

play magazine presents

girls of gaming

ISABELLA

COLD AS ICE IN THE NEW
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE



Girls of gaming

Featured Artists

Alex Ahad pages 32-38
Robert Duenas pages 25-27
Matthew Humphreys pages 02, 18, 19
Dany Orizio pages 01, 92
Phillip Jackson pages 28, 29
Robb Ruppel page 49

Publisher, Console Editor

Dave Halverson

PC Editor

Mike Griffin

Contributing Editors

Heather Anne Campbell
Matt Cabral
Eric L. Patterson

Super Designers

Mike Hobbs
Nelson Lui

Advertising

Director of Advertising & Promotions
Bethany Bell
bbell@playmagazine.com
818.470.3754

Director of Operations

Julie Halverson
jhalverson@playmagazine.com
818.707.7786 x 104

Copy Editors

Bill Gray
Daniel Campisi

Play Magazine Offices

29219 Canwood St. Suite 100
Agoura Hills Ca 91301
Tel: 818-707-7786
Fax 818-707-7212

www.thegirlsofgaming.com

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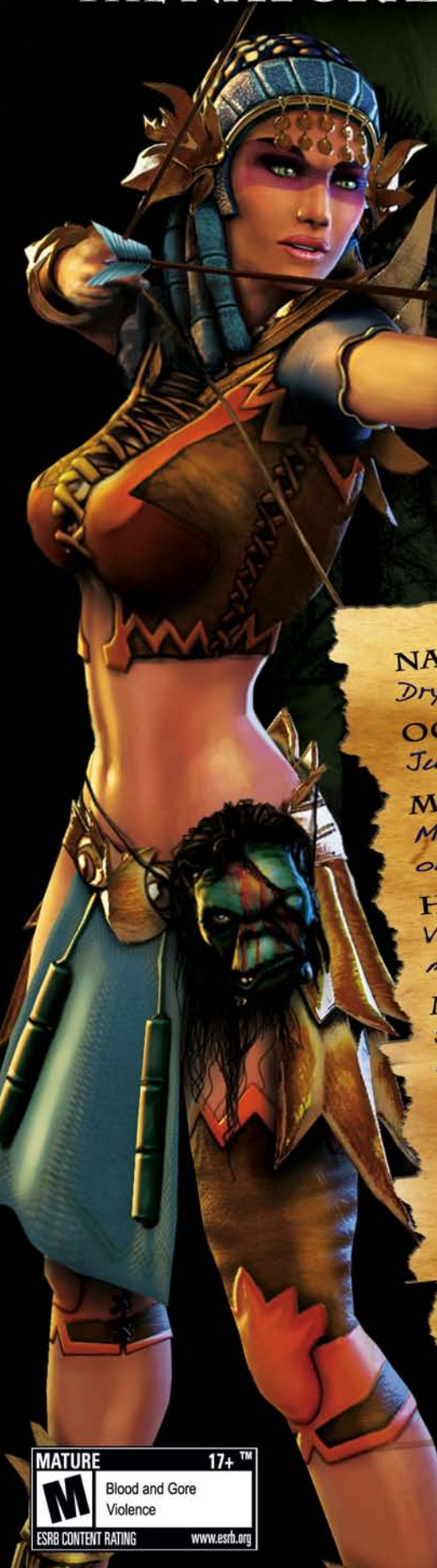
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THE NATURAL WARRIOR OF ANCARIA TELLS ALL



FALLEN ANGEL Sacred 2

NAME:
Dryad

OCCUPATION:
Jungle Warrior

MY FAVORITE PLACE IN ANCARIA:
*My home! The hightree house
on Jungle Island*

HOBBIES:
*Voodoo, naturalistic magic and
mastering the art of poison making!*

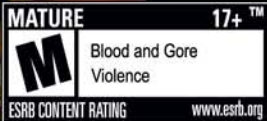
MY IDEAL MAN:
*Submissive (I tend to wear the pants
in the family)*

WEAPON OF CHOICE:
✓ Blow Gun
Sword
Staff
*I love ranged
weapons*

**MY TYPICAL FRIDAY NIGHT
INCLUDES;**
Dinner and a movie
Cleaning
✓ Battling the enemies of Ancaria



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Mirror's Edge

Developer: DICE Publisher: EA System: PS3/Xbox360 2008

It took seven generations of console tech to jack players into a living, breathing entity. Thanks to DICE and EA, that vessel is the nimble and determined Faith—bounding between skyscrapers at dizzying heights on the Mirror's Edge, running for her life in the interest of freedom and self-preservation while delivering vital intelligence to overthrow the dystopian regime that killed her mother and threatens her sister.

Faith also proves once again that a female protagonist can pierce the gaming stratosphere fully clothed, similarly to Michel Ancel's "Jade" from *Beyond Good and Evil*. Not that we don't love our jiggly heroines—obviously—but just as heroes come in all shapes and sizes, from hulking he-men to average Joes, so too should the softer side of gaming.

Faith







Street Fighter IV

Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom System: Arcade, Xbox 360, PS3 2008/2009





Cammy is one of our cover girls because... well, she's Cammy! Never has a clone of an evil dictator been so scrumptious. Pulled from the DNA of M.Bison, before (ew, gross) becoming his lover, nineteen-year-old Cammy has everything a girl needs to be confidently kickass. Memory loss? She was a hot Amnesiac before Radiohead burned tracks on Kid A. Pig Tails? As far as we're concerned, there's no such thing as Pippi Longstocking. How about those camouflage calves? They're perfect for hiding in a forest... of legs. Cammy is the only girl who could possibly pull our eyes off Chun Li, and keep them pulled. And let's not forget, she's the only Street Fighter character to ever be played by Kylie Minogue. Unless you count the voice of Guile in Super Street Fighter II.

CAMMY

Street Fighter IV

Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom System: Arcade, Xbox 360, PS3 2008/2009

Chun Li

Lo hell with Ms. Pac Man; Chun Li is the real first female of gaming. Usually, we'd be turned off by a girl with thighs shaped like angry bulls, but for Chun Li, we'll make an exception. The only question we have for this undercover agent is . . . are they nylons, or did she stick her gams in a tanning bed? Perhaps a better question is: Does it matter?



Sakura

Okay, we'll admit it. Sakura is hot. It was hard to say before Street Fighter IV, because, well, she's a schoolgirl. But almost fifteen years after she first stole our hearts with her attempts at Ryu's Shotokan, she's still wearing that fuku. Which means she may not have ever been in school to begin with! A girl who looks that good at 30? After fifteen years of fighting? Maybe more women should look into combat training.



C. Viper

Viper was designed with American tastes in mind, and it shows. A spy in a suit, Viper knows what really makes men melt, and it's not red hair. It's not aviators, either. Crimson Viper is distant, detached . . . and most importantly, addicted to her cellphone. That's what the modern man wants: A girl who gets gadgets.





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M
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Use of Drugs
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org




PLAYSTATION 3



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Marian

Developer: Infinitie Ammo Artist: Katie De Sousa System: PC/Mac 2009

Marian

Marian is a beautifully carved marionette who rips her strings from the grasp of “The Narrator” and becomes her own master. Caught in the dream world between life and death, she uses her own puppet handle as a weapon and replaces her limbs with a variety of tools in her quest to discover her true identity—and maybe even true love.

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PLAYSTATION 3

MATURE TM	17+
M	Blood Crude Humor Strong Language Suggestive Themes Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING	www.esrb.org
Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB	

Arc Rise Fantasia

Developer: Imageepoch Publisher: Marvelous/XSEED System: Wii 2009




Lesley

A chance encounter with a mysterious woman at a roadside lodge leads to the introduction of Lesley, the sultry and stunning gunslinger known as "Glamorous Two-Guns". Lesley is the kind of woman who can revive even the weakest of hearts with just a glimpse of her assets; which, by the way, are quite on display thanks to the scandalous outfits she loves to deck herself out in. Though she may at times seem careless in the decisions she makes, Lesley's true attitude is always cool and collected, choosing to keep herself distanced from any situation to better get an honest view of what exactly is going down.

Aion

Developer: NCsoft Publisher: NCsoft System: PC 2009

Zhiva

A female character with purple hair and a mask, wearing dark armor and holding a glowing blue sword.

Growing up on the streets of Pandaemonium, Zhiva learned early on how to quietly liberate people from the terrible burden of their money. Sometimes a more direct approach was needed, and she would use her charm and feline good looks to lure them in. When she was hauled for the umpteenth time in front of the Shadow Court, with just enough of an alibi to escape conviction yet again, the judge decided that maybe it was time to harness her abilities, and secretly made her an Assassin working for the Asmodian government.

A female character with pink hair and a red mask, wearing dark armor and holding a large, glowing red polearm.

Signe

Gwhirling maelstrom of blades and fury on the battlefield, but a calm, silent presence off it, Signe is a mystery to her comrades. Rumors abound: is it true that she's making amends for the terrible deeds of her past? Or on a quest to avenge a husband and son who were murdered? Whatever the truth, Elyos have been seen fleeing from her in the Abyss rather than risk being skewered on the end of the polearm she wields.



Araletha

Araletha, Ranger of the Elyos, is a force of nature. She loves to laugh, views shooting her bow as a sport, and always seeks to challenge herself and her friends to achieve greater heights. When she landed in trouble for telling the Brigade General of the Legion to "lighten up," she didn't flinch at the nasty chores she was given as a punishment, but decided to complete them quicker than anyone had ever managed so she could return to archery practice.



Athena

Developer: SNK Publisher: SNK System: NES 1987

Athena

Like a video-game Marie Antoinette, Athena is a gorgeous princess with a life of total leisure. But what makes this 8-bit beauty appealing is that she gives up her life of luxury to seek out adventure. Too bad she stars in one of the worst games ever made for the NES. Still, we forgive her. After all, she showed up much cooler in SVC Chaos. And that's the game we remember.

Lady Sia

Developer: RFX Interactive Publisher: TDK System: GBA 2001

eady sia



One of the first games released for the Game Boy Advance, Lady Sia was handheld gaming's first console comparable hand-drawn platforming adventure. The Xena-esque warrior princess Sia, tasked with defeating a race of anthropomorphs created by an evil warlock, could shapeshift, cast magic, wield a sword, and jump with the best of 'em, although she was never heard from again. RFX Interactive went the way of the Dodo soon after.

Karla Princess

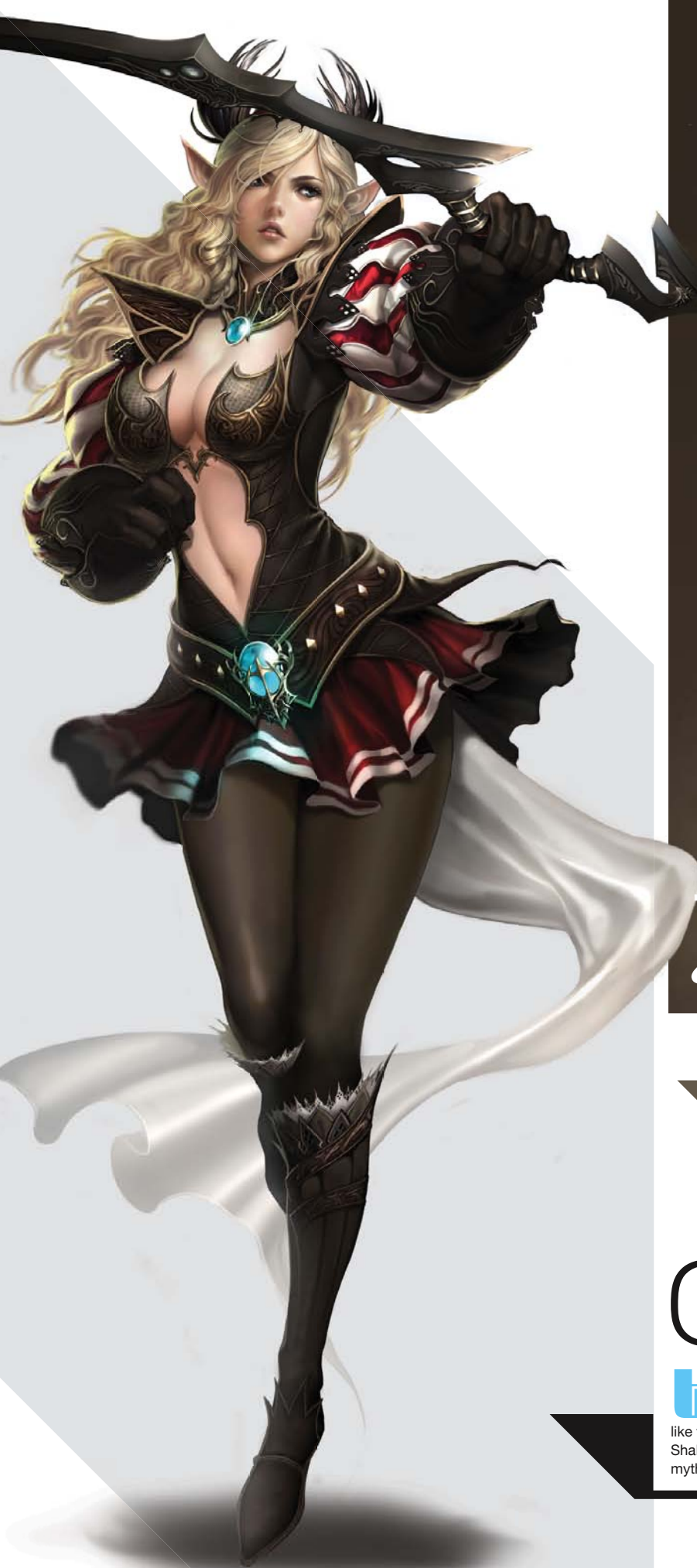
Karla is a unique mercenary acquired only through a quest. This Princess is a magic character that can use her feminine wiles to get others to do her bidding, helping to initiate the coveted Inventor's Quest at level 50. One of Atlantica Online's unique features is the mercenary system, where players can have up to eight mercenaries to accompany their main character into battle.



Archer

Robin Hood

The Archer is one of the first mercenaries you can hire in Atlantica Online, and naturally her weapon of choice is the bow. Like main characters, mercs also gain experience and level up. When a mercenary is upgraded to top levels, it takes on an historic persona. For instance, the Inventor mercenary can be upgraded to Da Vinci. In a gender-bending twist, when she's upgraded, this Archer becomes Robin Hood!



Beast Trainer Zhu Rong

This Beast Trainer a mercenary that can be acquired only by completing a specific quest. And when upgraded, she can become the infamous Zhu Rong. The Chinese god she's based on was male and he rode around on a tiger. In Atlantica Online, the Beast Trainer rides on a tiger and has other animals at her disposal to do the attacking in battles.

Prophet Cassandra

The bow-wielding Prophet Cassandra is based on Greek mythology's Cassandra, whose beauty led Apollo to grant her the power of prophecy. There are many real-world elements incorporated into Atlantica: places like the Egyptian pyramids and the Taj Mahal are dungeons, and people such as Shakespeare and Caesar are NPCs, as well as elements co-opted from various myths and legends from around the world.





Castlevania Order of Ecclesia
Developer: Konami Publisher: Konami System: NDS 2008

Shanoa



Female protagonists have been few and far between since the Belmont clan set out to slay the king of vampires. Limited to companions or the odd playable character in lesser games, the definitive female lead died when Sonia Belmont's Dreamcast debut was put to rest for reasons that remain somewhat a mystery. That the first would come in the shape of an elegant hand-drawn design reminiscent of the series' generation-defining male lead Alucard is as prophetic as it is ironic. Shanoa, like Alucard, exudes the very essence of what made Castlevania a legend so strong that its fans remain ever-vigilant in the face of misstep after misstep, waiting for the next quintessential side-scrolling console opus for which they now finally have a lead worthy of following in Alucard's footsteps.

Reimi Saionji



As a mistress of the bow and arrow, Reimi Saionji is the childhood friend of the ridiculously-named Edge Maverick. Reimi doesn't seem to hold it against him, though, as the two are tasked with finding a new home for humanity after the devastation of World War III in *Star Ocean: The Last Hope*.

Earthworm Jim

Developer: Shiny Entertainment Publisher: Interplay System: Genesis 1994



Princess What's Her Name

Her evil sis, Queen Slig-for-a-Burt, may wear the crown, but this sizzlin' Insectican is the only one we'll bow 'to. Less high maintenance than the constantly-being-kidnapped Princess Peach, and sporting a scrumptious red mare and form-fitting bee-autiful get-up, it's totally obvious what Jim sees in her. Here's hoping she'll pollinate our consoles again someday.

Killer Instinct Gold

Developer: Rare Publisher: Nintendo System: N64 1996

Kim Wu

Once upon a time, when versus fighting games ruled all that man surveyed, there could be only one — though Rare, Nintendo and Midway did all they could (and came mighty close) to proving otherwise with Killer Instinct — the only fighting game franchise besides Mortal Kombat that ever came close to Capcom's Street Fighter II. Among its shiny rendered warriors, the girls of KI Gold, B. Orchid (left) along with Maya (middle) and Kim Wu (top, right) emphasized large protruding bouncy ultra-combos.

B. Orchid

Maya

Suzi Andrews and Rosa Juarez



Pure Tour's two female racers, Suzi Andrews and Rosa Juarez, prove that girls can get down and dirty with the best of 'em, and look a whole lot better doing it.



Berri
the Chipmunk



Jugga

Conker: Live and Reloaded
Developer: Rare Publisher: Microsoft System: Xbox 2005

Lucked away in gaming's greatest film and fairytale parody *Conker: Live and Reloaded* (Rare's raunchy remake of the exceptionally un-Nintendo-like *Conker's Bad Fur Day* for N64) are legions of characters, previously only accessible via hallucinogenic substances such as the operatic *Mighty Poo*, including Berri, Jugga, and Mrs. Sunflower. Berri, Conker's girlfriend, is the sole motivation that drives him after he wakes up in a strange world after a night of heavy drinking and profuse vomiting. Along the way, he meets Mrs. Sunflower, who gives him (not to mention King Bee) a much-needed boost. Finally, Bugga The Knut's girlfriend Jugga takes a liking to Conker after he soothes the savage beast, a.k.a. Fangy the Raptor, that Bugga turned loose in the coliseum to devour any cavemen who think they can best him. All in a good day's work for gaming's most infamous anthropomorphic rodent.



Mrs.
Sunflower



Cate Archer

The Operative: No One Lives Forever

Developer: Monolith Publisher: Fox System: PS2, PC 2000

As badass as Bourne and as suave as Bond, this sexy secret agent could easily carry her own spy-themed film or television franchise. Despite holding her own in the guns and gadgets department, though, UNITY's top operative still manages to find herself neck-deep in henchman and their "Bwa-ha-ha-ing" bosses. Thankfully, she's got the moves—and the nine lives—of a cat. Now if only she could get another game.

Kingdom Under Fire II

Developer: Blueside, Inc. Publisher: TBA System: PC, PS3, Xbox 360 2009



Isabella



After the Dark Elves won independence from the Half-Vampires of the Vellond Empire, where they lived as slaves maintaining order among inferior races, many high-ranking elves ventured out to establish their own sovereign country. But for Isabella, freedom carried too high a price. Isabella's clan was in charge of capturing slaves for Vellond, and her reputation as a brutal slave collector earned her riches beyond that of most Half-Vampires, as well as the trust of the reigning ruler, Valdemar. When Valdemar is assassinated after the Encablossian war, however, her past choices lead to the uncertain future that plays out in KUF II.

Isabella is the first female character announced for the long-awaited follow up to one of the most breathtaking and technologically superior Xbox games, Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders. Her mastery of both sword and Ice Magic makes her a deadly opponent, able to freeze and then hack away at her enemies.

ISABELLA/BACK VIEW 190cm



Skull Girls

Developer: Less Than Three <3 Publisher: TBA System: PC 2009

Skull Girls

It is said (at www.skullgirls.com) that every seven years, a powerful and mysterious force known as the Skull Heart grants a woman a single wish. However, should that soul be less than pure, both her wish and her body shall be corrupted into a living nightmare that haunts all of humanity with its horror and malice. She will become the Skullgirl; a condition that manifests



01



02



03



04

itself in a 2D sprite-based fighting game from Less Than Three <3, a name indicative of the small group of indie developers putting this extremely promising game together.

The younger of the two Canopy Princesses, Umbrella fights to discover the meaning of the prophetic dreams in which she senses her mother's essence in the Skullgirl. Umbrella possesses an unusual talent for magic but lacks the maturity to use it.

Peacock is the result of decades of human experiments within the Anti-Skullgirl labs. She's a living weapon on par with the Skullgirl herself, forged with distorted memories of her favorite cartoons.

Painwheel has no memories of her past life but is painfully aware of the suffering that twisted her mind as she was conditioned as an Anti-Skullgirl at the hands of Valentine. After being cast aside when the council chose Peacock, she refuses to go down without a fight.

Cerebella is a young performer in the Skeleton Circus where outside of their performances the group's "talents" are bought for questionable tasks. Hired to relieve the Life Gem from Miss Fortune, Cerebella's character is put to the ultimate test.

Filia is a young schoolgirl whose memories are devoured by a parasite named Samson that is now affixed to back of her head, where it acts as her sole means of guidance.

The elder Canopy Princess, the cool and collected Parasoul commands a small group of skilled soldiers known as the Black Egrets. After her sister enters the chase for the Skullgirl, Parasoul enters the fight to save her.

Squigly was blossoming into a talented singer until she and her family were murdered. Resurrected by the parasite Leviathan she wagers her unnatural life to set things right, whatever that means.

One-time member of the thieving Fishbone Gang, Miss Fortune led a wild and reckless life until the entire gang had their heads lopped off, which she mysteriously somehow survived while gaining the ability to detach her head.



05



06



07



08

01. Umbrella
02. Peacock
03. Painwheel
04. Cerebella

05. Filia
06. Parasoul
07. Squigly
08. Miss Fortune









Cast

The three playable females in Odin Sphere, Gwendolyn, Mercedes and Velvet rank among gaming's most beautiful heroines even though they reside on the PlayStation 2. So glorious are Vanillaware's hand-drawn characters in Odin Sphere that one could argue they are the finest in the gaming kingdom. The main character Gwendolyn, Princess of Ragnanival and daughter of the Demon Lord Odin, is thrust into a dramatic turn of events after her sister Griselda falls in battle. Griselda bequeaths her sister a lance capable of absorbing foes' life essences, fashioning them into skills that make Gwendolyn the most feared valkyrie on the field of battle.

Odin Sphere

Developer: Vanillaware Publisher: Atlus System: PS2 2007



Midna

Link's sidekick in the now two-year-old flagship game for the Wii isn't hot in a traditional way, but she appeals to our "Moe" sensibilities, especially when she's sickly and draped over the back of wolf-form Link. Suddenly desperate to save the little imp, it wasn't until that moment in the game that we realized how much we cared for the headgear-wearing Twilight Princess. Also, it's nice to play a Zelda game with a sidekick that isn't yelling, "Hey! Hey!" all the time.

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess


Developer: Nintendo Publisher: Nintendo System: Wii 2006

Zapsi



The Lake Fairy is an underestimated unit in King's Bounty. Many generals don't realize these perky sprites and fairies can be hired literally by the thousands, happily working and chatting together in huge numbers. In addition to her natural ability of flight, this pretty fairy Zapsi can resist and disperse magic, which makes her very efficient against mage armies and a natural companion to magical creatures such as drakes.

Kaos



Demons like Kaos are creatures from another plane: strong mages and dangerous warriors that will possess, corrupt and dominate with destructive attacks. Born into a world of fire, they have immunity to all fire attacks; however, they fear cold and will act very indecisively when thrust into winter conditions. The magic of demons has only one true goal: bring disarray and inner weakness to the enemy troops before crushing them. A demoness like Kaos will often be accompanied by an entourage of irritating and merciless scoffer imps.



the Ice Spirit

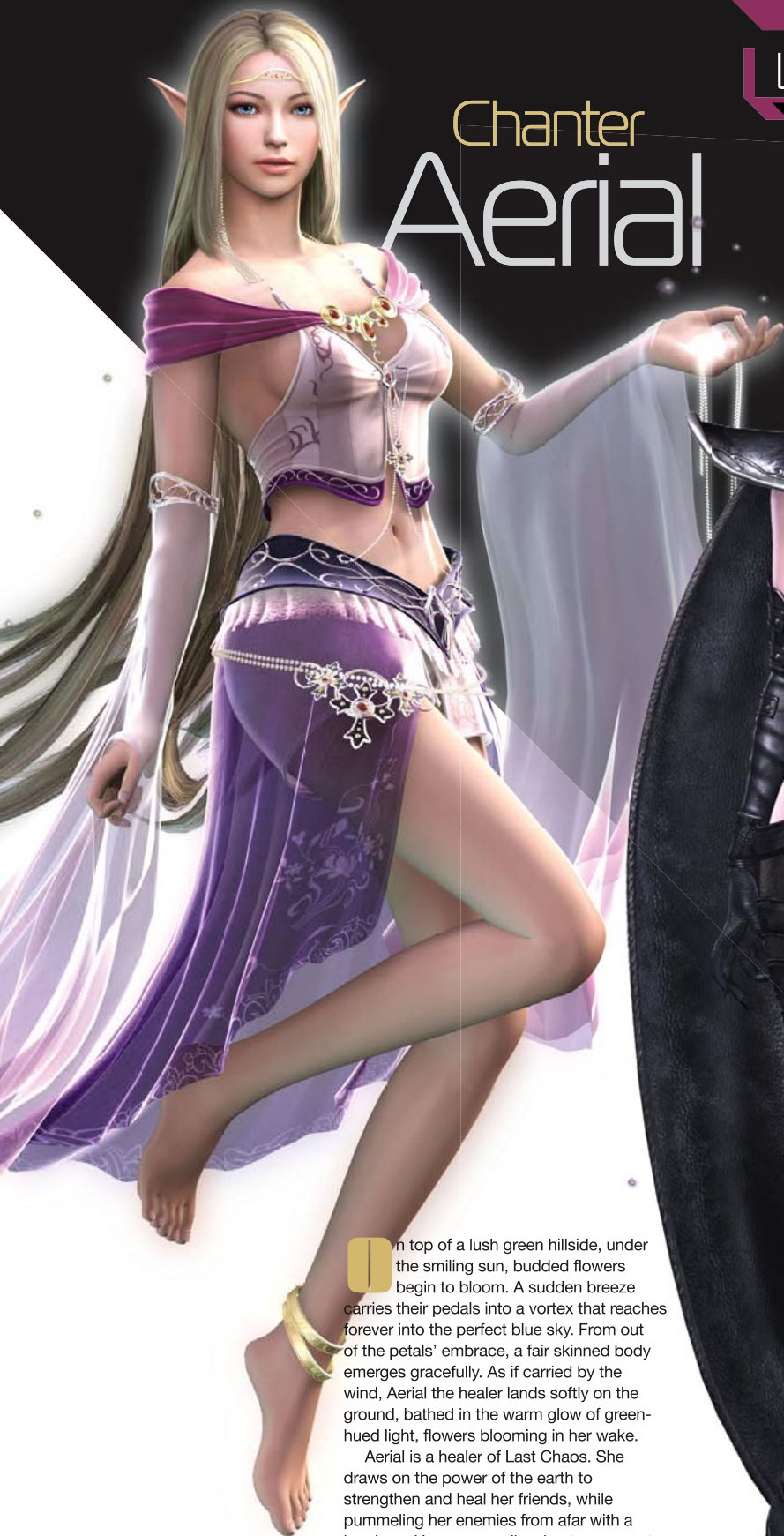
Lina

Lina is a vicious battle sorcerer from a techno-magical world that lost her original body in a long and brutal fight. Despite the amazing, glacial powers she now possesses as an ice spirit, Lina is nonetheless full of desire to return to her normal appearance. She is ready to serve you if you can assist her in recharging her magical devices, whose energy has almost been exhausted after centuries of imprisonment. She needs these devices to maintain her form, and she'll fight with ice thorns, orbs and chargers to protect them.

Last Chaos

Developer: T-Entertainment Publisher: Aeria Games System: PC online www.aeriagames.com

Chanter Aerial



In top of a lush green hillside, under the smiling sun, budded flowers begin to bloom. A sudden breeze carries their petals into a vortex that reaches forever into the perfect blue sky. From out of the petals' embrace, a fair skinned body emerges gracefully. As if carried by the wind, Aerial the healer lands softly on the ground, bathed in the warm glow of green-hued light, flowers blooming in her wake.

Aerial is a healer of Last Chaos. She draws on the power of the earth to strengthen and heal her friends, while pummeling her enemies from afar with a longbow. Her powers allow her to resurrect the dead, empower, heal and cure her allies. Alone she is a force of nature, able to empower her arrows to slow, stun or siphon energy from opponents. She is the guardian of life, the hand of justice for the earth.



A cold mist unfurls itself in a deadly silence through battle-worn hallways, reeking of decay. Suddenly a purple light crackles through the halls, sending the mist scrambling for cover. From the light, a figure emerges cloaked in darkness, her hair long and fine, flowing over soft, pale, purple skin. The figure's face as beautiful as it is cruel. She is Esmerelda, a mage born from the fabric of the universe and filled with the power of death.

As a mage of Last Chaos, Esmerelda's power to destroy is unequalled. Equipped to deal massive damage to single or grouped targets, she also maintains the ability to control other enemies through fears and curses. In a group setting, Esmerelda finds herself weaving spells that allow her to drain and disable opponents, allowing party members to wreak havoc on confused foes. In any position, Esmerelda is death incarnate.



Demigod
Developer: Gas Powered Games Publisher: Stardock Systems Windows 2009

Queen of Thorns

Sedna

Gas Powered Game's upcoming mythological RPG/RTS hybrid Demigod pits demigod against demigod vying for universal rule after "God" buys the farm, two of which happen to be female generals, by half-god standards at least, who focus on team-synergistic abilities and items that allow them to augment their forces. You can say that again.

The Agency

Developer: SOE Publisher: SOE System: PC, PS3 2009

Cassie Nova

Launching a new MMOG in the crowded, competitive market World of Warcraft calls its bee-yotch, is dicey business. Thankfully, SOE's The Agency has more than gadgets, guns, and globetrotting espionage in its corner. Cassie—think Lara Croft, but with more interest in kicking ass than collecting artifacts—detonates explosives, dominates baddies, and demands attention in all her black leather-clad beauty. She can interrogate us under the heat lamp anytime.



Eternal Poison

Developer: Flight-Plan Publisher: Atlus System: PS2 2008

Thage

If all of the visual beauty presented in the Atlus-released SRPG *Eternal Poison*, none is more eye-catching than the treacherous witch Thage, who takes more than a few pages from the bibles of the Japanese "elegant gothic lolita" movement. On a quest into the demon realm of Besek in search of the Eternal Poison, Thage may come off like a selfish, spoiled princess, but she's very knowledgeable in the black arts and a formidable foe. Always at her side is Raki, aka Ranunculus the Silver Wolf, an upper-level Majin who uses his sharp judgement and ferocious nature to help his beloved master.



Ikki-Tousen: Eloquent Fist
Developer: Marvelous Publisher: Marvelous System, PSP 2008 Japan

Hakufu, Ryofu, Kanu, Ryomo

Based on the *Battle Vixens* manga that became the *Ikki Tousen* anime series about students from rival school districts fighting over jewels that contain spirits from past lives—it's a long silly story I'm afraid—the important thing to note about *Eloquent Fist* (if you're a fan of the series or just naughty bits in general) is that it contains the same exploding clothing from the series in a side scrolling *Final Fight*-style venue complete with animated cut scenes where everything that can, does pop-out. With PSP games in the US few and far between Marvelous would be well, not-so-Marvelous if they fail to release the game stateside.

Izuna

You can't keep a good ninja down, especially when that ninja is the perky, pretty and penniless hobo ninja Izuna. Along with Shino-sis, Gen-An, Mitsumoto, and a long list of eccentric extras, Izuna brought a fun and fresh new face to the "Rogue-like" genre of dungeon crawlers. After making a brief cameo in Rondo of Swords, she went on to star in a bigger and far more expanded sequel, Izuna 2: The Unemployed Ninja Returns, as well as Windy x Windam, a DS 2D fighter from Success based around the Izuna universe.

Izuna 2: The Unemployed Ninja Returns

Developer: Ninja Studio Publisher: Atlus System: NDS 2008



The 3rd Birthday

Developer: Square Enix Publisher: Square Enix System: PSP 2009

Aya

It's the return of our least-exploited Square Enix hero, Aya Brea! The girl with a gun from Parasite Eve, Aya is quite possibly the best thing ever drawn by Tetsuya Nomura, and that's saying a lot. A little bit of Quistis, a little bit of Cloud, and we've got the pouty-faced, wedding-dress-bedecked, former MIST member who, happily, has a few clones. Aya returns for her 3rd appearance (a.k.a. birthday) on the PSP sometime in 2009.





Julie

The Heavy Metal F.A.K.K.2 (meaning Federation-Assigned Ketogenic Killzone to the second level) PC game picks up where the animated movie Heavy Metal 2000 left off. Having dispatched the would-be God Tyler (played with zeal by Michael Ironside), Julie embarks on a mission to save her home planet from the remaining GITH, whose leader (aptly named Gith) happens to be a disembodied head. Imagine what he could do with a whole body.

One of gaming's seminal heroines, Tyriss Flare made her long awaited 3D debut in 2008 after a nearly 20-year hiatus, avenging her Amazonian sisters in a rare breed of action game forged on skill and technique reserved for the most dexterous of gamers. With any luck it won't be another 20 years before we see her again. Maybe next time the axe-toting dwarf Gillius Thunderhead will do some head-cracking of his own along with Ax Battler, provided he puts on some clothes.

Golden Axe: Beast Rider
Developer: Secret Level Publisher: Sega System: PS3/Xbox 360 2008

Tyriss Flare





Bayonetta

Developer: Platinum Games Publisher: Sega System: PS3 / Xbox 360 2009

Bayonetta

The man who breathed life into the gracefully deadly Dante with Devil May Cry, Hideki Kamiya has finally seen the light and turned his sights to the fairer sex with Bayonetta. The eponymous witch draws guns with both her hands and feet to splatter monsters masquerading as angels all over the rich Victorian architecture. Her real claim to action-gaming fame, however, lies in the beautiful head of flowing black hair she brandishes for magical attacks, exposing her naked body for all to see, just before they die.

Dragon Age: Origins

Developer: BioWare Publisher: EA System: PC 2009

"Tales and legends, lies and idle fancies... have you no minds of your own?"

Morrigan

Morrigan is the daughter of Flemeth, the legendary and frightening Witch of the Wilds. Raised alone by her mother in the most remote corners of the great forest, the exotic beauty has learned to hold the rest of mankind in contempt. She has watched humanity from afar, hating them for their weakness even as she yearned to explore their world . . . all the time keenly aware of the hatred they would hold for her if they knew what she was. For Morrigan has learned her mother's arts and has become a mage as well as a shapeshifter, and she will stop at nothing to further her mysterious obsessions.



Kendra radiates innocence and has a heart as big as Talking Island itself. Though naïve to a fault, she sees the good in every person and situation. Kendra wholeheartedly believes in the power of love and thinks that every person has a specific and unwavering destiny. Born in a quiet cottage on the rural portion of Talking Island, Kendra's life has always been simple and uncomplicated, until the day she met a powerful Cleric who at once recognized the potential in her. Ever since that moment, Grand Magister Gallint has groomed her to become a powerful healer in the lands. Now, a mere handful of years after that fateful day, she finds herself on a mysterious mission given by her teacher. His instructions, ever-cryptic and vague, were only three words: "Find your truth."

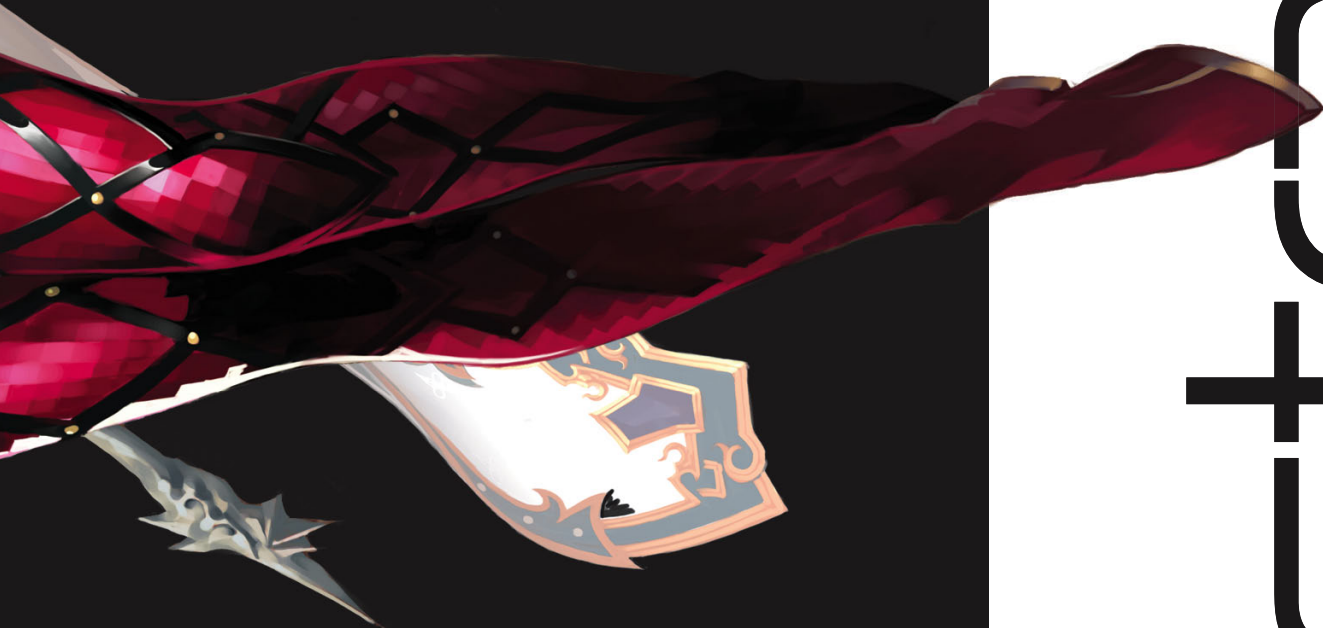


Ulna

Honor, loyalty, family and strength. These are the tenants that Ulna holds most dear. She has never feared death as much as she fears disgrace, for death on the battlefield is surely more admirable than defeat. However, contrary to what most would imagine, Ulna is not all business. Though not really in touch with any feminine side she might possess, Ulna is still endowed with attributes that turn any male Orc's head. She's even turned the heads of some dwarfs and humans, for that matter. But if you want to find a place in her heart, you'll have to best her in hand-to-hand combat, for it takes a man with an incredible amount of prowess to win this strong and independent lady.



Lineage II



Illustra

aving been conceived just after the Great War, Illustra was born to a world in which her kind were both feared and exiled. Living in the shadows and scrounging for a decent meal, Illustra can't remember a time when her heart was not full of contempt for the world around her. She discovered her predilection for dark magic at an early age. Once that wellspring was tapped, it was like an addiction that needed to be fed with alarming frequency. The more she learned, the better she performed. And the better she practiced her art, the more she craved retribution. Do not let her looks fool you — within her exotic and alluring exterior lies a devious mind. While she reigns her allegiance and loyalty to your cause, she uses that time to determine your weaknesses and isolate the things you hold most dear.

Tomb Raider: Underworld
Developer: Crystal Dynamics Publisher: Eidos System: PS3 / Xbox 360 2008

Lara Croft

The evolution of Lara Croft is nothing short of miraculous. Having sustained the ups and downs of 3D gaming, from its origins to present day, climbing to the highest echelons of the entertainment spectrum, crashing down and climbing back up again—it's a series as enduring as its tenacious leading lady, who has gone from a crude 3D pinup to one of modern gaming most elegantly designed and animated characters, bar none. In Tomb Raider: Underworld, Crystal Dynamics and Eidos take us back to the gameplay that made her famous, via cutting edge world-design and physics, along with the single-most refined 3D character in all of gaming.



enemies



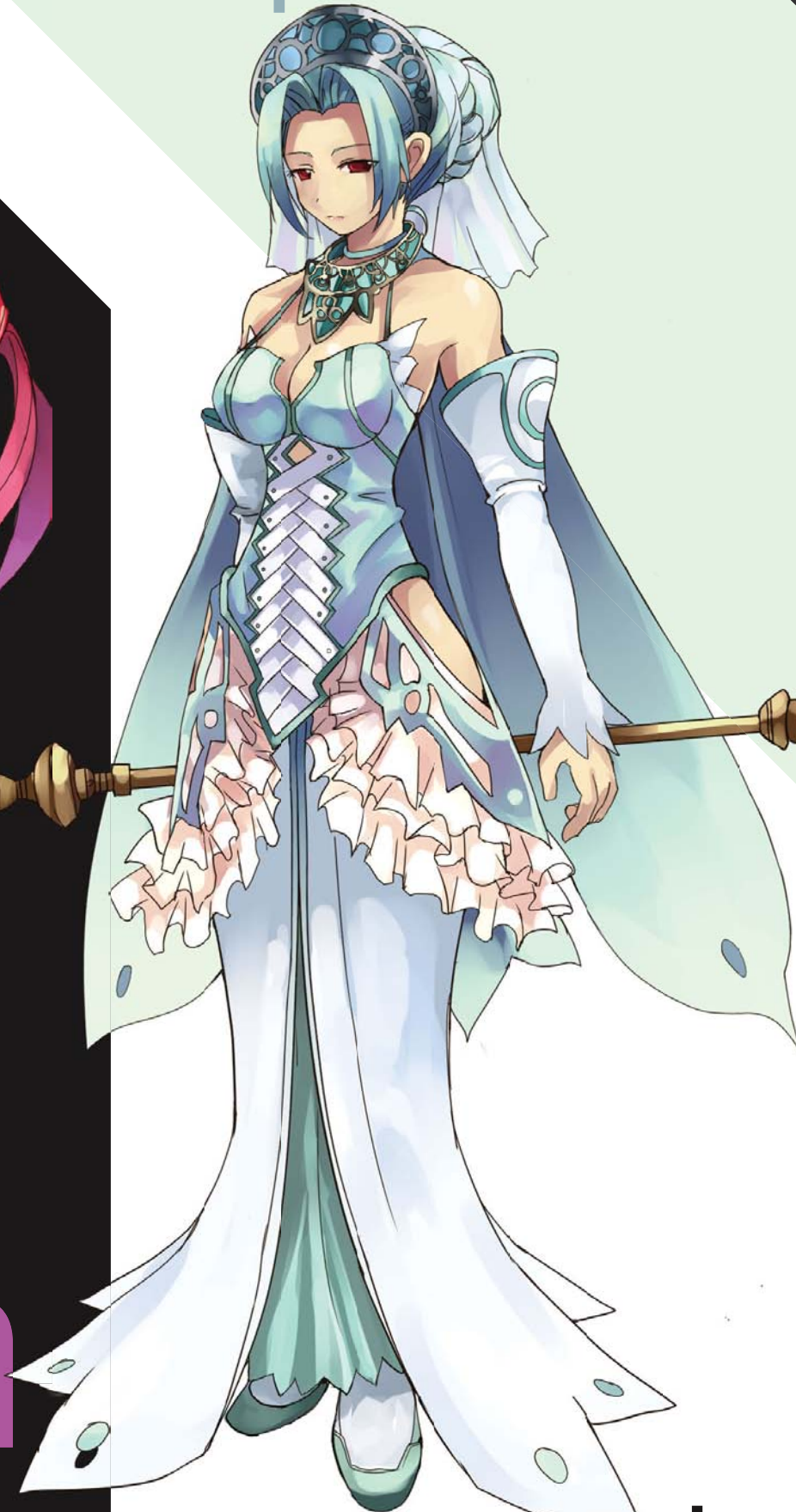
Die

Itches have come a long way from being green-skinned, warty, and, let's face it, disagreeable. That's good news for Roland, the hero of Atlus' beautifully illustrated SRPG *Luminous Arc 2* since he has to travel around the Kingdom of Carnva with a gaggle of them. Wickedly powerful in their own right, they get even more formidable after getting "engaged" to Roland, in one of the oddest battle mechanics we've seen yet.

Sophia



Karen



Asharae

"You will have none of the Scryona, and the Void will take us all."

Asharae's mother was a dancer and a woman of lowly birth. Though she left her child upon her lordly paramour's front step with a note describing the baby's origin, the Baron and his Madam raised Asharae as a slave, divulging not one hint of her true parentage. The young dark elven girl repaid their scorn by stealing a valuable magical artifact and a book of wizardry that awakened her arcane powers. Shortly thereafter, she kidnapped the Baron and Baroness to find out more about the Scryona. By the next sunrise, her questioning had killed her father and her stepmother was slain by wolves.

"You will die here, and I will bring your lifeless body to Solusek's Eye. Lord Nagafen will have further proof of the unrelenting power of Chaos."

Varanna

Fire Bolt


The hierarchy of the minions of Chaos included four Lords and two Overlords. When the Lords had been defeated by the Oathbound, the Chaos Masters resolved to send the Overlords across Norrath to complete their plans for domination. Varanna, the Overlord of Pyres, was tasked with a journey to the Lavastorm Mountains to recruit the mighty dragon Lord Nagafen to the cause of Chaos. The fiery mage drew strength from the flames of Lavastorm and was especially formidable on this volcanic battlefield. The small and the weak were no match for her abilities as she incinerated them with only a thought.

Legends of Norrath

“Do not dare look upon me as a maiden who needs saving! I am fierce as a lion, fast as an asp, and strong as a mammoth. I fear nothing and no one. I will bring your wicked ways to an end!”

Firiona Vie

The chosen of the goddess Tunare, the paladin Firiona Vie, helped the Oathbound to combat Chaos more than once. She helped to organize the struggle against the minions of Chaos across Norrath, while the Oathbound focused on the enemy leadership. In the final battle against Kalith, the Mistress of Chaos, the Oathbound teamed up with Firiona Vie and Lucan D'Lere. Firiona wielded her sword and shield another time at the Battle of Bloody Kithicor. As the two great armies of the High Elves and Dark Elves clashed, Firiona Vie fought in single combat against the daughter of Innoruuk, Lanys T'Vyl.



The wood elves, or Feir'Dal, come from the tree city of Kelethin. Its platforms and elevators soar skyward while blending naturally with the forest surroundings of Greater Faydark. Cousins of the high elves, the haughty Koadal, wood elves are instead pleasant and friendly. They love celebration and song, dedicating their lives to the goddess Tunare. The welcoming nature of the wood elves leads to close ties with other races, especially humans. The Kelethin Sunweavers wield mighty magical power used only to defend their forest home.

Feir'Dal

Kelethin Sunweaver

"I pledge to use the fiery sundering of Ro to immolate the enemies of Kelethin."

"Begone, foolish creature! I have more important enemies to apprehend than the likes of you."

Andwella

Rebuke

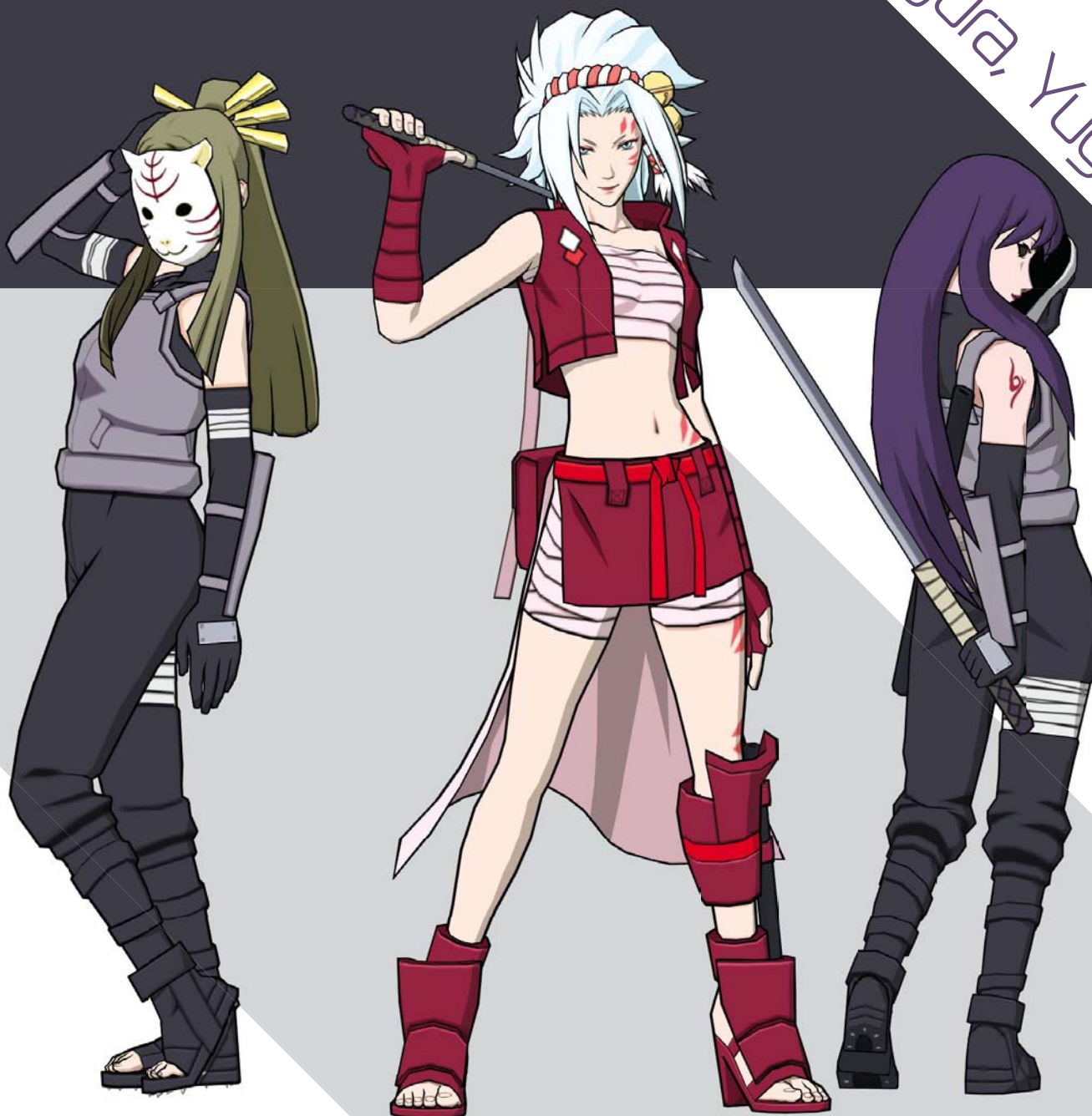
Unlike many of the Oathbound servants of the Tribunal who wore masks to conceal their identities, the priest Andwella battled against the forces of Chaos revealed to all. Her ardent faith was her shield against corruption by her enemies. The Chaos plot, operating secretly from within the Oathbound, required many of the Tribunal's followers to question their faith. Andwella never faltered and did not become an Oathbreaker. She resolved to fight the Chaos plot from within the Tribunal. Her investigations exposed many Chaos agents who would never again threaten the cause of Order.

Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2

Developer: Eighting Publisher: D3 System: Wii 2008

If there's one thing Naruto has in spades, it's side characters and filler stories. Still, sometimes the original stuff dreamed up for the games or the anime has some real grip to it. Created just for Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2, Komachi and Kagura are two women on opposite sides of the law. Kagura is a vengeful hokage-wanna-be, hidden behind a (hot?) ANBU mask. Her rival, ANBU Komachi, is easily defeated by the crimson warrior. Meanwhile, series minor character Yugao has another kind of vengeance on her mind—finding the killer of her lover, Hayate. Two women with clear goals, and one that's pretty much just cannon fodder. Eh, two out of three ain't bad.

Komachi, Kagura, Yugao



Tia

Tia is half-human and half-elf, reflecting the union of her father, a nobleman, and her mother, a respected elf. Her father, now a high-ranking officer in the palace, suddenly goes missing one day. Tia undertakes a journey to find her father, no matter the adversity. She's a tough girl on the outside, but is soft and vulnerable when it comes to her family. She's extremely agile yet relatively weak, compensating for a light frame with stealth and magical skills that create multiple images of her to confuse and bewilder opponents.

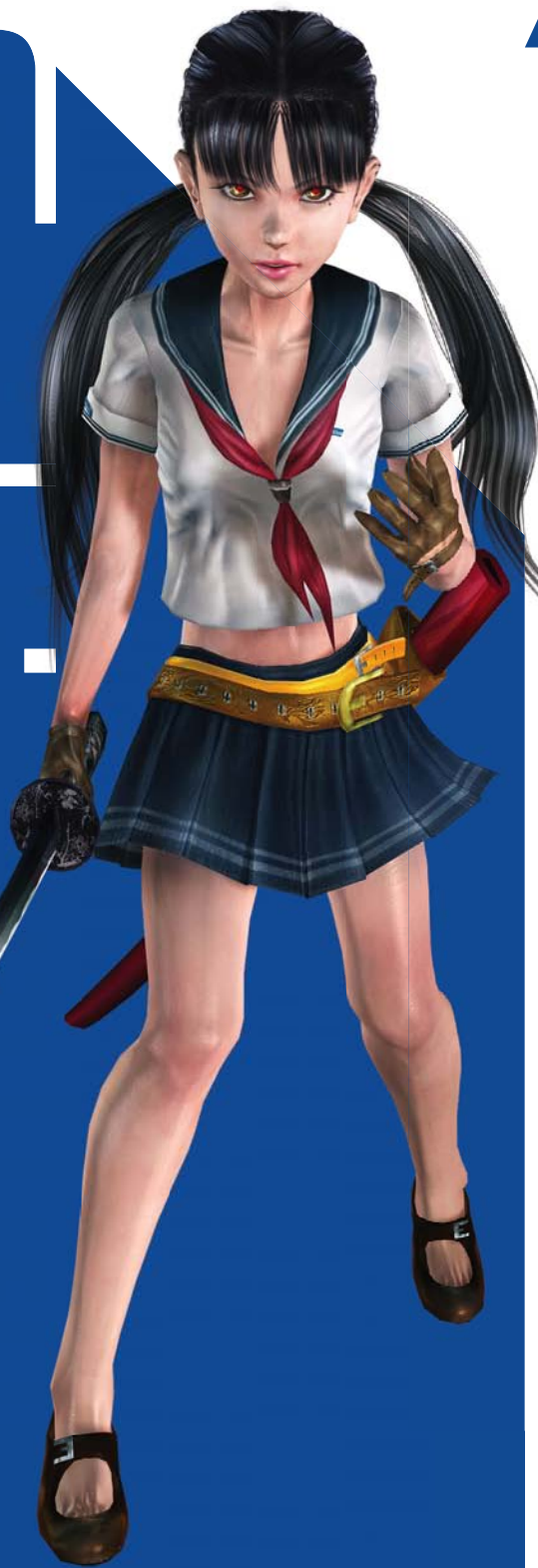


Eir

Eir is the princess of Lunia Kingdom. She has inherited special skills through her royal blood, but she thinks her skills are inferior to her older sister Lir. Dissatisfied with her destiny, Eir runs away from home for a life of adventure. She's elegant, but also arrogant and self-centered. She was born with special abilities that allow her to heal others, but along with these healing enchantments Eir has learned a number of protective magics from her new friends at the royal wizard guild—who are secretly keeping an eye on her highness.

Aya

ONECHANBARA



How many times have you been splattering zombies and wished you were a bikini clad cowgirl or a Japanese school girl? I know, right? Remember Tamssoft of Toshinden fame? Well, they're back with the greatest concept since butt-pounding living mushrooms: splattering zombie hordes as a pair of sexy sisters in various states of undress! The blood and gore GPM (gallons per minute) is off the scale on this one, as Aya and Saki slice through multiple spurting cadavers, loaded with promiscuity in the face of death. God bless Japanese game developers! The 360 version even lets you dress (or undress) the girls before they hit the streets hacking.



Misery

Reiko



Elika

Ubisoft Montreal has achieved the once-unthinkable task of making gamers care by tethering male and female leads together, then slowly developing a relationship between them that by game's end will have a profound effect on many a player. Elika acts as a vessel of healing, removing the corruption that chokes the land as she and the Prince of Persia explore four vast desert lands plagued by the darkness her father has wrought. If you've ever fallen in love with a game, imagine falling in love *within* a game.

Prince of Persia

Developer: Ubisoft Montreal | Publisher: Ubisoft | System: PS3/Xbox 360 | 2008

Resident Evil 5
Developer: Capcom Publisher: Capcom System: Xbox 360 PS3 2009

Sheva and Excella

Finally. Resident Evil 5 undoes all the trauma of Resident Evil 4 by giving us a sidekick that can fight on her own. Sheva Alomar (who may be named after our favorite baseball player, Roberto) is a good-guy girl who can take care of herself. This is a welcome feature in a game whose prequel boasted AI that seemed desperate to take shotgun rounds to the head. On the other side of the ethical coin is Excella, a pharmaceuticals employee in Africa... which in our experience usually means, "villain." Still, at least both girls can brag about their fashion sense—a hard thing to do when the T-Virus is turning everyone around them into blood-hungry psychopaths.



Afro Samurai

Developer: SURGE Games Publisher: SURGE System: PS3 / Xbox 360 2009



Sio

Sio isn't exactly in the first Afro Samurai game, however rest assured that she'll be all over the sequel. How do we know there will be a sequel? Because anime and games this defining and altogether extraordinary don't ever stop at one. Sio appears in Afro Samurai Resurrection where she relieves Afro of the Number One Headband and robs his father's grave. Then she really gets nasty. Played with a maniacal sinuous purr by Lucy Liu, Sio is pure evil and curvaceous booty all wrapped up into one poisonous package.



High Elf

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel

Developer: Ascaron Publisher: CDV USA System: PC, PS3, Xbox 360 2008

The High Elf lives and breathes magic. Inside the walls of the magic academy in Thylysium, she studied the ancient lore. Now she's about to set off into the unknown. The young pupil is eager to learn more, and she begins her adventures hoping that she will uncover more secrets to expand her knowledge. Maybe she will choose the path of Light? This would be the perfect moment to intervene! Ancaria is in turmoil. Injustice, oppression and hatred are commonplace. The Humans must finally be freed from slavery and given the power to vote. Now is the time to lead the world into a more secure future.

"Being bad never felt so good."

Considered royalty in the ranks of the succubi, a Queen of Suffering engenders the adoration and respect of any lesser brethren in the region. She quickly assembles an entourage of fanatical succubus devotees, forming a coven of loyal-to-the-death servants and students. Like her fellow succubus elite, the Maiden of Pain, the Queen of Suffering is affronted to the core by any mortal that attempts to dominate those of her race. Her seductive beauty and power even tempts other immortals, and like the legendary Sinstralls, she's more than happy to enter into combat with potent foes.

Queen of Suffering

98



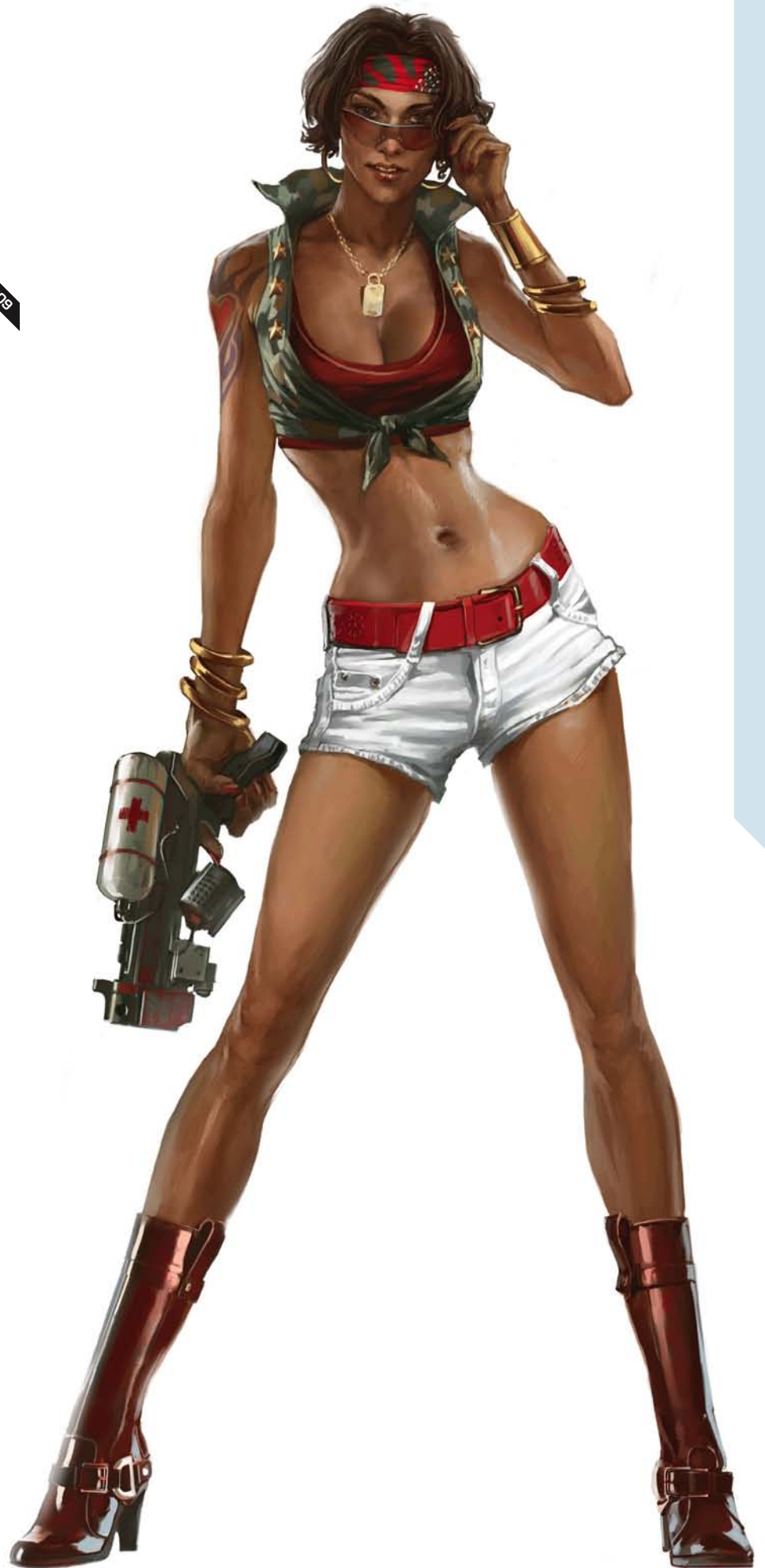
"Next time I'll be the master."

Maiden of Pain

She is torturer, tormentor and vile temptress, this elite succubus of the Burning Legion. Known as a Maiden of Pain, she roams the Legion strongholds across the Hellfire Peninsula, seeking out interlopers to impose her will upon — with a crack of her Lash of Pain. Unlike fellow members of her race of winged demons, the Savaad, the Maiden of Pain is no summoned puppet for a Warlock and she is enraged by the enslavement of her succubi brethren.

Medic

In Vogster Entertainment's new third person MMO shooter, crime is a way of life, and where there's crime, there's bound to be bloodshed, and where there's bloodshed there's bound to be a Medic. Sunrise City has been decimated after a series of catastrophic events that have crippled the global economy, so it's every man for himself in this next-generation Free-to-Play game teeming with virtual gangs and its own underground economy. There's never been a better reason to throw your avatar into harm's way.





Valkyria Chronicles
Developer: Sega Publisher: Sega System: PS3 2008

Selvaria B. Drei

In the world of Valkyria Chronicles, there are plenty of strong women worth our attention. But none are as fine as Selvaria. Stern and severe, Selvaria shows off Sega's CANVAS Engine with cool pride. Like a living painting, this Drei Stern soldier is everything that next-gen gaming should be. She's not just good character design; her moving lines show us that everything in HD doesn't have to come in shades of gray.

It doesn't bother us that she bleeds Valkyria blood; those special powers only serve to remind us of how impossible she is. And when Maximilian gives her her final orders, she serves him till the end. A woman of principles—always more important than proportions.

Eleanor



Alicia

Sure, these girls are all cut from the same CANVAS, but each is unique and remarkable. Whether it be Alicia's simple bakery dreams, Eleanor's calculated comprehension of Squad 7, Rosie's self-important, brassy confidence, or Isara's circumstantial nobility, each of these girls gives us another reason to play through the epic, revolutionary RPG by Sega. As if we needed another reason beyond Selvaria.





Rosie

Isara

Champions Online
Developer: Cryptic Studios Publisher: 2K Games System: PC / Xbox 360 2009

Mind Slayer

a.k.a. Stacy Turner



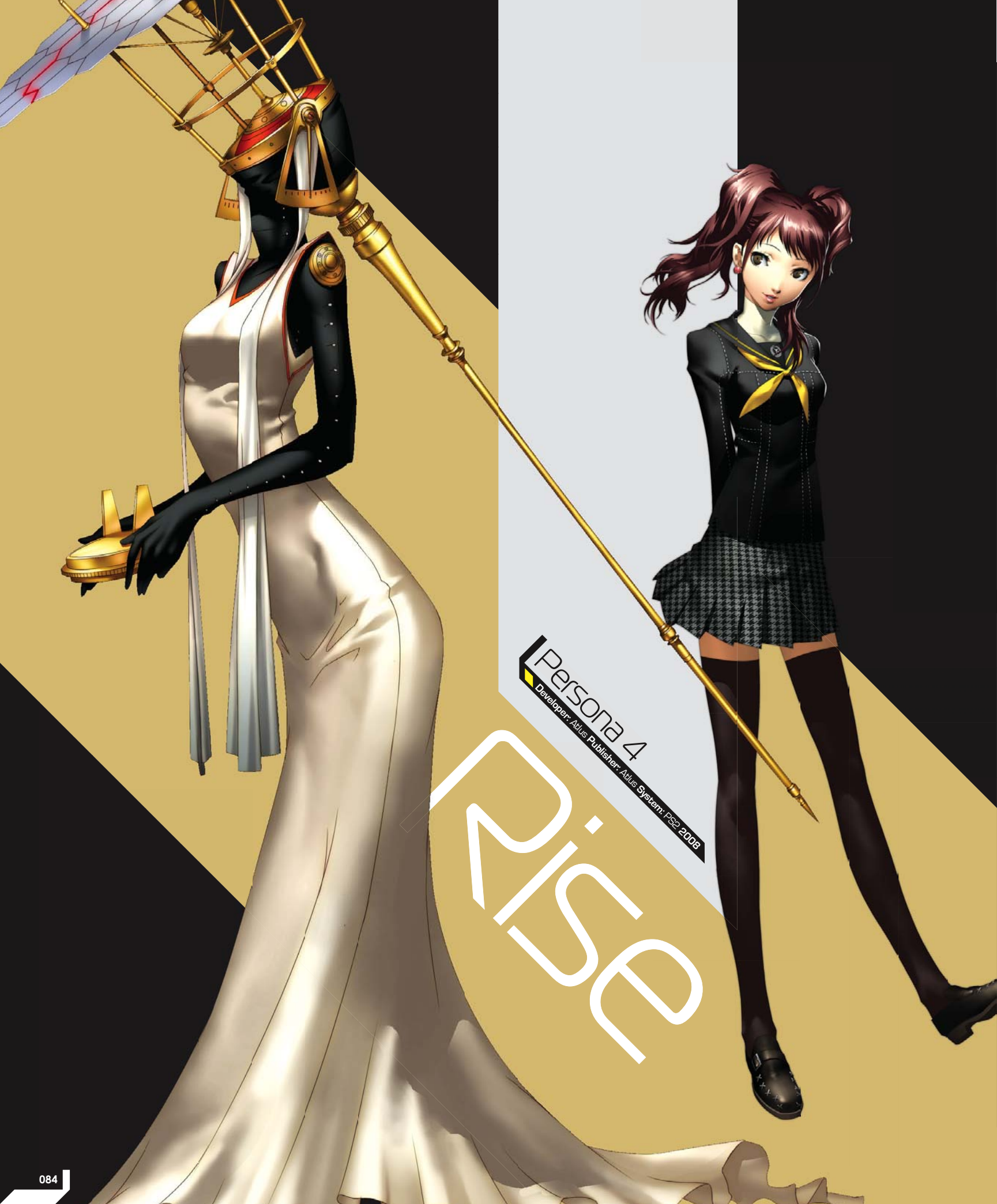
Mind Slayer is totally loyal to Psimon, new leader of PSI. To everyone else, she is utterly cold and uncaring. She rarely speaks to anyone but Psimon, and reacts harshly and sometimes even violently to any attempt to engage her in conversation. Other members of PSI have learned to keep their distance as much as possible. Mind Slayer's powers are all variations on telekinesis, from straightforward mental grabs to shields and psychokinetic fingers. Her favorite uses of her powers are the razor-sharp blades she fashions from pure mental force and uses to slice her opponents to ribbons. She will not hesitate to use lethal force to complete a mission for PSI, and sometimes she'll kill just for the fun of it.

Chie

Persona 4
Developer: Atlus Publisher: Atlus System: PS2 2008



Persona 4's magnum opus on the PS2 deserves a colorful cast of characters, and these girls flesh out the story with their distinctive personalities and sparkling designs. Chie breaks our hearts with her love of Kung Fu—nothing makes a girl grander than if she likes Bruce Lee. Rise is like the American Idol contestant you really want to win . . . if there were such a thing. And finally Yukiko is the traditional, elegant, and silent Japanese heroine that we've all come to love since Clamp started publishing manga in English. These birds help deliver the ultimate swan song for the PS2. What better way to say goodbye to a console?



Persona 4
Developer: Atlus Publisher: Atlus System PS2 2008

CRISIS



Y
U
O

Xi'a

Dark Goddess





Do not let her beauty fool you. While a stunning sight to behold, Xira is a temptress and a seductress; her goal to ultimately take upon the throne of the Goddess of Elaine and lead her children to a glorious future path — paved with crushed skulls of the unworthy. To her brave warriors of Fury she bestows great gifts and blessings, praising the heroes of the battlefield as they extinguish the ever-fraill Light.

Blademasters are masters of close combat, and Grimlie is no exception to that rule. Grimlie grew up in the city of Etherblade where she trained under the supervision of several Blademasters. Her strict upbringing has transformed her into a formidable figure on the battlefield. Intense training has not only made her into a legend in Territory Wars, but has also made her physique quite easy on the eyes.

Grimlie



Orinjina is a unique creature. Abandoned at birth for bearing the scar of the Untamed on her tummy, Orinjina was left to die inside a cave near the Orange River. The kind spirits of the river took pity upon the tiny, writhing bundle of flesh and influenced the inhabitants of the cave, the bats, to look after her. Day after day, month after month, the bats continued to feed and nourish the child. And after many moons passed, this child soon became a woman—but not just any woman. Her essence became fused with her caretakers, the bats. She inherited many of their physical, mental and spiritual traits. The three rings on her wing tips represent these inherited traits, which she bears proudly to this day.



Orinjina



Usagi

Usagi has always been a girl against the grain. Most other young Venomancers are trained in the use of poison magic, but Usagi developed an affinity for archery at a very young age. Being adept with a bow has forced her to become more agile and quick. Usagi often uses her pet to distract her opponents while she prepares the final blow with her bow. She is also known as a trickster, often transforming into her animal form or asking men to carry her from place to place.

Xarfoxy

Venomancers are typically beautiful women that have the ability to transform into magical creatures; Xarfoxy is no exception to this rule. Xarfoxy is often regarded in her town as the traditional Venomancer: she has strictly followed the teachings of the Venomancer Elders and looks down upon anyone who does not do the same. She is often found in the public forum of her town, reprimanding anyone who speaks out of order with a glare that penetrates and allures.

Muramasa: The Demon Blade
Developer: Vanillaware / Marvelous Publisher: XSEED System: Wii 2009

Momohime

One of two playable characters announced for Muramasa: The Demon Blade from the gaming industry's reigning masters of hand-drawn art and animation, Vanillaware, Momohime is a young kimono-wearing kunoichi who starts off in Kyo and travels to Edo within the game's Japanese-mythology based storyline, a departure from their previous work on Odin Sphere, which drew from Norse Mythology. Whatever the mythology, one thing remains clear—hand-drawn visuals will never go out of style.



Wakfu
Developer: Ankama Games Publisher: Ankama System: PC/Mac 2009

Ecaflip



When you're a god, even the rolling dice is predictable! But for the mere mortals who circle the blackjack tables of the material world hungrily, there is no such luck. And here, it is the Ecaflips who rule over crook, thief and gold-rusher, playing lady luck with supreme skill and recklessness. Ecaflips are accustomed to gambling on chance. They collect game cards and have made fearsome weapons out of them, leaving the swords of the past to other fighters. They might even read your future in these cards . . . but if they're lucky, you might not want to know what it is!

Tips
If an Ecaflipette starts opening your shirt with her soft, warm paw, just remember that a set of claws hides just underneath. That's one gamble you're sure to lose!

Oni

Developer: Bungie Publisher: Rockstar Games System: Windows, Mac, PS2 2001

KONOKO



Before they took the FPS world by storm with Halo, Bungie created the before-its-time Ghost in Shell inspired Oni, a plausible third-person shooter/ action game hybrid that used interpolation to make the games complex martial arts look silky smooth. If only they would have had the power to realize Konoko in all of her Masamune Shirow-like splendor. Halo is getting a little long in the tooth...



HOW MUCH
OF A GOOD THING
IS TOO MUCH?

YEAH...STUPID QUESTION

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Console Editor's Top Ten favorite Girls of Gaming

01	Nariko	Heavenly Sword	SCEA
02	Lara Croft	Tomb Raider Underworld	Eidos
03	Kameo	Kameo: Elements of Power	Microsoft
04	Tyris Flare	Golden Axe: Beast Rider	Sega
05	Kelly O'Lenmey	Gun Valkyrie	Sega
06	Zala	Untold Legends Dark Kingdom	SOE
07	Gwendolyn	Odin Sphere	Atlus
08	Vanessa Schneider	P.N. 03	Capcom
09	Vela	Jet Force Gemini	Nintendo
10	Samus Aran	Super Metroid	Nintendo

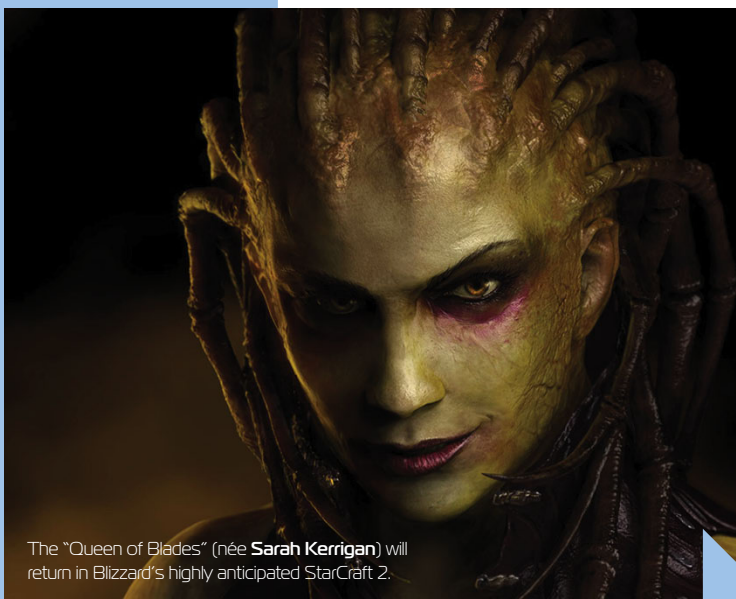
There's a big dichotomy between what I consider the most iconic girls of gaming versus my actual favorites. Early influences like Alicia Dragoon (Genesis), Marina (Mischief Makers N64), Gum (JSRF Xbox) and Cammy circa Cannon Spike (fighters are another matter altogether) will forever hold a special place in my gaming heart, but when it comes to gameplay and character design this is as close as I can come to producing a list. Nariko is pure poetry in motion and the most powerful, driven and sympathetic "girl" I have ever had the pleasure of controlling. No matter how many times I go back to Heavenly Sword, Nariko's nimble action and amazing poise set against in-game cinemas by WETA Digital and Ninja Theory that remain far superior to anything gaming has ever produced, never cease to draw me in and keep me pinned to the bittersweet end. I adore her sister Kai as well...the old Twing-Twang never grows old. I fell in love with Lara all over again this year; and every girl on this list remains in my regular gameplay rotation. Just missed the list: Jade (BG&E), Tati (Rise of the Kasai), Inphy (N3), and Ailish (Sudeki). Dave Halverson



PC Editor's Top Ten favorite **Girls of Gaming**

01	Alyx Vance	Half Life 2	Valve
02	Kerrigan	StarCraft	Blizzard
03	Firiona Vie	EverQuest series	SOE
04	Devona	Guild Wars	ArenaNet
05	April Ryan	The Longest Journey	Funcom
06	Elexis Sinclair	SIN	Ritual
07	Viktoria	Thief 2	Eidos
08	Rynn	Drakan	Psygnosis
09	Elaine Marley	Monkey Island	LucasArts
10	Shodan	System Shock 2	EA

Special mention: Sarah Morrison (R.I.P.) – Tabula Rasa - NCsoft



The "Queen of Blades" (née **Sarah Kerrigan**) will return in Blizzard's highly anticipated StarCraft 2.



The best partner Gordon Freeman could ask for, Half Life 2's **Alyx Vance** is brave and caring. And she has a really cool robot pet.



The indomitable **Devona**, stalwart leader of Guild Wars' original band of heroes.



Although the SIN game series has been retired, the busty CEO of SinTEK, **Elexis Sinclair**, has a place in game villain history.



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Megumi-chan

Afro Samurai

Developer: SURGE Publisher: SURGE System: PS3/Xbox 360 2009

If you thought Justice was a head case wait until you meet Sio. Play the amazing game by SURGE this January on PS3 and Xbox 360, and see the animation and look for the anime on FUNimation DVD.



Ride to Hell

Developer: Deep Silver Publisher: Deep Silver System: PS3/Xbox 360 Q1 2009

Candy

Candy hitches a ride in the upcoming Ride to Hell; the groundbreaking new open-world epic based on California Chopper culture in the late 60s.



Mature

Tabula Rasa

Developer: Destination Games Publisher: NCsoft System: PC 2007



Sarah Morrison

Sexy and self-assured, equal parts tomboy, field general and pin-up model, we'll miss Tabula Rasa's Sarah Morrison, one of online gaming's most recognizable characters in recent years. The TR servers shut down in February 2009, but we'll remember Sarah's beauty and heroism for years to come.



P.N.04 Anyone?

Art by: Robert Duenas Homepage: www.sketchrob.com 2008

RAD
28

Toadally Rad!

Art by: Robert Duenas Homepage: www.sketchrob.com 2008



RAD
28

Zzarxis the Necromancer



Artist's note: "The necromancer always captured my attention as a perfect fantasy role for strong female characters. Their dark and sinister power mesmerized me each time I experienced a necromancer's role in novels or games. In this artwork, I created a sexy female not afraid to ensnare the attention of others by any means necessary, ready to abuse her powers of corruption."

Morenn the Dryad

Of Geralt's many sexual conquests in *The Witcher: Enhanced Edition*, the wise and enchanting dryad he meets in the Brokilon forest is certainly the most down to earth of girls. Besides her painted body, Morenn has the appearance of a beautiful human female, but she moves through the woods with supernatural grace—morphing the forest around her to conceal all sound.



The Witcher

Developer: CD Projekt Red Publisher: Atari System: PC 2008

The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting
Princess Adda

Mature



Mature



The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting

Barmaid

The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting
Scribe's Wife

Mature



Mature



The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting

Morénn the Dryad

The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting
Toruv the Elf



Mature



The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting

Rita

The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting

Shani the Healer

Mature



Mature



The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting

Shani the Healer

The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting

Triss the Sorceress

Mature



Mature



The Witcher's Ladies in Waiting
Farmgirl



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