

Ariald : Ryzom's new developer !

-: Atys: Behind the Scenes #4 :-

Welcome to ***Atys: Behind the Scenes***, the magazine that gives you an inside scoop on Ryzom's operations by allowing you to discover the volunteers who, time and time again, contribute to the improvement of the game we all know and love.

Today, I'm pleased to share with you my interview with our new developer, Ariald.



Ariald

Tamarea : Hello Ariald! To begin, could you introduce yourself in a few words?

Ariald : Hello Tamarea! Sure, with pleasure! To start, my history with Ryzom is lengthy. I discovered Ryzom in 2011 when a friend introduced it to me. I immediately fell in love with it, as I had never played this kind of game before. I played until 2017, when I took a break, and I came back in 2021, still as a player. I joined the Ryzom team a few months after my return. Apart from that, I juggle between studies and my job as a developer in my ordinary life.

T : What made you want to join the Ryzom team as a volunteer developer? Did you have a dream or a specific project in mind?

A : Well, first of all, Ryzom has a big place in my heart. It allowed me to create many friendships, and I feel a lot of nostalgia when I think back to my early days on the game. When I returned in 2021, I was deeply saddened to learn that a majority of the people I used to play with had stopped playing. Like many, I felt that the game, especially because of its bugs, was a lost cause. However, I couldn't help but noticed that the spirit of community had not ceased, which made me start playing again. The more I played, the more ideas I had for the game. I felt the need to give back to this game that was so dear to me. In particular, I dreamed of solving the most annoying bugs and finally adding in the improvements that we had been requested for so long. So, one day I asked around, and that's how I got into the team.

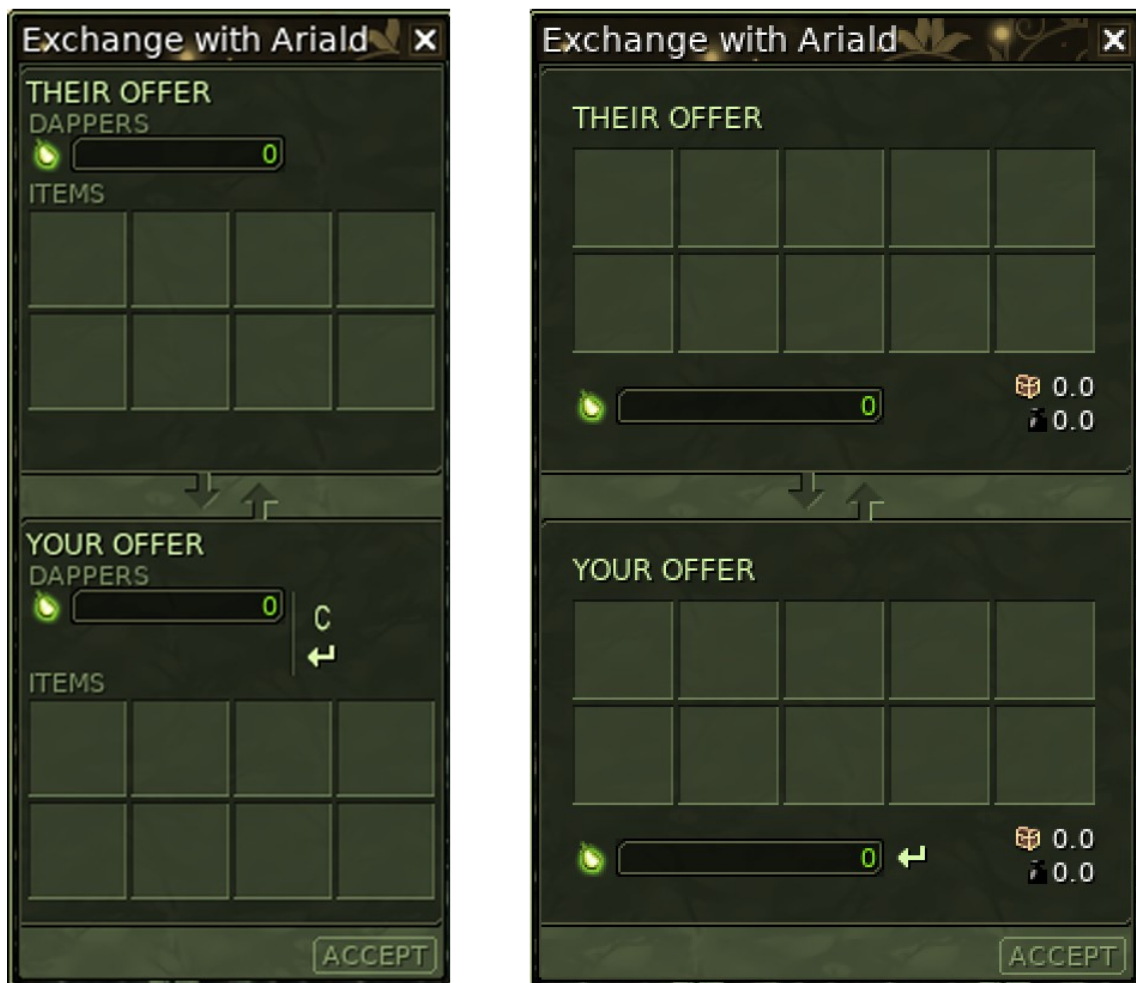
T : Tell us about your arrival in the team: did you quickly find your bearings?

A : First, I reached out to you to submit my application. We then scheduled an interview with Ulukyn. The questions were both technical and general. I received the news sometime later that I had been accepted into the team. I was very delighted. My onboarding was very smooth. I was

given a lot of freedom, designated the projects I wanted to work on and wasn't put under a lot of pressure or given strict expectations. At first, I worked almost exclusively alongside Ulukyn, but gradually I found my marks and started collaborating with other team members.

T : What was your first task as a Ryzom developer?

A : Initially, I wanted to add a visual editor for item groups. However, I quickly realized that the task was going to be a bit too difficult since I had barely begun to familiarize myself with Ryzom's code. So, my first task was to fix the inventory bugs that are now part of the January 2022 patch. As a player, these particularly bothered me. It was a humble beginning, but I figured I wasn't the only one who was annoyed by them. I also focused on the player trade window, which, in my opinion, was quite outdated. Notably, I added two slots and weight and bulk indicators and overall cleanup of the window.



Before (left) and after (right) of the player trade window from the January 2022 patch.

T : What was the hardest thing initially?

A : Finding my way around the code. First, you must understand that it has almost no documentation and is pretty messy. There are several code bases and millions of lines of it, so it's impossible to learn it all at once. I often had to disturb Ulukyn when I couldn't understand anything. Nevertheless, he was very patient with me, for which I am very grateful 😊.

T : You've just arrived, and you've already become a bug's biggest nightmare! What made you want to maneuver the code like a slashing sword?

A : Ha! I wouldn't go so far as to say that 😊. Anyhow, since Ryzom had become synonymous with bugs, I wanted to lend a helping hand. It's, unfortunately, a reality that bugs are part of the typical

game experience, and that's not normal. Often, it's a matter of problems that are very trivial to fix but make a huge difference in-game. There is also the migration to GitLab as our bug management tool that has played a major role in making fixing them easier.

T : You also like to help improve the daily gameplay of players, as evidenced by the latest patch that you are largely responsible for. Can you tell us more about this? Where and how do you choose what to work on?

A : Yes, these are what I like to call Q.O.L. (Quality of Life) improvements. These are the kind of refinements that are normally quite small but enhance the player experience enormously. Ryzom has a big potential for these kinds of improvements, and I tend to prefer working on them. Of course, there is the higher-level content that is interesting, but the small improvements are usually more feasible and are just as appreciated by the players. I mainly base my choices on my own experience as a player. I try to remember my own frustrations that I used to dream of seeing resolved, but lately, I've been consulting the forum and players more and more for inspiration to put myself back in the players' shoes.

T : By the way, how do you work on a daily basis?

A : My work revolves predominantly around GitLab. The workflow goes something like this: we designate the next patch's content by selecting the most relevant bugs and additions from the issue list on GitLab, each selected issue is assigned to a developer, and we all work on our respective issues. Once we're done, we begin the testing phase. At this point, it is very important to find all the bugs; otherwise, they will be pushed to Atys. When everything looks good, we patch. Then, it's just a matter of rinsing and repeating.

T : What is the player's role in your work?

A : I like this question a lot. I think it's very relevant. On the more obvious side, the player is the main recipient of our additions and fixes, and so they motivate our work. On the other hand, the more we work behind the scenes, and therefore the less time we have to play, the more we inevitably lose touch with the player experience. It's a shame, yes, because I love Ryzom, but more importantly because it's essential that the game evolves according to the criticism of real players. I depend on players to enlighten me on what they want to see in the game, what works well, what doesn't, etc.

T : What about other members of the Ryzom team?

A : The other members of the Ryzom team play an integral role in my work. I work namely with the game design team, the translator team, and especially the tester team. Without all these other volunteers, we can't do what we do.

T : What has been your greatest satisfaction so far?

A : I would say it was the moment when the first patch I worked on was released on Atys. Not only was it the culmination of my efforts, but it was also the moment when players discovered my additions and took notice. At that moment, I felt that I could make a real difference in the game.

T : And your most annoying bug to resolve?

A : Ah! There is one in particular that comes quickly to mind. Briefly, it was a super obscure bug that required you to drag and drop items from the trade window to the bag twice in a row to get them to move to the bag properly. I think I spent five relentless days on the bug alone. Finally, exhausted, very late one night, I had an epiphany. The ironic thing was that my solution was a single line of code.

T : Did you ever make a big OOPS?

A : Yes! "OOPS" happen to the best of us, unfortunately ☺. I think the worst I've done was crashing Atys. This was when I was just starting out and testing my client changes directly on Atys (don't try this at home). I was working on the player trade window. The server did not appreciate whatever I did. And, crash! Good thing it was very, very late at night (perhaps early, early morning)! Nowadays, I always test on Gingo or Yubo, precisely to avoid this kind of scenario.

T : What are you working on at the moment?

A : At the moment, I'm working on an inventory sorting system and adding "pockets" to the equipment window for quick access to consumable items. There are also a lot of small additions and Q.O.L. fixes, some of which have been in demand since the start of Ryzom. It's possible that these additions will already be in-game at the time of publication.



Sneak peek of the first iteration of the new equipment window, including the addition of five pockets.

T : What are your upcoming projects?

A : After completing this next patch, I plan to work on the item group editor, the redesign of the teleportation pact purchase window and many more improvements. There is also the infamous "Q15 madness" bug that I plan to fix, but a bureaucratic matter prevents me from working on it for the moment. In general, I prefer to focus on the small, essential Q.O.L. improvements before working on bigger content additions. In the long run, I would of course like to be able to add new mobs and new regions.

T : Thank you, Ariald, for this fascinating interview!

A : Thank you for giving me the chance to express myself and share my journey!

This is the end of this issue of *Atys: Behind the Scenes*, which we were delighted to make for you.

See you soon for the next one!