

# Asheron's Call:

## **Redefining The Role Of Player Killing**

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In the past few years, a new genre of gaming matured for the mass market – the genre of Massively-Multiplayer-Online-Games (MMOGs). Games like Ultima Online, Everquest, Asheron’s Call, and the others that followed blurred the line between gaming and reality. No longer could the player save his progress at any stage, shut down the game, and return to it later to find it in the same state. The virtual worlds of these MMOGs were persistent – life moved on even if some players were offline. Virtual societies developed, complete with their own politics and history. The designers simply provided some basic rules and framework, and the players themselves did the rest by “living” their virtual lives.

One of the pieces of framework provided in MMOGs is the ability to fight other human characters, as opposed to just non-player monsters. Player vs. Player combat (hereafter referred to as PvP combat), or more commonly known as player killing, allows players to battle the toughest opponents in any game – humans themselves. Unfortunately, in the first two MMOGs, Ultima Online and Everquest, the idea of PvP combat was not balanced to satisfy the majority of the players. In Ultima Online, player killers (hereafter referred to as PKs) actually ravaged peaceful players and, after killing them, looted the players’ items from their corpses. Many customers were furious! As Al Giovetti describes, “Ultima was never about player killing, it was about good role playing. [It] has seriously degenerated to an unfulfilling romp which resembles Quake and Diablo” (Giovetti 3). Many players quit the game altogether – as Lou Capuano states, “I simply could not take the player killing anymore” (Giovetti 3). The Ultima Online team later separated its worlds into parallel PK and non-PK universes, effectively separating player killers from peaceful citizens (Dibbell). However, this basically split the world’s politics and economy into two, eliminating any PK influence on the regular

worlds. In Everquest, PKs were not separated from non-PKs, but the PK population in general was very low. The player had to decide during character creation whether he or she wanted to partake in PvP combat – and if he/she chose to be a PK, there was no turning back – the character could never be reverted to non-PK status (Adrenaline Vault 1). Faced with such a harsh choice early in their Everquest careers, most players turned away from PvP combat and chose to lead a more peaceful life. Player killing did not contribute to the societies of either Ultima Online or Everquest – it was first too brutal and then quarantined in Ultima Online, and it was almost nonexistent in Everquest. Player killing came to be seen as a coarse, aggressive, and malicious activity, which was reserved for an elite few and often detracted from most players' enjoyment of the game... until November 1999.

Asheron's Call was the third MMOG released in the United States. This game redefined the role of PvP combat in virtual societies. Asheron's Call succeeded where Ultima Online and Everquest failed – it integrated the PK and non-PK communities into one, and it allowed players to do something that no other game could – create a unique PK culture rich with its own politics and history – a PK culture that actually affected the rest of the virtual world!

This paper will first examine how player killing in Asheron's Call was implemented and then describe the amazing PK culture that arose within the game, and by doing so demonstrate how this PK culture affected the entire population of Dereth, the world within Asheron's Call. The goal of this paper is to show how Asheron's Call redefined the idea of player killing and how it set the stage for the MMOGs that followed.

First of all, it is important to understand the significance of this topic. “Like the real-time strategy game frenzy of a few years ago, MMOG games are popping up like desert weeds after rain,” explains Gordon Walton, an industry veteran who worked on Ultima Online and The Sims Online, during his talk at 2003’s Game Developers Conference (qtd. in Kosak 1). In fact, as Walton continues, over 100 persistent-state worlds are in development right now (1). This new genre of gaming has a tremendous potential, because it can appeal to larger markets than ever before. As Turbine Entertainment’s website predicts, “by 2006, worldwide consumers will spend \$2.7 billion dollars on MMOG subscriptions” (“Industry Fast Facts: MMOG Sector” 1).

Some of the persistent worlds released after Asheron’s Call, such as Dark Ages of Camelot, and others still in development, such as Shadowbane, include PvP combat as a major part of their dynamics. While the idea of PvP combat is not new – it has been around since early games like Spacewar – it takes on a new perspective in these new MMOGs. As Julian Dibbell describes, players have a real monetary and emotional investment in these online worlds. Not only do they pay subscription fees, but they also invest countless hours upon hours developing in-game relationships, advancing their avatars, and finding rare items (Dibbell). Player killing can ruin everything that players worked hard for, as seen in the original Ultima Online. The trick, then, is to manage the PvP dynamic in such a way that it satisfies the majority of the players. The developers need to create a framework, under which customers will continue paying subscription fees and enjoying the game. That means that non-PKs must be able to enjoy the game safely, while PKs can still be allowed to influence the world’s political and historical culture by their actions against each other. Therefore, the significance of this topic is tremendous. The new upcoming MMOGs, which have a potentially enormous market,

must achieve the balance of PK and non-PK fields very well in order for this genre of gaming to succeed and expand.

As mentioned earlier, Asheron's Call was the first MMOG that was able to strike a good balance for how player killing fits into the rest of the game's world. In order to see how this is true, the reader must first familiarize him/herself with some background information on the concepts and the people behind Asheron's Call.

The idea for Asheron's Call was born in May 1995 – a “3D graphical MUD,” as Toby Ragaini, the lead designer for the game, describes (Ragaini 1). The development team, part of Turbine Entertainment Software, was divided into basic functional departments, led by Tim Brennen, who designed the server, networking, and character database, Chris Dyl, who developed the 3D graphics engine and the server-side physics, and Andy Reiff, responsible for the functional interactions in the game world. Jason Booth and Sean Huxter led the art team, designing, modeling, and animating characters for the game. Toby Ragaini himself headed the design team, which created the characters, monsters, history, and the timeline of the fantasy world called Dereth (Ragaini 1). Initially, Asheron's Call was designed to support only 200 simultaneous players, each paying an hourly fee. The game was scheduled to ship in the fourth quarter of 1997. As the project progressed, it became more and more ambitious. The team expanded to over 30 full-time developers, including 6 artists, 4 game designers, 15 software engineers, and 5 testers (Ragaini 4).

In late 1997 and early 1998, previews of Asheron's Call began to appear. New details were revealed – the increased population capacity, details on the seamless terrain environment and the 3D engine, and, most importantly, on how PvP combat was to be handled. As John Grande, the product planner for Microsoft Internet Gaming Zone,

described in one of the early interviews, “we’ve put a lot of thought into the handling of player killing in the game, especially given the time that we, the product team, have spent playing the competitor’s games” (qtd. in Mayer 1). Basically, as Grande states, “players decide whether they want to participate in player killing or not” (1). Although this sounds somewhat like the idea behind PvP combat in Everquest, there is one very important difference. In Asheron’s Call, players can choose whether they wish to become PKs at any time during their careers. They can also revert back to non-PK status after they don’t want to engage in PvP combat any more. This idea is not new – Jeremy Gaffney, the chief technology officer for Turbine, elaborates: “we’ve been surprised by all the PK problems other online games have seen... after all, there have been really solid answers to the PK problem on MUDs for years” (qtd. in Mayer 1) – but it hasn’t been implemented in the MMOGs before Asheron’s Call. Of course, the team considered excluding PvP combat from Asheron’s Call altogether, but then, as John Grande states in a different interview, “there would be no direct way for players to challenge each other” (qtd. in Janicki 4). This way, however, some players could fight against each other, while non-PKs would be effectively protected from the risk of death by other players – something that Ultima Online initially failed to implement.

The entire world of Asheron’s Call was at first divided into six parallel servers (two more were added later). A player would create a character on one server and then stay on it – he/she could not move between different servers. The development team also decided to try an experiment and make one of the servers entirely PK. In other words, instead of choosing whether the player wanted to be a PK or not, he/she was born into the world as a PK and stayed that way forever. Named Darktide, this server would evolve to become the toughest training ground a PK could ever wish for.

Finally, delayed long past its original shipping date, Asheron's Call was published in November 1999 by Microsoft Corporation. After 40 months of development and 8 months of beta, the game was ready. The framework for the world was set (for details on the setting, see "A Brief History for Travelers"), the servers were up, and the persistent world was online. It was finally up to the players to make history.

Now that the reader has some basic understanding behind the concept of player killing in Asheron's Call, it is time to examine how the PK culture arose in the game and how this culture actually affected Dereth, differentiating Asheron's Call from the MMOGs that came before.

Shortly after the launch of the game, guilds began to take shape, and soon entire monarchies formed. Eventually, curious players tried PvP combat.

During the first month, it was a very rare sight to see a PK. Only once in a while would one notice a red dot on the radar (on the radar built into the game's interface, monsters show up as orange dots, non-PKs as white dots, and PKs as red dots). On the Morningthaw server, however, approximately two months after the



**The radar in AC.  
The red dots are PKs  
(Author experience).**

launch of the game, the so-called Allegiance Wars took place. Large monarchies – headed by Shiner, Requiem, Killean, and other famous players, literally had wars across the lands of Dereth. All clan members were encouraged to “go red” (the slang for becoming a PK) and slay the enemy allegiances' warriors. Entire cities became home bases to specific guilds. The life of lone PKs was difficult – many were forced to choose a side. Politics began to develop, and the culture of PKs was born.

On Darktide, a single large monarchy formed, headed by the mage called Blood. The monarchy literally swallowed smaller guilds and terrorized the people. New players

born into the world were confronted by higher-level characters of the Blood monarchy and given a choice – join the Bloods or die. Eventually, opposition to the Bloods arose.

The so-called “Antis” were people who were less extreme – they believed that new



**The Bloods raided a dungeon known as the “subway.” Note the number of red dots on the radar. Also note the size of this monarchy: “Monarch: Mushir Blood, Followers: 11,807” (Asheron’s Call Vault).**

players should be allowed a choice, and they fought the Bloods. Darktide allowed for some extreme battles and wars – everyone was a PK, so there was no chance of escaping for long. The Bloods raided towns and common meeting areas, such as the dungeon shown above. The Antis had a difficult time consolidating in one place, and were scattered throughout the lands of Dereth. The situation on Darktide today is basically the same as it was years ago. The war between the Bloods and the Antis continues, and the Bloods maintain dominance over the server. This constant struggle for power is invigorating for many players, who continue their difficult lives on Darktide.



Back on the Morningthaw server, as the Bloods began terrorizing Darktide, a large monarchy began emerging during the Allegiance Wars, headed by a name that will never be forgotten by Morningthaw's players – Demono. Demono's monarchy had very similar principles to that of the Bloods on Darktide. It was the “evil” guild that would terrorize Morningthaw's PK population. The Demono clan grew very quickly and soon acquired many of Morningthaw's best PKs. At this point in time, the game progressed far enough for players to learn well how the game's physics and magic engines worked – and PKs took the most advantage of this knowledge. So-called “god-mode” was discovered. This term does not, as it seems to imply, mean invincibility. It was instead a way for players to cast spells while moving (see the “Archer vs. Mage” video for a demonstration – both the archer and the mage use this technique; although the video is more recent, the idea is the same) – something that the physics engine in Asheron's Call was not designed to allow. Later called “run-casting” (it took years for this term to finally replace “god-mode”), this allowed mage PKs to dominate the PvP field. Long beautiful duels between mages could be witnessed, with opponents gliding over the ground, shooting fireballs and lightning toward each other. Those who mastered “god-mode” became extremely good. One of such PKs was Vortec. He was arguably the best PK the server of Morningthaw has ever seen throughout its history. Vortec could fight crowds of PKs at the same time and walk away victorious. Vortec, among many other good PKs, joined Demono.

The Demono clan, although not quite as extreme as the Bloods, was the dominant PK guild on Morningthaw for almost a year. All ethics were thrown aside – if a player was a PK and not under Demono, he/she was hunted. Agreements and treaties were made with some clans, and politics were the dominant topic of discussion. Eventually,

however, the Demono monarchy began to fall apart. Demono himself left the game, and most of his best followers, including Vortec, disappeared soon thereafter.

In November 2000, the development team introduced a gigantic-scale event. A new dungeon appeared – the Catacombs of Ithaenc – which housed the so-called Shard of the Herald – a crystal monster, which, if killed, released the spirit of Bael’Zharon into the world of Dereth. Bael’Zharon was basically the Satan figure of Asheron’s Call – the merciless killer of anything living, he was often called the Hope Slayer. During this event, Turbine Entertainment did something never before done in an MMOG – it allowed the players to make a difference in the game’s story. The dungeon that contained the Shard of the Herald was restricted to PKs only. If some players did not want Bael’Zharon



**The defenders of the Shard pose for a picture around the Shard itself on the Morningthaw server. One of these members later destroyed the Shard, setting Bael’Zharon free (Asheron’s Call Vault).**

released, they could form a defense and protect the Shard against those players who wanted Bael'Zharon free. This was an event of epic proportions. Allegiances combined and people came together to make a stand in one way the other. On the servers of Morningthaw and Thristledown, major defenses were formed, protecting the Shard of the Herald. On Morningthaw, one of the defenders betrayed his team and destroyed the Shard, releasing Bael'Zharon. On Thristledown, however, people made a tremendous effort to keep the Shard alive. There were shifts of players making sure that no one got through to harm the Shard. However, Bael'Zharon (played by a member of the development team) was treacherous. This excerpt from the lore section of a fan website Crossroads of Dereth tells the story about Thristledown's defense:

Many monarchs hailing from Thristledown organized just such a defense. The initial success of this defense of the soul stone frustrated the Hope Slayer whose influence on the world while dampened had grown stronger with the destruction of the first five pieces of his prison. Compounding that frustration was the subversion that Bael'Zharon himself had attempted in Coldeve within the ranks of the Isparians themselves. He had tested several monarchs at the time, rewarding them with a shadow stone if they successfully ran a gauntlet of his design. Only two monarchs succeeded, Blackthorn and Vidorian, and were declared Dark Masters, swearing an oath to return a favor to their dark benefactor. With the unexpectedly successful defense of the Thristledown Shard of the Herald, Bael'Zharon desperate to be free, called upon these "errant servants" to break the defense.

And the Shard of the Herald was destroyed even on Thristledown (see the "Free BZ" video for the visual account of the Shard's fall). However, the developers were so impressed by the efforts of the players that they elected a monument (only on the Thristledown server) to those who gave their lives to protect the Shard. This entire event allowed players to actually make a difference in the world – they could decide the outcome of the story! Only PKs, however, could take part in the offense or the defense of the Shard. This was the perfect way to bring PvP closer to the majority of the players.

After November 2000, the PK population slowly began to grow on the servers. However, many new PKs were turned off by the harshness of veteran PKs. A stereotypical image of a PK as an elitist began to form. A couple players from Morningthaw made a mockery music video of a rapping PK (see the “PK rap” video). The video showed a veteran PK decked out in the best armor, overflowing with wealth, and full of scorn towards other PKs. This image persisted for quite a while, and many non-PK players still hold to it. This is one of the problems that developers may need to



**Shard Vigil Memorial on Thristledown (Asheron's Call Vault).**

address in the future – while the video is humorous, it actually represents the opinions of a lot of players who turn away from PvP combat.

Throughout the year 2001, many monarchies made pacts of peace in the PvP arena. PK fights became rare and very structured – opponents would duel like gentlemen and both the winner and the loser would walk away from the fight happy. Looting – taking items from the corpse of the loser – was strongly frowned upon and virtually eliminated. In 2002, a large monarchy appeared on Morningthaw, called the Crimson Order. This monarchy still exists today and it is the largest PK monarchy on the server, headed by the player who calls himself Staffstroker II. This monarchy was thought of as the new “evil” clan. However, it was not so much evil as innovative – the members tried to stir up some trouble and bring some chaos to a rather quiet PK world. As Staffstroker II described in the interview for this paper:

Well we are a clan of pro-choice... this means just that. I prefer a clan of INDIVIDUALS, not cookie cutter implants. Some choose to roleplay, some

choose to destroy anything in sight, some prefer to gang, some prefer to duel, etc etc.. I welcome all of that. The reason we are disliked by a lot is that (in my opinion) we were the first clan to outnumber the anti-loot PKs on the server... this was a huge turning point and was a very fun time. The individuals that dislike us are the ones who like to impose their own rules on the server... kinda like the fat kid playing dodge ball in gym class who makes up the rule about no hitting in the face! I believe we are playing the game the way it was intended...

Politics was the major topic on every Asheron's Call related message board. The more conservative PKs called for a PK council, which would "police" the PvP arena and prevent violent "ganging" (multiple players attacking one player) and looting. The Crimson Order laughed in everyone's face. PvP combat again began to be more of a war-like activity rather than a gentleman's game. Many large-scale battles were held in common areas, and the PK population grew immensely (see the "Al Jalima Fight" video for a demonstration – the archer character faces a small army of the Crimson Order).

Today, Morningthaw's PvP scene is very diverse. The Crimson Order remains the chaos-causing clan that it began as, but there are many other monarchies battling the Crimson Order. One of these is the Arwic Mafia, a group of fearless warriors, who started player killing at very early levels – as the monarch of the clan describes, "the Mafia is about winning, but we're also about throwing things into the face of other groups. We killed them at levels they wouldn't have even been red at" (The Arwic Mafia interview). The PK culture is growing every day, becoming richer and greater – it is not some small-scale add-on that few players enjoy, but rather a huge part of the game, that allows players to interact in ways that would not be possible otherwise.

The history of player killing is absolutely immense across the servers of Asheron's Call. Only a few major events were described above, and only from three of the servers (out of today's eight). It would be impossible to describe the encounters, treaties, duels, wars, and events that occur every day in Asheron's Call – there are just

too many! Player killing spawned a culture with amazing politics and history. It allowed people to create a story within the game itself – an interactive narrative (Patnode) – giving coworkers and friends something to talk about during lunch breaks.

What would happen if Turbine decided not to allow PvP combat at all in Asheron's Call? There would be no player-created politics, since there would be no way for players to enforce anything in a non-PK only world. There would be no epic events, where PvP interactions would decide the fate of Dereth – such as the freeing of Bael'Zharon. There would be no way to fight the ultimate monster – a human. As characters progress through the game, they become extremely powerful. By level 100,



**A mage takes out a group of attacking monsters with ease (Author experience).**

there is not much a single character cannot kill. In fact, a powerful character can fight off an army of monsters and still remain standing. The game becomes boring for some people, who yearn for something more difficult – and PvP is the answer. Most importantly, however, if PvP combat did not exist, there would be no rich culture added to the game – a culture that results from the interactions of people with people, with a

potential for wars, treaties, and new allegiances. Player killing allows players to step out of the framework set by the game developers and create something of their own.

Asheron's Call redefined the role of player killing in MMOGs. Whereas in Ultima Online and Everquest, PvP combat distracted from the game, in Asheron's Call, player killing added an alternative to everyday monster-slaying and allowed players to contribute to the game's culture. Player killing in Asheron's Call inspired countless stories, movies, and, most importantly, relationships with a great degree of trust. Turbine Entertainment was able to integrate PvP combat into the rest of the game in a way that kept the majority of the players happy – something not done before. Through this treatment of the PvP field, Asheron's Call set the stage for the MMOGs to follow. One of the games mentioned earlier – Shadowbane, which is ready to ship in just over a week, is based almost entirely on player killing, promising guild-owned towns, city sieges, and other features. However, it is important for the developers of games like Shadowbane to examine whether most of its customer base will be satisfied. The field of Massively Multiplayer Online Games is just now beginning to reach its full potential – and if the new games are not balanced well, this genre could die faster than it originated.

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"Staffstroker II." Interview. 2 Mar. 2003. Transcribed below.

"The Arwic Mafia." Interview. 2 Mar. 2003. Transcribed below.

## **Interview with Staffstroker II (monarch of The Crimson Order)**

*1. Tell me a couple things about you in real life - how old are you, how long ago did you start playing AC, and why are you playing AC?*

I am 29 years old, I started playing AC 2 months after retail. Why am I still playing AC... hmmm I ask myself this often I think the best way I can put it is that I play for the calm-down period after work and mostly for people. Without key friends or people I enjoy, there would be no reason for me to play this game.

*2. When did you start PK-ing? Were you around during allegiance wars?*

I am not a big AC history buff so please excuse if this is not the correct time period. I first started PK-ing when I joined Clan Natorious which was about 4-6 months before the whole "PK Council" fiasco. It was a great time to PK, the majority were great respectful gamers out to have fun.

*3. How was The Crimson Order started?*

Well my reign @ TCO was started when Morgus kept asking me to come over to take over the allegiance...I talked to him extensively over the phone for a few weeks and ran the idea past some of my friends and all were for it. After about a month of notification to my friend Smirking Revenge, I left COTD and took the helm at TCO. Originally (please correct me if I am wrong), Morgus broke from an allegiance and formed TCO, then after a while they had merged in under Zanator Moonblade. They evidently had a falling out and Morgus removed himself from that situation... then I believe they were under COTD. From that point up until he asked me to be the new monarch, I think it was about 2 months.

*4. TCO is often thought of as the "bad" monarchy, which loots, gangs, etc. (note - this is not my personal opinion - most of the people in your clan are pretty good friends of mine, hehe). How did this come to be so? Do you guys roleplay a clan of PKers who just pwn everything in sight?*

Well we are a clan of pro-choice...this means just that. I prefer a clan of INDIVIDUALS, not cookie cutter implants. Some choose to roleplay, some choose to destroy anything in sight, some prefer to gang, some prefer to duel, etc etc..I welcome all of that. The reason we are disliked by alot is that (in my opinion) we were the first clan to outnumber the anti-loot PKs on the server... this was a huge turning point and was a very fun time. The individuals that dislike us are the ones who like to impose their own rules on the server... kinda like the fat kid playing dodge ball in gym class who makes up the rule about no hitting in the face! I believe we are playing the game the way it was intended...

*5. Tell me some details about the clan. How close are you guys? What are the clan's ethics? Any info on what the ethics of the clan are would be great!*

This clan is like a great movie... sometimes you laugh, sometimes you cry, but when it is all over with...you wouldn't change a thing if you could redo anything. Ethics? Hmmm I for the most part leave that up to the individuals. I am not their parents, nor am I an AC +Admin. I am not a believer in micromanagement...so when I started as Monarch, I laid down 4 simple rules:

#1 Do NOT Fu\*k with Staff.

#2 No quest/line jumping.

#3 No killing of clan members

#4 No griefing or kill stealing.

All very simple but encompass what other guilds take PAGES to spell out.

*6. How often do you guys get looted? Do you loot? If you looted a valueable item, would you return it?*

I personally get looted about 90% of the time. When I originally took over as Monarch I had no plans on looting anyone... my first night out changed my mind. I was looted 12 times and looted no one. I was even looted by the people I hadn't looted 30 mins ago! So I thought to myself "EF THAT! If I am gonna jacked every time, I had better stock up on DIs" To sum it all up by a famous movie character "They drew first blood.."

*7. Why do you PK? Because it's fun? Because of the adrenaline rushing through your veins? Because you want to bring something new to the game?*

I PK for all of the reasons you stated above with addition of the most important one for me; having fun with my peers.

*8. What do you think on PK ethics? Are there any? Is PK a fight to kill and survive (subway, hehe), or is PK more of a cultured duel-type activity?*

PK ethics? Again, up to the individual... I personally think that you do whatever it takes to win that the game allows. Anything that shows up on the radar as a round dot should be dead. On the flip side, many others in my allegiance have differing views and I respect them all. 99% of all of the people I have ever fought regardless of my win or loss never received any smack talk. They simply got "Great hit!" or "Nice fight! Go again?" Things like that. The other 1% instigated arguments first and I chose that time not to back down.. I am sure most ppl know who those few are

*9. Do you guys use d00dspeak? If so, why? Just for fun (I mean, I often joke around with my friends by saying something like "OMFG j00 just got pwned so bad newb!")? Or actually to type faster?*

I do not see much d00dspeak. I mainly see it on the vn boards where some people think it is "cool". I generally type ingame very fast and bypass correcting any mistakes as long as they can get the idea I am trying to communicate to them. I DO tend to use a smiley face too much :) Generally I use it to show that I am actually smiling or grinning as I like to joke around 80% of the time :)

*10. What do you think of PK now? How has it changed for you throughout the patches?*

PK is about the same as it always has been in direct ratio with the actions of the rest of the server... AC is a dying game, anyone denying this is not too bright. All of the changes Turbine has made is basically creating cookie cutter toons/ allegiances/ etc etc.. I do think the maturity level is dropping lower and lower...probably associated with the handing down of accounts or the selling of accounts to younger gamers.

## **Interview with The Arwic Mafia (monarch of The Arwic Mafia):**

*1. Tell me a couple things about you in real life - how old are you, how long ago did you start playing AC, and why are you playing AC?*

I'm 24.. and I started playing AC 4 years ago, in April '99 in Beta 0. I play AC for fun, for friends and for profit. I sell things on ebay and basically this has turned into a hobby/job/social outlet.. when I'm not out elsewhere.

*2. When did you start PK-ing? Were you around during allegiance wars?*

I was around during the allegiance wars.. I'm Killean. I started pking back then.

*3. How was the Arwic Mafia clan started?*

It was started as a joke between me and 3 rl friends. We wanted to battle Towelz Roxor. Problem is at level 30ish we were managing to kill actual high level pks. People wanted to join, and it started to grow from there.

*4. As I understand, the Arwic Mafia clan is a very close group of friends - you guys PK for the sheer fun of it, without really caring if you die or not, right? Why such an attitude when everyone else is so competitive?*

Well, we actually do care if we die. Dying in a fair fight doesn't bug us, but losing to cheating does. We're rl friends and we get to know every new member well. We talk about things and learn about each other and work together. The mafia is about winning, but we're also about throwing things into the face of other groups. We killed them at levels they wouldn't have even been red at.

*5. Tell me some details about the clan - do you guys know each other in real life? Any info on what the ethics of the clan are would be great!*

The core members know each other in rl, they play mostly at my house. The newer members we all talk to in voice chat and generally try to get to know well. Ethics.. they're really a mirror of my ethics as monarch. We despise cheating, admire winning and basically want to make a difference. We're actually trying to make the game more fun instead of just having our own fun.

*6. How often do you get looted? Do you loot? If you looted a valueable item, would you return it?*

We get looted whenever we die, We loot whenever we can manage it when we get a kill. If we loot a valuable item.. it really depends on who from as to whether it is returned or not. Frankly, there are people we dislike a great deal, and they're not getting their crap back.

*7. Why do you PK? Because it's fun with friends? Because of the adrenaline rushing through your veins?*

I pk to have fun with friends and to take a little bit of the cockiness away from the established pks. They tend to take things for granted too much and force newer players to play the game by the rules that they made up in order to insure that they would be the best. We don't conform too well.

*8. What do you think on PK ethics? Are there any? Is PK a fight to kill and survive, or is PK more of a cultured duel-type activity?*

Dueling is silly. The game wasn't meant for dueling and it just isn't balanced. As far as ethics go.. fair is not cheating. Unfortunately there is rampant cheating. Cheating I see as using exploits, hacks or outside programs to help pk. Pking is about Killing and survival.

*9. Do you guys use d00dspeak? If so, why? Just for fun (I mean, I often joke around with my friends by saying something like "OMFG j00 just got pwned so bad newb!")? Or actually to type faster?*

We don't use d00dspeak except when we're joking around. IN combat our communications boil down to our target. We also use a lot of voice chat, and I give instructions on falling back, regrouping and selecting those to kill. I think our group adds a level of tactical complexity that other, less personal guilds lack.

*10. What do you think of PK now? How has it changed for you throughout the patches?*

Pking right now is horrible. The rampant use of exploits such as fast-casting, sticky breaking and speedhacking makes it nearly impossible to pk as a melee. Add to this mistakes in items and tinkered armor and it is really a pain.