

# Wildcards - Chapter 24: Raid Night

*I was starting to think that those infomercials would never end! Welcome back, everyone! For those of you that are just logging into the stream, you're in for one hell of a treat! Quentin Bell, CEO of Abidden Zoetic Enterprises and creator of Abidden... has joined us in the studio!*

The shoutcaster, #Penta-Price announced with genuine excitement as he introduced his special guest.

*Imagine my surprise, when I get told by the powers that be... that Quentin Bell would be in the studio? But wait, it gets even better. They told me that I don't have to go easy on him... and we're able to ask all those burning questions you've been holding onto for so long!*

Quentin shuffled nervously in his seat as he watched the animated man increase in tempo with each word spoken. Interviews were never the CEO's forte, but this was different. The more he thought about it, the apprehension he felt wasn't due to fear. It was exciting.

*If you think this is just another one of those publicity stunts, you'd be completely right! There's some incredible rumours floating around in the eSports space... and I think we're in for some very big news. Before we get into our Question and Answers with Quentin, we'll be ranking all of the best moments of the Paragons over the last decade. I'm told that it's to honour the ending of the Paragon's Tomb raid... but I think we all suspect something might be happening later. All eyes are on Helena tonight! I'm your host, #Penta-Price! See you after a short break!*

The shoutcaster tapped a few dials in front of him before turning around and giving Quentin a thumbs up gesture. The CEO watched the studio dials apprehensively, and the presenter sensed it immediately.

"Don't worry, they're off. See the big light up there that's currently green? That's when it's safe. Red means we're Live. Don't worry, they can't see us either... well, not the real us."

One of the many marvels of technology was how they presented the Livestream from the studio. Instead of it being Live footage of both Quentin and #Penta-Price, they produced computer generated models of them which synced up perfectly with the audio of the stream. It allowed guests to relax comfortably while showing them off at their best. Many fans online had slowed down the audio over the years in an attempt to identify more about #Penta-Price's real setup

and studio. Of all the conspiracy theories, the most popular one was that the shoutcaster didn't actually exist and was merely a network creation, designed to boost ratings.

The shoutcaster

"So what's off the table?"

#Penta-Price asked as he took a drink from a small flask at his side. Without missing a beat, he offered it to Quentin as he continued speaking.

"Kell was uncharacteristically vague when he said to roast you on tonight's show."

Smiling in curiosity, the CEO took the offered flask and took a swig. Immediately grateful as the warm whiskey put him at ease.

"Whoa, who needs tonics."

Quentin exclaimed with a laugh and a cough before handing the flask back to the shoutcaster. Thinking of the question, he just spread his arms wide as he answered.

"I'm an open-book tonight. Ask me the questions they want the answers to. Don't pull your punches."

Seemingly satisfied, the shoutcaster moved towards his studio interface before he hesitated and turned back to the CEO.

"You're... not going to get rid of Helena, are you?"

An uncharacteristically soft tone came from the shoutcaster, as though he hoped that he was wrong.

Quentin smiled sadly.

"Those are the questions you should ask in our segment."

#Penta-Price frowned at the answer before he eventually added.

"Can you just tell me?"

The CEO straightened in his chair before glancing at the flashing green light. It was indicating that they only had a few more seconds.

Looking at the shoutcaster directly, Quentin spoke matter-of-factly.

"Tonight is the last night that Helena Murdoch will be a Hero."

The red light appeared.

They were Live again.

*Okay! Now that one felt like forever! Who is in charge of these adverts? Haha, okay okay, I'll stop! Can't have them firing me, who would give you the latest Abidden news and gossip then?! To those just joining us, and those listening patiently... we're going to be going back over the last decade and looking at some of the crowning achievements of the Paragons!*

In the studio, #Penta-Price looked at Quentin with disappointment on his face. His tone didn't miss a single beat and sounded as excited as ever.

*And as many of you agree, the Paragons were the greatest thing about the game! So... who will feature in our Top Ten? Who knows, we might even have a few wildcards appear in the entries!*

Quentin couldn't help but smile at the choice of words. The Pre-Raid show was a tradition and Quentin had decided to be online so he could help control the narrative of events throughout the Raid.

*Quentin, who is your first guess? Of the last ten years, what was the tenth best moment of Abidden?*

#Penta-Price gestured towards a screen that showed all of the answers to the questions, but Quentin ignored it as he folded his arms and thought about the question.

Thanks for having me, #Penta-Price. What was the tenth best moment? I can almost certainly tell you the top five... but ten? Hmm. I'm going to say...

The shoutcaster rolled his eyes as he took another swig from his flask.

Scarr's Drunken Master Fight. I know there were so many questions around that fight back in the day, and I can tell you that I actually know the truth.

#Penta-Price spat his whiskey in surprise and started coughing abruptly. His expression shifted between shock, excitement and lastly confusion.

Quentin decided to let the wheezing shoutcaster recover.

I'll put you out of your misery, and finally end the debate. Was Don Orso actually drunk when he fought as the Drunken Master?

The CEO paused a few moments before his face burst into a wide smile.

You're damn right he was! He was so drunk that our AI couldn't figure out how to fight him. His Drunken Master style was so random that it actually worked!

#Penta-Price started to laugh, but it was so different from his usual laugh on the show. Quentin decided to add a little more context.

Obviously we had to investigate it as it's against practically every part of his contract. Do you know what we found when we got to his apartment? All of them, all the Paragons feeding him coffee and looking like the guiltiest bunch of kids you could imagine.

*I actually can't believe this. He always had those cheesy lines when he would jump into a battle, like the old fighting movies... I genuinely thought that he was just acting drunk!*

I think my favourite part of that whole situation was that he knew it would work. The smile on his face when I found him with coffee that morning. So was I right, is it in the Top Ten?

The shoutcaster paused for a moment before breaking out of his reverie. His hands darted across the interfaces in front of him and both he and Quentin were rewarded with a clip playing in front of them.

Both men watched as Quentin's guess was confirmed. The clip showed The Paragon, Scarr, in his full Monk equipment dancing around erratically on the battlefield. Each time he called out an attack, he would proceed to use a different skill. His movements were hilariously bad, and consisted of tactical tumbles away from his enemies. For some bizarre reason, he still managed to land critical hits by using only hand to hand martial arts.

Scarr is an incredibly agile player. His usual movements involved acrobatics and specialist martial arts. The Monk character was a terrible matchup with his skillset. If we had another chance, I'd love to see him in a more diverse role.

*Well, how the hell do we follow that, Viewers? In just under a minute, we broke Quentin Bell and got one of the closest guarded secrets in Abidden History! Get voting, leave some comments, tell your friends to start streaming... This show is definitely unmissable! And don't worry, you have plenty of time while we take a shortcut to one of our sponsors!*

As the green light illuminated in front of them, #Penta-Price exhaled loudly, the smile still wide on his face.

"You really did mean it... you're not holding anything back! I'm starting to think that there's something going on here."

The shoutcaster exclaimed finally as he turned in his chair. The excitement on his face was clear as day and Quentin smiled in response before confiding in him.

"I'll need your help to make sure that this is the most seen episode. Ask me the questions that will pull in the viewers, this is an incredibly important night for us all."

#Penta-Price nodded enthusiastically as he watched the green light. It would be a few more moments before they went Live and it would change to red. As almost an afterthought, the shoutcaster decided to confide in the CEO too.

"I never blamed you for this game turning to shit. I doubt they do either."

He gestured at one of the screens that showed the ratings ticking up higher and higher.

Quentin shook his head sadly, a wry smile on his face.

"We'll know for sure by the end of the night."

The CEO responded ominously as he watched the light turn red.

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*This has been insane! I can tell that you all think so too, just look at these viewership numbers! You'll be happy to know that we got all of the adverts done, so we won't be having anymore interruptions for the rest of the Livestream. I'm still in the studio here with Quentin, who has said he'll stick around for the entire broadcast... Let's hope he gives us more Abidden secrets along the way! Okay... Okay, we've just had a new spike of viewers! Looks like some impatient people out there were waiting on the adverts to end. Can't say I blame you! So, let's catch you up with what you've missed! Ready Quentin?*

Ready when you are, #Penta-Price!

*Haha, excellent! Ah yes, new viewers, that was indeed Mr. Quentin Bell... CEO of Abidden Zoetic Enterprises and Creator of Abidden. Whoa, Quentin, that title is a bit of a mouthful, any chance you'd change it?*

Yes, it'll be changed to a new title in the morning.

Quentin laughed as he checked his own interface. He had spent the last hour discussing the top moments of Abidden with the excited shoutcaster, much to the delight of fans who were piling on questions about the game and the Paragons. Many were curious about the future, but most were asking questions about the past. When silence entered the room, the CEO looked up in confusion only to see #Penta-Price panicking slightly in his chair.

***Such a strange sense of humour, Quentin. You'd change your title after all this time, just because it's a bit hard to pronounce?***

No, nothing silly like that. I've set up a new company, which will be announced at the end of the stream today... so I hope the fans will stick around to hear about it.

***Now that sounds incredibly exciting! You heard the man, everyone. What could Quentin have been working on under all of our noses?***

It was at that very moment that something clicked in the shoutcaster's brain. He started to piece everything together, and luckily he vocalised that exact thought process for the benefit of the millions listening to him.

***You're setting up a new company. You're on my show to promote it. We've spent the last hour talking about the Paragons... and we're about to watch the finale of the Paragons Tomb. Quentin... just what do you have planned?"***

You'll find out about it all, soon enough. I know you all want to know, but we still have a top three to discuss!

***Ahh! You're killing us here! Okay okay, lets keep this show moving... and holy fuck, look at those numbers! Where did we finish off?***

Should we do a quick recap for the new listeners?

***Excellent idea, Quentin! In tenth place we had Drunken Master, Don Orso. In ninth, we had Greaves leading the charge against the Bandit King and his forces. Eighth was Varya becoming the God Blade. Seventh was... help me out here, Quentin!***

Seventh was Scarr accidentally causing a Civil War between the NPCs. The Uprising against the Lamerian Throne.

***Yes! Then Greaves was sent to quell the uprising! Which came in fifth, so what was sixth again? Ah wait, it was Helena rejecting the Prince! I can still hear the slap to this day.***

I genuinely felt bad for everyone that wanted that to become a relationship. Looking back though, she really made the right choice... it was like she knew he'd become the Evil Prince.

***Ooooh, do I sense some gossip? Did Helena already know that Prince Gerald would become a Villain? You have to tell us, Quentin.***

I can tell you. For certain. That Helena... had absolutely no idea that he would become a Villain. Truthfully, I think the rejection became a catalyst for his eventual turn to the dark side.

***Haha, I can tell there are hundreds of thousands out there that won't sleep tonight after hearing that. I'll admit, I was on team Helena & Gerald too! Albeit, I think I just wanted to finally see some action happen on screen!***

#Penta-Price winked slyly at Quentin before gesturing at the comments section of the interface. The readings showed an explosive amount of comments pouring in to defend Helena and to reiterate that Gerald was the worst possible suitor for her. The two men in the booth had been teasing out reactions from the crowd the whole night. They had gotten 'Scarr' trending all across social media after the reveal of his 'Drunken Master' stunt. Further snippets of information were given away to the media, some that hinted at Greaves' temper outside of the game. Helena's sense of humour that viewers never got to see was explained through anecdotes that Quentin shared. The atmosphere on the stream was like a proud father talking about his kids, and the fans absolutely loved it. All animosity that had originally been aimed at Quentin for his hand in the Paragons' destruction was practically forgotten as the stream continued.

Behave #Penta-Price! Helena deserves much better than that. Can you imagine trying to marry off the Celestial Archer? She'd murder us. Speaking of which, we're getting to the top three. I am pretty sure I know exactly what will come out as the greatest moment of Abidden's History.

***Just because you guessed the majority, doesn't mean you're going to get the top three right! Okay listeners, Mr. CEO here has gotten four of his guesses correct... make sure to vote and prove him wrong! Vote for your favourite moments on the link below. While you do that, we're going to show the clip again of our fourth place winner!***

As the green light came on in the studio, #Penta-Price practically dove towards his hip flask which he gratefully took a swig of before sliding it across to Quentin. His eyes were shining with expectation and excitement as he constantly sat up and readjusted himself in the seat. In the space of a few seconds, he had clutched at his knees before crossing his legs... only to revert back to his original position. The wide smile on his face was an absolute transformation to the exhausted looking man that Quentin had met at the beginning of the stream. As the CEO took a drink from the flask, the shoutcaster finally asked what was on his mind.

"You're setting up a new company, and we're making the world fall in love with the Paragons again. Please tell me that I'm not crazy, and what I'm thinking is actually happening."

The screen in front of them played a clip from Abidden where Khance was smacked off a cliff by a rampaging monster. The footage went in slow motion and zoomed in on his face as the Divine Healer went cross-eyed as he was unceremoniously knocked out of the fight in the first few

moments. What made it worse was the peeling laughter that ripped out of Scarr as it happened. The clip had been the bane of Khance's life for so long, as everyone created memes around it. It quickly became synonymous with getting rid of something. Thousands of versions appeared online with different audio, and many popular influencers used it to end their streams.

Quentin smiled wryly, wondering how Khance and the other Paragons would react to this stream. The CEO made sure to clear it with all of them beforehand, and he was pleasantly surprised to find that they were happy for him to reveal the insider stories.

As he slid back the flask to the shoutcaster, Quentin glanced again at the light to make sure they were still safe to speak.

"You're not crazy and what you're thinking... could be happening."

Quentin grinned. Mostly because of #Penta-Price's disbelief, coupled with the fact that they went back on air just before the shoutcaster could ask a follow-up question.

*I'm getting warning looks from the higher-ups! Looks like we're going to have to postpone the reveal of our top three and jump straight into the raid! Quentin, I hope you'll help me here with some key insights into what's going on?*

Certainly. I would be happy to!

*Excellent, so maybe you could shed some light on some of the rumours that are floating around. Ethan isn't in today's line-up, but he's never missed a Raid night before. What's going on?*

There are certain things I'm not able to talk about, and I know that Ethan is quite a popular player in Abidden. I can safely tell you all tonight, that he has done absolutely nothing wrong and should be able to play Abidden in the future.

*I think you just put a lot of people at ease with that statement, Mr. Bell! But the cynic in me needs to ask... what do you mean by the word, 'Should'.*

Unfortunately, I don't have any say when it comes to the Heroes of Abidden. I haven't had any input in those decisions for years now.

*You can't expect us to believe that, you own the company! Why don't you have any input?*

Instead of answering, Quentin merely gestured at the screen in front of them which was showing the beginning of the raid. Without missing a beat, #Penta-Price jumped into action and started recapping on what had happened since the last Raid. As the shoutcaster began to list off the status of each Hero present, Quentin lifted the hip flask only to find that it was completely



empty. Before he could even frown, a grinning #Penta-Price revealed a full flask from an area underneath his desk. The CEO was awarded a wink before the shoutcaster focused completely on the scenes in front of him. As Quentin took a fresh swig of the alcohol, he marvelled at how efficient the shoutcaster was. Each skill, buff, stat and equipment update was reeled off flawlessly as #Penta-Price's eyes darted over the various images in front of him. What surprised Quentin further, was that the shoutcaster threw in some observations since the last battle which focused on strategy and team morale.

*With the exclusion of Ethan from this battle, I think it's safe to say that the remaining party will be looking to Helena for guidance. Tensions are likely going to be high without the Light General giving additional support from the background. ShieldBro looks resolute on his approach. He didn't fare too badly in the last raid, and we did see him complete a number of quests over the last number of days. Doesn't look like he's reached much higher in level, but maybe the extra practice will have given him more resolve in the battle to come.*

He's probably nervous because he let the healer die in the last raid.

The CEO added with a smirk. He saw a wide smile appear on #Penta-Price's face and knew he wasn't going to face any backlash from the shoutcaster.

*Hahaha, Quentin! You should be here for all of our broadcasts. I'll never know what will come out of that mouth of yours. Just an update for everyone about tonight's raid, Percivus has taken on the damage dealing role. He's been subbed in to replace TroyLegal who-*

... Is having some legal trouble.

Quentin quipped between swigs of the alcohol. He was feeling much more at ease now and felt much happier being able to speak his mind. Kell did tell him to let loose and to hold nothing back. The CEO had recalled Elvira looking both horrified and amused at their publicity plan. All he had to do was make the Heroes look bad and the Paragons look good. It was the easiest task as the job was practically already done for him. The Heroes were incredibly hateful and the Paragons were amazing by contrast.

*Legal trouble? You know, I think I heard a rumour about that very thing earlier today. But I guess we won't have time for that, the Raid party has just entered the room. We have Helena up at the front as the impromptu leader of the pack. ShieldBro is standing alongside her in the role of a tank. CurioSity is behind them with his healing powers at the ready. Percivus is in a spellcaster role and we have... nobody? Where are the fifth and sixth Heroes? Sorry about this folks, I'm not sure what's gone wrong here.*

I can tell you what's gone wrong, if you'd like?

Quentin's smile was half mocking and half guilty as he looked across at the confused shoutcaster.

***By all means, fill us in, Quentin!***

This raid is a little different to all of the raids you've seen over the years. Instead of holding a paywall over people and getting viewers to pay a premium to hear what the Heroes were saying... I decided to make the Raids Live.

***You... can't be serious?***

Yes, that Raid right now is completely Live. If you enable in-game audio, everyone will be able to hear exactly what is being said in the game. It should be completely fine though, each of the Players adheres to a strict code of conduct in how they communicate with each other. It might be a bit of a jagged experience, Viewers, so I hope you'll have patience with us as we revert back to the old system... of how this game was supposed to be played. What you're looking at right now, is a Hero who is logging in late. I wonder what they're all saying down there?

#Penta-Price hit a button on the interface and the green light illuminated briefly, indicating that it was safe for the two men to talk privately.

"Are you fucking insane? You know what's going to happen if we put them on Live! This will cause an absolute shitstorm for the network and for the shareholders. Are you drunk right now?"

The shoutcaster almost pleaded with Quentin for him to show some semblance of sanity. His face was awash with fear of what was happening, but another part of him was kinda curious to see the aftermath of the impending shitstorm. Abidden had been long overdue a lift in excitement as it had fallen into the same repetitive cycle of raid and promotion followed by another raid and promotion. The fights lacked any form of lustre, the Heroes had zero cohesion and instead relied on individual star power. The audience had shifted from enthusiastic fans of the game, to rabid fans of the brands the Heroes represented. The shoutcaster was conflicted as he looked at Quentin. He didn't know which outcome he wanted more... to preserve the status-quo or to see what would happen Live on air.

"Hit the button. It'll all make sense soon, I promise." Quentin reassured the shoutcaster as he gestured towards the interface.

Exhaling loudly, #Penta-Price tapped two separate buttons on his interface, a genuine smile on his face.

***Fuck it! We're doing it Live!***

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You have received a buff from CurioSity.

A buff has been cancelled.

You have received a buff from CurioSity.

A buff has been cancelled.

Helena sighed audibly as she ignored the notifications that were popping up in front of her. She didn't even need to turn around to see the Healer's creepy expression aimed directly at her.

"Hey, can you injure yourself? I'll heal you straight away, it helps me gain XP."

CurioSity's voice echoed out in the Tomb which resulted in a derisive snort coming from ShieldBro.

"You wouldn't need to gain XP if you actually went and did some quests. Leave Helena alone, she likely has enough on her mind tonight."

No matter what ShieldBro's intent was, he instantly made it worse.

"Oh... I'm sorry, I thought you were a Shield? Since when did you become a Knight?"

CurioSity mocked as he turned around to look at Percivus. The Healer gestured at their Tank in disbelief.

"And what's this about her having a lot to think about? It's just another raid. Clock in, clock out. Get the royalties... rinse and repeat. Easy."

A laugh from behind indicated that Percivus agreed with CurioSity.

Helena turned around and gave the Healer and Spellcaster a withering look before addressing them.

"Both of you should be careful how you speak. We're going to be Live tonight. Everyone got sent the memo."

ShieldBro nodded his head quietly, which showed Helena that at least he had taken the time to read his messages.

CurioSity's gaze was narrowed on the Celestial Archer, suspicion written all over his face.

"We're Live? Like, everyone can hear what we're saying... no editing buffer anymore?"

The Healer's tone carried an edge of nervousness. Behind him, Percivus looked dumbly between the rest of the raid party... he had the sense to keep quiet.

Wincing slightly, CurioSity turned around to look at the empty slot on the team with horror finally crossing his features.

"Ethan and TroyLegal won't be attending today, will Bartleby know that we're Live?"

ShieldBro looked at the empty space and grimaced.

"If he was here on time, and checked his messages... then he'd know. But your guess is as good as mine."

Bartleby Von Bruntmeister has joined your Party.

Would you like to Resume the Raid: "Tomb of the Paragon"

Helena looked around and saw that a white light illuminated around a figure.

"Alright Bitches! Lets fuck up some monsters! YEAH!"

"Bartleby! No!"

ShieldBro attempted, but it was no use. The Hero had sprinted out of his spawn point and launched past the group at high speed.

"Let the fuckers edit me out, I've been waiting on this shit forever! Lets fucking raid this Tomb!"

Bartleby laughed maniacally as he drew a warhammer from his back.

"I've an amazing feeling about this raid! Might be the drugs talking, but lets fucking do this!"

CurioSity looked horrified as he watched the Hero scream in the direction of the tomb.

Helena just smiled as she attempted to start the raid, but before she could accept, a new notification popped up in front of her.

A Player has joined your Party.

Would you like to Resume the Raid: "Tomb of the Paragon"

"JeffX?! You've got to be shitting me! Dude, I thought you hated battles!"

Bartleby roared with a laugh as he practically jumped around in anticipation.

Percivus and CurioSity shared an uneasy glance as they looked at the Bard that had just joined their ranks.

ShieldBro merely shook his head before activating his barrier, illuminating the entire party in a basic protective shield.

"I will protect you all!"

He shouted his catchphrase, but it lacked the normal vigour that usually accompanied his voice.

Helena's smile grew wider as she saw the effects of being Live was having on the Raid Party.

The Celestial Archer raised her hand and signalled that she was starting the Raid.

"YESSSS!"

Bartleby Von Bruntmeister laughed as he gripped his warhammer with bright eyes aimed directly at the awaiting chamber.

The Tomb of the Paragon has resumed... the Darkness beckons.

"You know guys, I never thought they'd let me do another raid after last time! This is going to be EPIC!"

CurioSity turned to JeffX and muttered harshly.

"You know we're Live, right?"

The young Bard merely smiled in response, which seemed enough for the Healer to disregard him. All of their eyes were on Bartleby who was rushing forward into the chamber, roaring an incomprehensible battlecry.

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*Whoa! Now this has been a lot to take in! I don't even know where to start. I think CurioSity managed to save himself from saying anything stupid on Live feed, but what can we say about Bartleby Von Bruntmeister? I genuinely never thought we'd see him in another raid after the last fiasco.*

I quite like him. I've always been curious about who would win between him and Greaves.

*Greaves. Obviously.*

#Penta-Price answered immediately as though it was common sense. His eyes widened the moment the words left his mouth and he gave Quentin a rude gesture with his free hand while he tried to correct himself.

*Well, I mean, not obviously of course. Bartleby just didn't get to the same rank as Greaves, it wouldn't be a fair fight.*

It would be entertaining to watch though.

*Yes, yes it would. The Light General versus the Battle Brewer... it seems like a terrible match up. Actually, what would his next level look like? God Brewer, Divine Brewer, Drunk Knight?*

I have absolutely no idea... I don't think the design team ever considered the possibility of him completing his ascension quest.

*Since we've gotten a bit of time, why don't we get back to our Top Three Abidden moments? Who is your money on, Quentin?*

Khance and Varya against the Prime Evil. Number three, guaranteed.

*And finally... ladies and gentlemen, our esteemed guest is completely wrong. Show the clip!*

Quentin turned around with a playfully amused expression on his face. His eyes locked onto the screen and much to his surprise, the event that he thought would take the first place prize was being played.

The scenery was of tranquil clouds lazily floating above the ground, only to shift its angle and show Helena hurtling down from the Heavens as she was chased by murderous Harpies. Behind her in the background was the Sky Palace which housed the Lamerian Royal Family.

King Gerald's Coronation! I was sure she was going to die in the Throne Room.

***Imagine choosing to throw yourself off the edge of a floating island... I remember screaming at the screen, telling her not to do it. I don't think I was the only one!***

This is my favourite part.

As Helena fell from the sky, she turned in mid air and drew her bow, aiming at the Harpies that pursued her. With cold precision, she managed to defeat nearly all of them.

Just as her body was about to smash into the ground below, a burst of light wrapped around Helena and granted her angelic wings that saved her.

***The birth of the Celestial Archer. Wonderful... but still only third place! I think that was one of the real turning points for Abidden. It became more than just a game with that battle. Gerald, who was marketed as this great love interest... turned out to be a puppet of the Prime Evil.***

That wasn't actually the Prime Evil though. Gerald wasn't important enough to catch that bastard's interest.

***He was a King in Abidden. The Lamerian Throne is one of the top three forces in the whole continent... and he wasn't important enough?***

Correct.

Quentin finished simply without giving anymore context to the shoutcaster.

Both men watched as the Raiding party tentatively made their way forward. Rather, the five players behind Bartleby moved tentatively... while the Battle Brewer rushed forward screaming about his crusade against evil.

***Before we get back to the Raid, I wanted to ask... why do some of the Heroes only have basic classes and some have more exciting titles? CurioSity is a Healer. Percivus is a Spellcaster. Bartleby is a Battle Brewer and JeffX is a Bard. There's no pattern!***

Bartleby is sponsored by the Clancy Group. They wanted an action hero that would combine with their alcohol brands. Unfortunately, they didn't really put a lot of time into its creation... so it never evolved into anything. CurioSity and Percivus are different though, they just aren't very good at the game... which is why they've never progressed into more advanced classes.

***And JeffX, the Bard?***

He's never actually completed a quest before. This is his first raid, despite him being a player for nearly two years. If a piece of debris fell from the roof, it would likely kill him.

*Well that's quite a bleak picture... oh, looks like the comments are all calling for us to continue with the top three! I think we all know what's about to come up.*

I genuinely have never understood this fandom.

The CEO laughed as he watched the next clip play over the scene of the raid. The two most popular clips that ever came out of Abidden involved the same person. The first was him being punted off the side of a cliff by a monster... and the second was when he became the Divine Healer.

In the first fight against the Prime Evil, the entire team was killed off. It was their first ever team wipe. Khance's Healer ability, 'Second Chance' allowed him to revive immediately... but he was left alone in the centre of the battlefield. Greaves' army was dwindling fast and all of the Paragons were dead.

*This is 100% when everyone started shipping them. Hell, I started shipping them after this.*

#Penta-Price gripped the sides of his chair as he watched the scene unfold. Khance desperately tried to cast his ability, 'Revive' on each of the Paragons, but it didn't work. They had logged out of the game when their characters died. Only at the very end, when the Prime Evil was about to kill him, did the 'Revive' finally work. On Kinsco, The God Blade. She had trusted Khance and stayed logged in, hoping he would survive and resurrect her. Varya defended against the Prime Evil while Khance desperately used every skill and ability he had to heal her. All of his slogans were forgotten, and none of the witty quips emerged as he continued to heal Varya.

*This part is so badass.*

Khance's arms whip up and start healing each of the wounded soldiers on the battlefield. As the timer cools down, he revives some of the fallen while he continues to heal Varya in front of him. Spells, reinforcements, barriers and buffs... Khance launched all of them, with precision at each person. His entire demeanor changed throughout that fight and he eventually got rewarded for his exploits. A burst of light pierced through the heavens and struck Khance, evolving his character to become the Divine Healer and forcing the Prime Evil to withdraw.

*Oh! It looks like the top place is going to have to wait, the Heroes have finally found the final chamber of the Paragons Tomb!*



Quentin grinned as a cutscene unfolded for all the viewers and even the players in-game. The light in the studio went green and #Penta-Price turned around to look at the CEO after seeing some of the cutscene.

"I think it's time you told me about this new company of yours."

The CEO pointed at the cutscene, the smile on his face becoming wider as he glanced at the viewership ratings. They were the highest numbers the game had ever achieved.

"Keep watching, everything is going to make sense very, very soon."