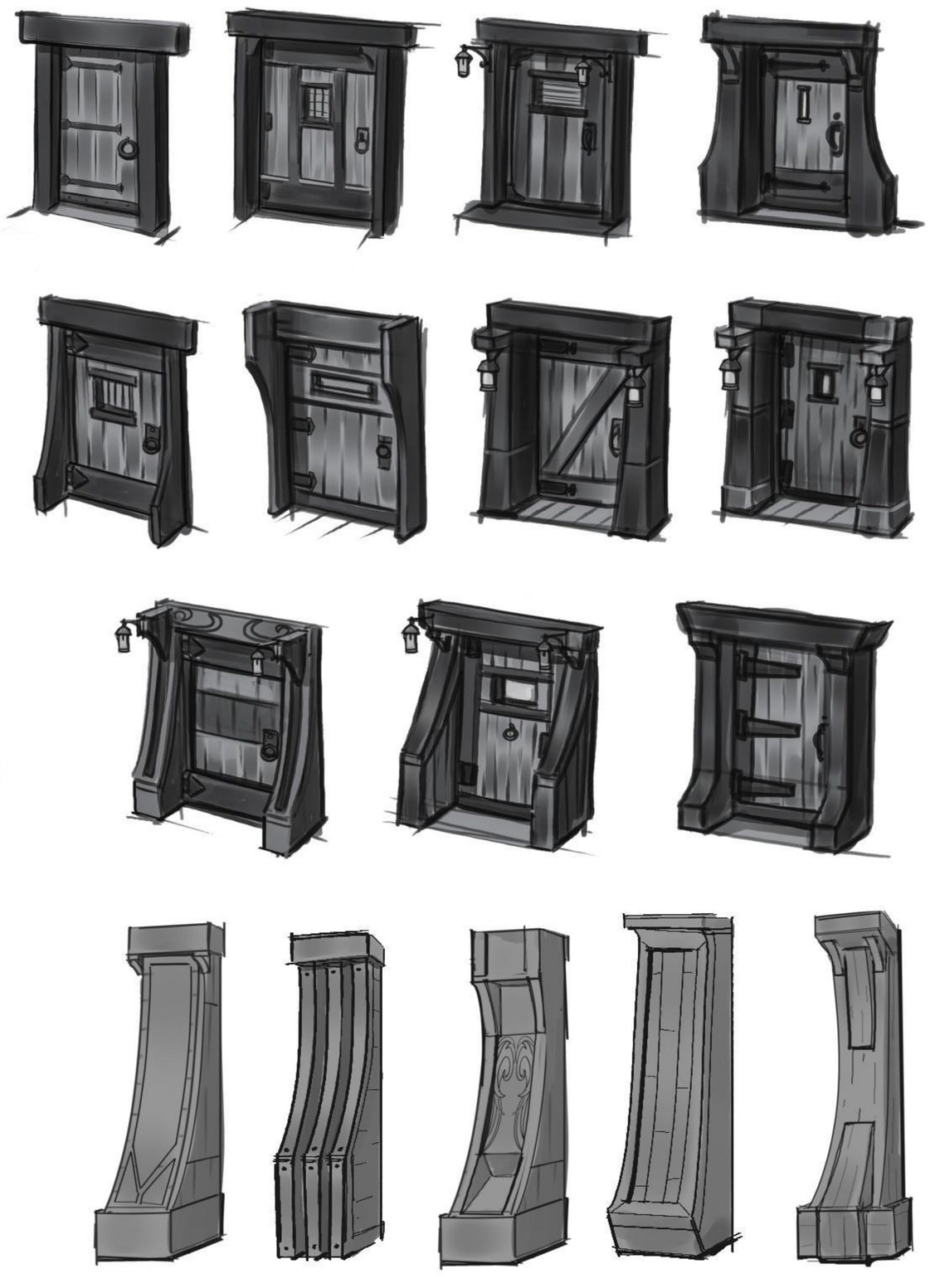




EXTERIOR STUDIES

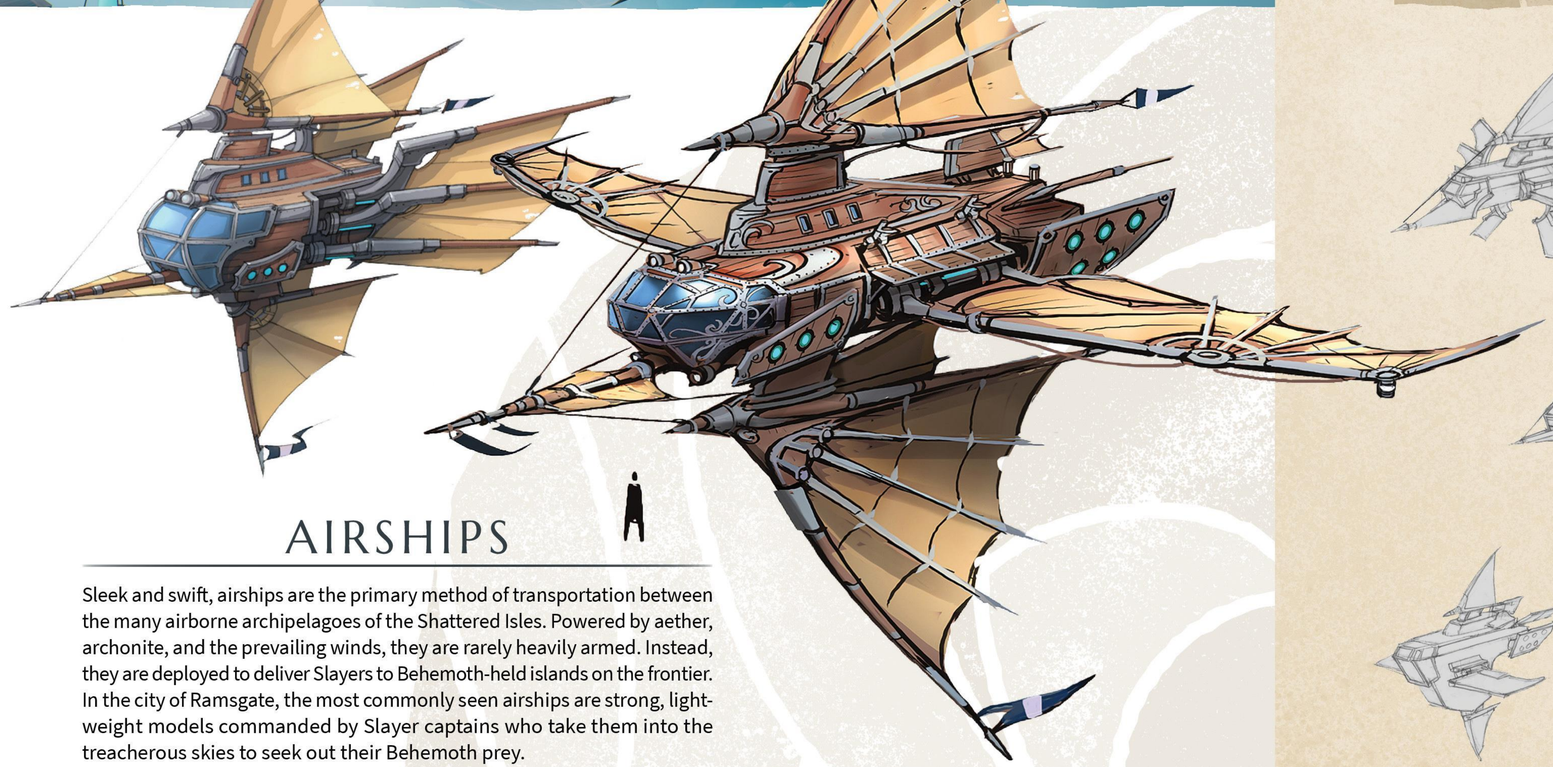
We worked to define even the lowest level of detail in Ramsgate, right down to doors and windows.





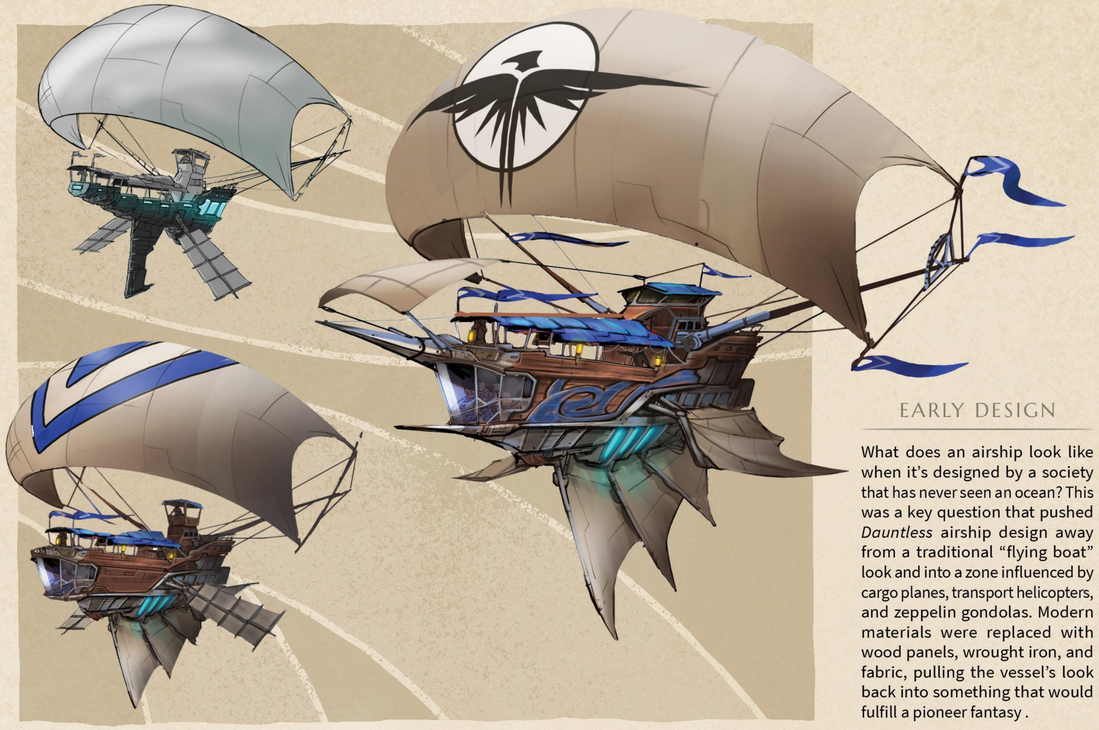
RAMSGATE PLAZA

It became apparent during our Tech Alpha that Ramsgate Plaza, the open area next to the airship docks, had become an important central area for Slayers to congregate. We started seeing the plaza as a Slayer's first look at the social hub of *Dauntless*. In addition to practical concerns, such as access to key NPCs for quests, it needed to communicate Ramsgate's unique culture and climate at a glance.



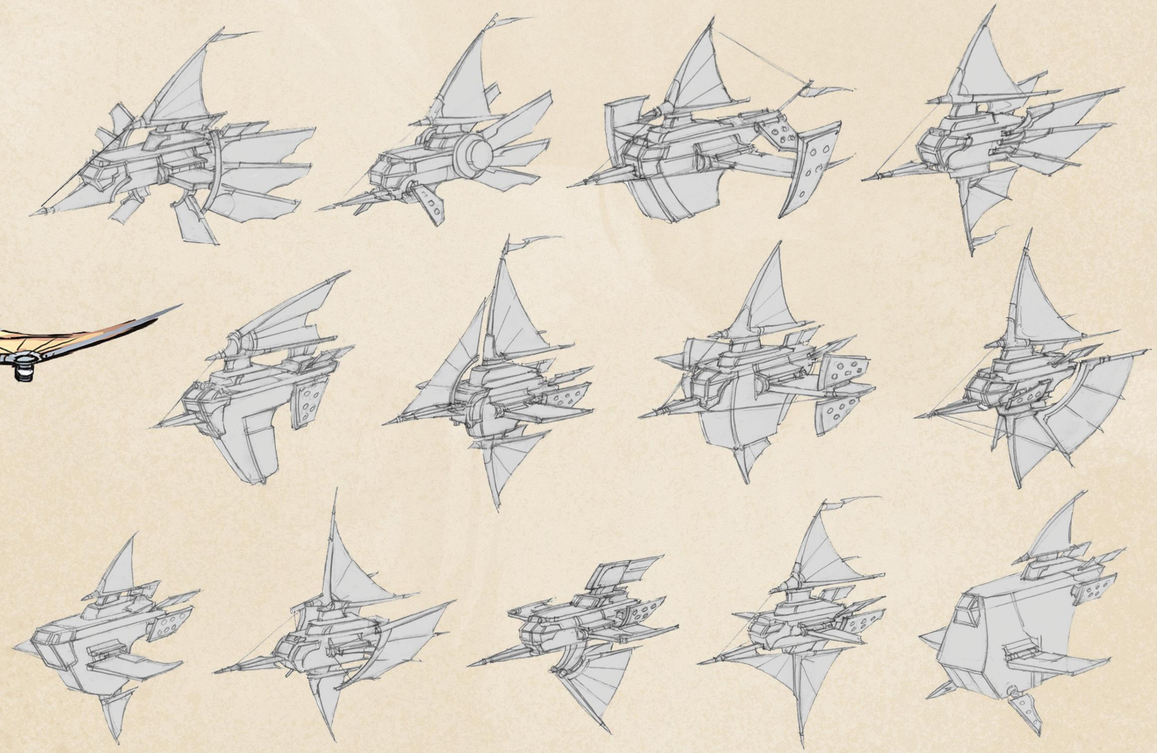
AIRSHIPS

Sleek and swift, airships are the primary method of transportation between the many airborne archipelagoes of the Shattered Isles. Powered by aether, archonite, and the prevailing winds, they are rarely heavily armed. Instead, they are deployed to deliver Slayers to Behemoth-held islands on the frontier. In the city of Ramsgate, the most commonly seen airships are strong, lightweight models commanded by Slayer captains who take them into the treacherous skies to seek out their Behemoth prey.



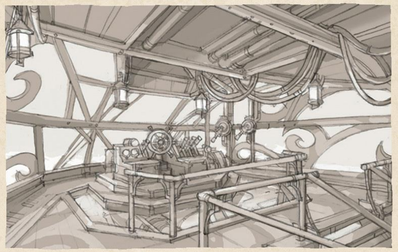
EARLY DESIGN

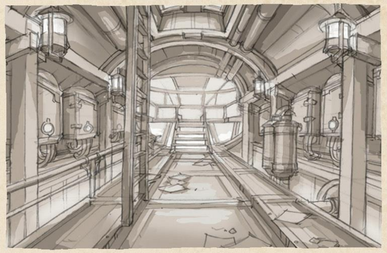
What does an airship look like when it's designed by a society that has never seen an ocean? This was a key question that pushed *Dauntless* airship design away from a traditional "flying boat" look and into a zone influenced by cargo planes, transport helicopters, and zeppelin gondolas. Modern materials were replaced with wood panels, wrought iron, and fabric, pulling the vessel's look back into something that would fulfill a pioneer fantasy .

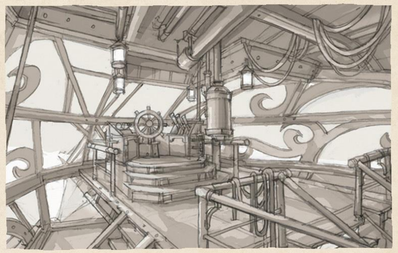


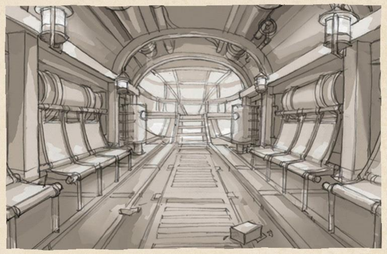
AIRSHIP INTERIOR

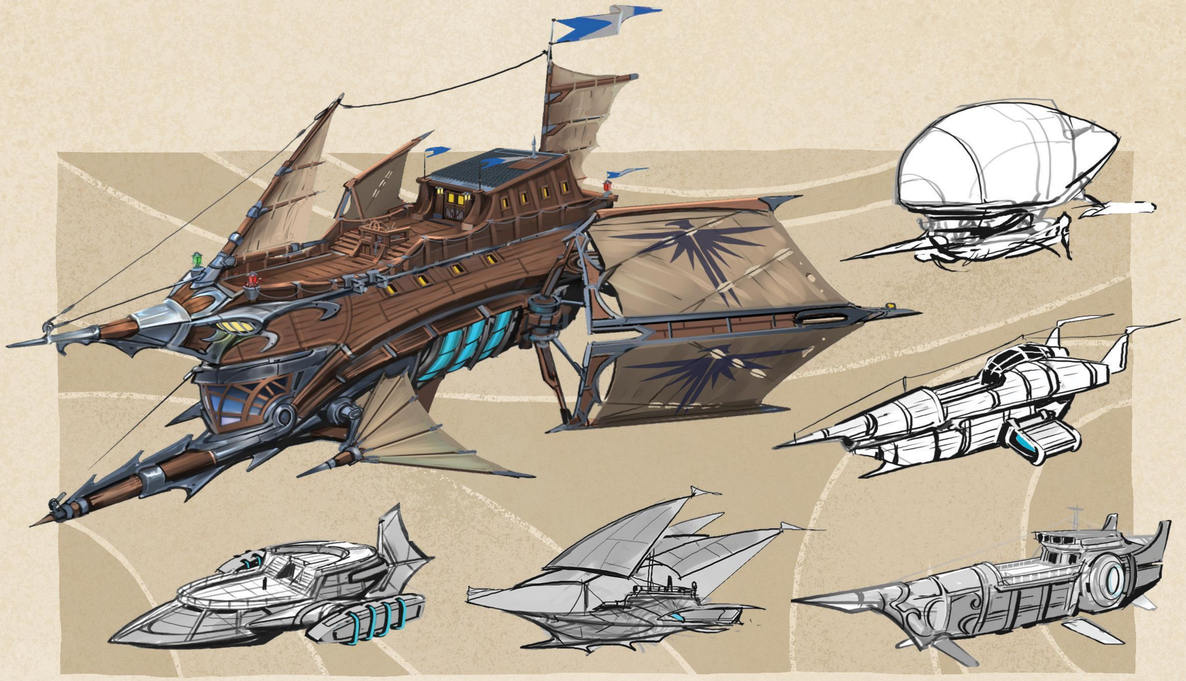
An airship pilot needs a panoramic view of the environment in order to safely navigate the perilous, rock-strewn skies of the Shattered Isles. The interior of the airship was designed for maximum visibility above and below. Inside we see no complex electronic panels, pedals, or control sticks; instead, simple wooden pillars and joists are strewn with electrical cables and ropes, while barometer-style instruments replace more modern radial gauges. For the *Dauntless* opening cinematic, we recreated the interior of the airship in our motion capture room so we could recreate the entire cinematic live—which, coincidentally, involved placing our Animation Director in a motion-capture suit and launching him across the room (for artistic reasons).









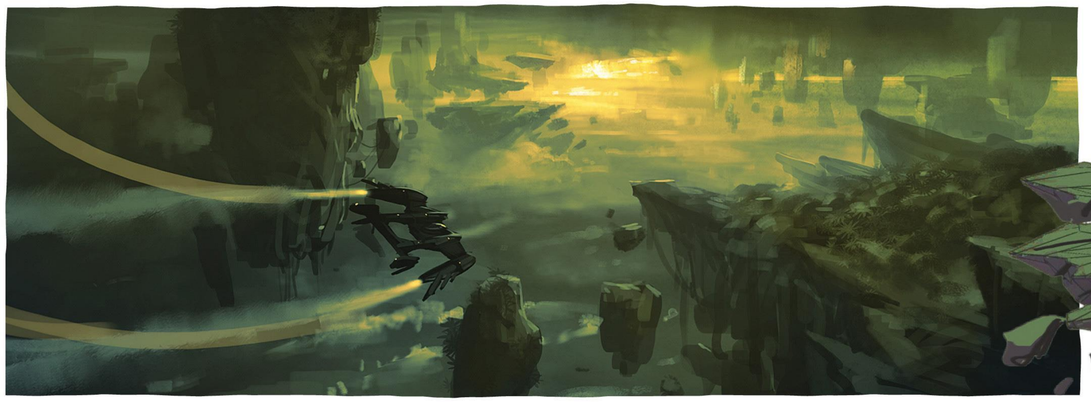


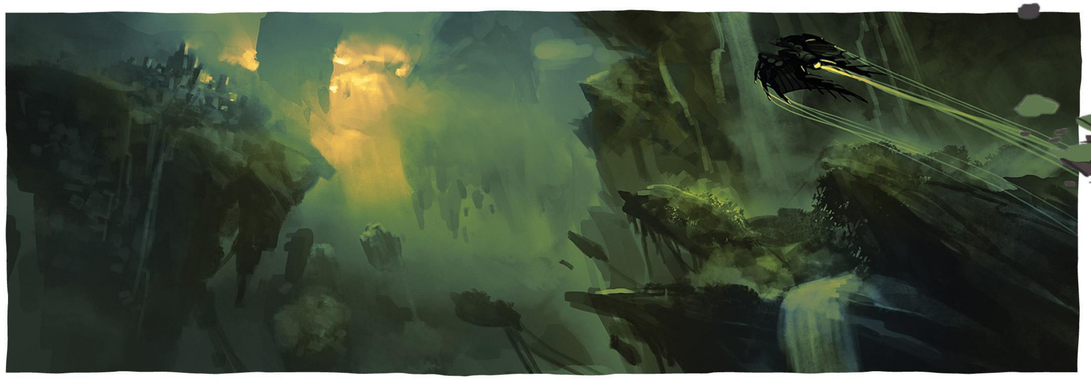
CHAPTER 4

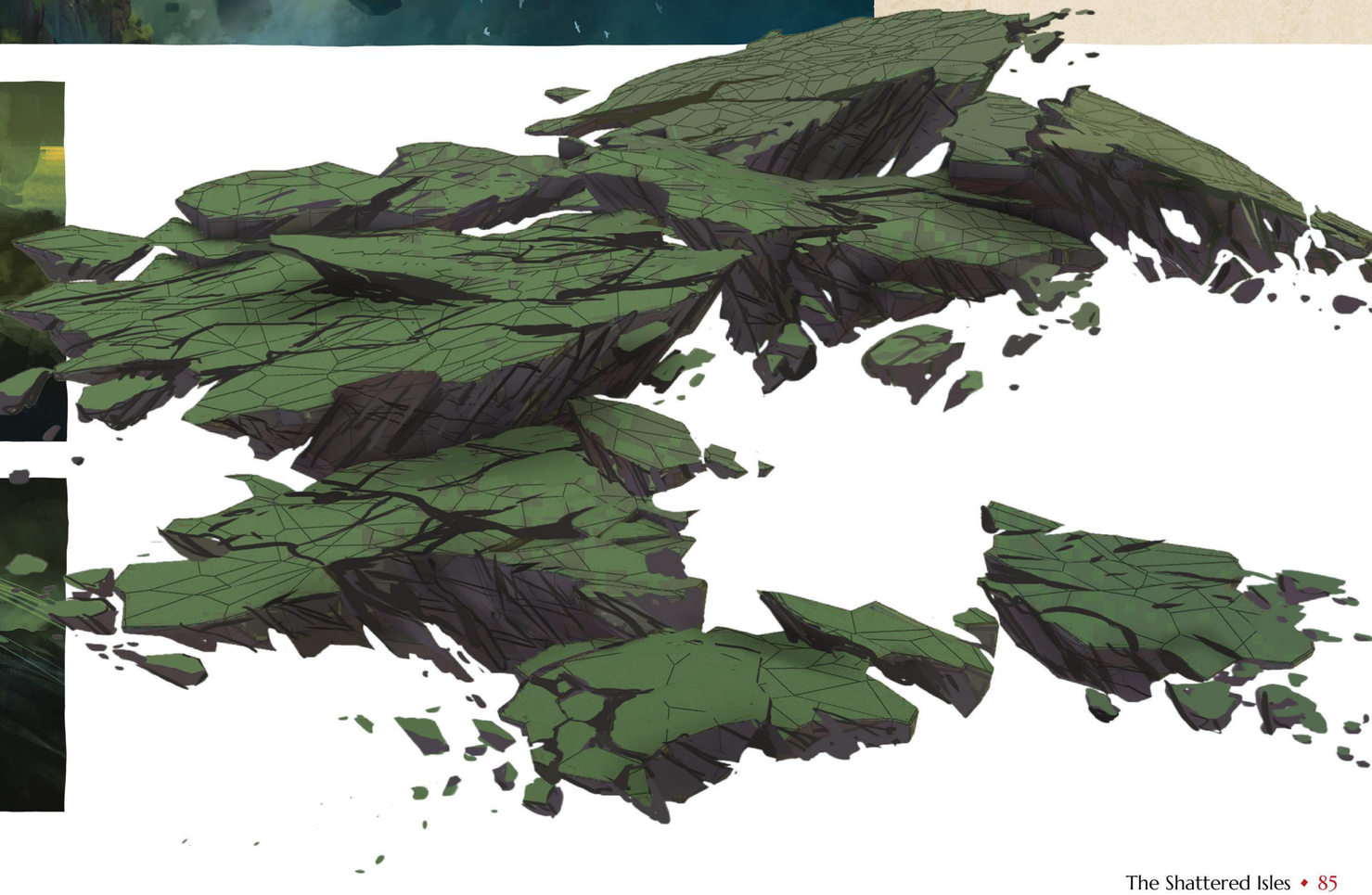
THE SHATTERED ISLES

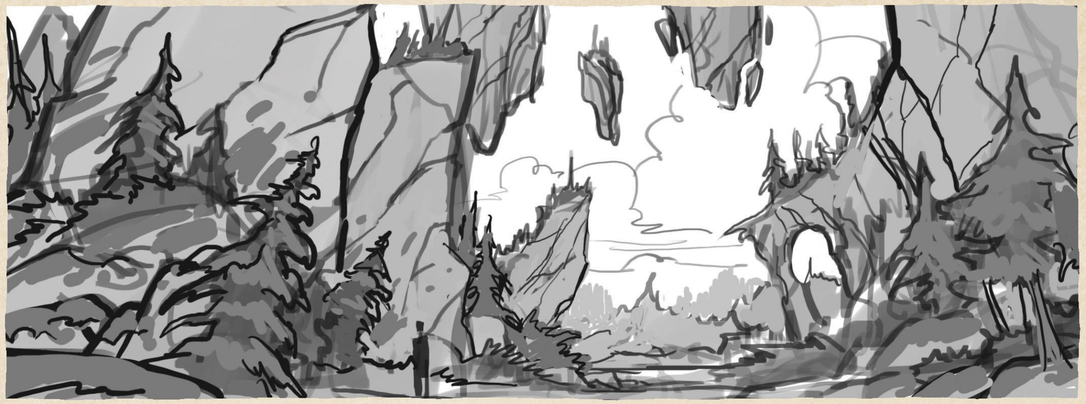
ISLANDS

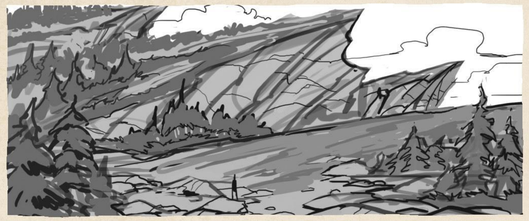
The islands of *Dauntless* are shattered land masses, formed by collisions of rock and earth as they float through the sky. While lush and beautiful, their sloped meadows and jagged cliff faces give them an unstable, temporary look, as if parts of them could collapse and fall into the Sky Below without warning.

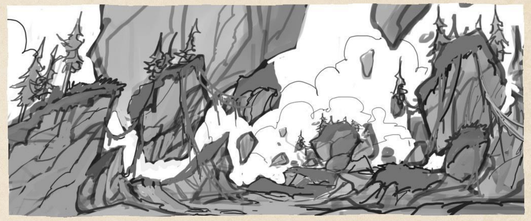


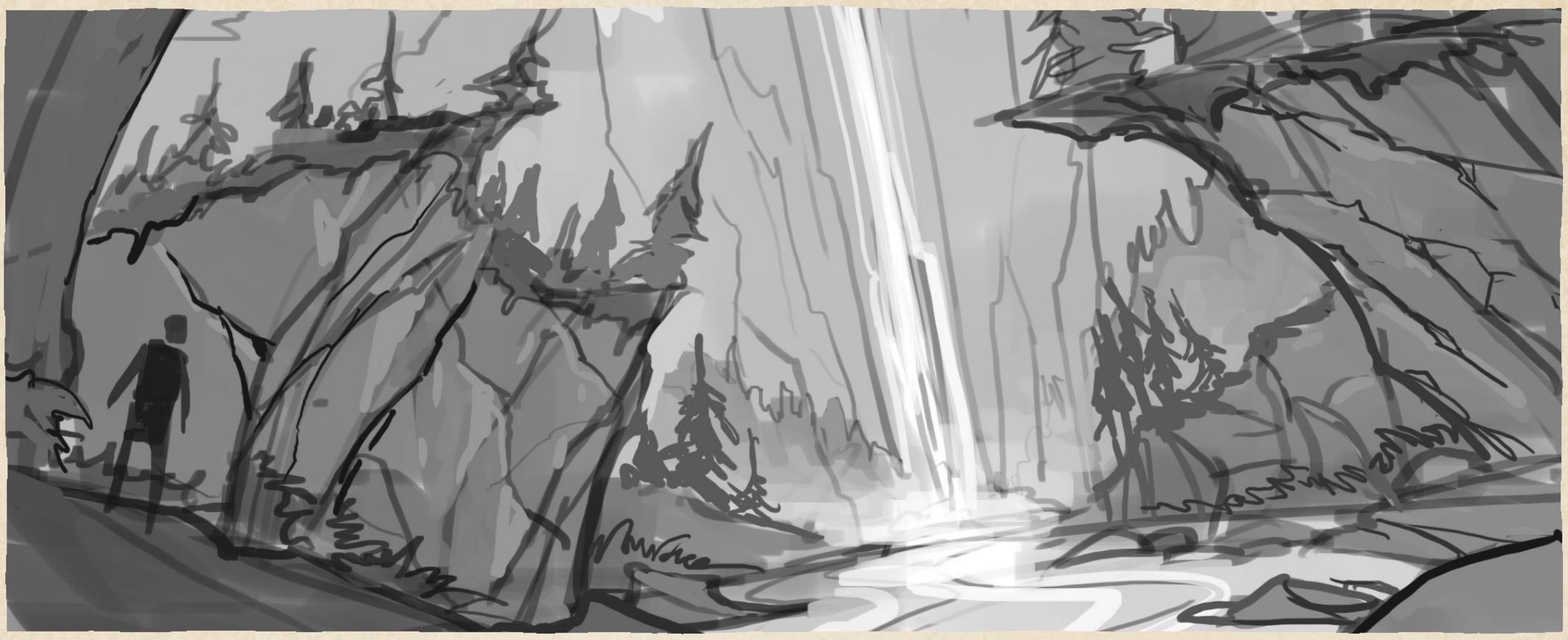


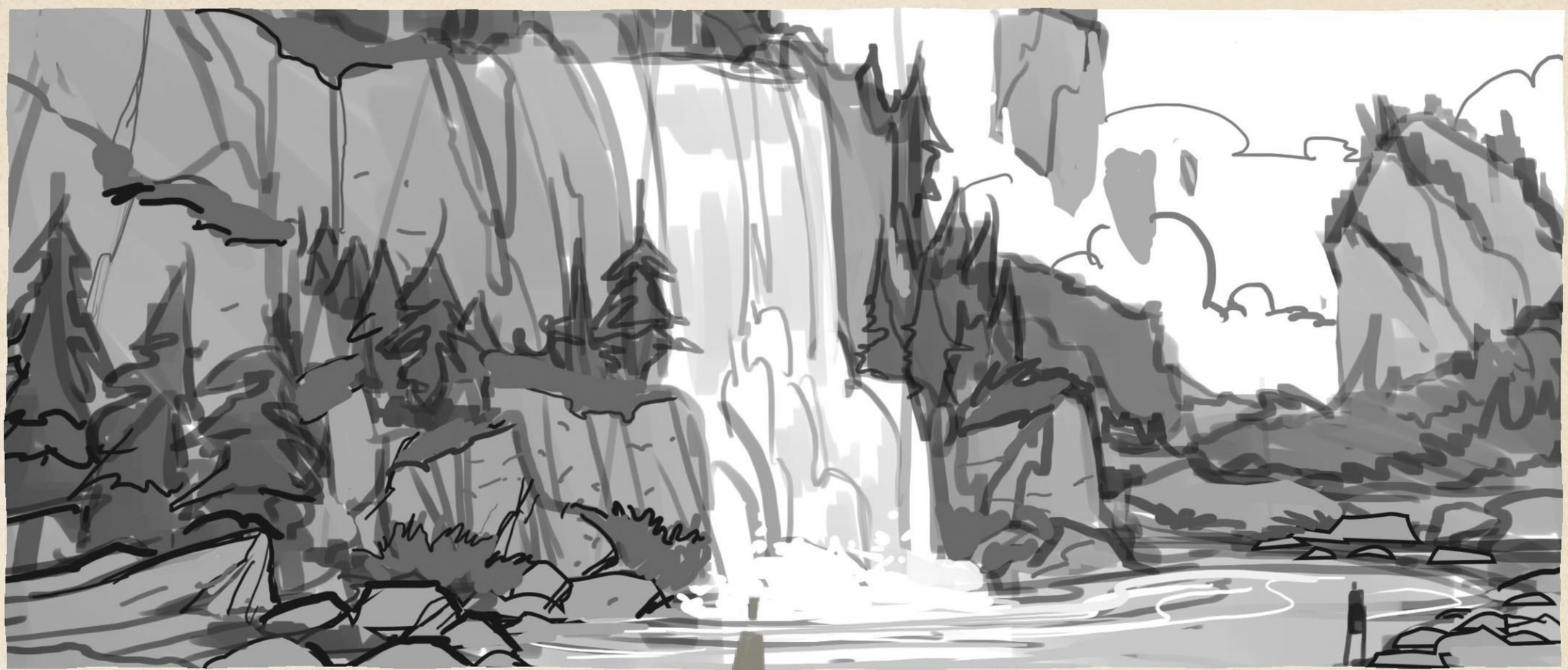


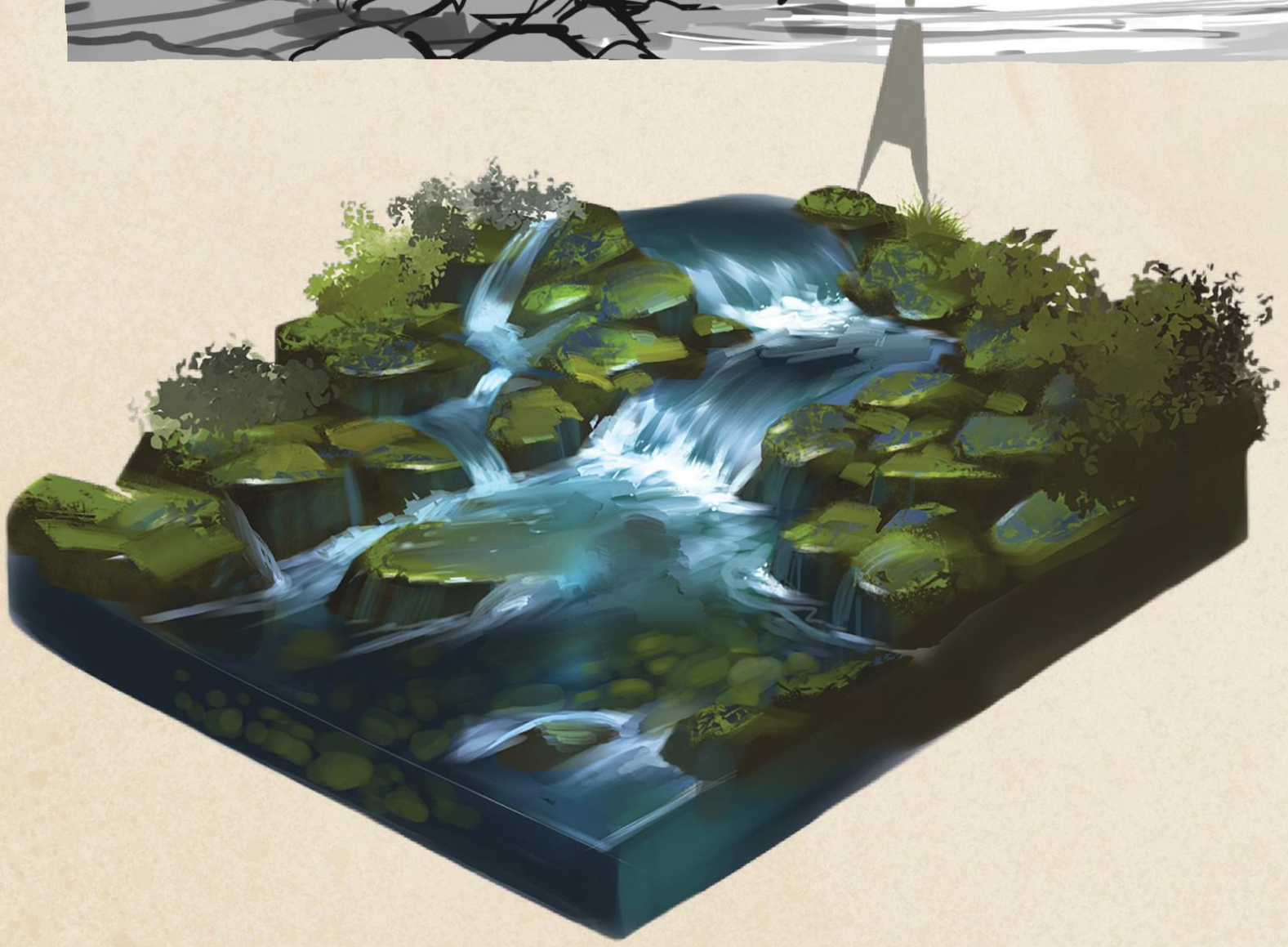






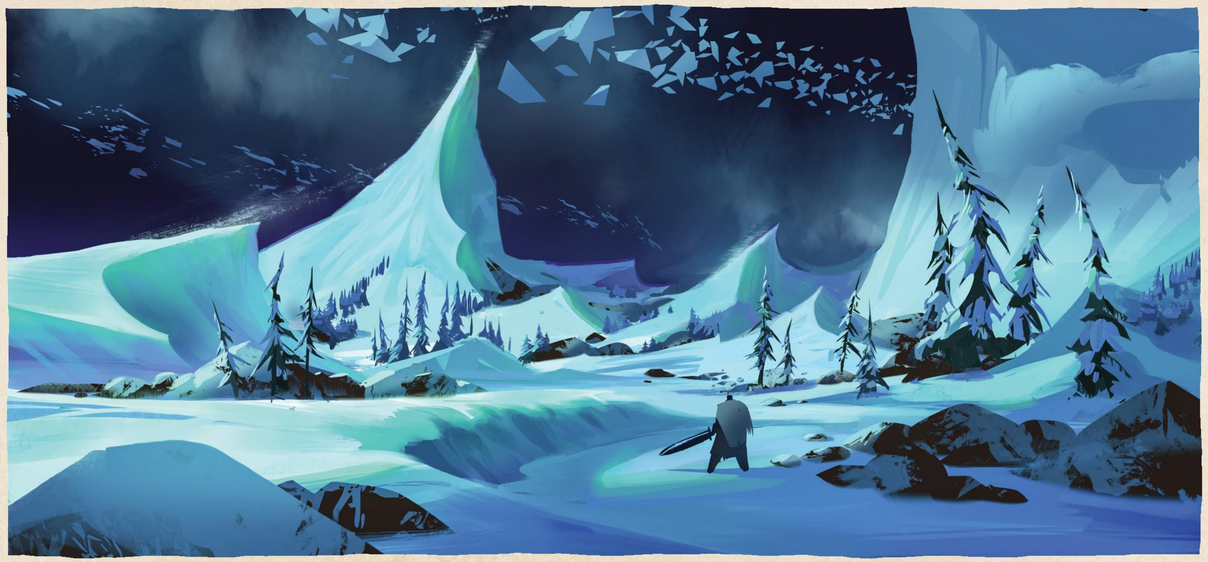






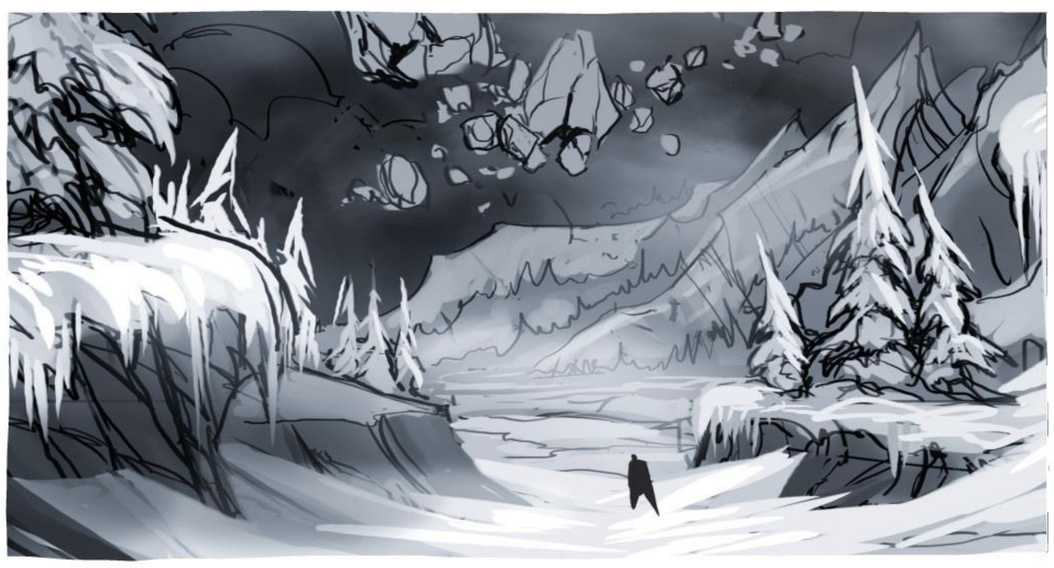
CONCEPTS

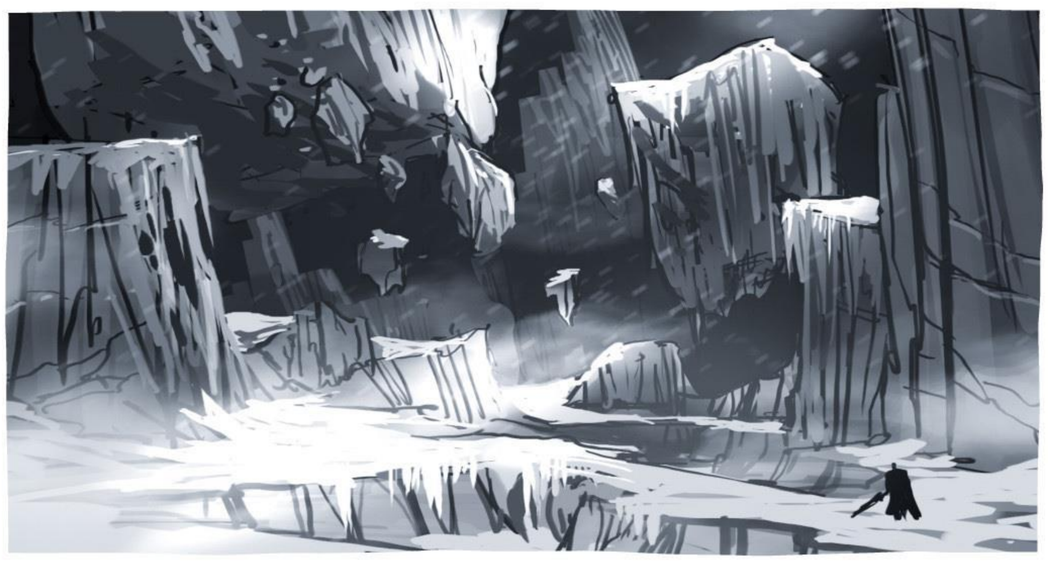
Concept art is about solving problems early on in development before stakes are planted in the ground with 3D modeling. Simple issues are explored at this stage, like how to communicate environmental damage after a battle, the effects of changing temperatures, and even what water should look like. Higher-level questions are explored as well. How do we create unique vistas on each island? How do we instill a sense of drama and otherworldliness? What role do unusual land formations and atmospheric effects play in creating an overlying mood?

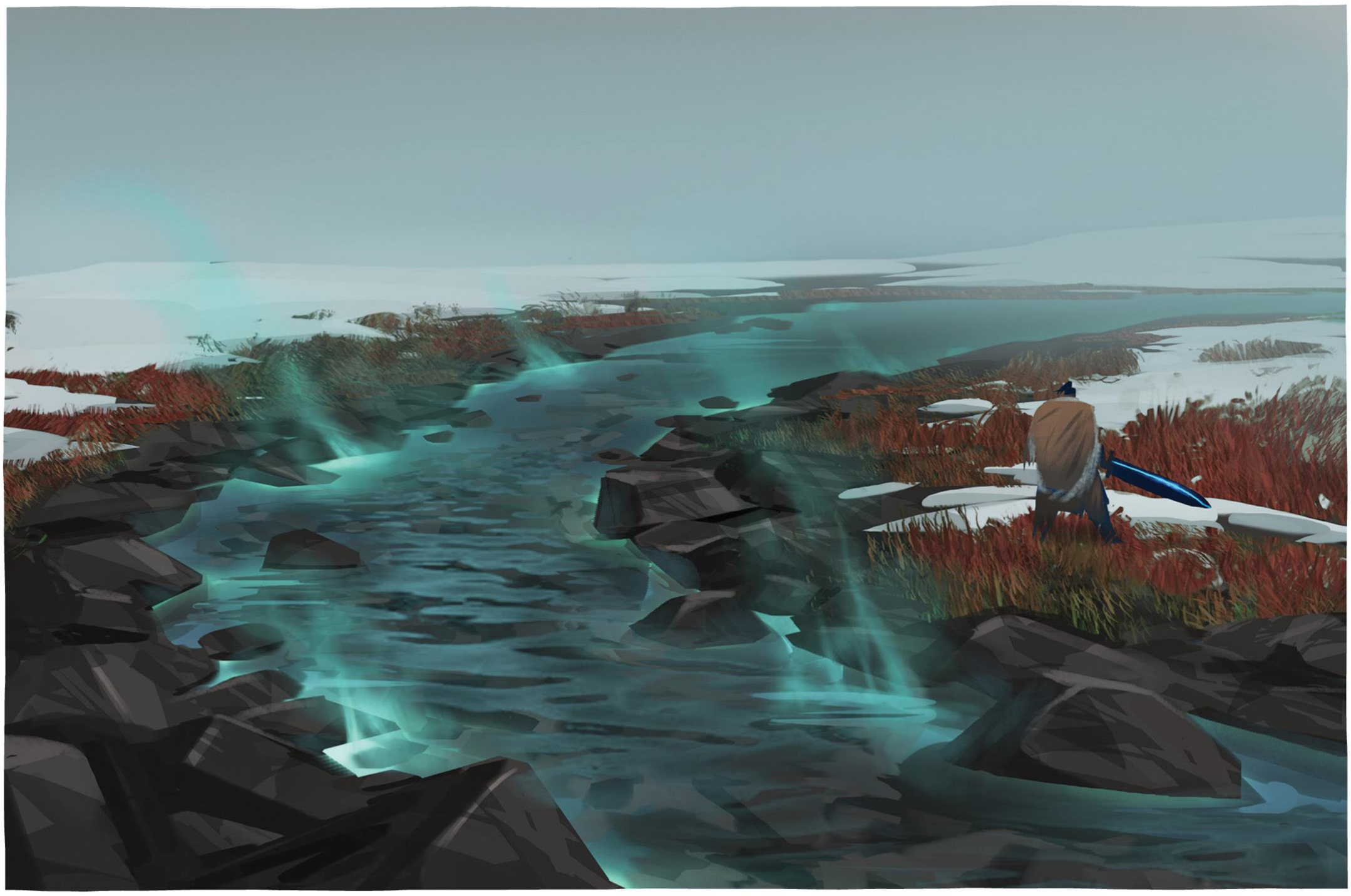


BIOMES

In the Shattered Isles, climates differ from one elevation to the next. Upper reaches suffused with blaze aether are hot, arid, and dominated by deserts. The Helic Risers - the verdant middle region where Ramsgate is located—can be defined by flowing water and lush forests. Lower elevations are gripped with frost aether that covers them with chilling, snowy tundras. No one knows exactly what lies beneath the Sky Below, as no airship has ever descended there and made it back.





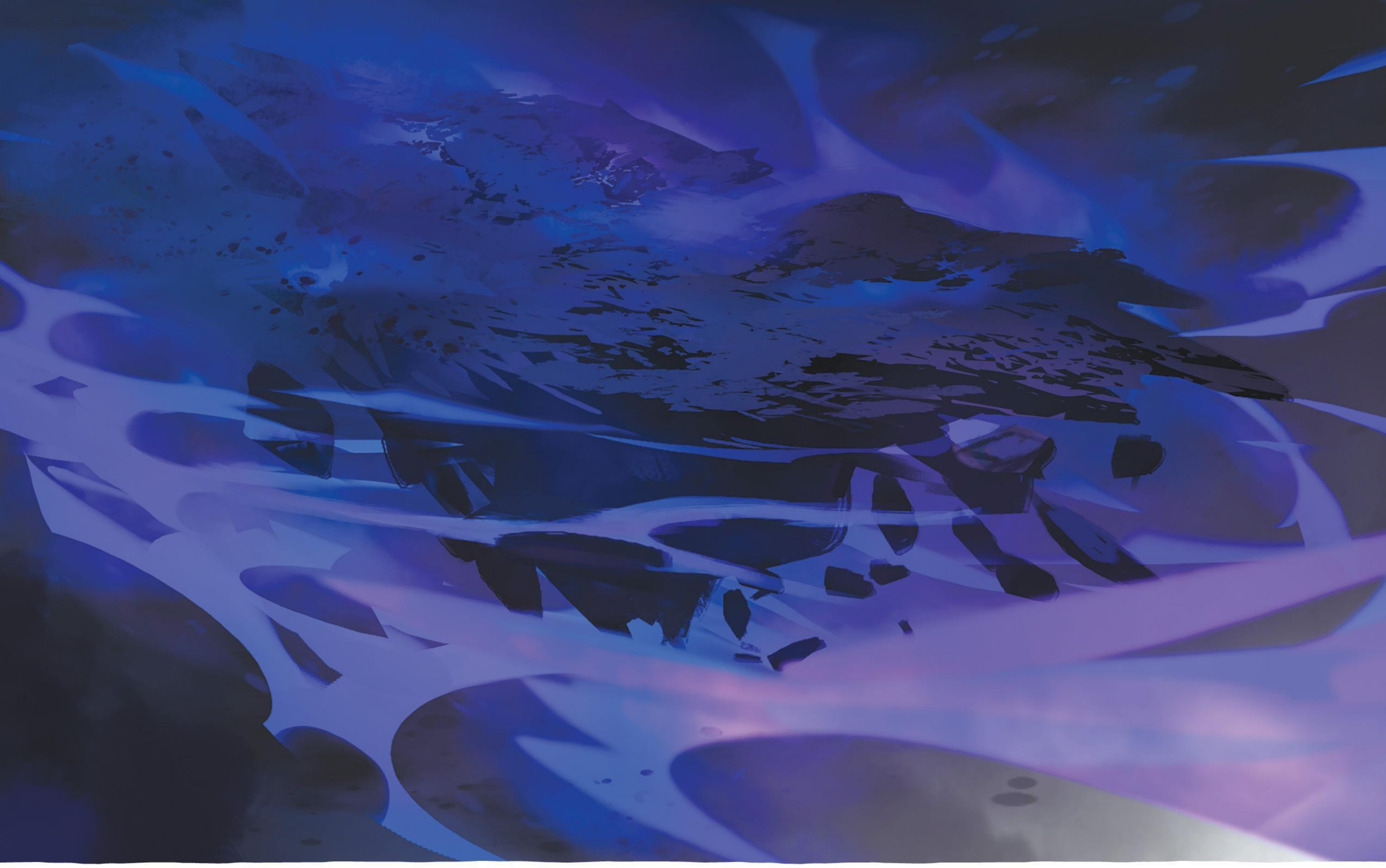


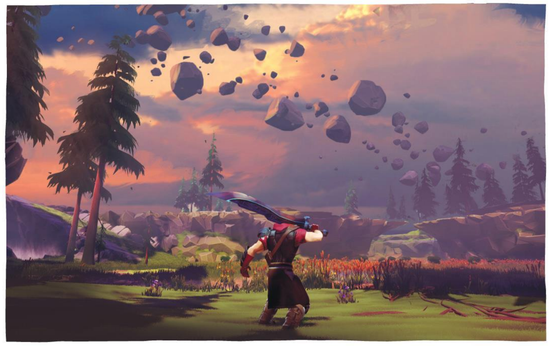
WINTER BIOME

Icy crags and bone-white snow exaggerate the harsh cliffs and lines of the Shattered Isles. This snowy biome was our second environmental exploration after the mossy forest. We wanted the oppressive winter and winds to shape the landscape.

CONCEPTS

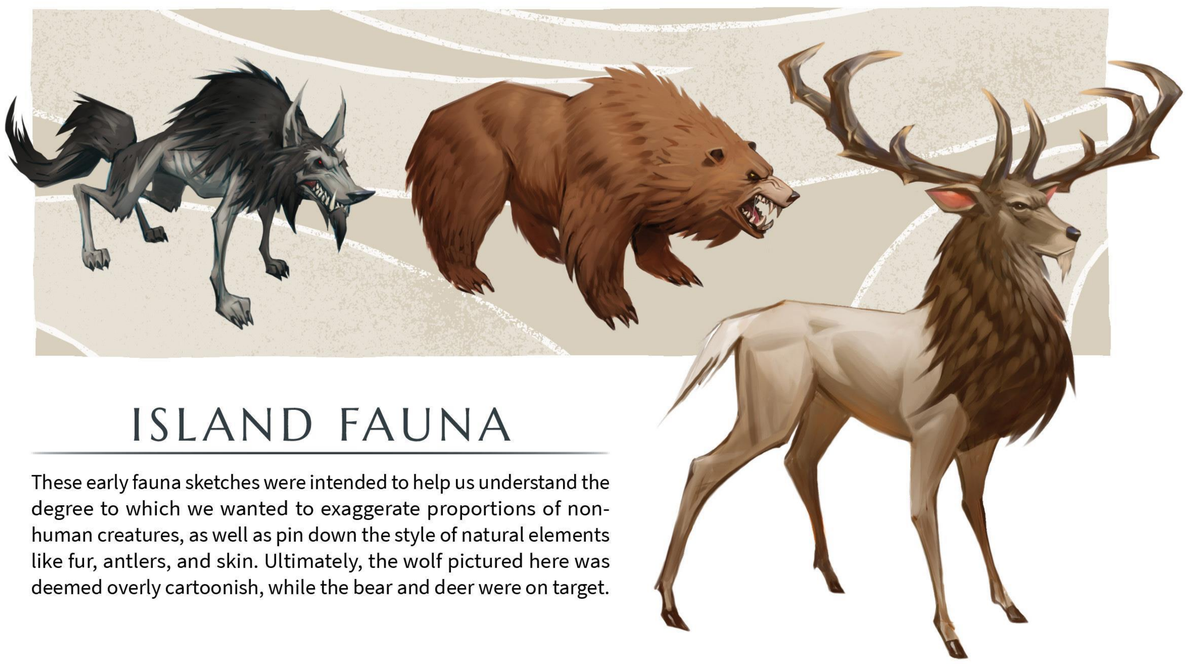
As we explored the concepts of diverse ecologies and environments in the Shattered Isles, we also found ourselves fleshing out more of the story behind the Behemoths. Here we explore concepts of Behemoth dens, frozen island landscapes, and an overwhelming umbral aetherstorm.





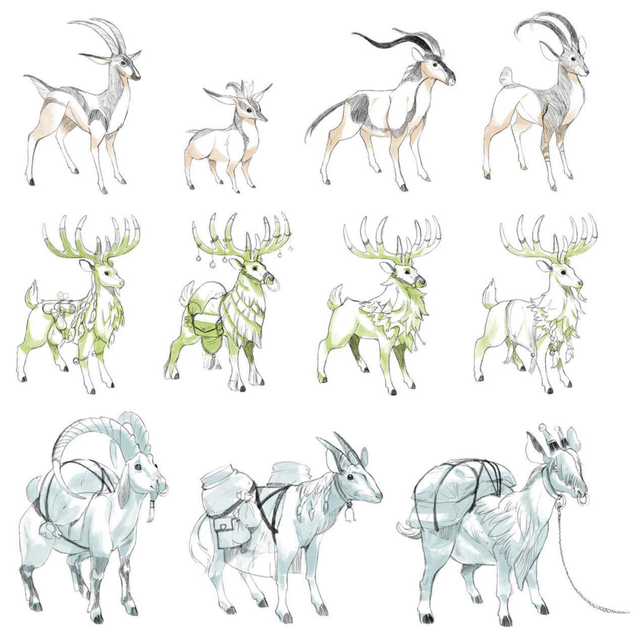
ISLAND FLORA

Plant life survives, and even thrives, in the many diverse biomes of the Shattered Isles. Not only do these flora add to the beauty of each ecological niche, they're also useful sources of crafting ingredients. To help ensure the most important gatherable plants were easy to spot, our concepts focused on bright, distinctive colours and unique shapes.



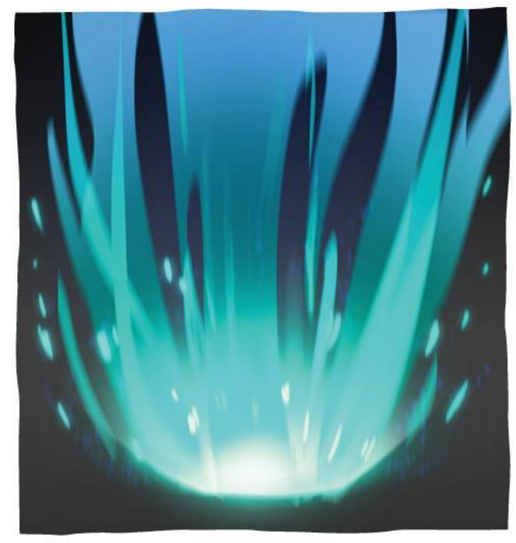
ISLAND FAUNA

These early fauna sketches were intended to help us understand the degree to which we wanted to exaggerate proportions of non-human creatures, as well as pin down the style of natural elements like fur, antlers, and skin. Ultimately, the wolf pictured here was deemed overly cartoonish, while the bear and deer were on target.



AETHER

Discovered long ago in an age since lost to history, aether is a wondrous form of energy that allows airships to fly, islands to stay aloft, and smiths to forge legendary weapons and armour. A source of power both destructive and miraculous, aether manifests in living form as the Behemoths that threaten humanity's fragile civilization.

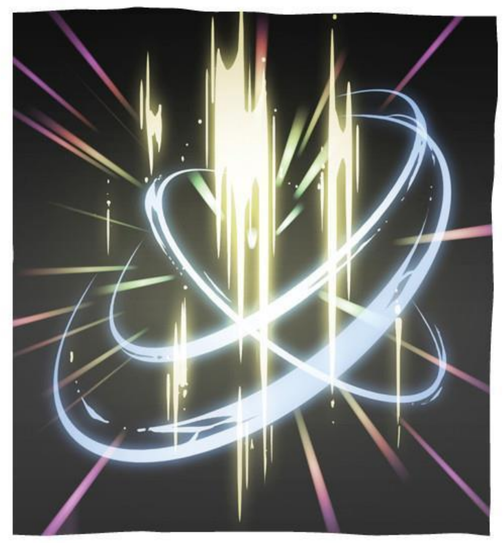


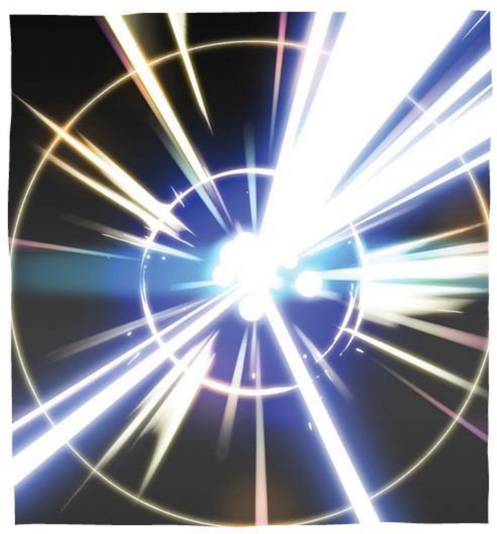
AETHER ASPECTS

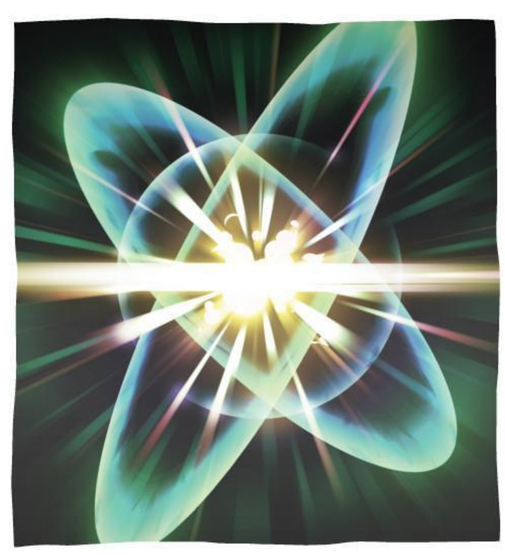
Aetheric energy forms a spectrum of power that ranges from the cold darkness of umbral aether to the hard, bright light of radiant aether. In between, aether interacts with frequencies that manifest as elemental power: fiery blaze, chilling frost, and electrified shock, for example. The most common form of aether is the raw, balanced force of neutral energy.

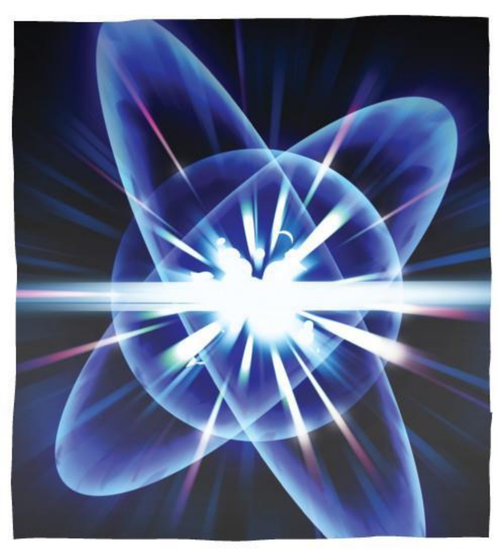
RADIANT AETHER

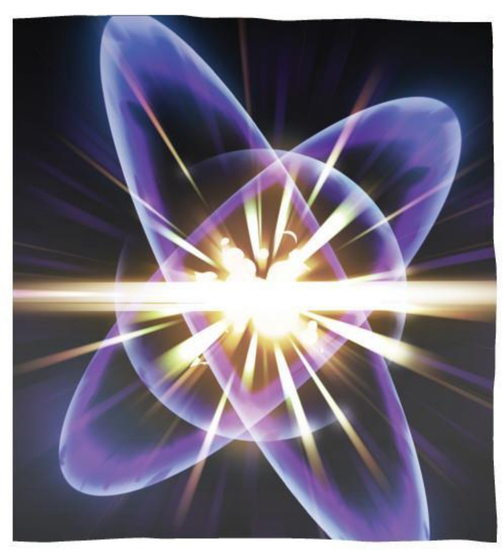
Embodying solid light as deadly as fractured glass, these different radiant designs show the wide variety of visuals within just one aetheric frequency.

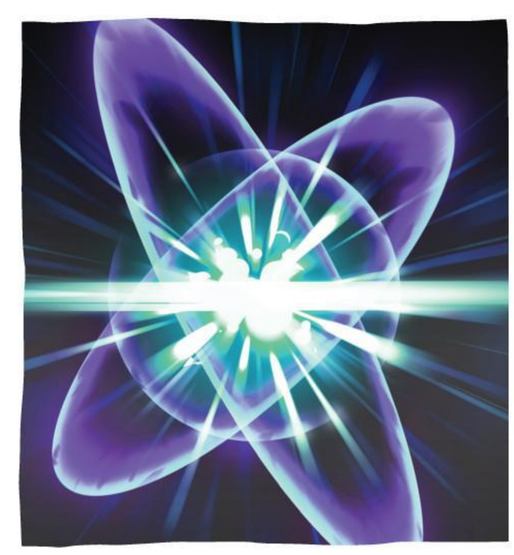










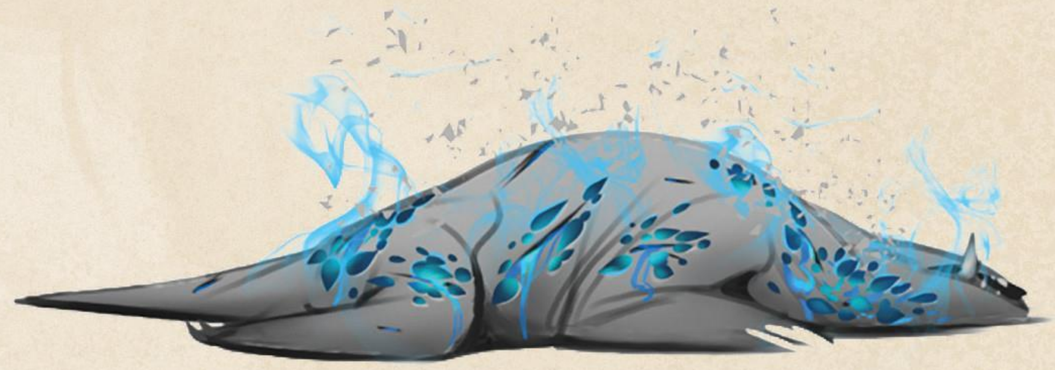


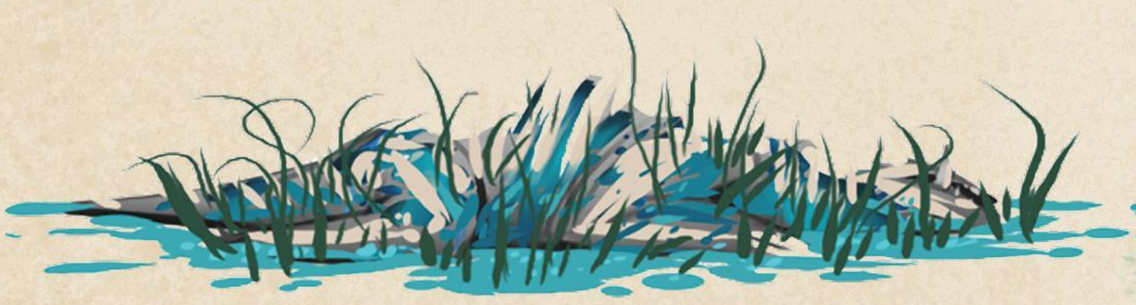
EARLY CONCEPTS

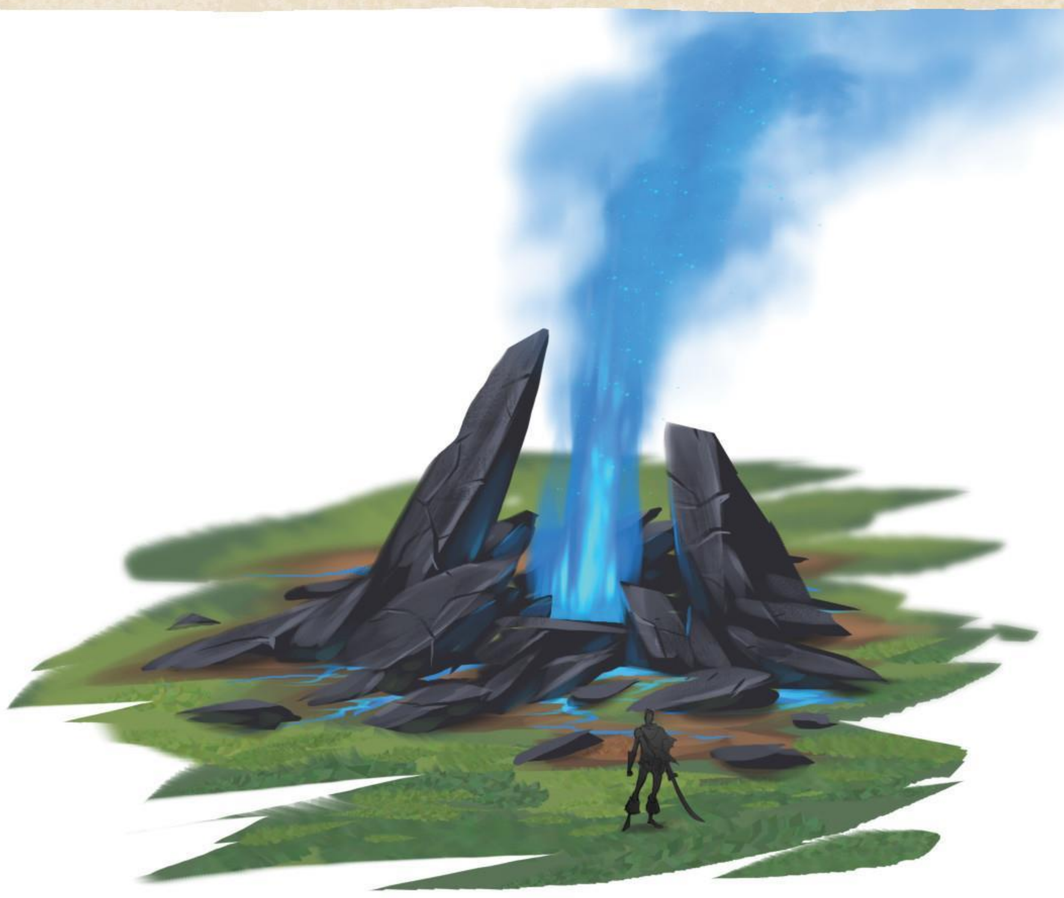
Before the idea of an aetheric spectrum solidified, we knew we wanted to depict this power and energy in ways that didn't feel too familiar. These first aether concepts show both the potential look of aetheric energy as well as some of its behaviour —both binding islands together and cracking them apart.

AETHER-INFUSED WEAPONS

The smiths of Ramsgate have mastered the art of infusing weapons and armour with many varieties of aetheric energy. This early look at the first aether-infused weapons we conceived shows that the elemental points of the aetheric spectrum were already part of the design.

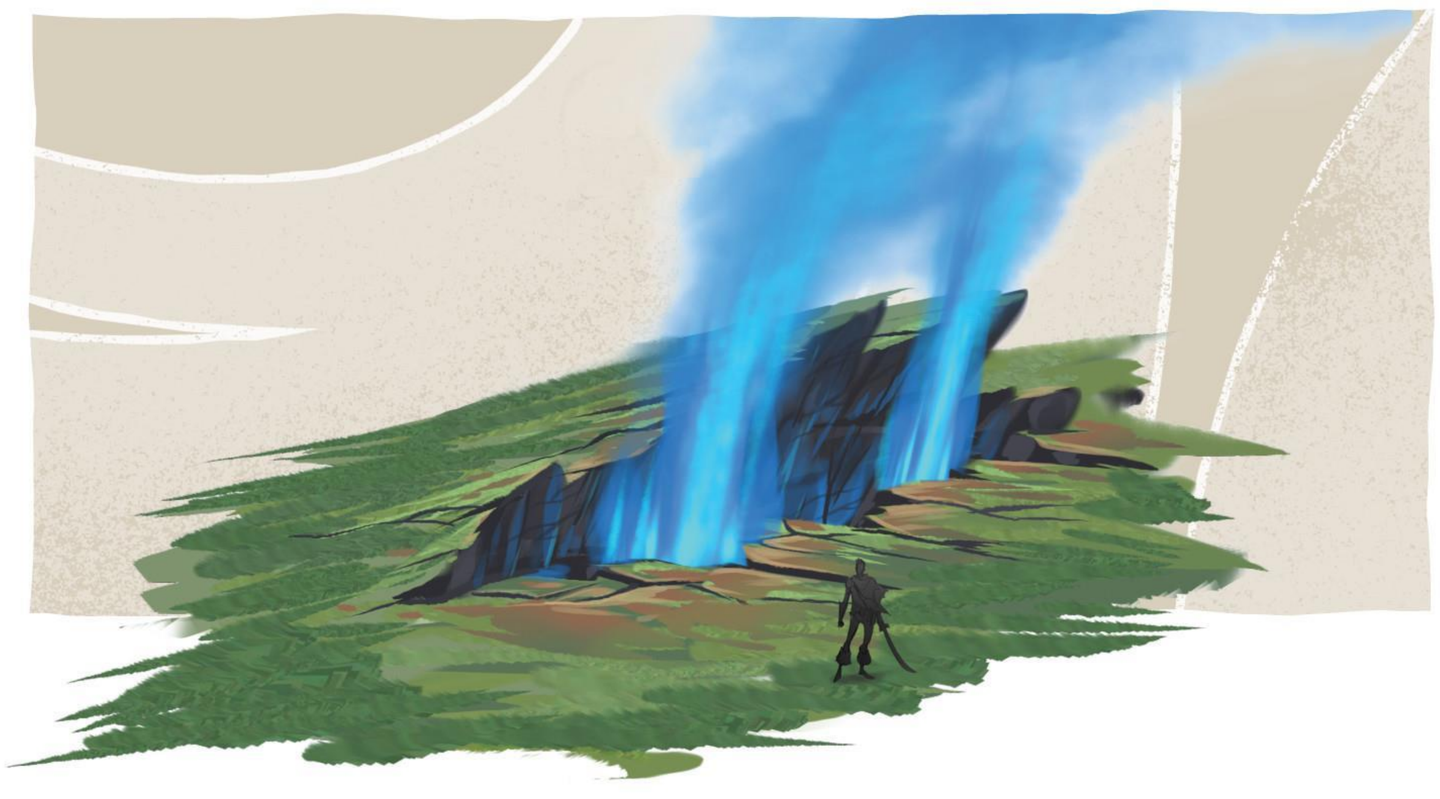






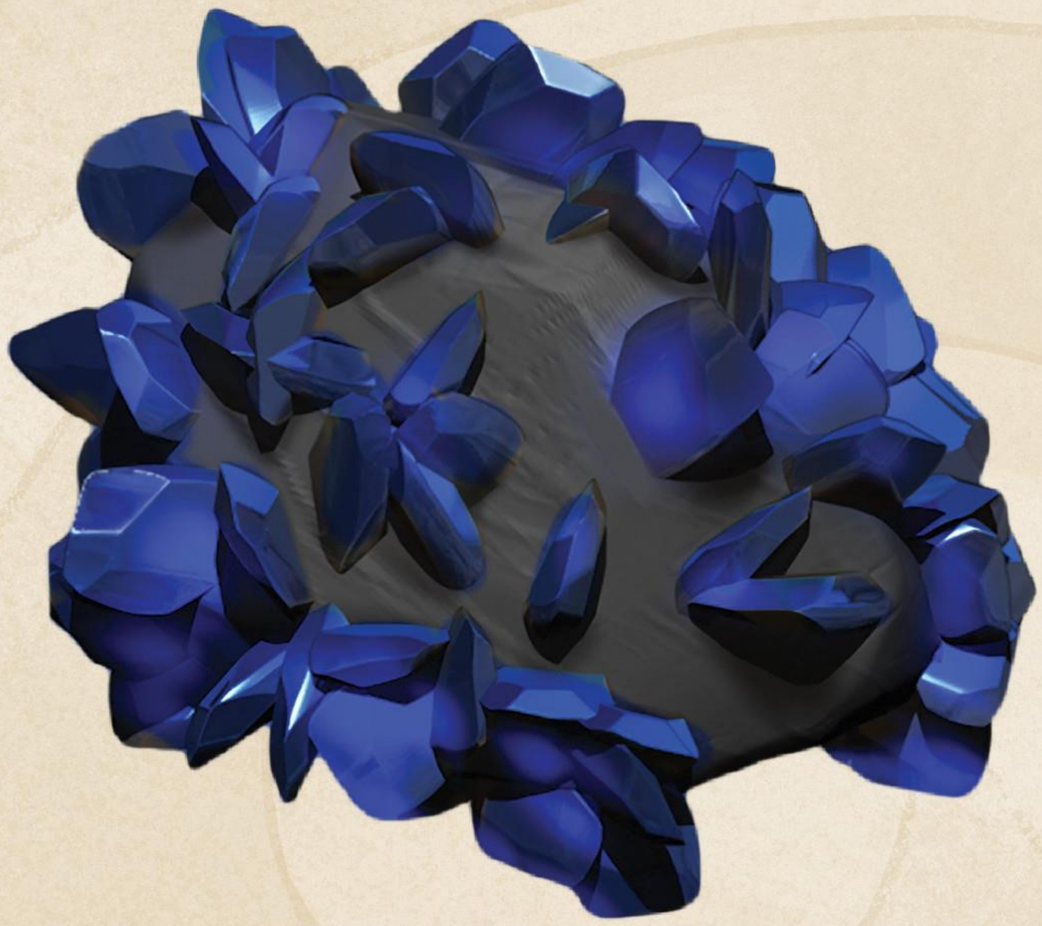
AETHER VENTS

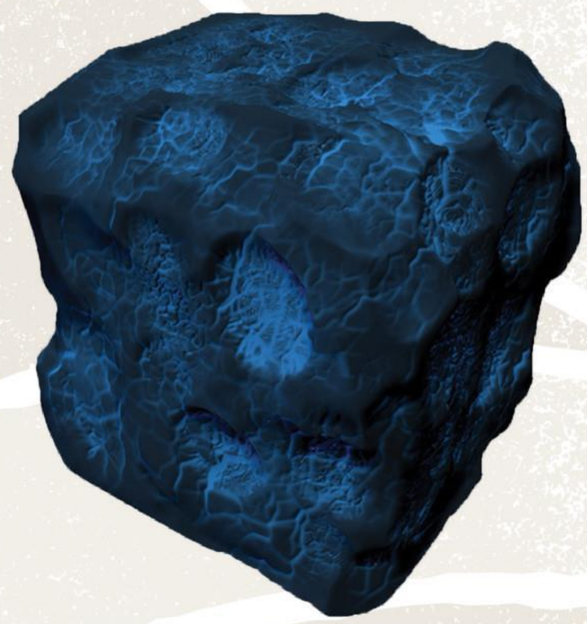
Just as it keeps airships in flight, aether suffuses the Shattered Isles and makes them float through the atmosphere. But this volatile power is difficult to contain and often seeps up through the earth in cracks called aether vents. Behemoths feed off of these vents; they sometimes even help create them when they tear into the ground beneath their feet.

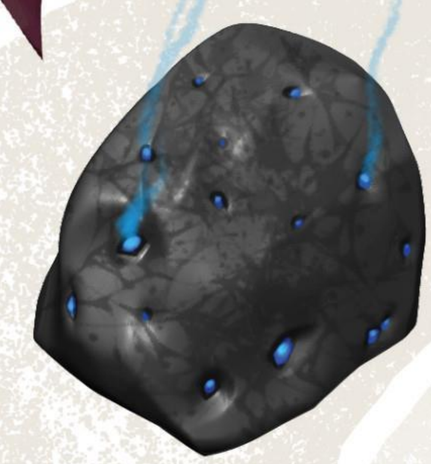


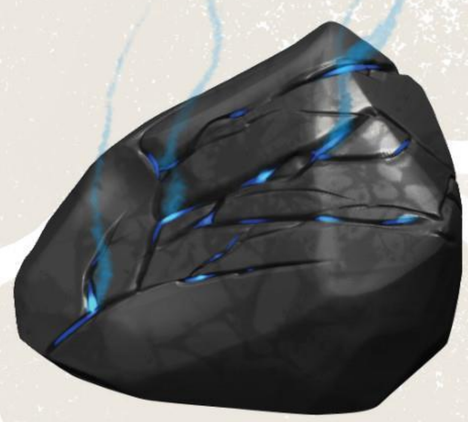
ARCHONITE

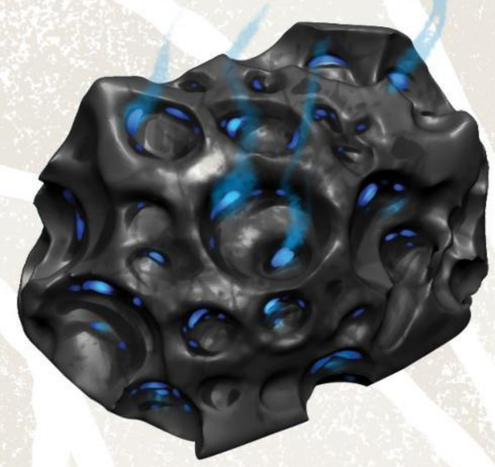
The aether that keeps islands aloft is often found in concentrated form as a mineral called archonite. Archonite can be used as a power source, broken down into more basic aetheric elements by skilled aethersmiths, and even transformed into weapons and armour. These often display a crystalline appearance that belies serious material strength.









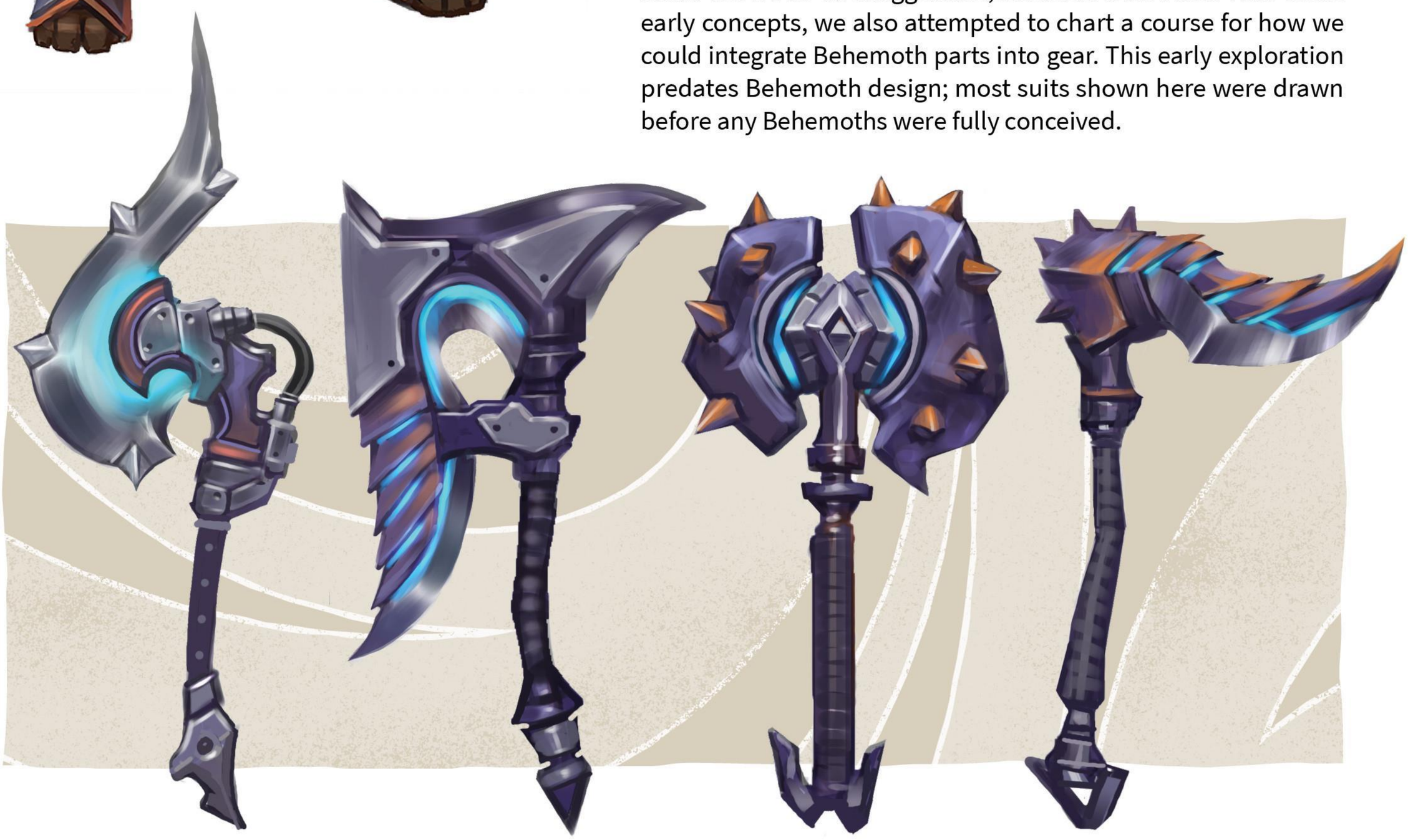


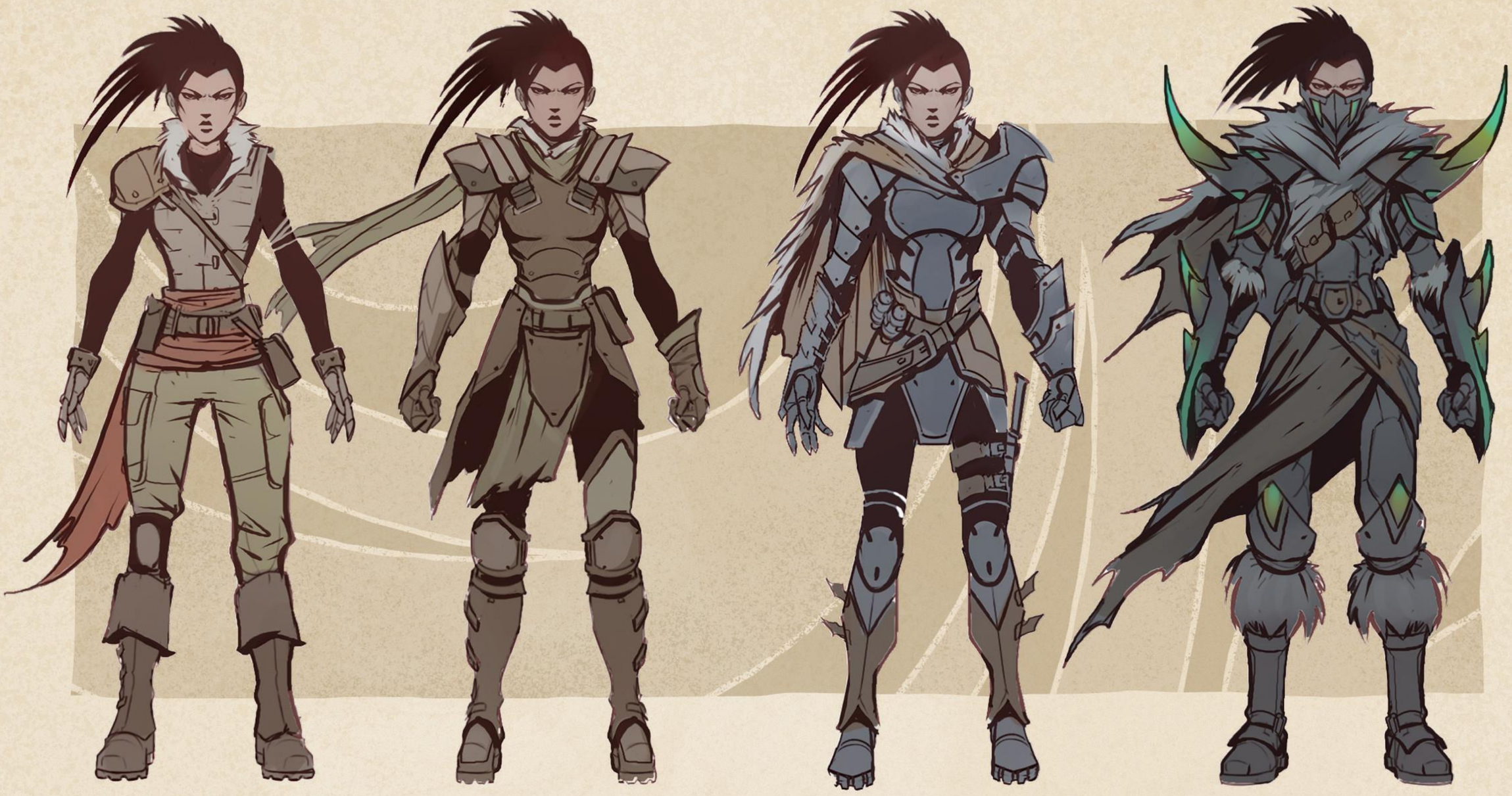
CHAPTER 5

WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

EARLY DESIGN

We began designing weapons and armour with sheets of "blue sky" sketches; creative discovery that, in addition to seeking out visual appeal, allowed us to test the degree of complexity that we could work into an exaggerated, readable silhouette. With these early concepts, we also attempted to chart a course for how we could integrate Behemoth parts into gear. This early exploration predates Behemoth design; most suits shown here were drawn before any Behemoths were fully conceived.



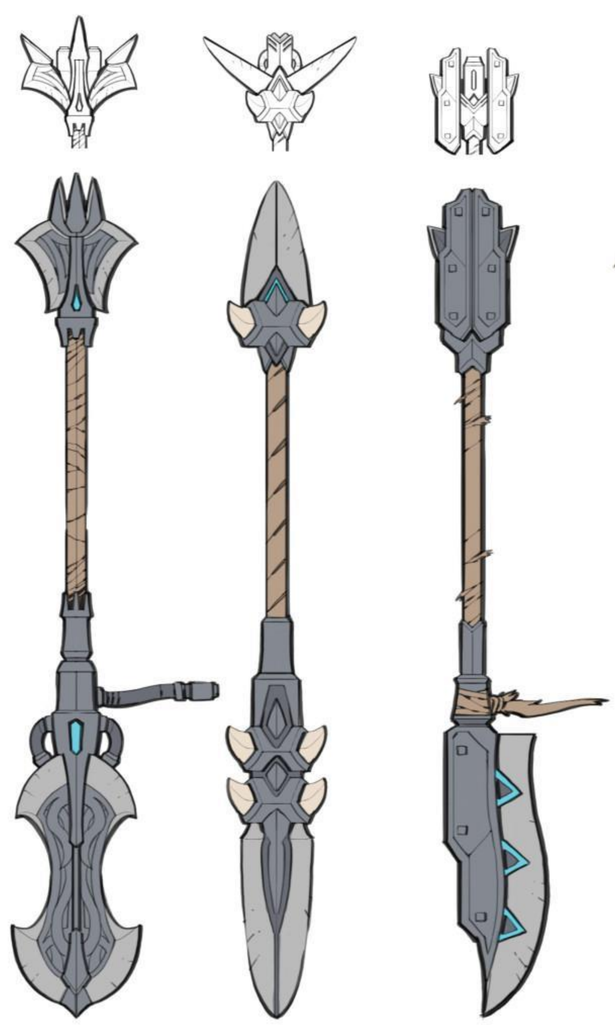


CHAIN AXE

In the early days, all axes were "chain axes," complete with saw teeth that would animate along the blade's edge during an attack. While the results of the prototype showed promise, this approach was ultimately deemed overly technical and restrictive from a design standpoint.

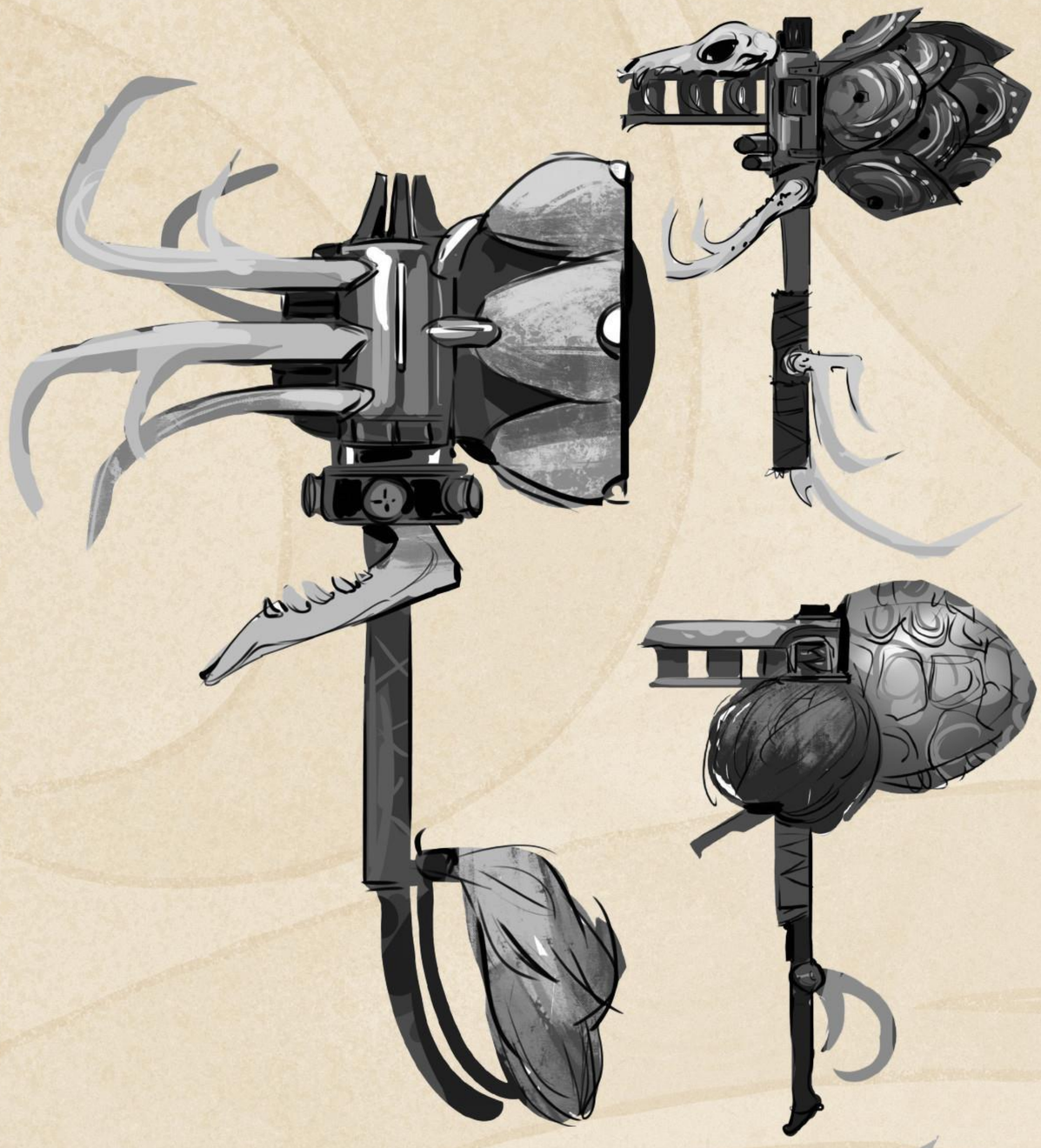
STEEL WEAPONS

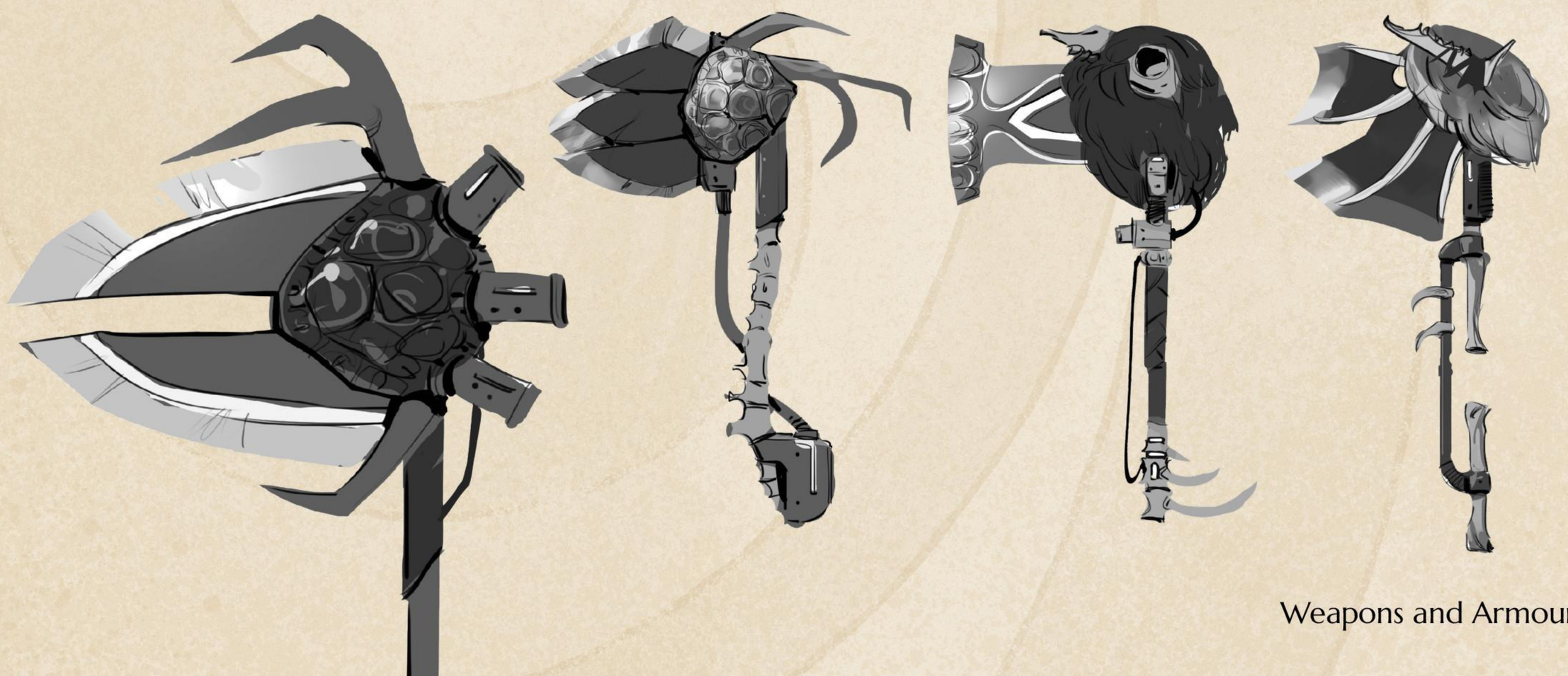
The steel weapons were among the first concepts that made it into *Dauntless*. In fact, the steel sword was the first weapon to ever hit a Behemoth (specifically, a Drask). As time went on we focused on making every weapon set unique to the Behemoth that was used to craft it. But since we still liked the look of the steel arms and armour, we decided to make them available as a cosmetic transmog set—a nod to our early roots.



FAUNA WEAPONS

At one time, island fauna was huntable, and we designed (but never built) a weapon set for the animals inhabiting each biome. Rather than having a weapon comprised of a single animal's parts, each weapon was to contain elements of canines, hoofed quadrupeds, and tortoises.





RECRUIT'S SET

All new Slayers in Ramsgate start out as recruits and wear armour that marks them as such. For the recruit's armour set we aimed for a combination of streetwear looks and functional protection that every player would want to wear—but which were still fairly mundane compared to the more impressive and awe-inspiring gear veterans forge from the Behemoths they slay. The recruit's weapon set has a similar aesthetic featuring polished steel, rugged grips, and a tassel that adds a dash of style. As they were the first weapons players would forge after using their training sword, we wanted the act of crafting them to be a rite of passage.

ARCHONITE WEAPONS

As with the steel set, archonite weapons do not directly incorporate Behemoths into their design. But they are inspired by weapons the earliest Slayers of legend used in their battles for survival. As humanity explored the Shattered Isles, they discovered a wealth of resources that would ultimately power their arsenal. Archonite was one of the most important, and when forged into a weapon it proved to these early Slayers that humanity really could defeat the Behemoths that threatened their continued existence.

THE DRASK SET

The Drask set was our first attempt to combine a Behemoth's appearance and power with Slayer weapons and armour. In this design, green scales provide protection while red fins accentuate style and curves. We experimented with multiple mask concepts before arriving at the current design.

EARLY DESIGNS

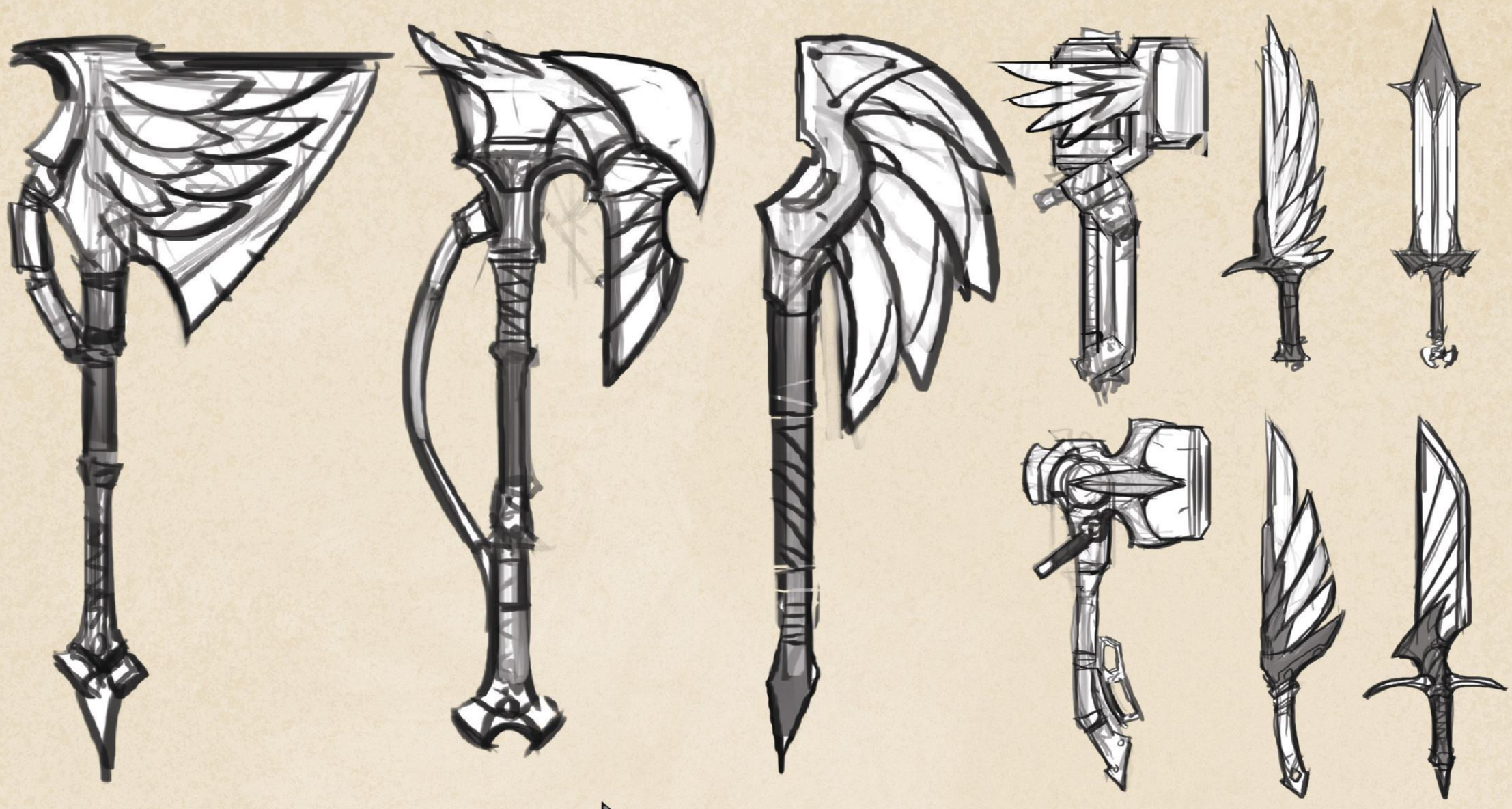
The Drask's fins were a big influence early on, but we ultimately moved away from these concepts. They felt too sci-fi and alien for *Dauntless*.

DRASK WEAPONS

The Drask axe was the first axe we conceived—even before the steel axe. It featured jagged, rough edges powered by aether tubes.

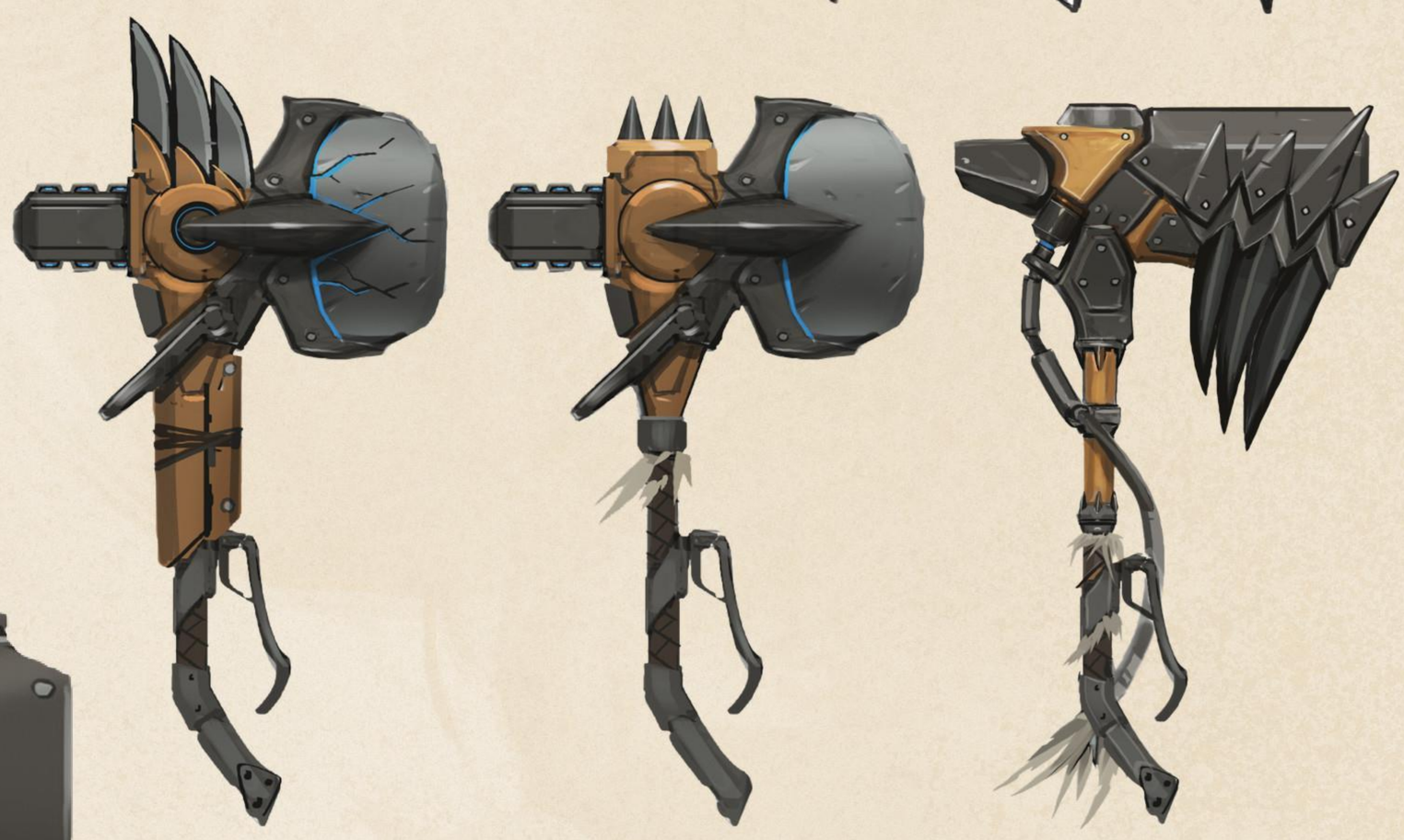
THE SHRIKE SET

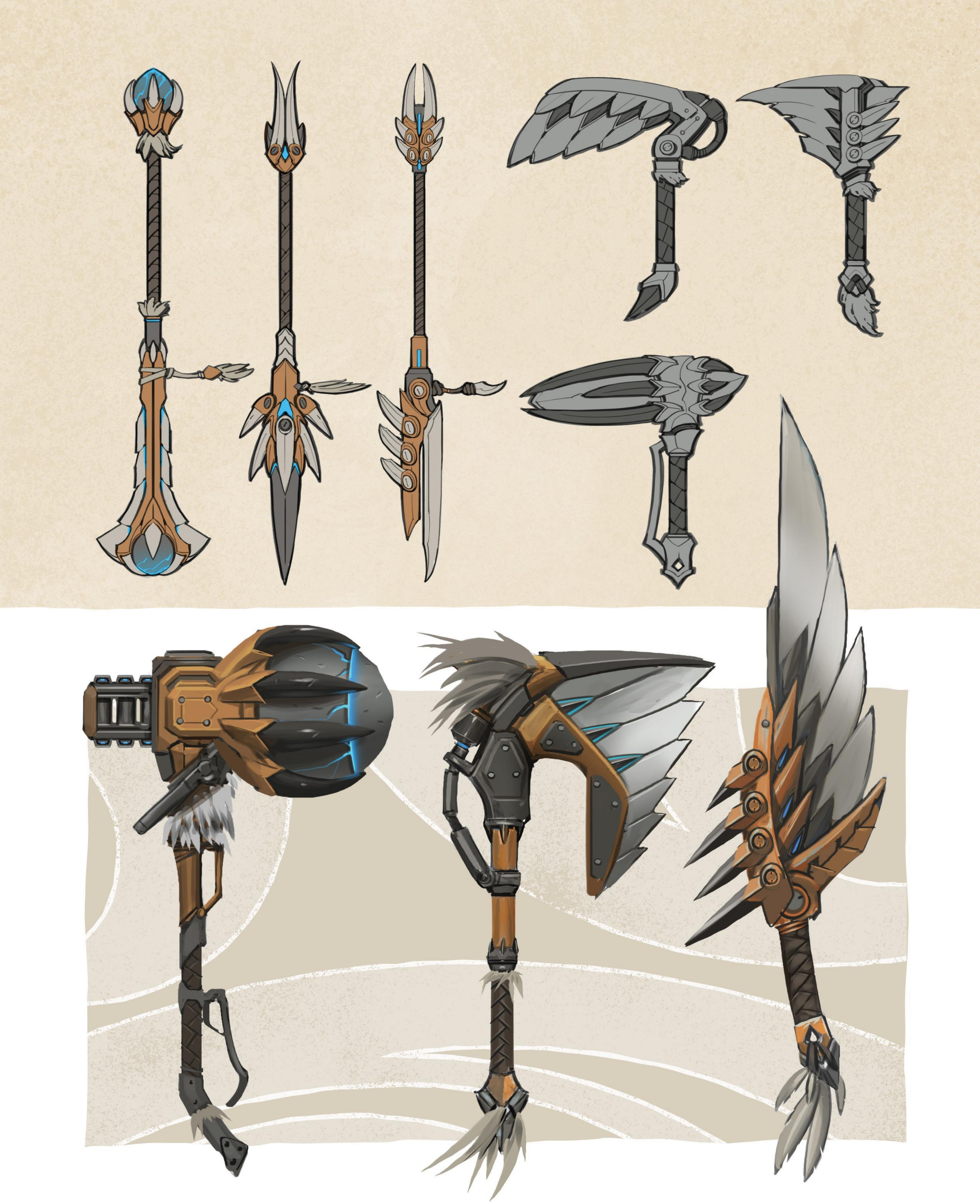
The Shrike set features a variety of plumes and feathers borrowed from the Behemoth's owl-like body. Durable steel and plate marry with these softer materials to create a dual-natured protective set. We incorporated the Shrike's talons into the greaves, really dialing up the avian theme for this armour.



SHRIKE WEAPONS

While feathers lend themselves naturally to armour and clothing, they're a little trickier to build into weapons. We chose sharp edges that featured a layered, serrated look for texture—an homage to the beast from which these weapons come from.



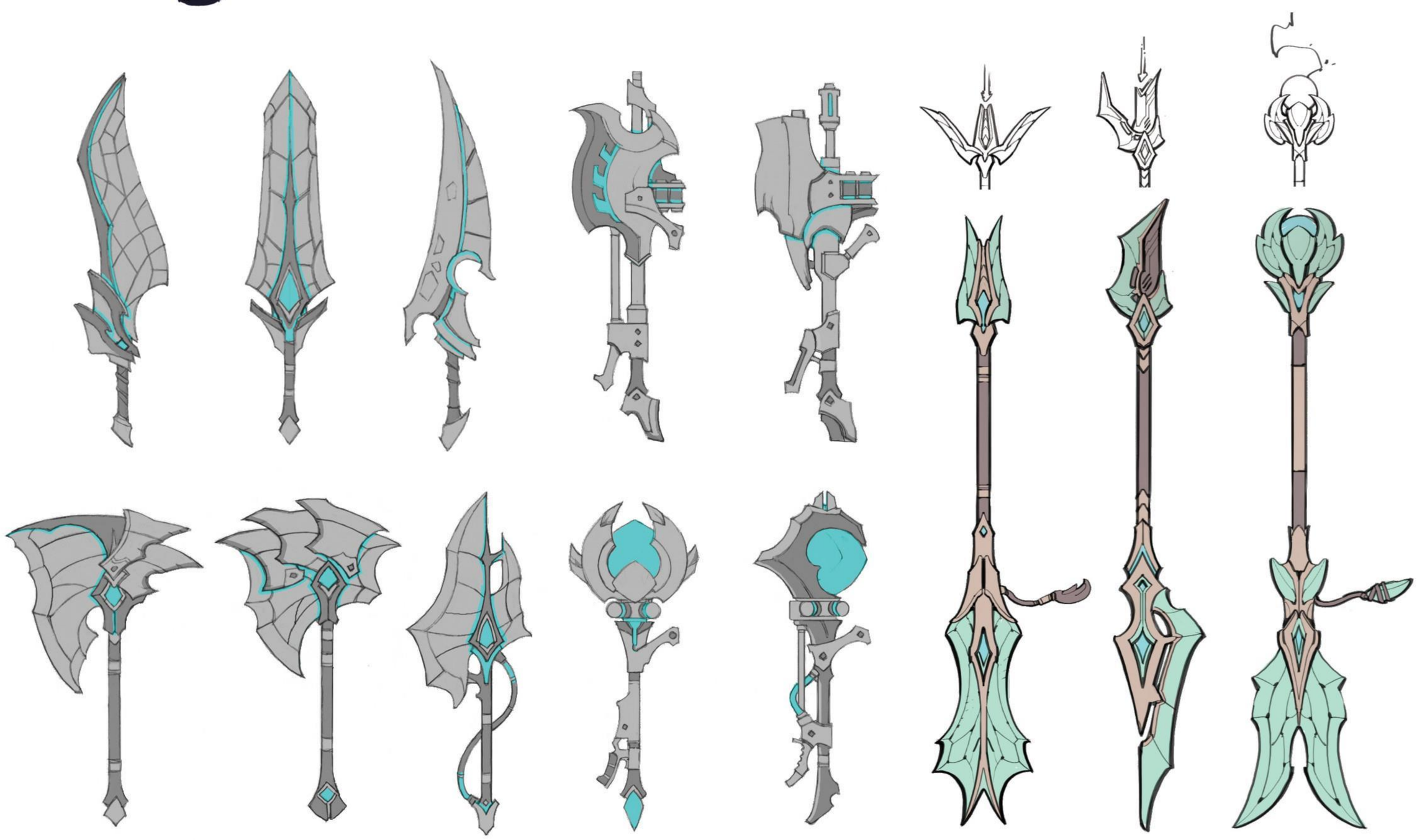


THE SKRAEV SET

The Skraev hails from a colder climate, so we wanted its armour to feature a warm and bundled look, complete with lush furs and billowy feathers. When the snow is dumping and the wind is howling, a Slayer needs more than just a weapon to survive in the Shattered Isles—they need protection from the elements. This thinking also inspired the owl-eyed "goggles" helmet.

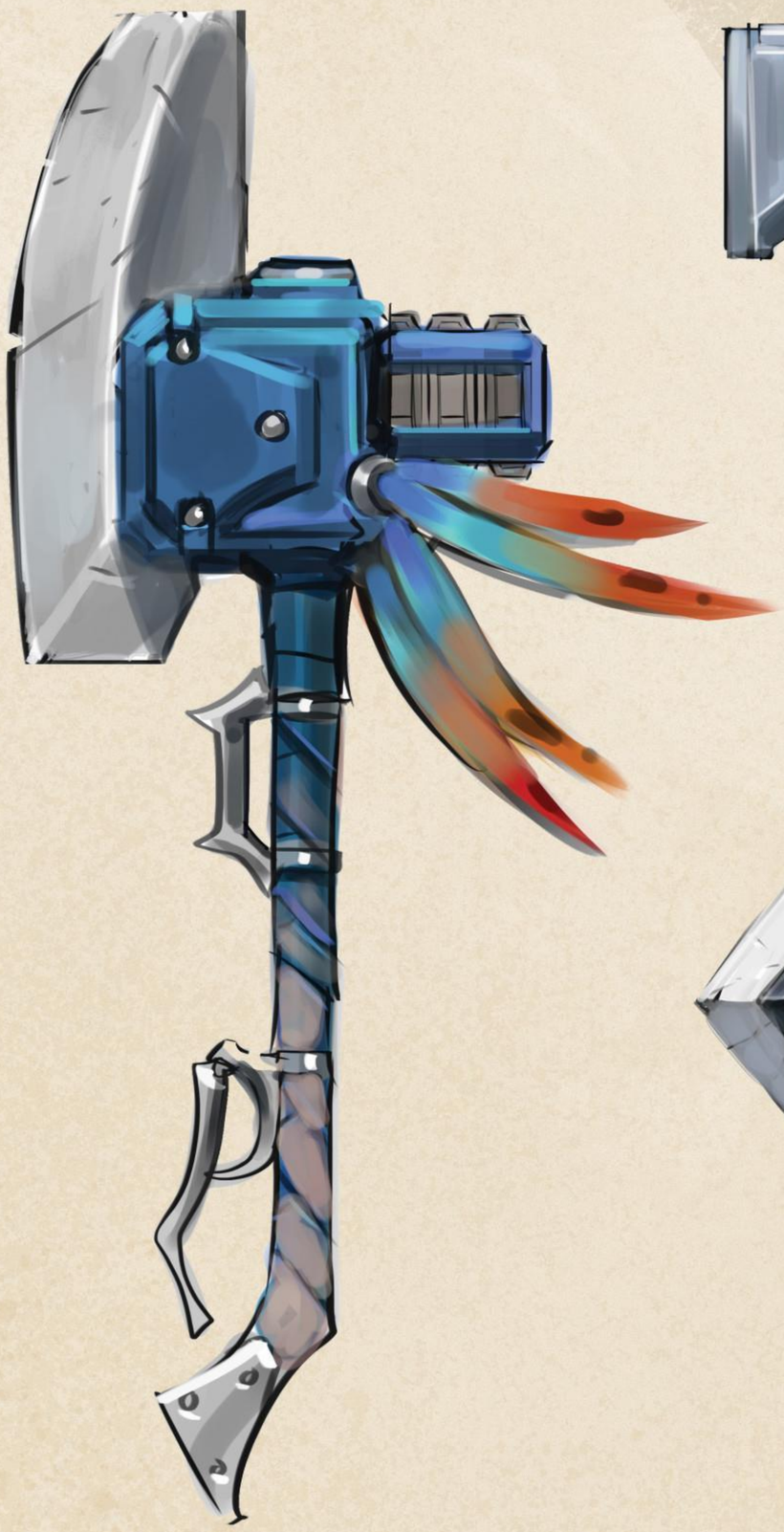
THE REZAKIRI SET

The Rezakiri set was a great exploration in how futuristic our armours could go. Drawing inspiration from the beast's hard carapace, this armour is a departure from our usual organic themes. The sci-fi theme also gave us the freedom to explore some new ideas, such as gems, lights, and modern plating. The visor was especially fun to design.



THE EMBERMANE SET

Since we developed the Embermane Behemoth fairly early on, its weapons and armour naturally followed. We wanted to integrate the Behemoth's iconic horn and feathers, as well as its sharp, grasping claws. The final armour features a nice asymmetry with the horn on the shoulder. Smaller touches, like the toothed necklace, really draw out the character in this set. For the weapons, we prominently feature the Embermane's horn—a visual testament to the raw power of Behemoths.



THE GNASHER SET

The Gnasher is defined by its wild fur and massive tail—elements that gave rise to the "frontiersman" look of its armour. Big, bushy seams and billowing fur abound. As for the weapons, we knew we wanted to incorporate the Gnasher's big buck teeth. Any Slayer worth their salt knows that these make for fierce weapons.

THE QUILLSHOT SET

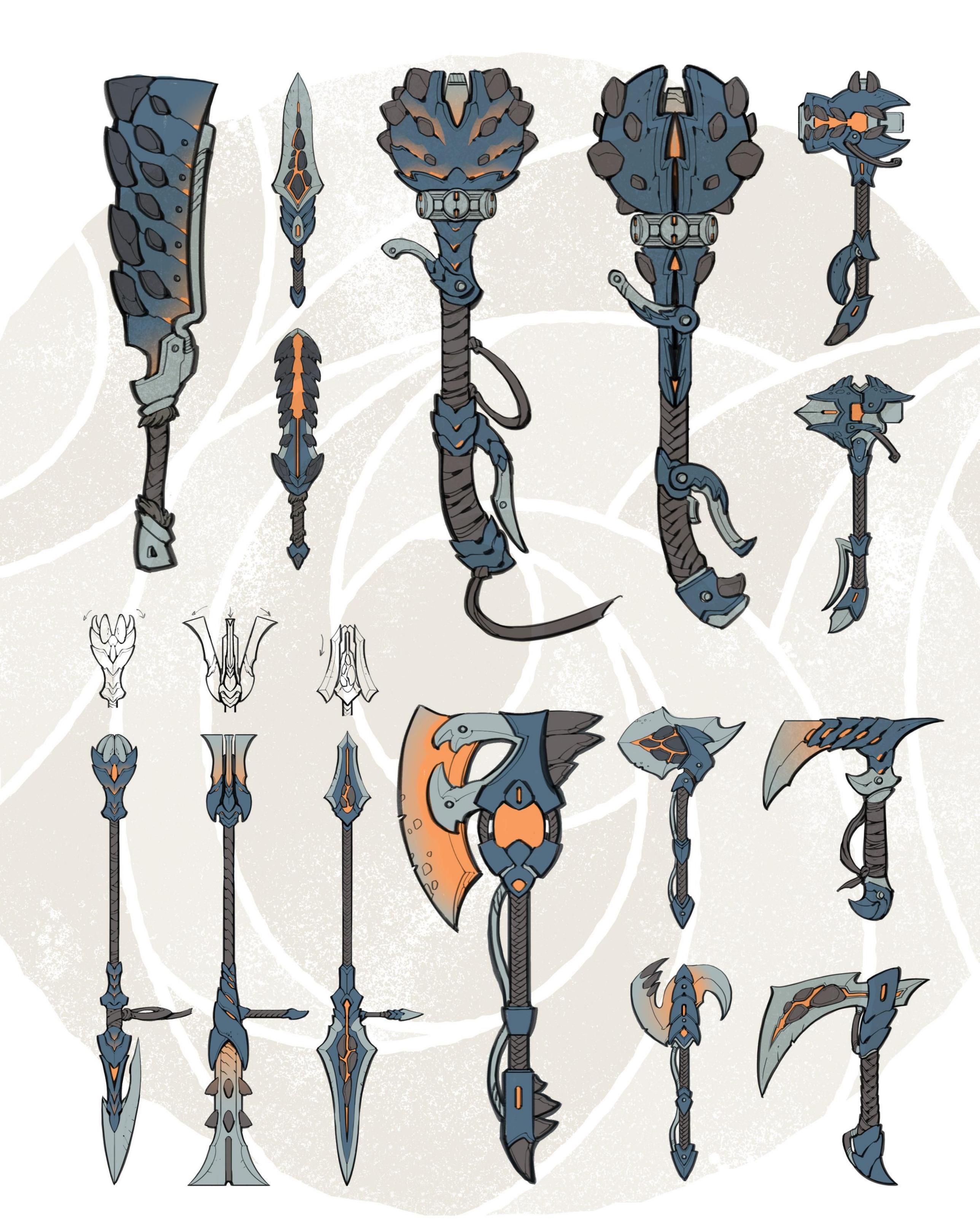
The Quillshot is synonymous with its spines, which we incorporated throughout its weapons and armour—including the "spiked bat" take on the sword. We wanted to push this design into a more ragtag, wasteland space. Something from the future but rooted in '80s punk fashion. The tusked mask, open jacket, and torn pants scream style over practicality: a perfect choice for reckless Slayers who have not only seen hell but have chosen to wear it.

ARMOUR EXPLORATION

When we were designing the helmet for the Quillshot set we tried a couple different treatments. The tusks were a must—but where to put them? We landed on the mask look because it played into the anarchic style of the armour and helped distinguish it from other armour sets.

THE CHARROGG SET

"The Space Barbarian," as we dubbed it at the studio, features big, bulbous plates and scales. If the Rezakiri armour is a vision from the future, the Charrogg armour is a throwback to the pre-historic era. The Charrogg's unique skin texture allowed us to create some truly different looks for all of its gear. Hints of fire are visible in each of the weapons.



THE PANGAR SET

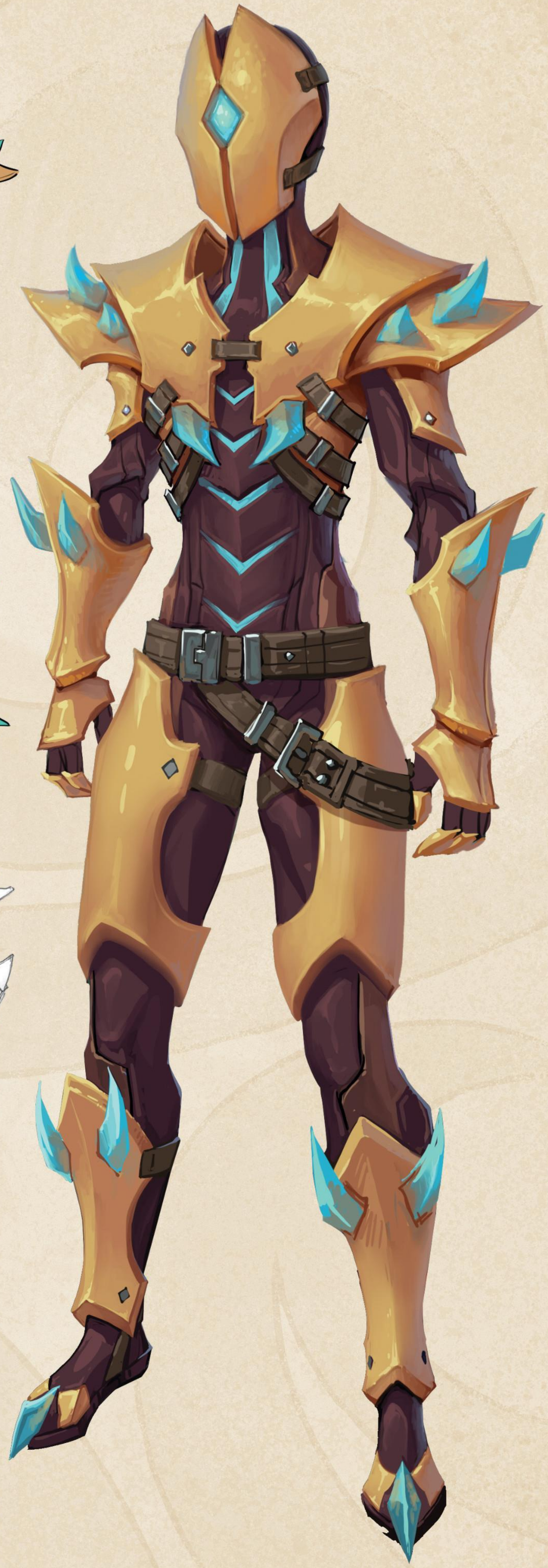
The Pangar's trademark is rolling, so its armour and weapons incorporate that same sense of motion. Curved edges and round lines define each piece. Since the Pangar's massive tail is a terror on the battlefield, we brought it into focus with the coattails on the armour.

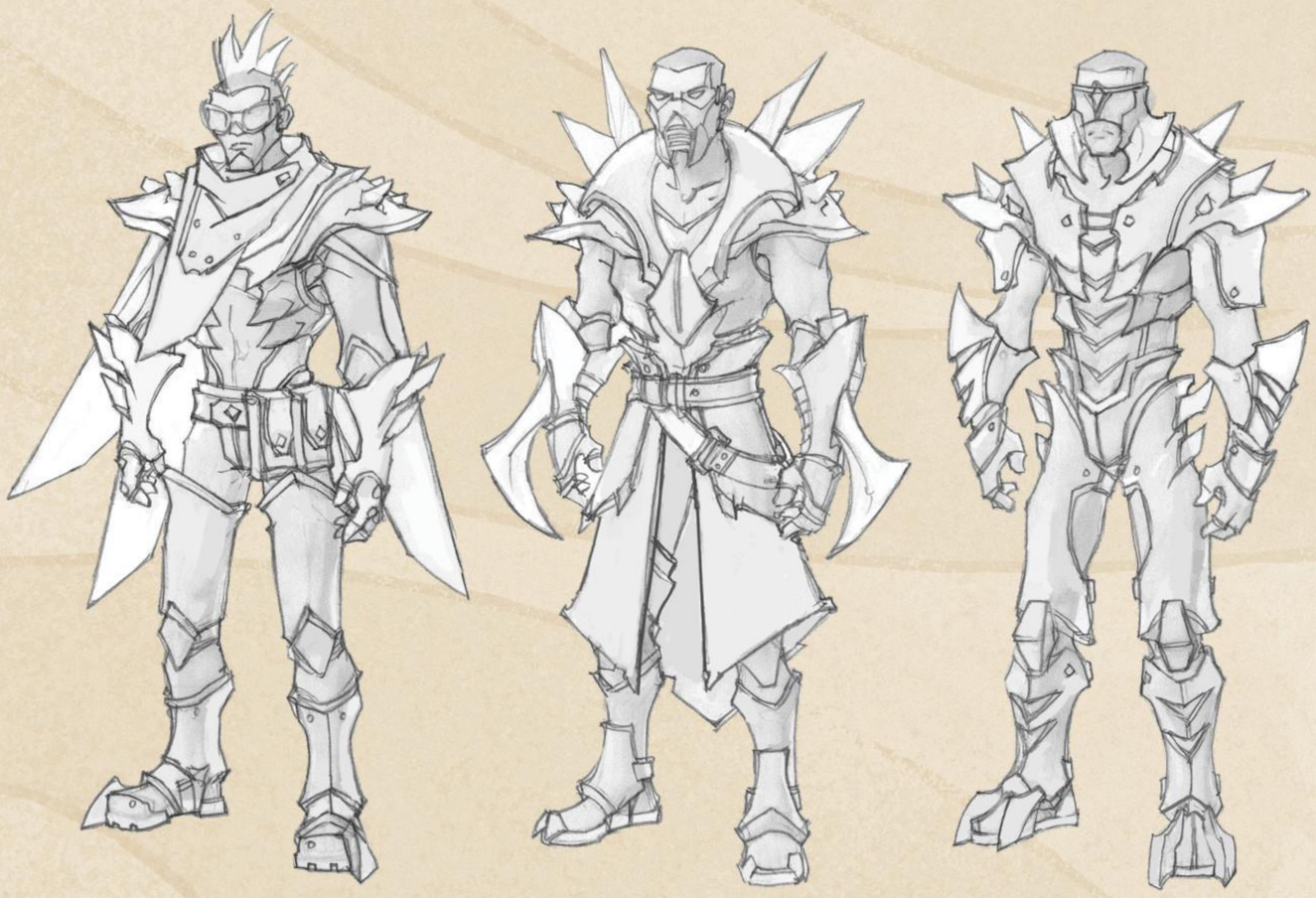
THE HELLION SET

The Hellion's fearsome fire and lava affinity comes across in a variety of points and edges. Craggy shapes define this set, recalling a volcano about to erupt.

THE STORMCLAW SET

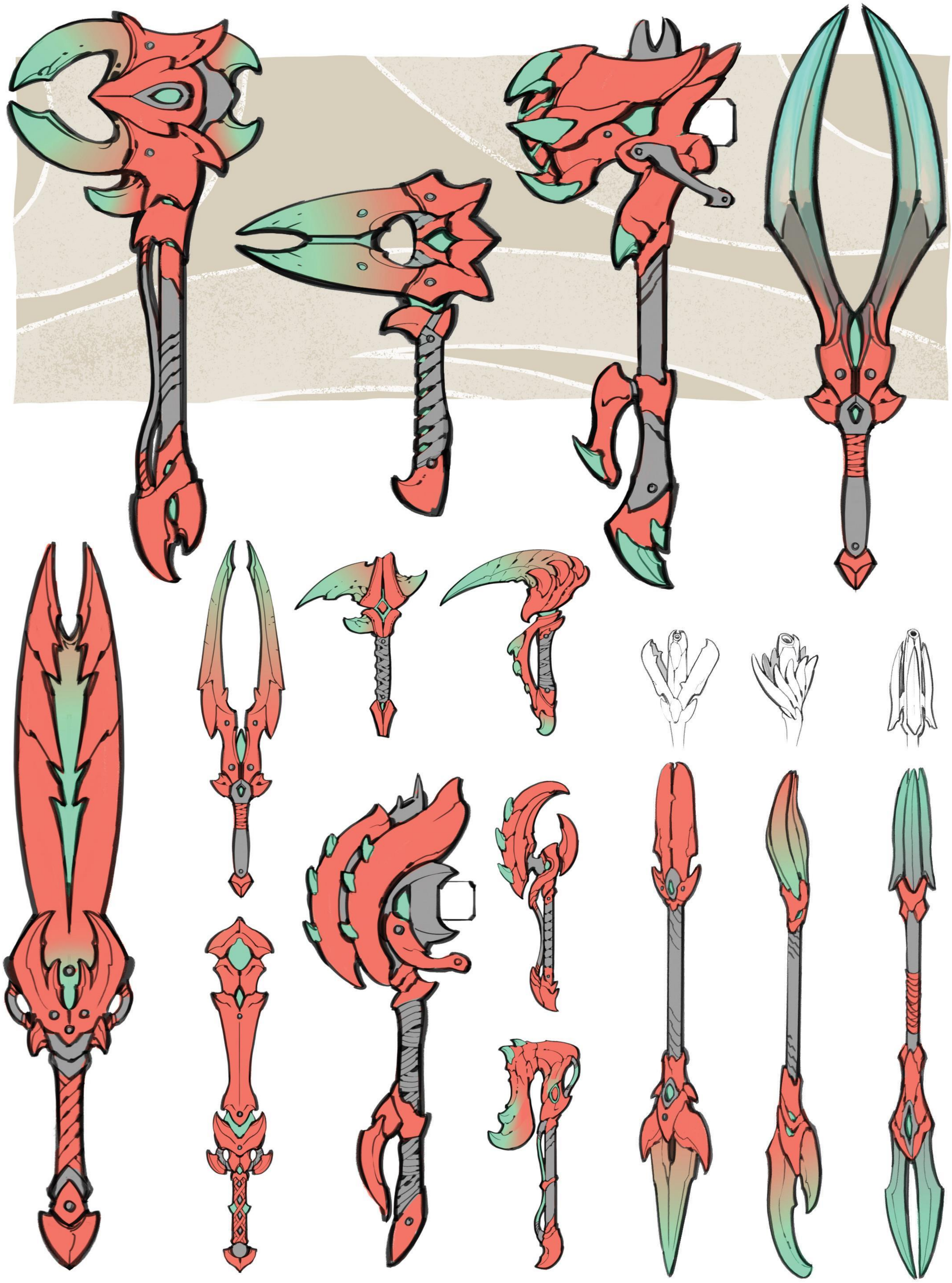
For the Stormclaw set, we drew inspiration from classic Asian designs to create a ninja-like theme. Sharp talons punctuate lightweight plating with stylish cloth underneath. And, of course, no Stormclaw set would be complete without the Behemoth's signature horns on the helm.





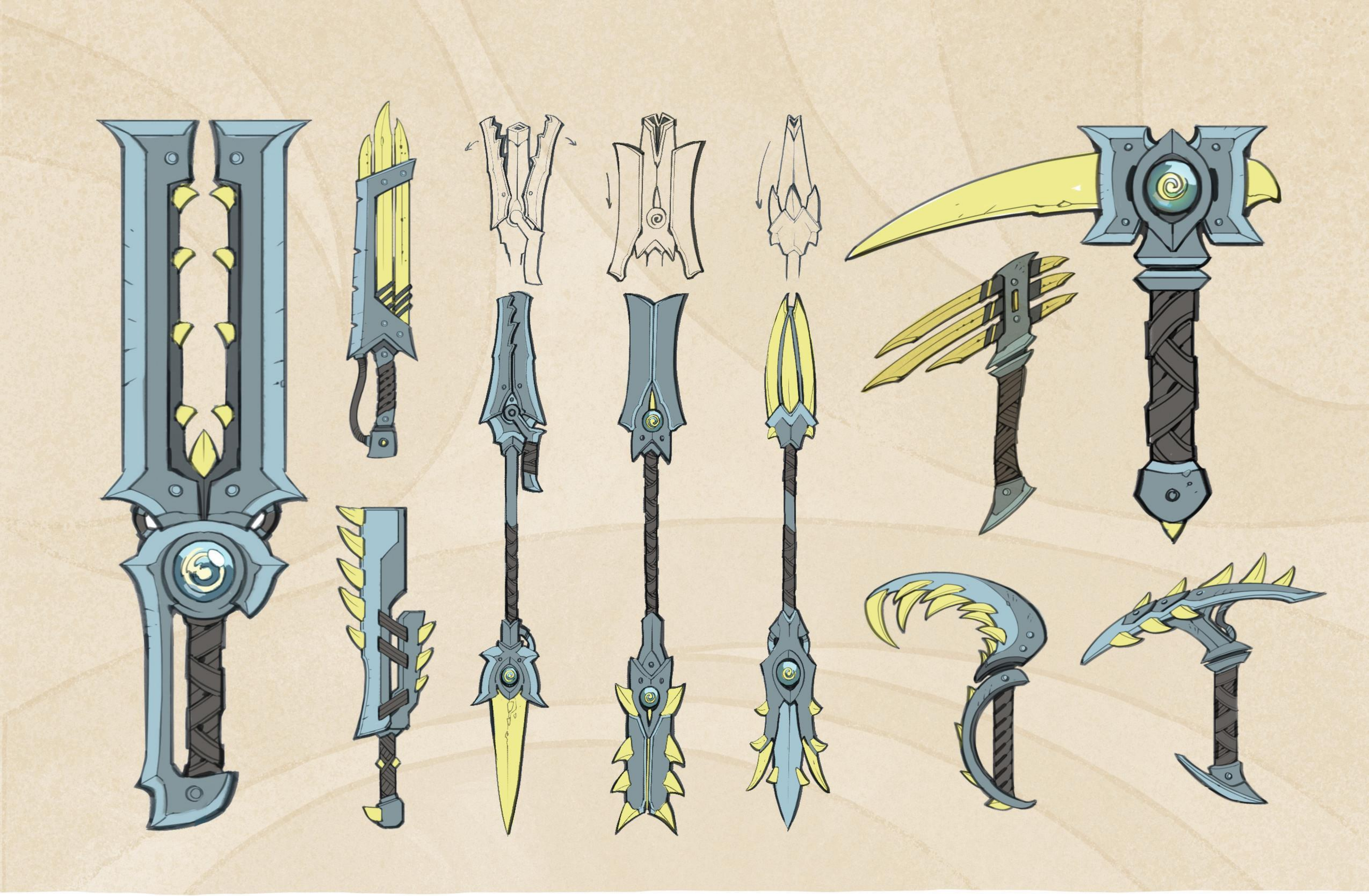
THE KHARABAK SET

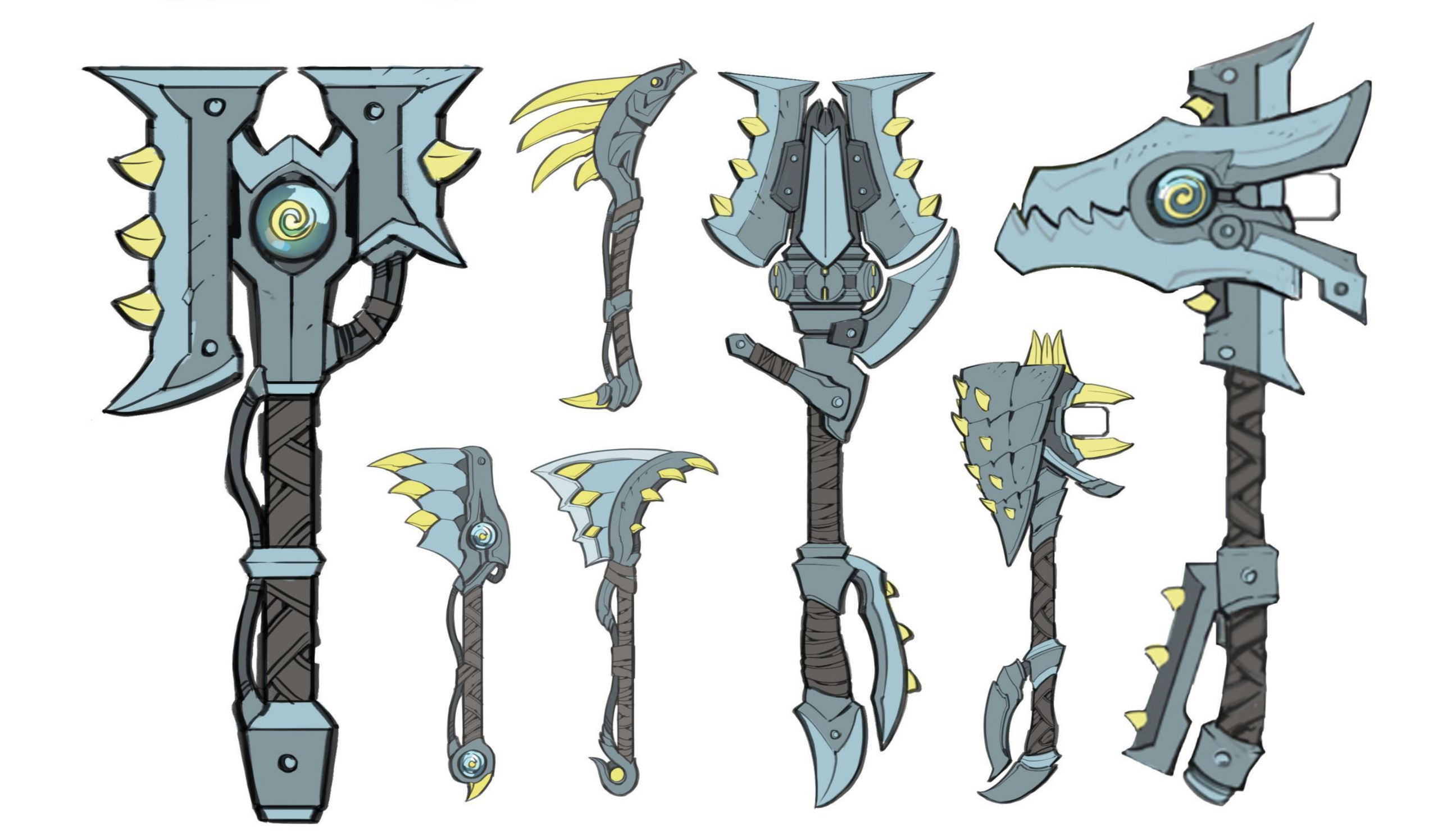
The Kharabak set really draws its inspiration from the insectoid nature of the Behemoth while its bladed weapons invoke its terrifying pincer talons. For the armour, we decided to push things creatively, opting for a futuristic feel that integrated the Kharabak's insect plating and spikes.



THE NAYZAGA SET

With the Nayzaga set we wanted to create a lab scientist aesthetic; something modern and scientific, but also reinforced for protection. We liked the coat so much that it inspired some real-life *Dauntless*-themed apparel offerings.





THE SHROWD SET

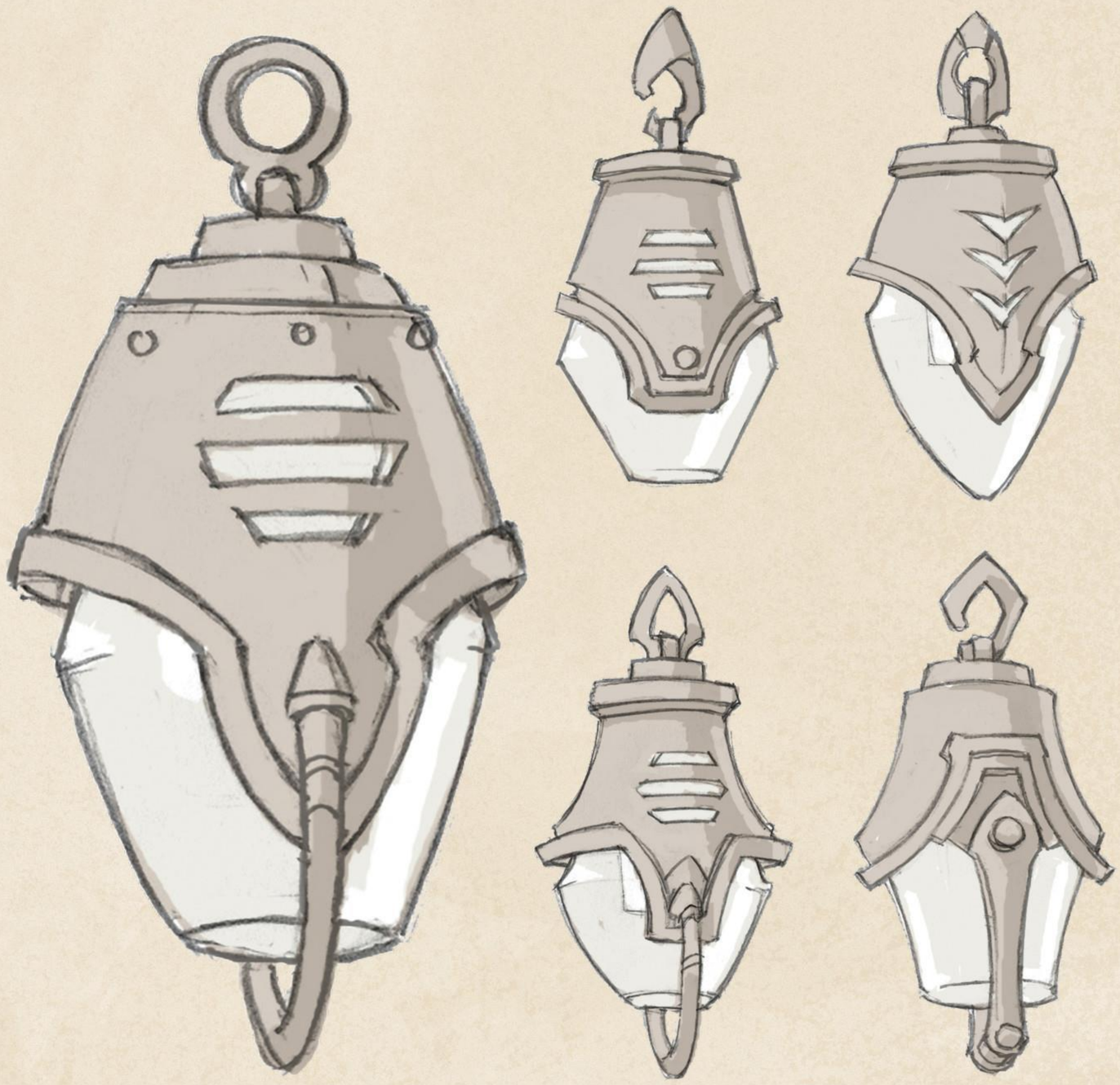
The Shrowd's unique physical appearance, specifically the feathers and beak, gave rise to this "plague doctor" look very early on. This was one of the unique cases where the armour design would go on to influence the visual design of the Behemoth. With the weapons, we wanted the Behemoth's otherworldly nature to dictate the curves and unnatural shapes.

THE SKARN SET

If the Skarn benefits from big rocky plates for protection, so too should the Slayer. The Skarn armour features big chunky rocks to protect its wearer, but also thin wavy fabric for an extra sense of flair. The weapons share similar inspiration, forged with thick blocks of rock to bash and break a Slayer's target.

LANTERNS

Every Slayer is granted a lantern before they venture into the frontier; but this is no mere light source. Each lantern can harness and house the power of aether to unlock potent abilities. They can even function as radios to allow Slayers to communicate with their airships! Infusing the power of Behemoths into lanterns further augments them in new and exciting ways. Here we see a variety of early concepts we designed for the many lanterns in the game today.

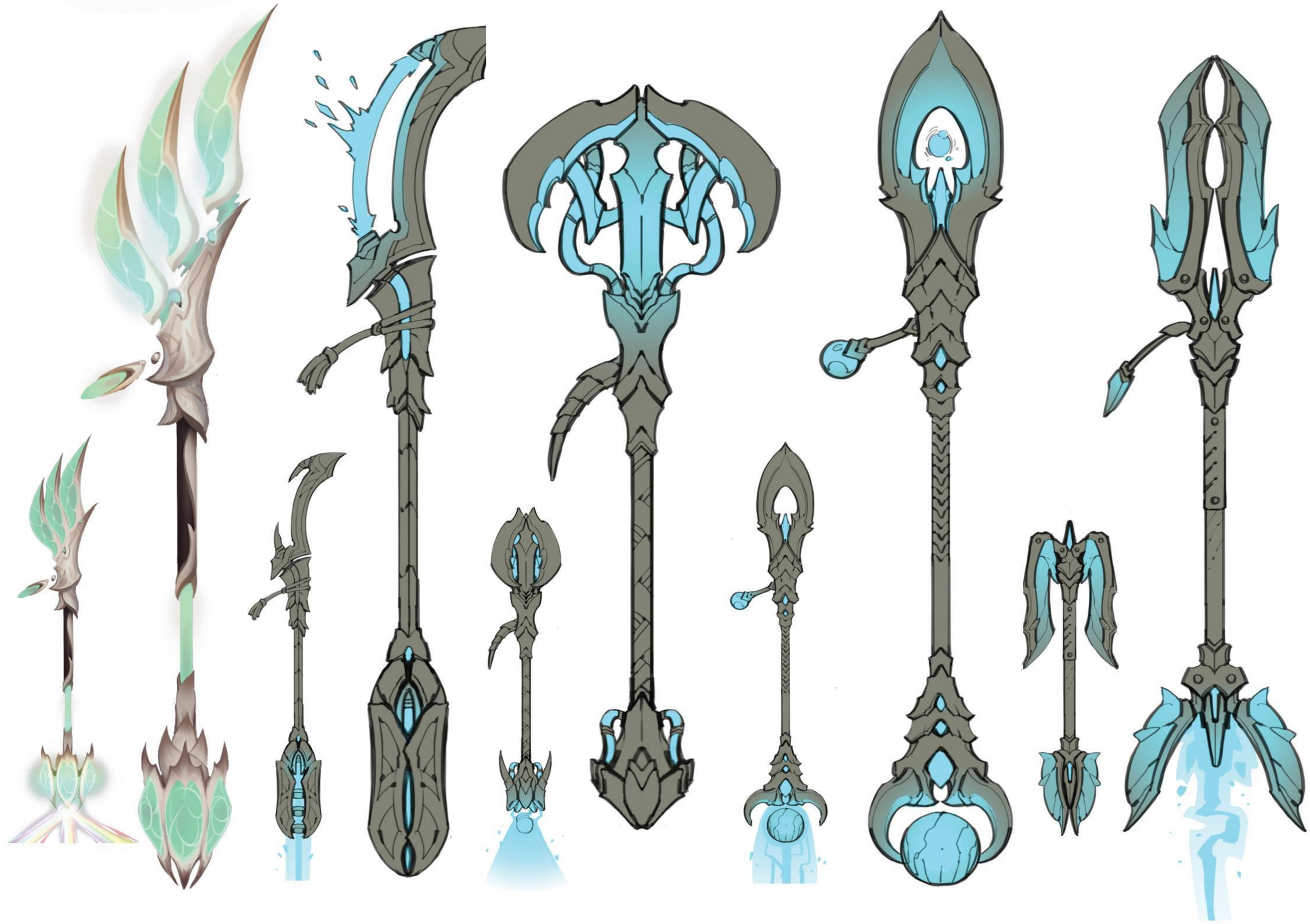


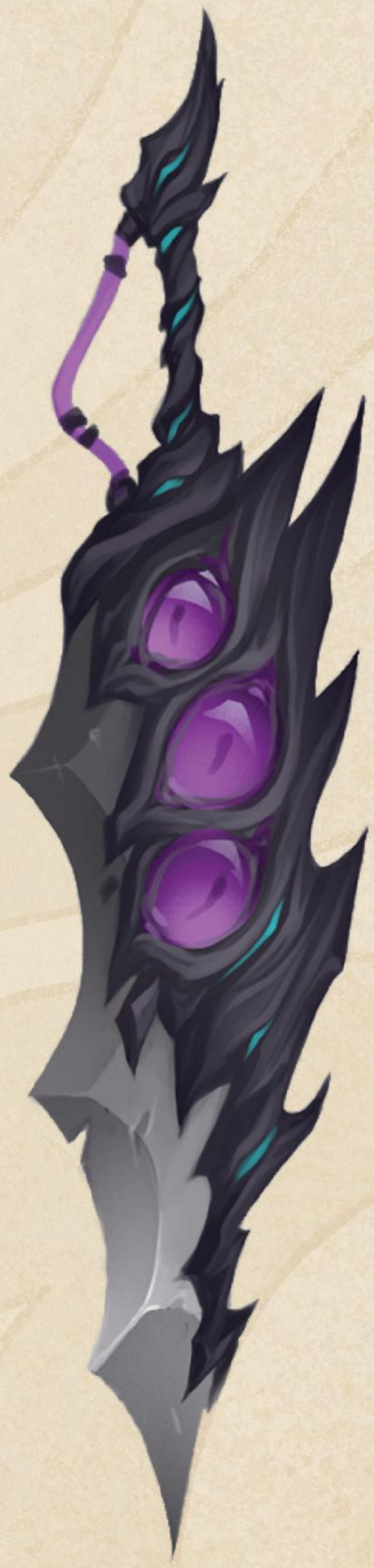
EXOTICS

Exotics represent the rarest and most powerful equipment in the Shattered Isles. While every Slayer seeks out their components, only the most elite and seasoned can wield them in combat. Exotics are further evolutions of existing weapons and armour, providing not only unique styles but powerful abilities. Here are some early explorations into our first exotic items.

REZAKIRI EXOTICS

The first exotics implemented in *Dauntless* were the Rezakiri's Prismatic Gaze (helmet) and the Godhand (war pike). Prismatic Gaze needed to further accentuate the Behemoth's luminescent wings while the Godhand featured amplified radiant aether elements.

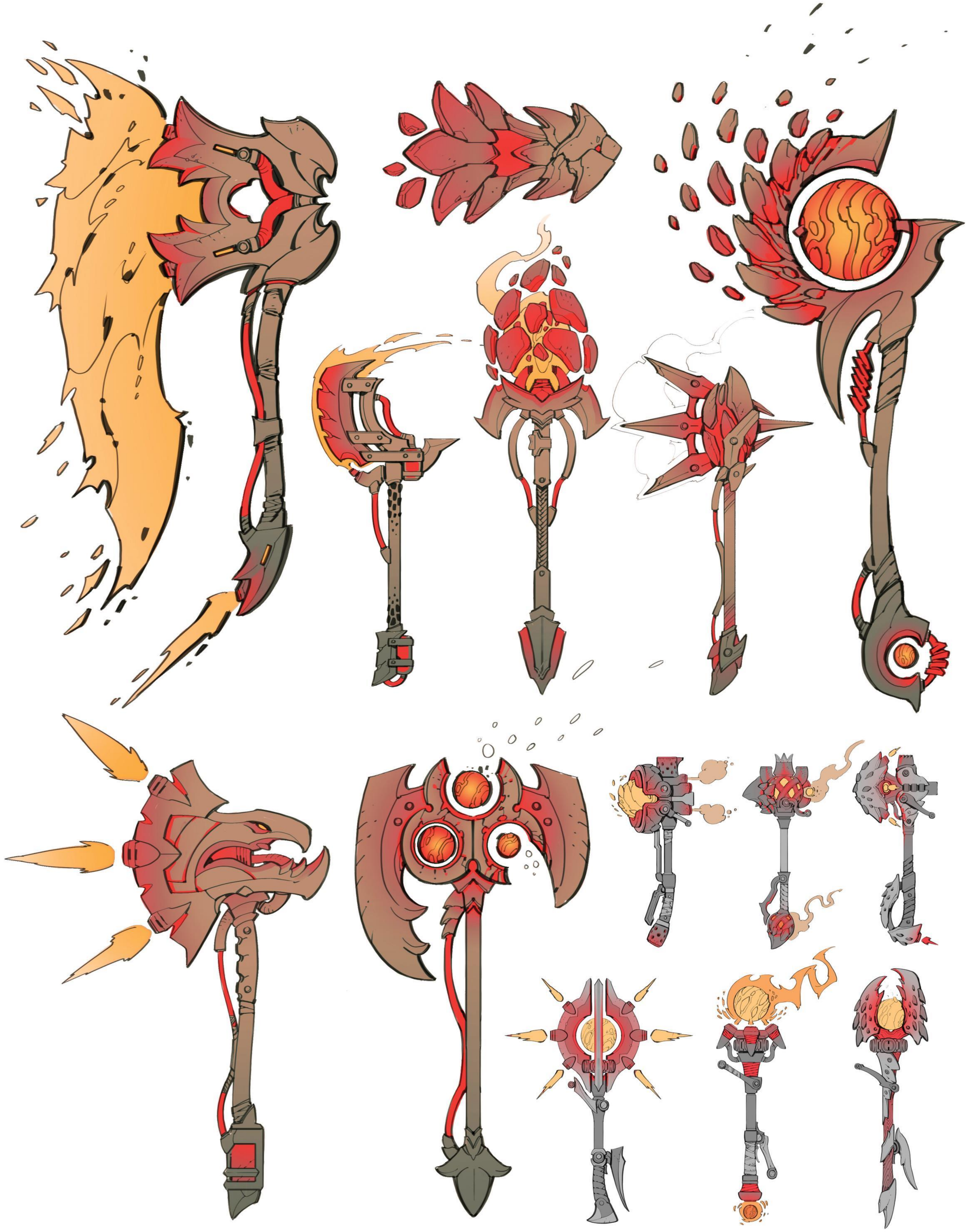




SHROWD EXOTICS

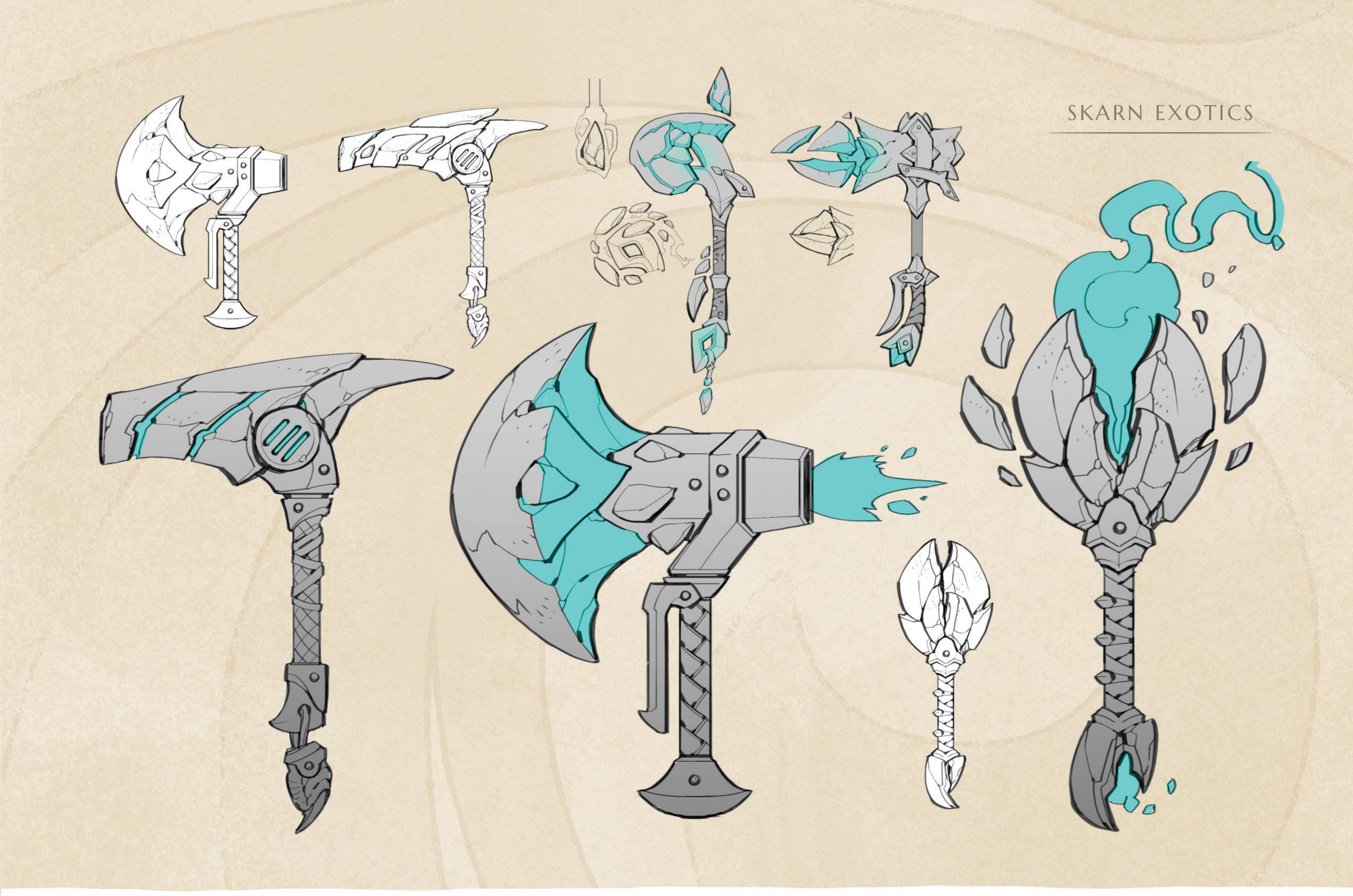
Another early addition to *Dauntless*, Tragic Echo (helmet) and the Hunger (sword) amplify Shrowd's otherworldly umbral power. We were inspired by the stuff of nightmares for both pieces, and as an added touch on the Hunger we animated the eyes to blink and frantically survey its surroundings.

GNASHER EXOTICS



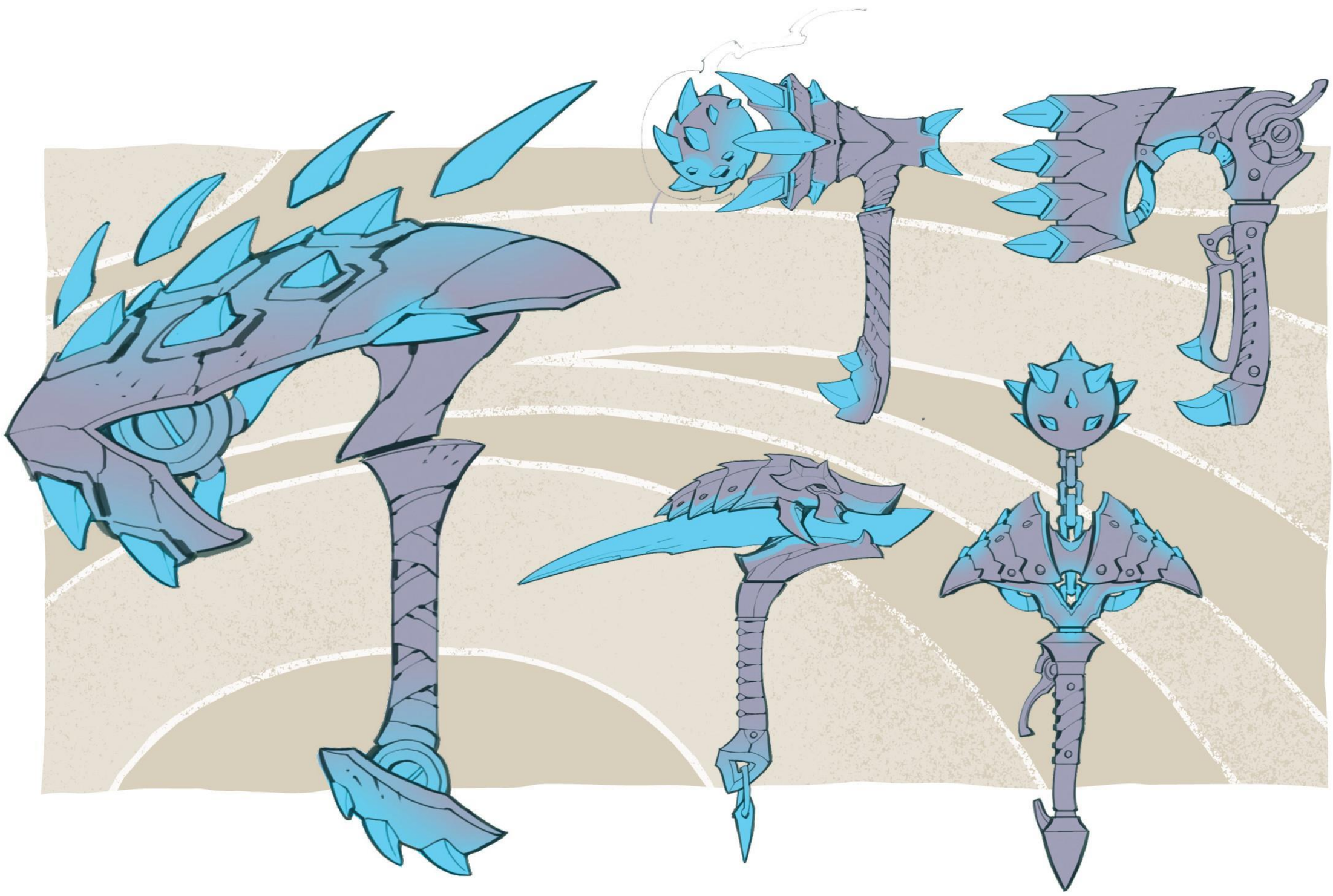
CHAROGG EXOTICS

SKARN EXOTICS

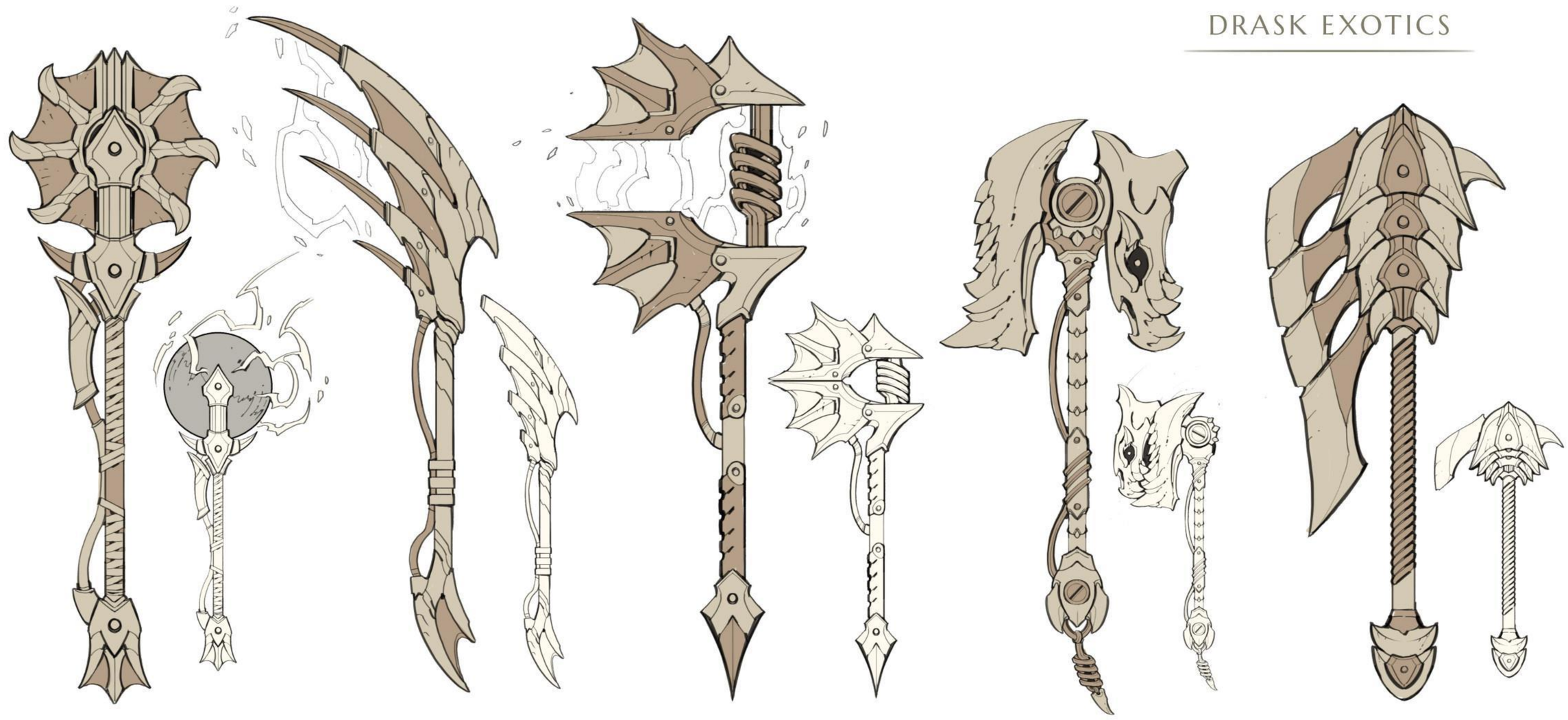


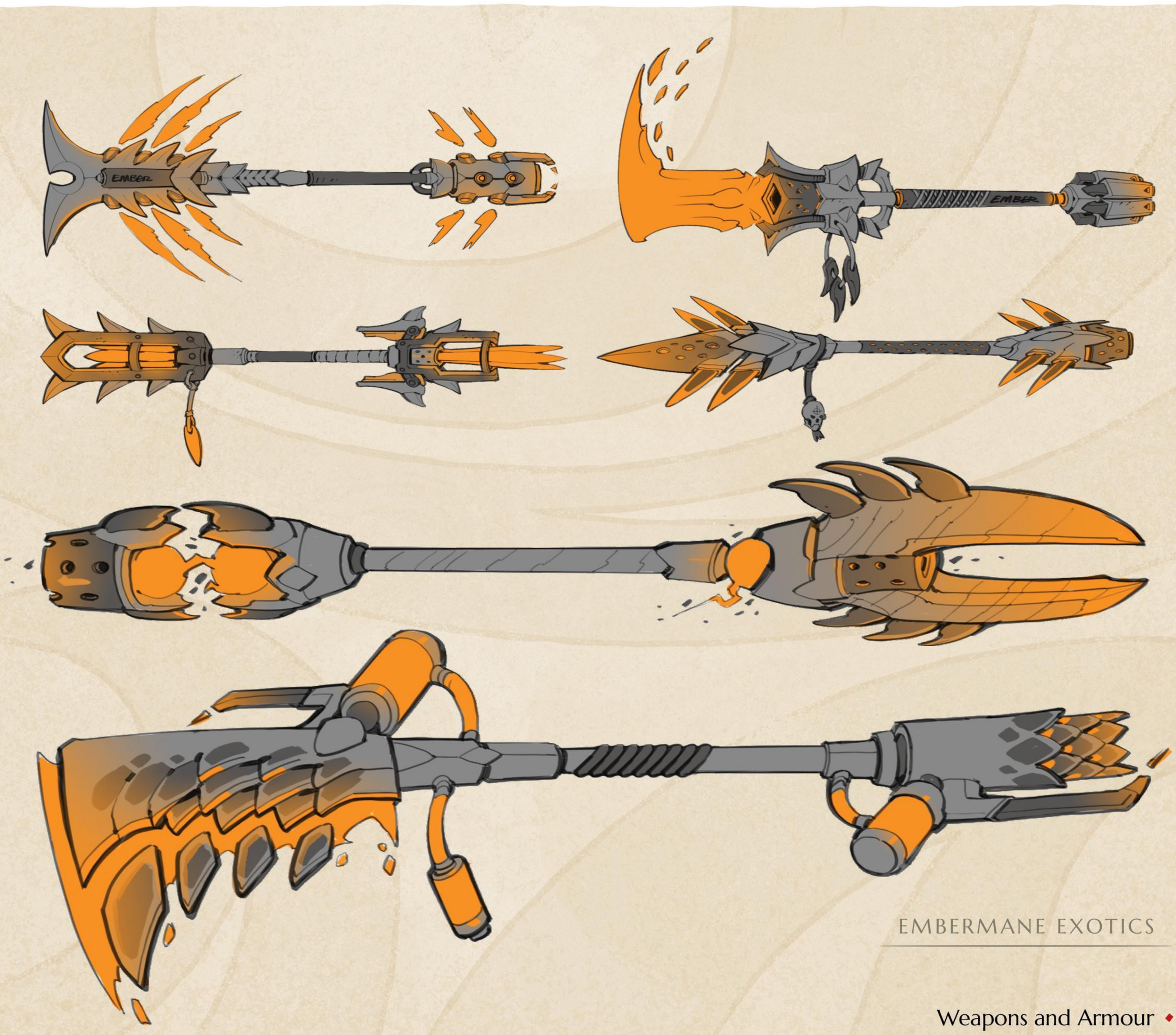
SHRIKE EXOTICS

QUILLSHOT EXOTICS



DRASK EXOTICS





EMBERMANE EXOTICS

THE ART OF DAUNTLESS™

MASTER THE HUNT AND FORGE YOUR LEGEND!

Dauntless is a fresh take on the action-RPG genre, developed by industry veterans from Riot Games, BioWare, and other acclaimed studios. After a cataclysmic event, mankind survives in a harsh, yet majestic world of floating islands. Ferocious beasts known as Behemoths now stalk the earth. You are a Slayer, an elite warrior who risks life and limb hunting the Behemoth threat. On your journey, you'll forge an extraordinary arsenal of weapons and gear to overcome formidable challenges threatening our survival. Now, you have a unique opportunity to witness the creation of this magnificent epic like never before.

Dark Horse Books and Phoenix Labs are thrilled to present the most intimate look at the development of the game with *The Art of Dauntless*, a meticulously curated tome full of hundreds of pieces of concept art, each paired with exclusive commentary from the team that created it.