

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

ASHBRINGER™



NEILSON • LULLABI • WASHINGTON



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

ASHBRINGER



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CAST OF CHARACTERS



HIGHLORD ALEXANDROS MOGRAÏPE
A COURAGEOUS AND DEVOTED COMMANDER WITHIN THE KNIGHTS OF THE SILVER HAND. HE DIRECTS HIS FORCES WITH STEADFAST DETERMINATION AND UNWAVERING FAITH.



REPAULT AND DARION MOGRAÏPE

ALEXANDROS' ONLY SONS. THEIR MOTHER DIED WHEN DARION WAS BORN. FOLLOWING THAT TRAGIC LOSS, EACH OF THEM STRUGGLES TO FIND HIS OWN IDENTITY.



FAIRBANKS

A LOYAL AND DEVOTED FRIEND OF THE MOGRAÏPE FAMILY. HE IS ALEXANDROS' TRUSTED ADVISOR AND RIGHT HAND IN ALL DIPLOMATIC MATTERS.



SAÏDAN DATHROHAN

A DEVOUT PALADIN, RESPECTED LEADER, AND HONORABLE WARRIOR. DATHROHAN IS A MAN OF STRENGTH AND CONVICTION TO WHOM ALL PALADINS LOOK FOR GUIDANCE.

GENERAL ABPENDIS AND LADY BRIGETTE ABPENDIS

THOUGH BOTH ARE OCCUPIED WITH SCOURING EVIL FROM THE WORLD, GENERAL ABPENDIS IS JUST AS OFTEN ENGAGED IN CONTROLLING HIS WILLFUL DAUGHTER'S BEHAVIOR.



ISILLIEN AND DOAN

ISILLIEN THE PRIEST AND DOAN THE MAGE WORK TO MAINTAIN THE "PURITY" OF THE ORDER OF THE SILVER HAND.



MAXWELL TYROSUS

AN OUTSPOKEN DEVOTEE OF THE LIGHT, MAXWELL'S VIEWS OF WHAT IS BEST FOR THE ORDER ARE NOT ALWAYS SHARED BY THE MAJORITY OF HIS COMPANIONS.

CHAPTER I



Cover by Chris Robinson

A LAND OF CONFLICT,
IN A TIME OF WAR.

THE *SECOND WAR*
BETWEEN *ORCS*
AND *HUMANS*.

IT HAS BEEN A LONG AND
BLOODY CAMPAIGN, AND
NOW, THE WAR'S MOST
PIVOTAL BATTLE...

...IS ABOUT
TO BEGIN.

MY LORD!
STATUS
REPORT, SIR. SUPPLY
LINES HAVE BEEN
RESTORED.

AND
WHAT OF THE
BALLISTAE?

ARRIVING
PRESENTLY.

GOOD.
THE *FORTRESS*
OF *BLACKROCK*
SPIRE WILL NOT
FALL EASILY. THE
SIEGE IS SURE TO
BE A LONG AND
DIFFICULT
ONE.

BUT
WORTH IT
TO PUT THESE
ORCISH DOGS
OUT OF THEIR
MISERY!



HIGHLORD MGRAINE!
DOOMHAMMER'S
FORCES
HAVE ATTACKED AND
OVERRUN
FORWARD POSITIONS!
COMMANDER LOTHAR
AND
LORD LUTHER
ARE ENGAGED
AS WE SPEAK!

WELL, *ABBENDIS*, IT
SEEMS OUR *DOGS* STILL
HAVE *TEETH!*



READY YOURSELVES,
MEN! IF IT IS *BLOOD* THESE
GREEN-SKINNED HEATHENS CRAVE,
THEN *BLOOD* THEY SHALL *HAVE!* COME,
YOU KNIGHTS! RAISE HAMMERS, BARE
STEEL! WE *FIGHT* TO THE END,
WE *DIE* IF WE MUST!

FOR
LORDAERON,

**FOR THE
KING!!!**



DEATH IS CONTAGIOUS

ATTACK!!!





HORDE FORCES
HAVE CIRCLED
TO THE WEST! WE
MUST ACT *QUICKLY*
OR RISK BEING
OUTFLANKED!

WE RIDE,
MEN! *UPHOLD*
THE WESTERN
FLANK AT *ALL*
COST!

GRRRNN--





AAAGGGGH!!



UNGH?



THH-
BOOM



YOU GROW CARELESS IN YOUR OLD AGE, ALEXANDROS! I WON'T ALWAYS BE AROUND TO WATCH YOUR BACK!

I WOULD HAVE FELLED THE BRUTE SOON ENOUGH, BROTHER TIRION! YOU'VE GONE AND RUINED MY SPORT!



HA! YOU'RE WELCOME!



SHARAKH
ZAHAM
KIROL!



BY THE
LIGHT...



THAA-
WHOOOM



YOU, UP
THERE--TARGET THE
WARLOCK!



THE REST
OF YOU FALL
BACK! DO NOT
ENGAGE!



ENEMY
SIGHTED,
SIRE!



LET FLY!
CUT THAT
MOTHERLESS
GREENSKIN
DOWN!

STAMP



ZAR-
KUIUM?



SSYA-TWILIGHT



NEVER BEFORE
HAVE I BEHELD AN ARTIFACT
OF SUCH **POWER**. IF ONLY IT
COULD BE **COMMANDED**
BY THE **LIGHT**...

WHAT ARMY COULD
STAND AGAINST IT? SURELY IN
THE RIGHT HANDS--

EEEYAAGGGHH!!!

WHAT
MADNESS IS
THIS? MY *HEALING*
POWERS...HAVE
NO EFFECT!

NOR MINE, LORD. A
FOUL OMEN, INDEED.
WHATEVER THE *OBJECT*
MAY BE, 'TIS SURELY AN
INSTRUMENT OF *EVIL*.
AND AS SUCH...

"...IS UNDOUBTEDLY
BETTER LEFT *ALONE*."

THE **SECOND WAR** ENDED WITH THE DEFEAT OF THE **ORCISH HORDE**.

IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, FOR A BRIEF TIME, THERE WAS **PEACE**. BUT IN A WORLD SHAPED BY **WAR...**

PEACE NEVER LASTS LONG.

COME ON, **TOUCH IT!** WHAT ARE YOU, **SCARED?**

I DON'T **WANNA TOUCH IT!** YOU TOUCH IT!

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I **TOLD** YOU? HOW OFTEN MUST I **REPEAT** MYSELF?

OW!
HEY!

I'VE SAID IT A HUNDRED TIMES: **DON'T SNEAK** INTO MY ROOM! **DON'T TOUCH** MY THINGS! BUT ABOVE ALL, I'VE TOLD YOU TO **NEVER OPEN** THE **LOCKBOX!**

IT WAS **RENAULT'S** IDEA!

YOU LITTLE **COCKROACH!**

QUIET, RENALT! I'M **DISAPPOINTED** IN YOU MOST OF ALL! WHAT A FINE **EXAMPLE** YOU SET FOR YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER! THE **ORB**, OF ALL THINGS! HAVEN'T I ALWAYS TOLD YOU TO **PROTECT** DARION? TO **LOOK OUT** FOR HIM? BOTH OF YOU--TO YOUR ROOMS! **NOW!**

OH, HOW THEY LIKE TO **TEST** ME SOMETIMES. **STILL**, MY LOVE, YOU WOULD BE **PROUD** OF THEM...

HERE LIES
ELENA MOGRAH
BELOVED WIFE AND MOTHER

...AND **SHOCKED** AT HOW MUCH THEY'VE **GROWN**. **RENAULT** REMINDS ME OF **MYSELF** IN MANY WAYS--**BRASH, HEADSTRONG, AGGRESSIVE.**

DARION IS MORE LIKE **YOU...** HE HAS YOUR **QUIET STRENGTH**. I CAN SEE IT IN HIM EVEN NOW. **AHH...** I WISH YOU COULD HAVE **KNOWN** HIM.

I **MISS** YOU, **ELENA**, MORE WITH EVERY PASSING DAY. I MISS YOUR **UNSHAKABLE FAITH**. I MISS THE **LIGHT** THAT DANCED IN YOUR **EYES**. I PRAY WITH ALL MY HEART THAT YOU'VE FOUND **ETERNAL PEACE.**

AM I...
INTERRUPTING,
SIR?

JUST **TENDING THE GARDEN,**
FAIRBANKS. HOW DOES THE
DAY FIND YOU?

SORE. THE HUMAN
FRAME WAS NOT MEANT TO
STRADDLE A GIANT **BEAST**
FOR EXTENDED PERIODS
OF TIME.

MM, YES.
I'VE HEARD THE
TWO-MILE JOURNEY
FROM **CAPITAL CITY**
CAN BE A **GRUELING**
ONE. WHAT
NEWS?

GRIM
DEVELOPMENTS AMONG THE
NORTHERN PROVINCES. SICKNESS,
DISEASE, DEATH...SOME MANNER OF
UNNATURAL **PLAGUE.** THOSE WHO PERISH
FROM IT RETURN SHORTLY AFTER TO VISIT
RUIN UPON THE **LIVING.** THESE UNDEAD ARE
CALLED **SCOURGE.** LORD **UTHER** HIMSELF
IS AIDING **PRINCE ARTHAS** AND **LADY**
JAINA PROUDMOORE IN EFFORTS TO
QUELL IT. SO FAR THEY HAVE MET
WITH **NO SUCCESS.**

AS YOUR **ADVISOR**
I RECOMMEND THAT WE
PREPARE TO INTERCEDE
IF NECESSARY.

HM...

SIR?

THERE'S SOMETHING
THAT'S BEEN ON MY MIND;
A **DISCUSSION** I'VE BEEN
MEANING TO HAVE FOR QUITE
SOME TIME...

PERHAPS
THAT TIME IS
NOW.

OLD HILLSBRAD,
SOUTHSHORE INN,
DAYS LATER.

RECENT REPORTS PAINT A **GRUESOME** PORTRAIT. THE RANKS
OF THE **SCOURGE** CONTINUE TO **GROW,** ADDING TO THEIR
NUMBERS WITH EACH AND EVERY **KILL.**

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN
SOMETHING OF AN **ALARMIST,**
FAIRBANKS.

THIS IS NOT A
MATTER TO BE TAKEN
LIGHTLY, ABBENDIS. IT IS UP
TO THE KNIGHTS OF THE **SILVER**
HAND TO DO ALL WITHIN OUR
POWER TO ERADICATE THIS
NEW **THREAT.** IT IS WHY I
CALLED YOU HERE, MY
BROTHERS.

AND YOU
WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE
THIS **ARTIFACT** OF YOURS
PRESENTS A **SOLUTION?** I
MUST CONFESS MY ASTONISHMENT
THAT YOU'VE **KEPT** IT ALL THIS
TIME; ALEXANDROS, ESPECIALLY
CONSIDERING...WHAT
IT **DID** TO YOU.

THE ARTIFACT IS INDEED A RELIC
BEYOND MY UNDERSTANDING, BROTHER DOAN.
IT IS A LIVING EMBODIMENT OF **SHADOW...** A **VOID.**
BUT I BELIEVE--I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED--THAT
THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS TO FORGE IT INTO A
WEAPON OF **RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

AFTER ALL, CAN
GOOD EXIST WITHOUT EVIL?
CAN THERE BE LIGHT WITHOUT
DARK? THEY ARE TWO SIDES OF
THE SAME COIN, GENTLEMEN...



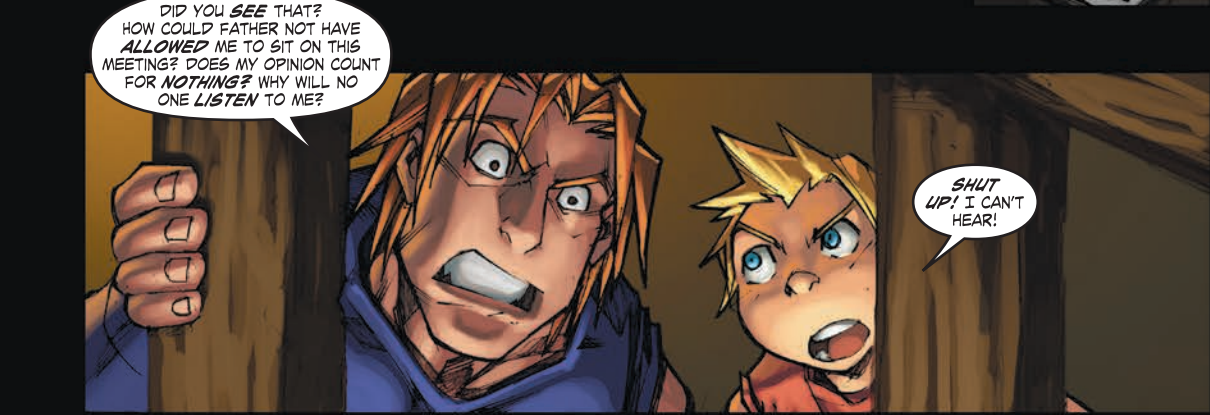
A WEAPON OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS? THIS
IS NONSENSE!

IT IS AN
INSTRUMENT OF
WICKEDNESS AND
THEREFORE MUST BE
DESTROYED! IF YOU
REFUSE TO CARRY
OUT THAT TASK,
MOGRAINE, THEN
I WILL!

SSHH
AA
KX



IT
CONSUMED
THE LIGHT! DID
I NOT TELL
YOU?



DID YOU *SEE* THAT?
HOW COULD FATHER NOT HAVE
ALLOWED ME TO SIT ON THIS
MEETING? DOES MY OPINION COUNT
FOR NOTHING? WHY WILL NO
ONE LISTEN TO ME?

SHUT
UP! I CAN'T
HEAR!



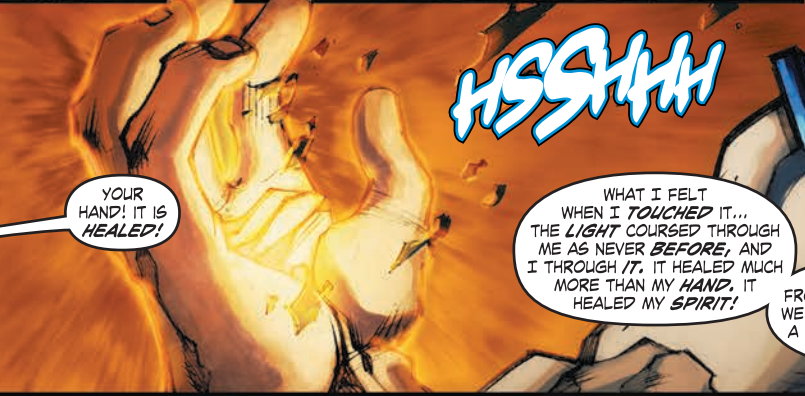
I MAINTAIN THAT THE ORB MAY
BE USED FOR GOOD.

IT HAS BEGUN TO GLOW.
PERHAPS THERE IS SOMETHING TO
THIS AFTER ALL, ALEXANDROS. AT
THE VERY LEAST, IT IS WORTH FURTHER
EXPLORATION. JOIN ME, BROTHERS,
IN AN EXPERIMENT...



ITS COLORATION... IT IS CHANGING.

I CAN FEEL ITS POWER, BUT DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE. SOMETHING HAS CHANGED. COULD IT BE? COULD THIS BE IT? I MUST KNOW... I WILL KNOW.



YOUR HAND! IT IS HEALED!

HSSHHH

WHAT I FELT WHEN I TOUCHED IT... THE LIGHT COURSED THROUGH ME AS NEVER BEFORE, AND I THROUGH IT. IT HEALED MUCH MORE THAN MY HAND. IT HEALED MY SPIRIT!

SO IT WILL BE: FROM THIS BLESSED CRYSTAL WE WILL FORGE A WEAPON-- A WEAPON TO CAST DOWN THE UNDEAD.

WE MAY HAVE NEED FOR JUST SUCH A WEAPON, ALEXANDROS...



LORD COMMANDER DATHROHAN!



EVENTS SURROUNDING THE PLAGUE CONTINUE TO SPIRAL OUT OF CONTROL. MERE DAYS AGO PRINCE ARTHAS SOUGHT TO CONTAIN THE PLAGUE BY KILLING INFECTED VILLAGERS IN STRATHOLME BEFORE THEY COULD PERISH FROM THE SICKNESS. MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN... HE SLAUGHTERED THEM ALL.

AND WHEN LUTHER TRIED TO STOP HIM, ARTHAS ACCUSED OUR BROTHER OF TREASON AND SUSPENDED THE PALADINS FROM SERVICE.

OUTRAGEOUS! HE DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO TAKE SUCH ACTION!

WE MUST SPEAK WITH ARTHAS IMMEDIATELY!

THE PRINCE HAS LEFT, REPORTEDLY SAILING FOR THE FROZEN CONTINENT OF NORTHERN.



THEN WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

OFFICIALLY WE ARE TO DO NOTHING; WE MUST WAIT WHILE LUTHER SEEKS COUNCIL WITH KING TERENAS.

UNOFFICIALLY, WE WILL EXPLORE ALL AVAILABLE OPTIONS TO WIPE OUT THIS SCOURGE ENTIRELY.

ALEXANDROS, SHOULD THIS PLAGUE CONTINUE TO SPREAD, WHO WOULD BE CAPABLE OF FORGING THIS ORB INTO A USEFUL WEAPON?

HAZ MODAN

PERHAPS A REST IS IN ORDER, MY LORD.

YOUR FREQUENT RESTING, COUPLED WITH THIS HARSH WINTER, HAS ADDED SEVERAL DAYS TO AN ALREADY LENGTHY JOURNEY. IF WE TARRY MUCH LONGER, THE PLAGUE WILL CIRCLE THE KNOWN KINGDOMS TWICE BEFORE WE RETURN.

IF I MAY BE SO BOLD... GENERAL ABBENDIS EXPRESSED APPREHENSION REGARDING OUR QUEST... HE VOICED PARTICULAR CONCERN OVER YOUR TRUSTING OF THE DWARVES.

I HAVE NOTED A GROWING FACTION WITHIN OUR ORDER, FAIRBANKS... ONE LED LARGELY BY ABBENDIS HIMSELF... A FACTION INTOLERANT OF WHAT THEY DEEM TO BE THE "LESSER" RACES. IT DISTURBS ME, OLD FRIEND. IT IS NOT BEFITTING A PALADIN TO TREAT OTHERS UNJUSTLY BASED ON THEIR HERITAGE.

I CAN ASSURE YOU OUR DWARVEN FRIENDS HAVE NO NEFARIOUS INTENTIONS. THEY CARE LITTLE FOR THE AFFAIRS OF MEN. THEY WOULD MUCH RATHER EXPLORE THEIR OWN HISTORY. AND WHEN IT COMES TO MASONRY AND ENGINEERING, NONE ARE BETTER AT DELVING INTO THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH...

AND SHAPING IT TO THEIR PURPOSE.

THEY ARE MASTERFUL, SIR, I'LL GIVE THEM THAT MUCH. IRONFORGE IS TRULY A MARVEL TO BEHOLD.

WHO GOES THERE?

PLEASE INFORM THE GOOD KING MAGNI THAT ALEXANDROS MOGRAINE AND HIS TRUSTED ADVISOR SEEK AN AUDIENCE.

WELL NOW, 'TIS YOUR LUCKY DAY! HIS MAJESTY ONLY JUST RETURNED. TREAD LIGHTLY, THOUGH... HIS MOOD IS SULLEN.

LATER, WITHIN THE HALLS OF IRONFORGE...

AYE, I AM FAMILIAR WITH THIS SCOURGE. HAVE YE NOT HEARD THE LATEST NEWS FROM LORDAERON?

BEFORE SETTING OUT WE LEARNED THAT KING TERENAS RECALLED ARTHAS FROM NORTHREND, WHILE THE UNDEAD CONTINUE TO RAMPAGE THROUGH OUR LANDS UNCHECKED. MY BROTHERS FINALLY AGREED WITH ME THAT A POWERFUL WEAPON AGAINST THE SCOURGE IS CALLED FOR.

MUCH HAS HAPPENED IN RECENT DAYS. ME OWN BROTHER, MURADIN, WAS IN NORTHREND ON AN EXPEDITION WITH THE EXPLORERS' LEAGUE. HE AND ARTHAS ARE...WERE, OLD FRIENDS. AND IT'S BECAUSE O' THAT BLACK-HEARTED FIEND ARTHAS THAT ME BROTHER IS NOW DEAD.

DEAD? WE HAD NO IDEA...YOU HAVE OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES, YOUR MAJESTY.

CONDOLENCES WON'T BRING BACK M'BROTHER. BUT CRAFTIN' A BLADE WITH THE EXPRESS PURPOSE O' KILLING THOSE UNDEAD BASTARDS...WELL, THAT FEELS A BIT LIKE SPITTIN' IN ARTHAS' EYE, AND THAT MIGHT JUST EASE THE PAIN SOME.

IT'LL TAKE TIME, LADS, BUT I'LL FORGE YE A WEAPON...ONE THE LIKES O' WHICH YE HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE, AND WON'T BE LIKELY TO AGAIN!

THERE ARE THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT MASTER DWARVEN BLACKSMITHS POSSESS THE **ABILITY** TO IMPART **EMOTIONS** INTO THE BLADES THEY SHAPE.

MAGNI BRONZEBEARD NEVER TOOK MUCH **STOCK** IN THE CLAIMS. **NEVERTHELESS**, AS HE STANDS NOW HOLDING THE ORB, THINKING OF THE BROTHER HE WILL NEVER **SEE** AGAIN, MAGNI **HARNESSES** ALL OF HIS **RAGE**, HIS **FURY**, HIS DESIRE FOR **VENGEANCE**. HE CALLS UPON THEM, **WILLS** THEM INTO **BEING**.

HE BELLOWS A **WARCRY** THAT ECHOES IN THE VASTNESS OF THE **GREAT FORGE**...



AND HE BRINGS THE HAMMER **DOWN**.

SHAKOOM

AGAIN, AND AGAIN...

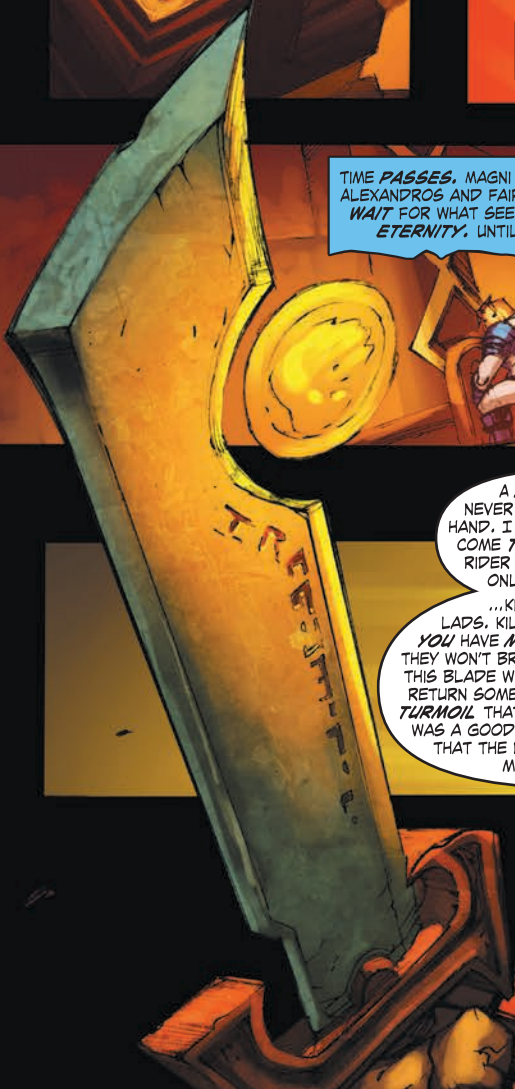
AND AGAIN.

TIME PASSES. MAGNI **TOILS**. ALEXANDROS AND FAIRBANKS **WAIT** FOR WHAT SEEMS AN **ETERNITY**. UNTIL...

'TIS **DONE**.

A **FINER** BLADE HAS NEVER BEEN CRAFTED BY **MY** HAND. I ONLY HOPE IT DOES NOT COME **TOO LATE**... A GRYPHON RIDER BROUGHT WORD TO ME ONLY MOMENTS **AGO**...

...KING **TERENAS** IS **DEAD**, LADS. KILLED BY **ARTHAS'** OWN HAND. **YOU** HAVE **MY** CONDOLENCES. AND THOUGH THEY WON'T BRING BACK **YOUR KING**... PERHAPS THIS BLADE WILL ADMINISTER SOME **JUSTICE**, RETURN SOME SEMBLANCE O' **ORDER** TO THE **TURMOIL** THAT GRIPS YOUR KINGDOM. TERENAS WAS A GOOD MAN, **WISE** AND **JUST**. **KNOW** THAT THE DWARVES O' **IRONFORGE** WILL MOURN HIS **PASSING**.





TERENAS, DEAD...
MADNESS.

I--I CAN'T...
BY THE LIGHT, WILL
THERE BE **NOTHING**
FOR US TO RETURN
HOME TO?



I'M A **SIMPLE** DWARF, MESELF.
BUT IF I WERE **YOU** LADS, I'D SEE
TO ME **HOME** AND **FAMILY**. THE
WAR WILL KEEP.

FAMILY,
YES...**YES!** WE
MUST MAKE **HASTE!**
THANK YOU, GOOD KING.
YOU MAY REST ASSURED,
I WILL MAKE GOOD
USE OF **THIS**. I WILL
HONOR MURADIN'S
MEMORY.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER...



LIGHT HELP ME,
FAIRBANKS, IF ANYTHING
HAS **HAPPENED** TO MY
BOYS, NO POWER IN THIS
WORLD WILL **CONTAIN**
MY RAGE...



DARION!
RENAULT!
WHERE--

HEARTHGLEN!

MY
LORD!

HEARTHGLEN

STEP ASIDE,
FAIRBANKS...

I WILL
HANDLE
THIS.

IN AN INSTANT THE
BATTLE IS JOINED.

AND JUST AS
SWIFTLY...

SHUNKT

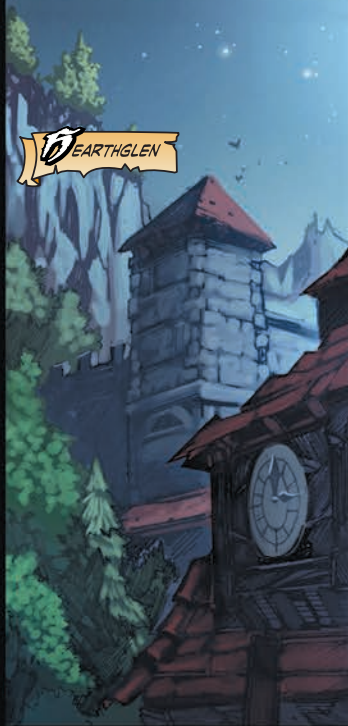
...IT IS FINISHED.

FTHLKT

THIS *BLADE*, FAIRBANKS...IT
FEELS AS MUCH A PART OF ME AS THE
BLOOD THAT RUNS THROUGH MY *VEINS*.
IT IS PURELY, TRULY AN INSTRUMENT OF
DESTRUCTION; A *BEAUTIFULLY LETHAL*
CREATION THAT LEAVES NOTHING BUT
CHARRED BONE IN ITS WAKE.

I WILL
CALL IT...

THE
ASHBRINGER!



WHY ARE WE STILL *DISCUSSING* THIS? TO ME THE ANSWER IS CLEAR: CHOP OFF ITS *HEAD* AND THE *SERPENT* WILL DIE...

WE SHOULD *HUNT DOWN* AND *KILL* ARTHAS!

THE *PLAGUE* WILL CONTINUE TO *SPREAD* WHETHER ARTHAS IS ALIVE OR NOT. THE NORTHERN PROVINCES HAVE NOW BECOME *PLAGUELANDS*.

THE CITIES *OVERRUN* BY THE *SCOURGE* ARE BEING USED BY THE *UNDEAD* TO *PROPAGATE* THIS *EPIDEMIC*. *STRATHOLME* AND *ANDORHAL* ARE AMONG THE WORST. WE SHOULD FOCUS OUR ATTENTIONS THERE.

AND JUST LET ARTHAS GET AWAY WITH *MURDER*? NONSENSE! DOES THE *DEATH* OF *TERENAS* MEAN NOTHING? WHAT ABOUT *LUTHER*? HAVE YOU ALL *FORGOTTEN* SO SOON?

MY DAUGHTER CAN BE...*HEADSTRONG*, MY LORD. YOU MUST *EXCUSE* HER.

LORD COMMANDER DATHROHAN IS *RIGHT*, MY CHILD. WE MUST SEE TO THE MOST *IMMEDIATE* THREAT.

I, TOO, CONCUR THAT WE MUST FOCUS ON *CONTAINING* THIS *PLAGUE*.



THEN LET'S STOP *TALKING* AND SET TO IT!

FATHER!

I GOT YOUR *MESSAGE*, BOYS. WELL DONE. YOU DON'T KNOW HOW *RELIEVED* I AM TO SEE THE TWO OF YOU *SAFE*.




TAELAN FORDRING OFFERED HIS LANDS FOR OUR *SANCTUARY*.



I *SERVED* IN THE *SECOND* WAR WITH YOUR FATHER, *TAELAN*. NO MATTER HOW THINGS MAY HAVE *TURNED OUT*, THE *TIRION* I KNEW WAS A *GOOD* MAN.

NOW... WHERE ARE THE *REST* OF THE *KNIGHTS*? SURELY THIS IS NOT *ALL* THAT'S LEFT OF THE *ORDER* OF THE *SILVER HAND*?



FOR A TIME, THE FATE OF AZEROTH ONCE AGAIN TEETERED ON THE BRINK OF *OBLIVION*, EVEN AS ORCS AND HUMANS SET ASIDE THEIR DIFFERENCES LONG ENOUGH TO FACE OFF AGAINST THE DEMONIC *BURNING LEGION* IN THE *THIRD WAR*. THE RACES OF THE WORLD SECURED A HARD-WON VICTORY DESPITE *OVERWHELMING* ODDS.

AND SO IT IS THAT IN THE WAR'S AFTERMATH, LIKE A RAGING *INFERNO* IGNITED FROM A SINGLE SPARK, THE KNIGHTS OF THE ONCE PROUD *ORDER OF THE SILVER HAND* EXACT A FURIOUS *RETRIBUTION* ACROSS THE *PLAGUELANDS*.

AND RIDING *FOREMOST* AMONG THEM IS *ALEXANDROS MOGRAINE*: VANQUISHER, CRUSADER, *DELIVERER*.



IT IS SO MANY OF OUR PALADINS ARE *DEAD*. LORD U'THER HIMSELF HAS FALLEN AT THE HANDS OF *ARTHAS*.

FIRST *TERENAS*, NOW *U'THER*... LIGHT PRESERVE US.

DISEASE AND *DEATH* HAVE LAID CLAIM TO OUR LANDS, AND THE UNDEAD HAVE SHOWN NO SIGNS OF *FALTERING*.

TAKE HEART, LORD COMMANDER. *HOPE* REMAINS, FOR I COME BEARING A *WEAPON OF WAR* UNLIKE ANY OTHER. THE *SCOURGE* HAS TAKEN *MUCH* FROM US, THERE IS NO *DENYING* THAT. BUT NOW, MY BROTHERS...

...THE *TIME* HAS COME TO START TAKING *BACK*.

SCOURGE OF THE SCOURGE.

THE *ASHBRINGER*.


QUICKLY HIS *DEEDS* BECOME *TALES*, AND SOON THEREAFTER THE *TALES OF THE MAN AND HIS BLADE*...

...BECOME *LEGEND*.



THERE IT IS: *STRATHOLME*. THIS IS SURE TO BE OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE *YET*.

IT IS UNNATURAL THAT THESE FIRES SHOULD STILL BE *BURNING*. *DARK FORCES* ARE AT WORK.



ABBENDIS IS RIGHT, DARION. THIS COULD BE UNLIKE *ANYTHING* WE HAVE YET FACED. I WOULD NOT THINK *LESS* OF YOU FOR TURNING AWAY.


I TOLD YOU I COULD SIT IDLE NO LONGER, FATHER. I'M NOT A *BOY* ANYMORE.

YOUR MIND IS SET, THEN.

IT IS.

SO BE IT. RENAULT, YOU ARE TO WATCH YOUR BROTHER AT ALL TIMES. PROTECT HIM. AM I UNDERSTOOD?

YES, FATHER.



WITHIN THE BURNING CITY, THE SWELTERING HEAT IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE OCCASIONAL GUNSHOT CRACK OF BURNING WOOD, SETTING ALREADY TENSE NERVES FURTHER ON EDGE.

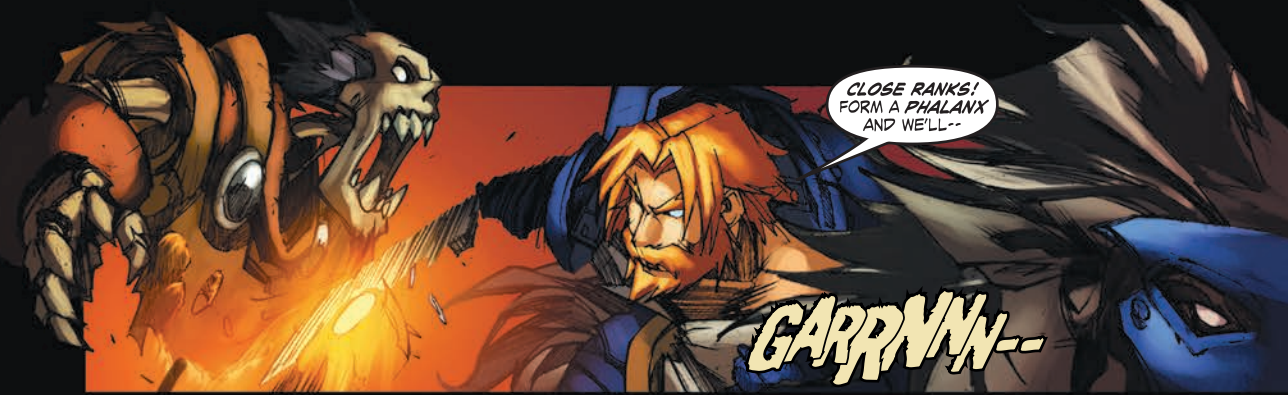
WHY DO I SUDDENLY FEEL LIKE A RAT IN A MAZE?

HUSH, TAE LAN! BE READY FOR ANYTHING.



SSHHK
KLANG

RATS INDEED, THE TRAP IS SPRUNG! BEHIND US!



CLOSE RANKS!
FORM A PHALANX
AND WE'LL--

GARRNN--



MOVE!

WE ARE
CUT OFF FROM
THE OTHERS!

ALEXANDROS!
ABBENDIS! LIGHT BLAST
YOU HORRORS-- I CAN SEE
NOTHING THROUGH THIS
CURSED MOB!



HA!
A BRIEF
RESPIRE AT
LEAST...



SHAZANAKKARISHTUUMRIKIL...



WHAT--

SLEEP.



YOU KNIGHTS! CLEAR ME A PATH THROUGH THAT RUBBLE, DAMN YOUR EYES! WE MUST FIND ANOTHER WAY OUT! QUICKLY!



DARION, LOOK OUT!

MRRRAAGGH!!



DARION!



BACK TO THE ABYSS WITH YOU!!



HNN...

WHO--?
YOU...ARE
LEGION.

MY KIND ARE CALLED NATHREZIM, DREADLORDS, IN YOUR TONGUE. PERHAPS THAL'KITUUN WOULD BE MORE FITTING. IT MEANS UNSEEN GUEST IN OUR LANGUAGE.

FITTING BECAUSE I HAVE EXISTED HERE, BETWEEN THE WORLD OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD, AWAITING A MOMENT SUCH AS THIS, UNDER THE VERY NOSES OF THE SCOURGE-- WITHOUT THEIR SLIGHTEST SUSPICION.



YOU ARE AN AGENT OF SHADOW, AND THAT IS ALL I NEED TO KNOW.

MAKE YOUR PEACE, DEMON!!




HAAAGGH!!



WHOOSH

YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR LEAGUE, PALADIN.



KNOW THAT I AM BALNAZZAR. KNOW, AS I DRINK YOUR LIFE, THAT I WILL TAKE UP RESIDENCE IN THIS WEAK SHELL YOUR SOUL ONCE CALLED HOME. KNOW THAT I WILL CORRUPT AND DESTROY EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE YOU HAVE EVER LOVED.



G-G-GRA-GAAAGHH!



A PATH IS CLEARED!

FLY, AS IF THE LEGION ITSELF WERE AT YOUR HEELS!



AT LAST, ANOTHER GATE...



BARRED!

MAKE WAY.

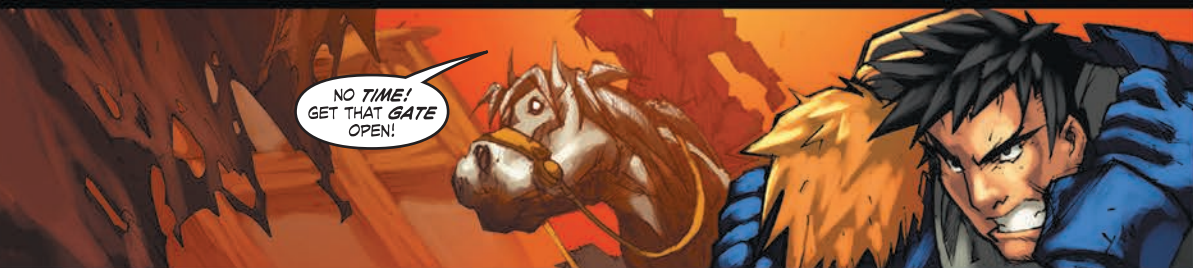


LORD COMMANDER! LIGHT BE PRAISED, I HAD BEGUN TO FEAR THE WORST!

NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT ME, ALEXANDROS. I'M AN OLD HAND AT BEATING THE ODDS.

YES, I--

DARION! IS HE...



NO TIME! GET THAT GATE OPEN!



WITH PLEASURE!

THAT NIGHT...



I FEAR THAT THE SORCERY RUNS DEEP, BROTHER. DEEPER THAN OUR ABILITIES TO HEAL IT. ONLY HIS FAITH CAN CARRY HIM THROUGH NOW.



WHAT DID I TELL YOU, BOY? I TOLD YOU TO PROTECT HIM! HOW COULD YOU LET THIS HAPPEN? HOW?

IT'S A MIRACLE ANY OF US WALKED AWAY.



A MIRACLE INDEED.

COME, RENAULT. LET YOUR FATHER CALM DOWN.



RENAULT WAS IN DANGER TOO, YOU KNOW.

YOU THINK I SHOW FAVORITISM?

I DID NOT MEAN ANY DISRESPECT, LORD...

I'LL FAVOR YOU WITH A STORY, TAEAN. THE NIGHT DARION WAS BORN, HE WAS BORN STILL. HE MADE NO MOVEMENT. HE MADE NO SOUND. IN A PANIC I RUSHED OUT TO THE STREAM THAT COURSES NEAR OUR HOME.



I PLUNGED DARION INTO THE ICY WATERS AND TO MY ASTONISHMENT, TO MY DELIGHT, HE BEGAN FLAILING. AND THEN HE CRIED OUT--THE MOST EXQUISITE SOUND I HAVE EVER HEARD. I RAN BACK INTO THE HOUSE TO INFORM ELENA THAT OUR SON HAD SURVIVED... ONLY TO FIND THAT SHE HAD NOT.

WHEN I LOOK INTO DARION'S EYES, I SEE MY WIFE. LOSING HIM WOULD BE LIKE LOSING HER ALL OVER AGAIN, AND THAT IS A THOUGHT I CANNOT BEAR. AS LONG AS DARION LIVES... A PART OF ELENA LIVES AS WELL. PERHAPS IT IS UNFAIR OF ME...BUT THAT IS HOW I FEEL.

10 MORNING



LINGH...

DARION!



IT WAS **BLACK** AS PITCH ALL AROUND ME. I THOUGHT I MIGHT NOT MAKE IT OUT, BUT I FOLLOWED THE **LIGHT**, FATHER. IT **LED** ME.

IT'S **OVER** NOW. YOU'RE SAFE. I **LOVE** YOU, SON. WITH ALL THAT I **AM**...

ALL I **WAS**...

ALL I **EVER WILL BE**.

10 DAYS LATER, HEARTHGLEN



I TELL YOU, OUR NUMBERS ARE TOO **FEW**. WE MUST LOOK TO RECRUITING AMONG THE **NIGHT ELVES**, **DWARVES**, AND **GNOMES** IF WE ARE TO **RETAKE** OUR FALLEN CITIES.

IT IS NOT FOR THE **LESSER RACES** TO MEDDLE IN THE AFFAIRS OF **MEN**, MAXWELL!

I AGREE. THEY ARE **NOT** TO BE TRUSTED!

I THINK LORD TYROSUS IS **RIGHT!** WHAT RIGHT DO WE HAVE TO **JUDGE** THE OTHER RACES?

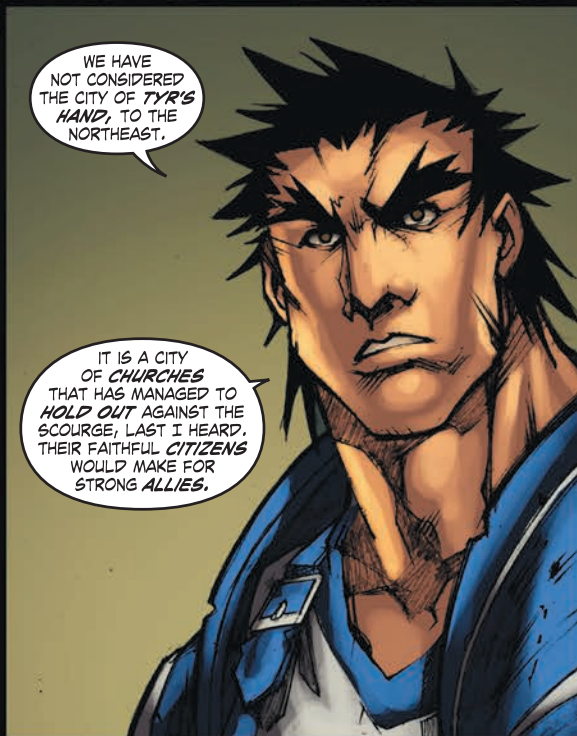
IT IS OUR **LIGHT-GIVEN** RIGHT TO DO SO, BROTHER. NOW BE **SILENT!**

I DON'T TAKE **ORDERS** FROM YOU!





ENOUGH!
IF THE OTHER RACES OFFER THEIR **HELP** WE SHOULD **ACCEPT** IT, BUT FOR NOW WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO HANDLE OUR **OWN** PROBLEMS.



WE HAVE NOT CONSIDERED THE CITY OF **TYR'S HAND**, TO THE NORTHEAST.

IT IS A CITY OF **CHURCHES** THAT HAS MANAGED TO **HOLD OUT** AGAINST THE SCOURGE, LAST I HEARD. THEIR FAITHFUL **CITIZENS** WOULD MAKE FOR STRONG **ALLIES**.



THERE IS **ALSO** THE MATTER OF THESE **FREE-WILLED** UNDEAD WHO ARE RUMORED TO AMASS AT THE RUINS OF **CAPITAL CITY**. THEY ARE LED BY A FALLEN **ELF** RANGER CALLED **SYLVANAS WINDRUNNER**.

FREE-WILLED OR **NOT**, THEY MUST BE **DESTROYED** LIKE ALL OTHER UNDEAD!

HEAR, HEAR!



WE WILL **CONFER** WITH THE **GOOD** PEOPLE OF **TYR'S HAND**. WE WILL RAISE AN **ARMY**, AND WE WILL **WIPE OUT** THESE **FREE-WILLED** UNDEAD. THEY ARE NOT A THREAT **NOW**, BUT WE CANNOT ALLOW THEM TO **BECOME** ONE.

NOT IN OUR OWN **BACK YARD**.

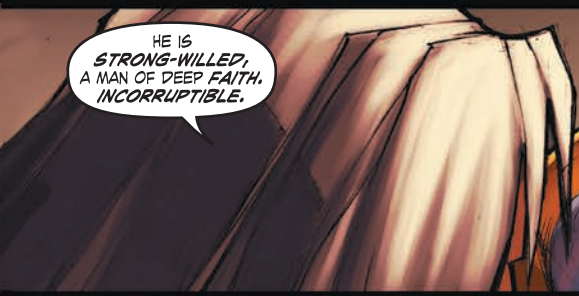


THAT NIGHT, IN THE CHAMBERS OF LORD COMMANDER DATHROHAN...

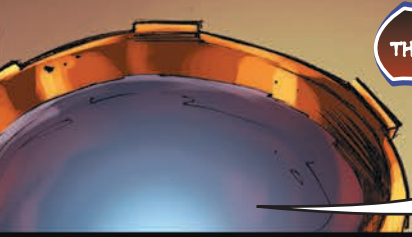


ALEXANDROS INTENDS TO ATTACK THE FORSAKEN.

THE HIGHLORD MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO INTERFERE.



HE IS STRONG-WILLED, A MAN OF DEEP FAITH, INCORRUPTIBLE.



WHAT OF THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM?

THE YOUNGEST SON DISPLAYS THE SAME CONVICTION AS HIS FATHER, THE OLDEST, HOWEVER, POSSESSES A DARKER TURN OF SOUL.



GOOD. WIN HIM TO OUR CAUSE. ELIMINATE THE THREAT ALEXANDROS POSES WITHOUT REVEALING YOUR HAND.

LADY SYLVANAS THINKS TO HAVE ME UNDER HER THUMB, AND SO IT MUST BE, FOR NOW. IN TIME SHE WILL LEARN THAT VARIMATHRAS IS NO ONE'S PAWN.

THE LEGION SHALL DEVOUR ALL, DEAR BROTHER, AND THE FINAL GAMBIT SHALL COMMENCE...

...WITH THE **DEATH** OF HIGHLORD ALEXANDROS MOGRAINE!

CHAPTER 2



Cover by Chris Robinson



Ludo
Lullabi
Tony

Cover by Ludo Lullabi and Tony Washington



SOON.

SOON THE FEVER WILL **BREAK**. SOON IT WILL BE TIME FOR YOU TO **CHOOSE**.

BUT WHAT YOU ASK IS--

A NECESSITY. YOU'RE A NATURAL **LEADER**, RENAULT. A MAN LIKE YOU SHOULD BE IN A POSITION OF **INFLUENCE**, OF **POWER**. I'VE TOLD ALEXANDROS THIS...



AND WHAT WAS THE HIGHLORD'S **REPLY**? THAT YOU WERE A LOYAL SOLDIER AND THAT'S **ALL**. A SOLDIER, RENAULT, A **FOLLOWER**. THAT'S HOW HE **SEES** YOU.



I'VE **PROVEN** MYSELF TIME AND AGAIN TO MY FATHER, YET I REMAIN A **GHOST** WHILE HE SHOWERS DARION WITH HIS **AFFECTIONS**.



HE MAKES SPEECHES THAT CHANGE **NOTHING** AND HE SETS OFF ON THESE FOOL'S QUESTS....

YES. AS HE DOES EVEN **NOW**, AT **CAPITAL CITY**. OR SHOULD I SAY...

"WHAT'S LEFT
OF IT."

THESE
"LIBERATED
UNDEAD" HAVE
BEEN TOILING FOR
WEEKS. BUT TO
WHAT END?

THEY ARE
CALLING THEMSELVES THE
FORSAKEN, BRIGITTE, AND I
SUSPECT THEY INTEND TO TAKE
LORDAERON'S OLD CAPITAL
AS THEIR OWN.



ASHES TO ASHES



WHATEVER THEY CALL THEMSELVES, I SAY WE **ATTACK** THE WORM-RIDDEN FILTH **NOW**, BEFORE THEY'RE FULLY ENTRENCHED!

DID YOU LEARN NOTHING AT **STRATHOLME**? THESE ARE NOT MINDLESS **DRONES** LIKE THE **SCOURGE**. NO, THIS NEW ENEMY IS CALCULATING, ORGANIZED, **DISCIPLINED**.



I AGREE THEY MUST BE DEALT WITH, BUT IT WILL TAKE A **SUPERIOR FORCE** TO DO SO. IF YOUR FATHER'S RIGHT ABOUT TYR'S HAND, WE MAY RECRUIT ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL FROM THERE.

ONCE WE'VE AMASSED AN ARMY WE WILL **OBLITERATE** THEM, BUT **NOT** BEFORE.



AND WHAT ARE WE TO DO **UNTIL** THEN? COUNT TWIGS?

WE ESTABLISH A **DEFENSIBLE** POSITION NEARBY-- A FORWARD **BASE**.

WHERE?



NORTHERN TIRISFAL GLADES

THE MONASTERY STOOD NOT ONLY AS A GREAT CENTER OF **ENLIGHTENMENT**, BUT A SECLUDED, **SACRED** PLACE OF WORSHIP AS WELL.

IN MY YOUTH I SPENT MANY **MONTHS** WALKING ITS CLOISTERS, **STUDYING** IN ITS LIBRARIES AND **PRAYING** IN ITS CHAPEL.

WE SHOULD BE UPON IT AT ANY **MOMENT**.

DO MY SENSES BETRAY ME OR DO I SMELL **MEAT COOKING**?



WE'VE ARRIVED.
AND *YES*, I SMELL
FOOD AS WELL.

HAVE THE MEN
SPREAD OUT AND *SEARCH*
THE GROUNDS FOR SIGNS OF THE
SCOURGE. TELL THEM TO BE
THOROUGH; THE PROPERTY
IS *SIZABLE*.

THEY ARE TO
REPORT ANY DISCOVERIES
IMMEDIATELY.



IT LOOKS
AS THOUGH WE'RE
NOT *ALONE*.

'TIS AS YOU SAY,
FAIRBANKS. SOMEONE HAS
TAKEN UP *RESIDENCE* HERE.
PERHAPS A WAYWARD MEMBER
OF THE *ORDER* OR--



TROLL!

WE FOUND
HIM *HIDING*
IN THE CLOISTER,
SIR.



YOU'LL *PAY* FOR
DEFILING *SACRED* GROUND,
BLASPHEMER!!

NO,
WAIT! YA DON'
LINNERSTAND!



HE HAS
A RIGHT TO BE
HEARD.

LINHAND
ME, TYROSUS, OR
RISK LOSING YOUR
GOOD EYE!



ENOUGH, BOTH
OF YOU! THE TROLL
WILL BE ALLOWED
TO SPEAK.

MANY TANKS, LORD. MA NAME BE
ZABRA HEXX. I COME HERE MANY
MONTHS AGO, ONLY SEEKIN'
SHELTER AT FIRST...

BUT DEN I START READIN' DA BOOKS
IN DA LIBRARY, I START TO LEARN DA
WAYS A DA LIGHT. I PRAYED AND PRAYED
WID ALL MA HEART, I CALLED OUT
TO DA LIGHT. AND YOU KNOW
WHAT HAPPEN?

DA LIGHT
ANSWERED ME,
BRUDDAS AND SISTAS.
IT OPENED MA EYES,
IT SET ME ON A
NEW PATH!



I WARN YOU,
ZABRA, THROUGH
THE LIGHT I MAY
DIVINE WHETHER OR
NOT YOU SPEAK
FALSELY.

IT ALL
TRUE, LORD, I
SWEAR IT!

LET US SEE...



HE SPEAKS THE
TRUTH. THE LIGHT
HAS BLESSED
HIM...

HIS
LIFE WILL BE
SPARED.



BLESSED OR
NOT, HIS KIND
HAS NO PLACE
WITH US!

I DON'T WANT NO
TROUBLE. I BE LEAVIN'
RIGHT AWAY.



TANK YOU FOR SAVIN'
MA LIFE, LORD...

I WON'T EVER BE
FORGETTIN'.

EARTHGLÉN

MYSELF AND THE OTHERS ARE SET TO DEPART FOR TYR'S HAND, LORD COMMANDER.

RENAULT CONTINUES TO CONVALESCENCE. HE IS NOT WELL ENOUGH TO TRAVEL. I TOO AM FEELING SET UPON, SO I SHALL STAY WITH HIM.

I'LL SAY GOODBYE, THEN...

HOLD, BROTHER DARIÓN. RENAULT IS SLEEPING. MOREOVER, I FEAR CLOSE PROXIMITY WILL ONLY RESULT IN YOUR SHARING THIS MALADY.

OF COURSE. PLEASE EXTEND MY WISHES FOR A SPEEDY RECOVERY, AND TO YOU AS WELL, LORD COMMANDER.

MANY THANKS. LIGHT SPEED YOU AND THE OTHERS.

THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO MAKE A DECISION.

I DON'T FEEL WELL, I--

YOU SHOULD HAVE SOME MORE TEA.

I HAVE MADE CONTACT WITH OUR ENEMIES. WE HAVE ARRIVED AT A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ARRANGEMENT.

BUT THE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY IS NARROW, AND WILL SOON DRAW TO A CLOSE.

IF YOU'RE TO EMBRACE YOUR FUTURE, IF YOU'RE TO PROVE YOUR WORTH, PROVE YOUR FATHER AND ALL THE OTHERS WRONG, THEN THE TIME TO ACT...

...IS NOW.



WE'VE COMPLETED OUR SEARCH, HIGHLORD. NOTHING ADDITIONAL TO REPORT.

GOOD. NOW IT'S TIME TO BEGIN SETTING THINGS HERE IN ORDER.

FAIRBANKS AND I WILL RENDEZVOUS WITH THE OTHERS AT HEARTHGLEN AND APPRISE THEM OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. BRIGITTE, YOU'RE IN CHARGE HERE WHILE WE'RE GONE.

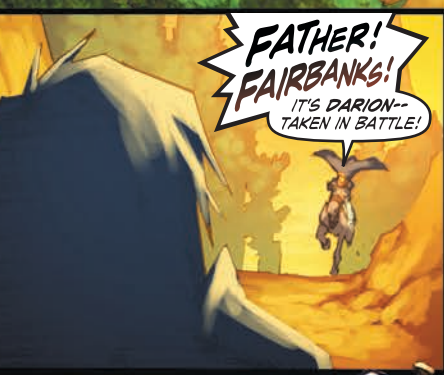


LATER, NEAR THE EASTERN BORDER OF TIRISFAL...

THIS CHILL WIND CUTS TO THE BONE. PERHAPS IF WE WERE TRAVELING ON A FULL STOMACH...

FAIRBANKS, I SWEAR IF I WERE TO HAND YOU A SACK OF GOLD YOU WOULD COMPLAIN OF ITS WEIGHT.

WELL NOW, LORD, THAT'S A THEORY I WOULD HAPPILY PUT TO THE TEST.



FATHER! FAIRBANKS! IT'S DARION-- TAKEN IN BATTLE!

HE'S BEING HELD EVEN NOW IN STRATHOLME! GENERAL ABBENDIS HAS LED A RESPONDING FORCE BUT THE TIDE TURNS AGAINST THEM!

WHAT OF DARION? STILL ALIVE?

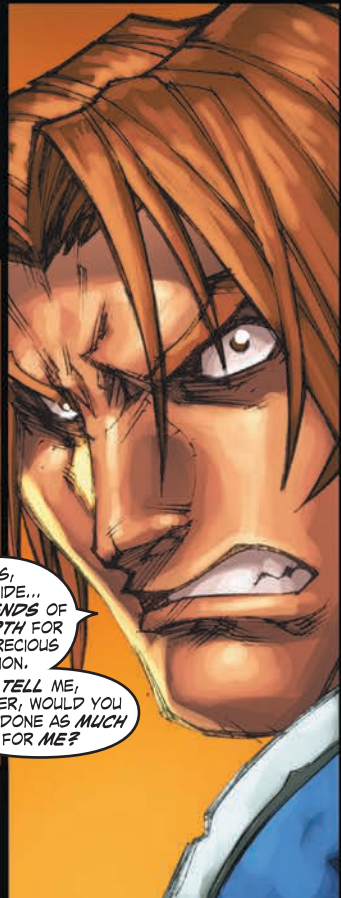


BEING HELD TO RANSOM, I'M TOLD.



FOLLOW THE NORTHERN ROAD TO THE OLD MONASTERY! TELL LADY ABBENDIS AND THE OTHERS TO MEET US AT STRATHOLME IMMEDIATELY!

FAIRBANKS, WE RIDE!



YES, YOU RIDE... TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH FOR YOUR PRECIOUS DARION. TELL ME, FATHER, WOULD YOU HAVE DONE AS MUCH FOR ME?



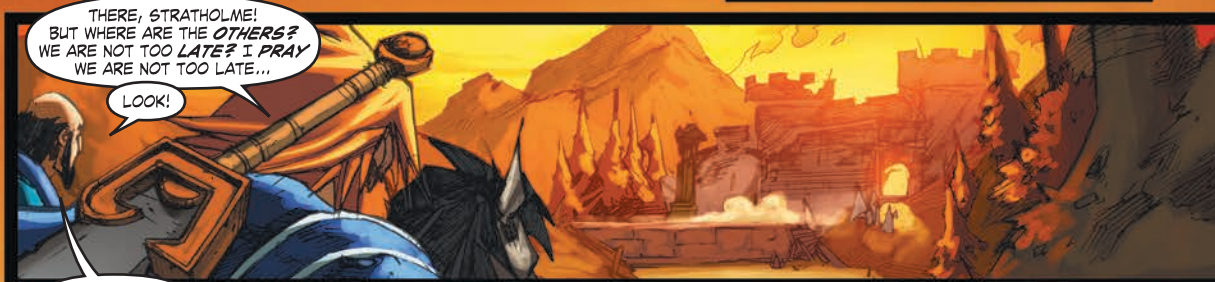
THEY RIDE, AS FAST AS THEIR CHARGERS WILL CARRY THEM.

ACROSS THE CRUMBLING BRIDGE AT THONPRORIL RIVER...



THROUGH THE *EASTERN PLAGUELANDS*, PUSHING THEIR HORSES TO THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE.

UNTIL...



THERE, STRATHOLME!
BUT WHERE ARE THE *OTHERS*?
WE ARE NOT TOO LATE? I PRAY
WE ARE NOT TOO LATE...

LOOK!

EMERGING FROM THE CITY...



WE ARE FLANKED!

BEHIND US AS WELL. A TRAP, THEN...

BUT WHO? WHY?

NO TIME TO PONDER, OLD FRIEND...





TIME
NOW ONLY TO
FIGHT...

...OR
DIE!





SHARUM



AAGGH!!



FAIRBANKS!

DAMN YOU, CURSED WRETCHES!



TELL YOUR MASTER THAT A THOUSAND OF HIS MINIONS WILL NOT SUFFICE! I WILL DELIVER YOU ALL...

AND WHEN I AM DONE I WILL STAND...

...AGAINST A THOUSAND MORE!



FUNKETH



THROUGH EXHAUSTION AND FATIGUE, ON AND ON ALEXANDROS FIGHTS.



THE UNDEAD FALL BEFORE ASHBRINGER LIKE WHEAT TO THE SCYTHE. UNTIL...



...WHERE ONCE COUNTLESS NUMBERS STOOD, NOW ONLY A HANDFUL REMAIN. AND ALEXANDROS DARES TO CLING...



...TO THE BRIEFEST GLIMMER OF HOPE.



RRRAGGHH!!

RRRK!



WITH ALL-BUT-DEPLETED RESERVES OF STRENGTH AND FOCUS...

ALEXANDROS CALLS OUT TO THE LIGHT.

THE ANSWER IS SWIFT...

...AND EFFECTIVE.

SWAH!



IT IS FINISHED.

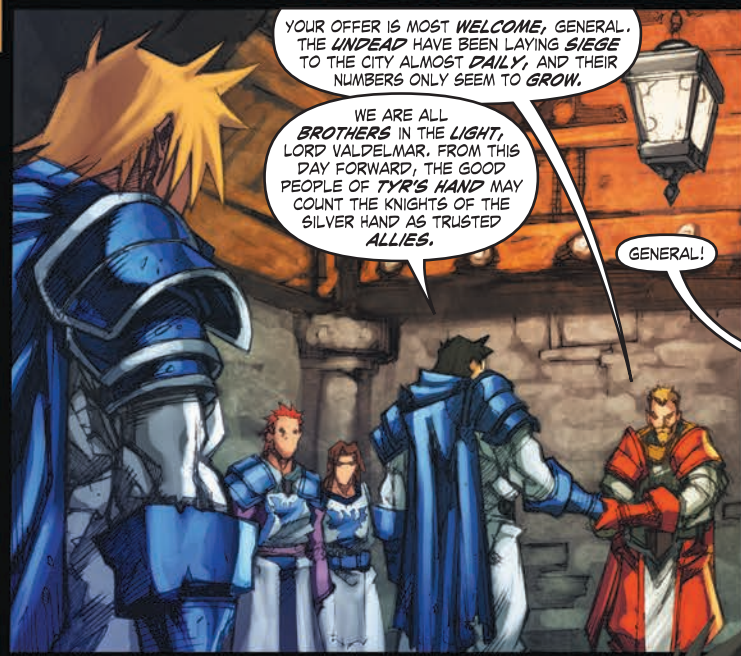


HUGH!





TYR'S HAND



YOUR OFFER IS MOST *WELCOME*, GENERAL. THE *UNDEAD* HAVE BEEN LAYING *SIEGE* TO THE CITY ALMOST *DAILY*, AND THEIR NUMBERS ONLY SEEM TO *GROW*.

WE ARE ALL *BROTHERS* IN THE *LIGHT*, LORD VALDELMAR. FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, THE GOOD PEOPLE OF *TYR'S HAND* MAY COUNT THE KNIGHTS OF THE *SILVER HAND* AS TRUSTED *ALLIES*.

GENERAL!



THE *EMISSARIES* ARE SUMMONED TO *CONVENE* AT HEARTHGLEN IMMEDIATELY!

WHAT? WHY?

IT'S HIGHLORD MOGRAINE, GENERAL. HE'S *DEAD*. HE'S *DEAD*, KILLED ALONG WITH *FAIRBANKS* EN ROUTE FROM TIRISFAL TO HEARTHGLEN.



LIGHT PRESERVE US!

IT CAN'T BE...

LIES!

IF THIS IS INDEED *TRUE*, DARION, I'M--



DARION?



WARDENHOLDE KEEP,
HEARTHGLLEN

THE DEATH OF ALEXANDROS DEMANDS JUSTICE. NONE WOULD DISPUTE THIS, YET I SAY TO YOU THAT WE LACK SUFFICIENT NUMBERS TO MOUNT AN OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE SCOURGE.

ALL THE MORE REASON TO RECRUIT OUTSIDE OUR OWN RACE, OUTSIDE OUR OWN FACTION IF NEED BE!

NONSENSE!



IS IT, TRULY?
THE SCOURGE IS A THREAT TO ALL LIFE, ABBENDIS, NOT JUST HUMANITY!



YOU'RE A JABBERING FOOL, MAXWELL! THE PURITY OF THE ORDER WILL NEVER BE FOULED BY THE UNCLEAN!



You!!

IT WAS YOU, RENAULT, THAT KILLED ALEXANDROS! I WAS THERE! I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES... THE ASHBRINGER, THRUST THROUGH YOUR FATHER'S BACK!



FAIRBANKS... I'M HAPPY TO SEE THAT YOU SURVIVED, BUT I FEAR THE TRAUMA YOU SUFFERED HAS ADDLED YOUR MIND.



I KNOW WHAT I SAW, YOU TRAITOROUS BASTARD!

AND I SAY TO YOU THAT THE BOY WAS ILL AND IN MY CARE. PERHAPS WE SHOULD ENQUIRE AS TO JUST HOW IT IS THAT YOU MANAGED TO SURVIVE!

AT THE VERY LEAST YOU HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY EXPOSED TO THE PLAGUE. KNIGHTS, ENSURE THAT BROTHER FAIRBANKS IS QUARANTINED.

I WILL SEE TO HIS WELFARE PERSONALLY.



I WILL NOT BE SILENCED, LORD COMMANDER! IF YOU VOUCH FOR THE BOY, THEN PERHAPS THE WHELP DID NOT ACT ALONE?

UNHAND ME, DAMN YOU, I'M NOT INFECTED!

I'M NOT INFECTED!



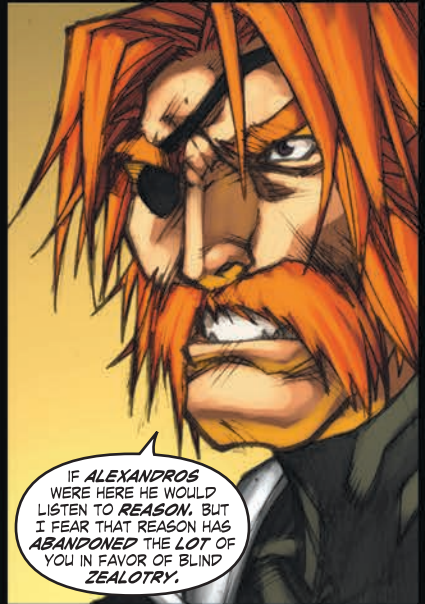
YOU SAY THAT ALEXANDROS WAS KILLED BY A MULTITUDE OF UNDEAD, YET ON OUR RETURN FROM THE MONASTERY WE COULD FIND NO SIGN OF SUCH A BATTLE. NOT A SINGLE SCOURGE CORPSE.

TURNED TO ASH NO DOUBT, AND SCATTERED BY THE WIND. WE OWE YOU NO FURTHER EXPLANATION, MAXWELL. YOUR TALK ALREADY BORDERS ON TREASON.

NOW, YOU EITHER SET YOURSELF WITH US, OR AGAINST US. WHAT'S IT TO BE?



IF ALEXANDROS WERE HERE HE WOULD LISTEN TO REASON. BUT I FEAR THAT REASON HAS ABANDONED THE LOT OF YOU IN FAVOR OF BLIND ZEALOTRY.



WE ARE TAKING OUR LEAVE OF THE ORDER AND WHAT IT HAS BECOME. THOSE AMONG YOU WHO SHARE OUR CONCERNS MAY JOIN US AT ANY TIME.

FOR THOSE WHO REMAIN, IF YOU DO NOT REDISCOVER THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF THE LIGHT...



"...THEN YOU WILL SURELY BE DAMNED."

AGH!
AGH!!
AAAGGGG
HHHH!!

ELENA,
I NEED
YOU.

MY THOUGHTS,
MY EMOTIONS ALL SEEM...
DISCONNECTED. I FEEL AS
THOUGH I AM LOSING MYSELF,
AS IF MY SOUL HAS BEEN
CAST ADRIFT.

WHO
DO YOU
LOVE?

I LOVE
YOU ELENA,
I HAVE ALWAYS
LOVED YOU.

I COULD
NEVER LOVE YOU!
LOVE IS NOTHING
BUT A CHILDISH
FANTASY!

NO!
NO...

LEARN THIS
LESSON AND LEARN
IT WELL: HATRED AND
DESPAIR ARE THE ONLY
TRUTHS OF EXISTENCE.
I HARBOR ONLY
RESENTMENT
FOR YOU...

RRUNKKA

"...AND FOR YOUR PRECIOUS
DARION, THE CURSED
FILTH WHO STOLE MY LIFE!"

BREATHE,
PLEASE--BY THE
LIGHT, BREATHE!



NN-NNGYAAHHH!!

IT'S A MIRACLE!



WHO DO YOU LOVE?

I LOVE YOU, DARION!



NO, YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM! NOT DARION!



"NOT MY SON!"

WHO DO YOU LOVE?



I...LOVED YOU, RENAULT.

I HATE YOU!
I HATE YOU AND
IF I COULD KILL
YOU AGAIN I WOULD!
YOU MADE ME
WHAT I AM!

NO, NO!
NOOOOOO...



AAAGGHH!!!

FURTHER RESISTANCE IS POINTLESS. YOUR WILL IS NO LONGER YOUR OWN. IF IT IS ANY CONSOLATION, YOU FOUGHT THE CHANGE LONGER THAN ANY BEFORE YOU.

NOW TELL ME, ALEXANDROS MOGRAINE, WHO DO YOU LOVE?



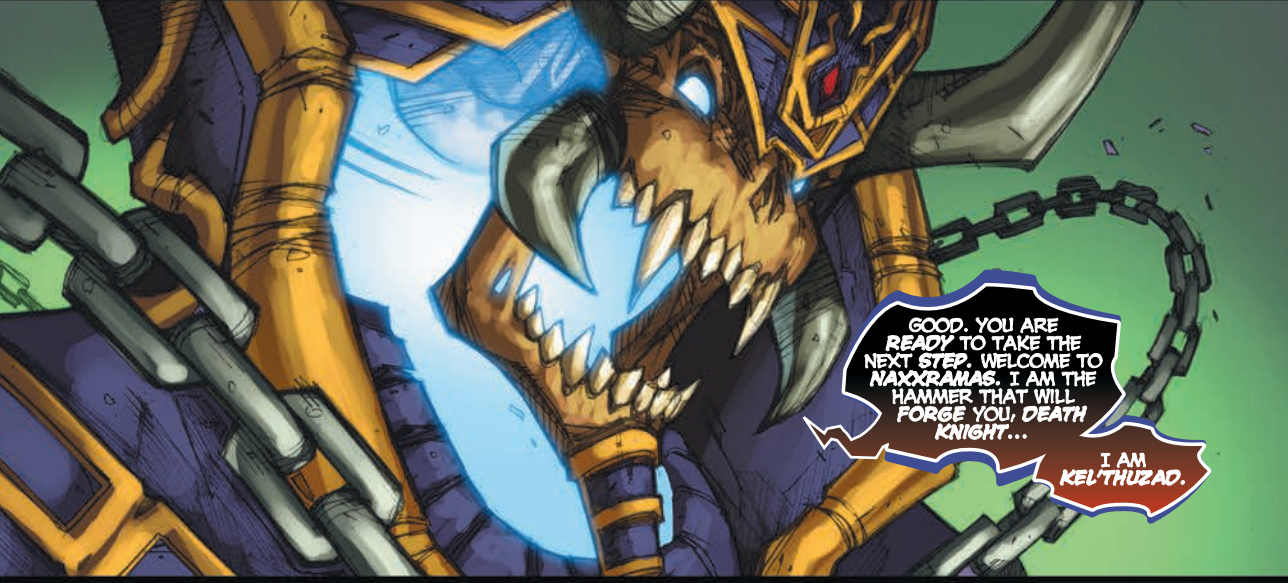
I...

WHO DO YOU LOVE?

NO ONE.

WHO LOVES YOU?

NO ONE.



GOOD. YOU ARE READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP. WELCOME TO NAXXRAMAS. I AM THE HAMMER THAT WILL FORGE YOU, DEATH KNIGHT...

I AM KEL'THUZAD.



IS ISILLIEN READY?

NEARLY.

WHAT YOU DID WAS FOR THE BEST. YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU? YOU HAVE SERVED THE ORDER WELL, RENAULT. I'M PROUD OF YOU.

SIRS, WE ARE READY.



SO YOU'RE THE
NEW MEAT, EH?

I...KNOW YOU,
KORTH'AZZ, ONE OF
LUTHER'S MEN...

NOT NO MORE,
BUDDY BOY.

IT IS *NOT* TOO
LATE FOR YOU,
ALEXANDROS.

SHUT
YER GOB,
ZELIEK.

SILENCE!
LISTEN WELL;
WHATEVER PURPOSE
MAY HAVE DRIVEN
YOU IN LIFE IS NOW
MEANINGLESS.

ALL THAT
EXISTS FOR YOU NOW
IS TO SERVE IN THE
COLD DARK...



IN THE LIGHT,
WE GATHER TO **EMPOWER**
OUR BROTHER. IN ITS **GRACE**,
HE WILL BE MADE **ANEW**. IN ITS
POWER, HE SHALL EDUCATE
THE **MASSSES**.

IN ITS
STRENGTH, HE
SHALL COMBAT THE
SHADOW...



ALL OF YOUR FORMER ALLEGIANCES, YOUR MEMORIES, YOUR LOYALTIES ARE NOW CAST TO THE VOID. YOU ARE TO BE A VESSEL OF ANNIHILATION; A HARBINGER OF THE APOCALYPSE...



LORD COMMANDER DATHROHAN, IF YOU DEEM RENAULT MOGRAINE WORTHY, I ASK YOU NOW TO PLACE YOUR BLESSING UPON HIM...

BY THE GRACE OF THE LIGHT, MAY YOUR BRETHREN BE HEALED. BY THE STRENGTH OF THE LIGHT, MAY YOUR ENEMIES BE UNDONE.



KA CHING!

ALL THAT REMAINS FOR YOU NOW IS TO GRASP THE SWORD, AND SEAL THE PACT.






ARISE AND BE RECOGNIZED, RENAULT MOGRAINE. HERE IN TIRISFAL, THIS MONASTERY WILL SERVE AS YOUR *SANCTUARY*, AND OUR *STRONGHOLD*.

DO YOU VOW TO UPHOLD THE HONOR AND CODES OF OUR NEW ORDER, AND TO CLEANSE THE WORLD OF CORRUPTION, WHEREVER IT MAY BE FOUND?

I DO.

THEN JOIN ME, BROTHERS, IN *WELCOMING* RENAULT MOGRAINE, THE FIRST *COMMANDER* TO BE PROMOTED...

...WITHIN THE *RANKS* OF THE *SCARLET CRUSADE!*



YOU ARE THE SWORD'S STRENGTH, ALEXANDROS, AND IT IS YOURS. NOW, THE MIGHTY ASHBRINGER-- MAN AND SWORD ONCE CONSIDERED THE GREATEST ENEMY OF THE SCOURGE...

... WILL BE ITS MOST TERRIFYING WEAPON. NOW ALL WHO KNOW WILL COME TO FEAR THE NEWEST, GREATEST *CHAMPION* OF THE *LICH KING!!*



B RILL

LIGHT DAMN YOU, ALL I WISH IS TO BE LEFT ALONE!



I HAVE DEDICATED MY LIFE TO THE LIGHT BECAUSE I BELIEVED IN A GREATER PURPOSE. SO TELL ME: WHAT GREATER PURPOSE WAS SERVED WITH MY FATHER'S DEATH?

WHY DID YOU BRING ME BACK AFTER STRATHOLME?

WHAT IF YOUR FADDA NOT BE DEAD?



WHO SPEAKS?

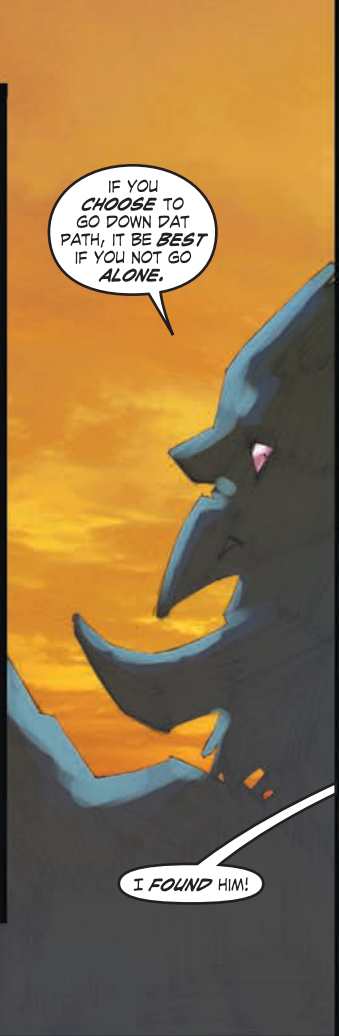
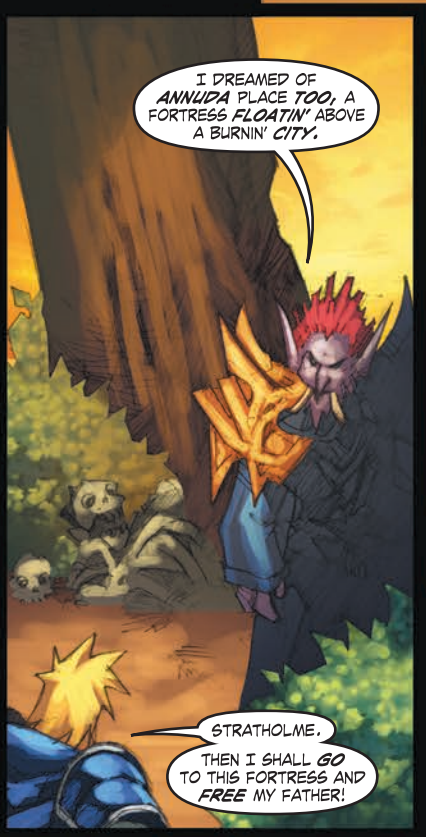
I BE ZABRA. I BELIEVE DA SPIRIT A YOUR FADDA MAY NOT YET BE DEPARTED.



YOU LOOK LIKE HIM. HOW DO YOU--DID YOU KNOW MY FATHER?

HE SAVE MA LIFE NOT SO LONG AGO. EVER SINCE, I FEEL A CONNECTION TO HIM THROUGH DA LIGHT. DAT CONNECTION NOT LOST...

...IT ONLY BEEN OBSCURED.





WHO ARE YOU?



I'M GRUNNHOLDE.

WE'VE SPLIT FROM THE ORDER, DARION. WE'VE FORMED A NEW ORGANIZATION, ONE THAT WELCOMES ALL RACES. I WONDERED IF YOU MIGHT LIKE TO JOIN US.



HE SAID I SHOULDN'T DO IT ALONE...

WHAT?

YES.



GOOD, GOOD! IT IS MY GREAT HONOR THEN...



...TO WELCOME YOU, DARION MOGRAINE, SON OF HIGHLORD MOGRAINE THE ASHBRINGER...

...TO THE ORDER OF THE ARGENT DAWN!!



CHAPTER 3



Cover by Chris Robinson



Cover by Ludo Lullabi and Tony Washington

CHILLWIND POINT: BASE CAMP OF
THE ARGENT DAWN UNDER THE
COMMAND OF MAXWELL TYROSUS.

THE TROLL YOU
SPEAK OF WAS CALLED
ZABRA HEXX, DARION. WE
FOUND HIM AT THE OLD
MONASTERY.

YOUR FATHER
CONCLUDED THAT HE WAS
BLESSED BY THE LIGHT AND
SPARED HIS **LIFE**. THIS **CONNECTION**
HE CLAIMS TO SHARE WITH
YOUR FATHER...

I GUESS
SUCH **IS** POSSIBLE.
FOR ALEXANDROS TO BE
ALIVE, THOUGH...

THE TROLL SAID
MY FATHER'S SPIRIT HAS
NOT **DEPARTED**. I CAN ONLY
HOPE THAT MEANS HE'S ALIVE.
ZABRA TOLD ME TO SEEK
OUT A **FORTRESS** ABOVE
STRATHOLME.

I'VE HEARD
OF IT. A BASTION OF
THE **SCOURGE** FROM WHICH
THE LICH KING'S LIEUTENANT
KELTHUZAD SPREADS THE
UNDEAD **PLAGUE**.

SO THAT'S WHERE
MY PATH WILL **LEAD**. I MUST
KNOW MY FATHER'S **FATE**,
BROTHER MAXWELL, COME
WHAT MAY.

HAVE
YOU A **PLAN**,
THEN?

IF THE
FORTRESS IS AS
FORMIDABLE AS YOU
SAY, THE ARGENT DAWN
LACKS THE **NUMBERS**
TO MOUNT A FULL-SCALE
ASSAULT. BUT A
HANDFUL OF US MAY
BE ABLE TO STEAL
OUR WAY IN.

SO BE
IT! I WILL
GLADLY **FIGHT**
BY YOUR
SIDE.

Naxxramas



NO. YOU'RE THE LEADER OF THIS NEW ORDER; FAR TOO VALUABLE TO RISK.

MM, AND ONCE YOUR MIND IS SET, THERE'S NO DIVERTING YOUR COURSE. I KNOW. INDEED THE APPLE DID NOT FALL FAR FROM THE TREE.

VERY WELL. ONCE OFFICER PUREHEART RETURNS, THEN...

WE DON'T KNOW WHEN THAT WILL BE. I MUST LEAVE SOON. EVERY DAY WASTED MAY ALREADY BE A DAY TOO LATE.

I WOULD CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS IN THE MORNING, IF YOU'LL ALLOW IT.

BY MY LEAVE, IF-- WHEN YOU'VE LIBERATED YOUR FATHER, WE WILL BE AWAITING YOU AT LIGHT'S HOPE.

THE OLD CHAPEL TO THE EAST.



THE SAME. BEFORE YOU CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS, THOUGH, THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW...

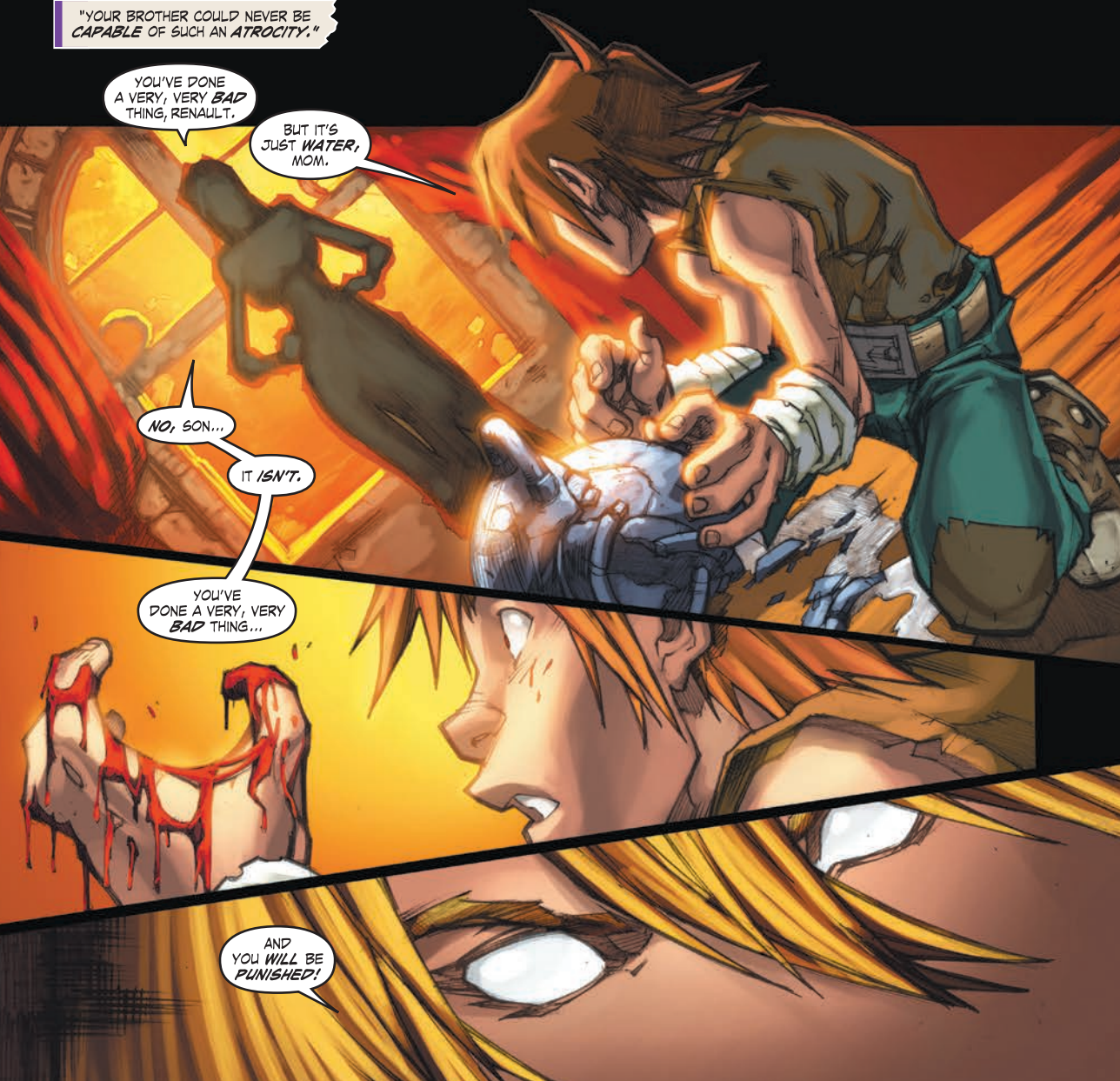
FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON YOUR FATHER, WHEN FAIRBANKS SURFACED AT HEARTHGLEN, HE ACCUSED RENAULT OF...OF BEING THE ONE WHO KILLED ALEXANDROS.

POOR FAIRBANKS MUST HAVE BEEN DRIVEN MAD!

NO MATTER HOW FAR THE ORDER HAS FALLEN OR HOW FRUSTRATED RENAULT MAY HAVE BECOME, SUCH TALK IS PREPOSTEROUS.

I'M SURE YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE...

"YOUR BROTHER COULD NEVER BE CAPABLE OF SUCH AN ATROCITY."



YOU'VE DONE A VERY, VERY BAD THING, RENAULT.

BUT IT'S JUST WATER, MOM.

NO, SON...

IT ISN'T.

YOU'VE DONE A VERY, VERY BAD THING...



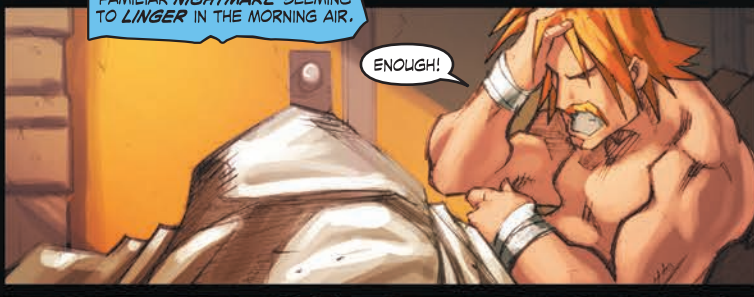
AND YOU WILL BE PUNISHED!



AAAAGHH!!

SCARLET COMMANDER
RENAULT MOGRAINE
AWAKENS BENEATH
SWEAT-SOAKED SHEETS...

THE LAST TRACES OF THE NOW
FAMILIAR NIGHTMARE SEEMING
TO LINGER IN THE MORNING AIR.



ENOUGH!



YOU!
READY MY HORSE
IMMEDIATELY!

YES,
LORD!

CHILLWIND

WHAT I ASK I DO
NOT ASK LIGHTLY, AND I
WILL NOT BE OFFENDED BY
YOUR REFUSAL.

HOWEVER, IF YOU'RE
WITH ME AND YOU WOULD
SEE MY FATHER LIBERATED,
THEN STEP FORWARD NOW AND
BE RECOGNIZED.

HOLD, HUMAN.
YOU WOULD CHARGE
BLINDLY INTO SOME
UNDEAD FORTRESS, NOT
KNOWING IF YOU'LL EVER
SEE DAYLIGHT
AGAIN...

TO SAVE
SOMEONE WHOM
MOST BELIEVE TO BE
DEAD. IS THAT THE
WAY OF IT?

YES,
GRUNN'HOLDE.

WHY?

BECAUSE HE'S
MY FATHER.



ALEXANDROS MOGRAINE IS A LEGEND FOR THE NUMBER OF SCOURGE HE OBLITERATED, THE SAME SCOURGE WHO NEARLY EXTERMINATED MY BLOOD ELF BRETHREN.

IT WOULD BE AN HONOR TO SEE THE ASHBRINGER'S FURY UNLEASHED ONCE AGAIN. MY NAME IS FERELYN BLOODSCORN AND I HEREBY PLEDGE MYSELF TO YOUR CAUSE.

AND I BE BRANNIGAN THUNDERMAUL, SON OF SEAMUS THUNDERMAUL OF THE MIGHTY WILDHAMMER CLAN...

AND THE LAST WARRIOR ALIVE TO BACK DOWN FROM A CHALLENGE.

MY THANKS, FERELYN; BRANNIGAN.



HELLO, STRANGER. YOU ARE?

HE DOES NOT SPEAK. THE MOST WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO LEARN IS THAT HIS NAME IS CASTILLIAN.

WELL MET THEN...CASTILLIAN. ANYONE ELSE?

SO BE IT. WE LEAVE IMMEDIATELY.





HUMAN!
WAIT!



WITHOUT ME YOU FOOLS WILL ONLY GET YOURSELVES KILLED, BESIDES...
ORCS HAVE FATHERS TOO. IN FACT, WE TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN OUR LINEAGE.

LATER...



DOES IT MAKE YOU NERVOUS, HUMAN, TO HAVE AN ORC SEATED *BEHIND* YOU LIKE THIS?

NOT REALLY. IF ANY *HARM* SHOULD BEFALL ME, WHO'D FLY THE *GRYPHON*?

HA HA HA!
A FAIR POINT.



WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF THAT *MAGE--CASTILLIAN*, IS IT?

NOTHING. SOME THINK HE'S A *SPY* SENT BY THE *FORSAKEN*. DON'T WORRY, I'LL KEEP A *CLOSE EYE* ON HIM.



FOR THE *MOMENT* I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH FINDING THIS *FORTRESS* OF YOURS. *STRATHOLME* LIES AHEAD.

I HAVE AN *IDEA*. MUCH LIKE THE CITY'S EVER BURNING *FIRES*, THESE *CLOUDS* SEEM NEVER TO *DISSIPATE*. PERHAPS IT'S TIME...

...TO
EXPAND OUR
VIEW.

WELL DONE,
HUMAN. YOU'RE **SMARTER**
THAN YOU **LOOK**.

I SEE NO
LOOKOUTS
POSTED.

THAT'S
BECAUSE WE'RE
THE ONLY **DIMWITS**
CRAZY ENOUGH TA
GET **NEAR** THE
PLACE!


PERHAPS,
BRANNIGAN.
OR PERHAPS
THERE IS NO WAY
IN, SAVE BY
SORCEROUS
MEANS.

THOSE **SKULLS**, FERELYN.
THEY APPEAR TO BE SOME KIND OF **DUCTS**.
LET'S HAVE A CLOSER LOOK...

WELL, THERE GO
OUR **RIPES**. I SURE HOPE
CASTILLIAN'LL BE ABLE TO
TELEPORT US AWAY WHEN
THE TIME COMES.

THE PASSAGE
LEADS **INSIDE**. I CAN'T
TELL HOW **FAR**. I'LL GO
IN **FIRST** AND--

NO, HUMAN! LET
CASTILLIAN GO FIRST...
TO **LIGHT** THE WAY.



EGGKH...
THE STENCH
O' THIS PLACE
COULD CHOKE
A YETI.

AN
EARTHEN
CHAMBER
ABOVE. EMPTY.
FAINT LIGHT
BEYOND.

WE
GO UP,
THEN.

GRR-UNK



DID YOU
HEAR THAT? HUSHED
NOISES JUST OUTSIDE THE
LIGHT OF YOUR STAFF...
CASTILLIAN?

SHMPH! I MAY AS
WELL BE TALKING TO A
MANA WORM.



ALLOW ME
TO SPEED
THE PROCESS, LITTLE
MAN.

YE HAVE ME
DEEPEST THANKS,
ONE MAN TA
ANOTHER.

THERE'S
MORE FEMALE
HERE THAN YOU
COULD--

QUIET! DID
YOU FEEL THAT?
A TREMOR. AND A
SOUND LIKE--

SHAAAAA

YOUR
HAND, QUICKLY.
QUICKLY!

"WE NEARLY LOST
YOU, HUMAN."

WHOOOSH

"THEN WHERE
WOULD WE BE?"

I AM *NOT*
SO SURE OUR
SITUATION HAS
IMPROVED.

ALL AROUND THEM,
SKITTERING, SCRAMBLING
NOISES GROW SUDDENLY
LOUDER, FRENZIED...

INSISTENT.

BY DATH'REMAR...



MAKE HASTE! BEFORE THEY SURROUND US!



FWOOM

A DOORWAY AHEAD!



WAIT TILL THE OTHERS ARE THROUGH...



NOW!

SHAKOOM

TASTY
MORSELS...
WHICH ONE
SHALL I EAT
FIRST?

CASTILLIAN,
LIGHT!

I'VE BEEN
TOO LONG
WITHOUT FOOD.
WITHOUT BLOOD
TO DRINK.



SHOCK

PAY ATTENTION, LAD,
AND I'LL SHOW YE WHY WE
CALL OUR WEAPONS...

BZZZZ





STORMHAMMERS!!

SHRAAKOOM

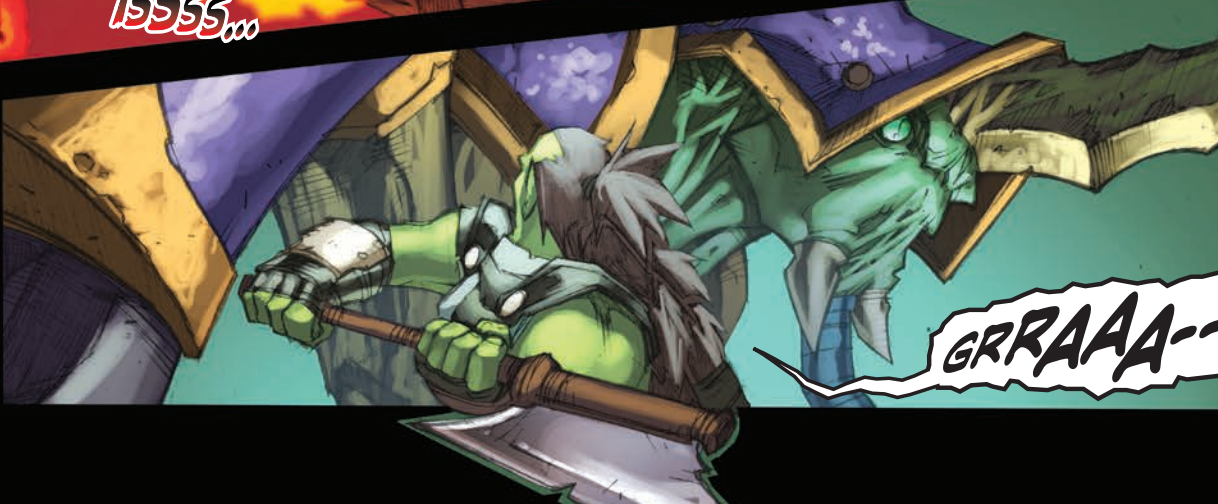
HA HA!
BY KURDRAN,
NOW THAT'S WHAT
I SIGNED ON
FER!!



FZZTT

FOOSH

TSSSS...



GRRAAA--



HAAGH!!

NO MORE BLOOD FOR YOU!

SHRUGK!!



I SUGGEST WE GET OUT WHILE WE CAN.

NO! NO! NO! EEAGGHH!!!

THAT WAY!

RUNNIN' TOWARD THE SCREAMS, EH, LAD? THAT'S MY KINDA MOXIE!!



B RILL

HAS THE COMMANDER GIVEN FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS?

LORD RENAULT SAYS TO WAIT. SO WE WAIT. HE'S IN NO MOOD TO BE TRIFLED WITH.



I WANT THE NIGHTMARES TO STOP. THERE WAS A TIME PERHAPS WHEN I NEEDED YOU TO UNDERSTAND, BUT THAT TIME HAS PASSED.

I DON'T NEED YOU ANYMORE. I DON'T NEED ANYONE.

I'M A MAN NOW.



GRRRAA--



KKAGGH!!

KSMASH

ELENA MOGRAIN



SIR, ARE YOU OKAY? I HEARD--

GRAB TORCHES AND BURN IT.

SIR?

BURN EVERYTHING.



FWOON



WHOOOSH



KRAK WOOON

GOODBYE, MOTHER.



AXXRAMAS

WHAT DO YE THINK THIS PLACE IS?

IT MUST BE WHERE THEY PUT TOGETHER THOSE THINGS... THE ABOMINATIONS... BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE LIKE THAT.

IS IT...

HARD TO TELL. IT IS NOT MOVING.



LOOKS LIKE
THAT *MONSTROSITY* WAS
PUT TOGETHER FROM THE
FLESH O' *GIANTS*.

I SAY
WE *CHOP*
OFF ITS *HEAD*
WHILE WE CAN
AND BE *DONE*
WITH IT.

A *BOLD* STRATEGY,
GRUNN'HOLDE. BUT I
WONDER IF IT MIGHT
BE *WISER* TO ATTEMPT
MOVING ON WITHOUT
WAKING IT *UP*.

SAGE
ADVICE,
MASTER
DARION.

SHAZZT

ZZKKT





AGREED THEN, LET'S--WHAT IN THE SEVEN KINGDOMS IS THAT?

LOOK--

THOXX

OOOOUT!!

SMASHH

AS THE MONSTER ATTACKS, FERELYN CATCHES A FLEETING GLIMPSE OF ITS SYRINGE-LIKE ARM AND THE PLAGUE TOXIN HOUSED INSIDE...

BUT IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE.

THE NEEDLE PLUNGES DEEP. LIQUID DEATH RUSHES IN.

FERELYN'S BODY IS A BLAZING FURNACE. SEARING PAIN LANCES EVERY NERVE, AND THE BLOOD ELF'S EYES FEEL AS IF THEY MIGHT EXPLODE.

BLECHTT!!

WHILE
BELOW...

RAPPA... OOMMM

EAT.

YOUR.

BONES!!

SO MUCH
FOR NOT WAKING
IT UP.

WE SHOULD
HAVE *BENEADED* THIS
NIGHTMARE WHEN WE
HAD THE CHANCE!
YAAAGGH!!

ABOVE.

FEREYLYN *BATTLES* THROUGH
UNBEARABLE PAIN AND
A FATE THAT IS SURE TO
BE WORSE THAN DEATH...

HGGH...!!

HE LASHES OUT.

THE CREATURE
IS ENRAGED.

THEN...

**KRAAK
AA**

THE PAIN IS
NO MORE.

YE'LL PAY
DEARLY, YE RANCID
SACK O' SCRAP!

SHRAK!

AGGHH!

YE'RE
SO KEEN ON
THIS PLAGUE
O' YOURS, THEN
GO ON...

KRAKOW

HAVE YER
FILL!

SHH-AZZAK

SHH-
NOW
WHAT?

DAD, I'M
HERE, WHERE
ARE YOU?

WELCOME,
LOST CHILD. ALLOW
LADY BLAUMEUX
TO HELP YOU FIND
YOUR WAY.

LEAVE,
I *BEG* YOU,
WHILE YOU *STILL*
CAN!

STUFF A
STOCKING IN IT,
ZELIEK!

YOU *KNOW* I TAKE
NO *PLEASURE* IN THIS,
KORTH'AZZ.

CASTILLIAN--
HE'S GONE!

THE *ROACH* LED US INTO
A TRAP AND THEN SCURRIED INTO
THE *DARK*. I *TOLD* YOU, HUMAN...
NOT TO BE TRUSTED!

WHO
NEEPS ON
THREE ON
THREE, THEM'S
FAIR ODDS IN
MY BOOK.



ME AN' ME
BIG BLOODY
MOUTH!

SMASHH



ENOUGH
LIP FLAPPIN'!
ZELIEK, IS IT?
YE'RE FIRST!

KRAK OOM



STAND DOWN,
YE PULL-WITTED
TWIRLYBIRD!

ASH! YE SWING
LIKE A NINNY, YE
WEAK-WRISTED
MOLE RAT!



DAD... WHAT
DID THEY DO
TO YOU?

WHAT ARE
YOU DOING? IT'S ME!
OPEN YOUR EYES,
IT'S ME!



ONE LESS
THREAT. HUMAN!
WHERE'S THAT FATHER
OF YOURS?



LOOK
NO FURTHER,
GREENSKIN.

HAKGH!

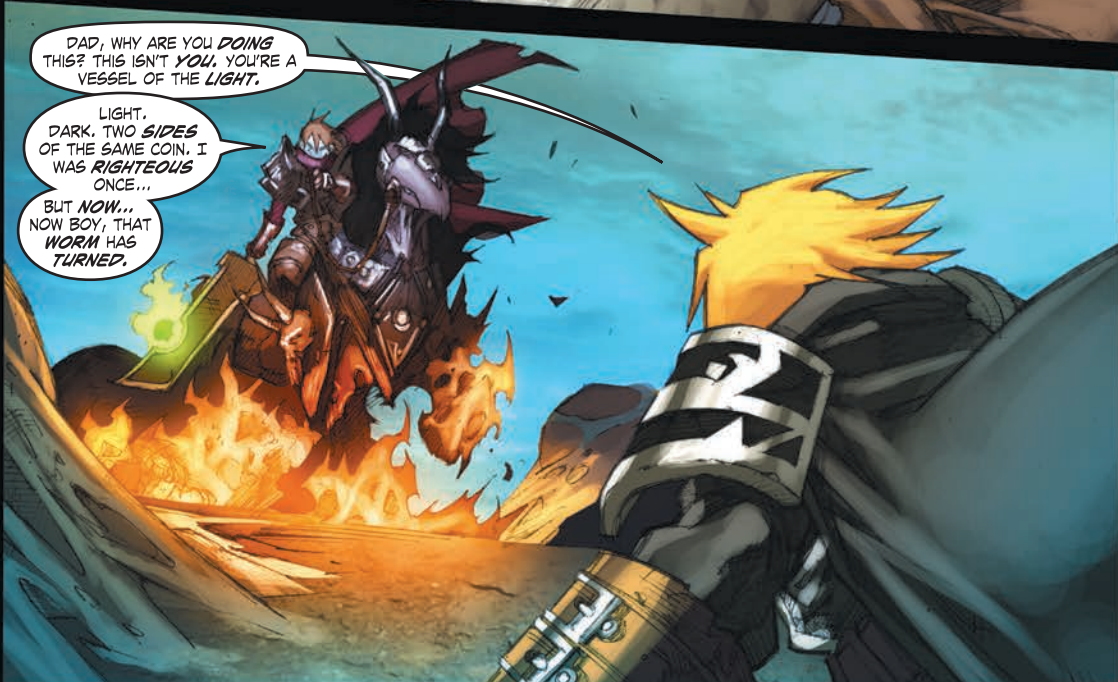


YE MAY AS WELL CRAWL *BACK* INTO YER HOLE;
YE BAGGY-EYED *TOSSPOT*.

KISS ME ARSE,
YE SOFT-NOGGINED
NANCY BOY!

WANKER!

GIT!



DAD, WHY ARE YOU *DOING*
THIS? THIS ISN'T *YOU*. YOU'RE A
VESSEL OF THE LIGHT.

LIGHT,
DARK. TWO *SIDES*
OF THE SAME COIN. I
WAS *RIGHTEOUS*
ONCE...

BUT *NOW...*
NOW BOY, THAT
WORM HAS
TURNED.

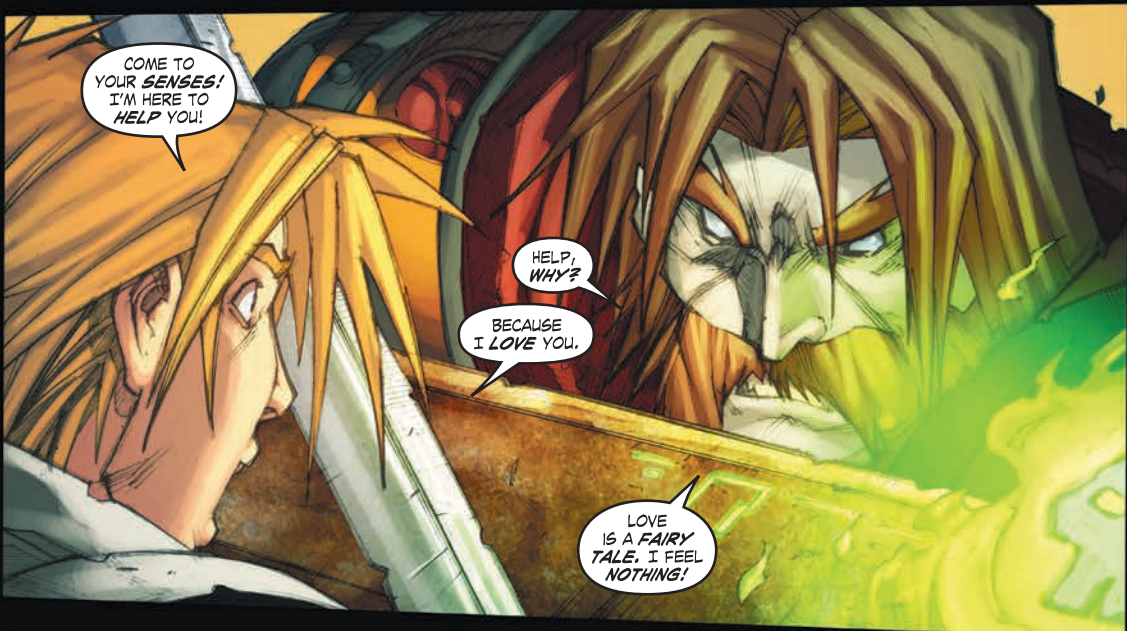


THIS IS *INSANE*. YOU HAVE TO *WAKE UP!* DON'T DO THIS!



IT'S *ME*, CAN'T YOU *SEE* THAT? IT'S YOUR *SON!*

I AM NO *LONGER* WHAT I *ONCE* WAS. I AM THE *SHADOW* NOW. I AM THE *VOID*.



COME TO YOUR *SENSES!* I'M HERE TO *HELP* YOU!

HELP, *WHY?*
BECAUSE I *LOVE* YOU.

LOVE IS A *FAIRY TALE*. I FEEL *NOTHING!*



HANG *ON*, DARION, HANG *ON*, I'LL BE WITH YE AS SOON AS I--



FORGIVE ME, BROTHER. THIS IS NOT MY *CHOICE*. BUT YOU *MUST* DIE. THE MASTER *COMMANDS* IT!

HAGGGHH...





OH NO
YE DON'T,
BOY!



K-K-KSHH

NOW, NOW
YOU WILL SERVE
THE MASTER FOR
ETERNITY!

NOO!



HLKK!!



NO NO
NO NO
NO...

THMP



HAAAA--



NO!!!

SHLLKK

FOR A LONG MOMENT
THERE IS ONLY THE SOUND OF
DARIUS'S TORTURED SOBS.

TOO
LATE...
I WAS TOO
LATE...

NEARBY, THE DEATH
KNIGHT ZELIEK STIRS...



WHEN WILL IT BE
OVER? WHEN WILL
I BE RELEASED?
HOW MANY MORE
MUST I KILL?

THEN, A THIRD VOICE:
HUSHED, DISTORTED,
YET FAMILIAR.



RUN!

DAD? BUT
HOW--

DOORWAY...
BEHIND YOU...
NOW!



AND FOR DARIUS,
BLACKEST DESPAIR
TURNS TO FERVENT
HOPE.

HOPE THAT HE WAS *NOT*,
AFTER ALL, TOO LATE...

HOPE THAT HIS FATHER'S SPIRIT,
GUIDING HIM NOW OUT OF THE
UNDEAD BASTION, IS NOT LOST...

HOPE THAT THE MAN WHO WAS
ALEXANDROS MOGRAINE
MIGHT SOMEHOW LIVE AGAIN.

THEN, IN A ROOM
OF PORTALS...

A HOST
OF UNDEAD...
THOUSANDS. IS THAT
NORTHREND?

STRAIGHT
ACROSS.
HURRY!

BACK TO THE
PLAGUELANDS.

RENAULT...
TAKE ME TO
RENAULT.

WAAWHUMP

SCARLET
MONASTERY

OUR INFORMANTS REPORT THAT A LARGE-SCALE
SCOURGE OFFENSIVE IS IMMINENT.

AND WHAT OF THE
PRISONERS, INQUISITOR WHITEMANE,
WHAT HAVE THEY TO SAY?

INFORMATION
EXTRACTED FROM
THEM CORROBORATES
THE INFORMANTS' CLAIMS.
THEY AGREE ON THE
TARGET AS WELL:
HEARTHGLEN.

THE FORSAKEN
ARE NOT AN IMMEDIATE
THREAT... ROUND UP A
SQUAD OF OUR BEST
SOLDIERS, MILADY, AND
SPEED YOUR WAY TO
HEARTHGLEN.

IT WILL
BE DONE,
LORD.

LATER, AS WHITEMANE LEADS A SQUAD OF SCARLET CRUSADE SOLDIERS TO DEPART...

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU BROUGHT ME HERE. WILL RENAULT KNOW WHAT TO DO? CAN HE HELP YOU?

HELP... YES.

RENAULT! I HAVE AN URGENT MATTER TO--

YOU! YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE, TRAITOR! HOW DARE YOU SHOW YOUR FACE, AFTER SIDING WITH THAT CRACKPOT TYROSUS!

THE SCARLET CRUSADE IS THE ONLY TRUE FORCE FOR GOOD ON AZEROTH. WHAT COULD YOU HOPE TO MEAN BY--

RENAULT, LISTEN TO ME! I'VE COME TO TALK ABOUT FATHER, HE--

THE SWORD! WHY DID YOU BRING THAT HERE? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO? YOU TORTURE ME!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE'RE FAMILY!

I HAVE NO FAMILY!

THOK

GUARD, GET THAT CURSED SWORD OUT OF MY SIGHT!

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN WE WOULD GRAPPLE AS CHILDREN? I WOULD HOLD YOU DOWN UNTIL YOU BLUBBERED, MEWLING LIKE A KITTEN!

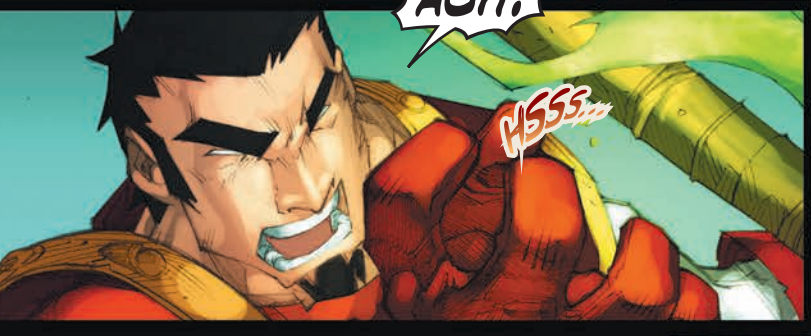
EVEN THEN YOUR PATHETIC WEAKNESS MADE ME SICK!

I HAVE SEVERED THE TRAPPINGS OF MY OLD LIFE, AND NOW THERE IS ONLY ONE BOND LEFT TO BE BROKEN. YOU, DEAR BROTHER, THE WEAKEST LINK!



YOU'RE A WEAKLING AND A BETRAYER... AND THE PUNISHMENT FOR BETRAYAL...

AGH!



IS DEATH!

THEN, A VOICE ECHOES WITHIN THE CRUSADER'S CHAPEL, A VOICE HUSHED, DISTORTED, YET FAMILIAR.

BETRAYAL...



YOU KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT BETRAYAL... SON.

F--FATHER?

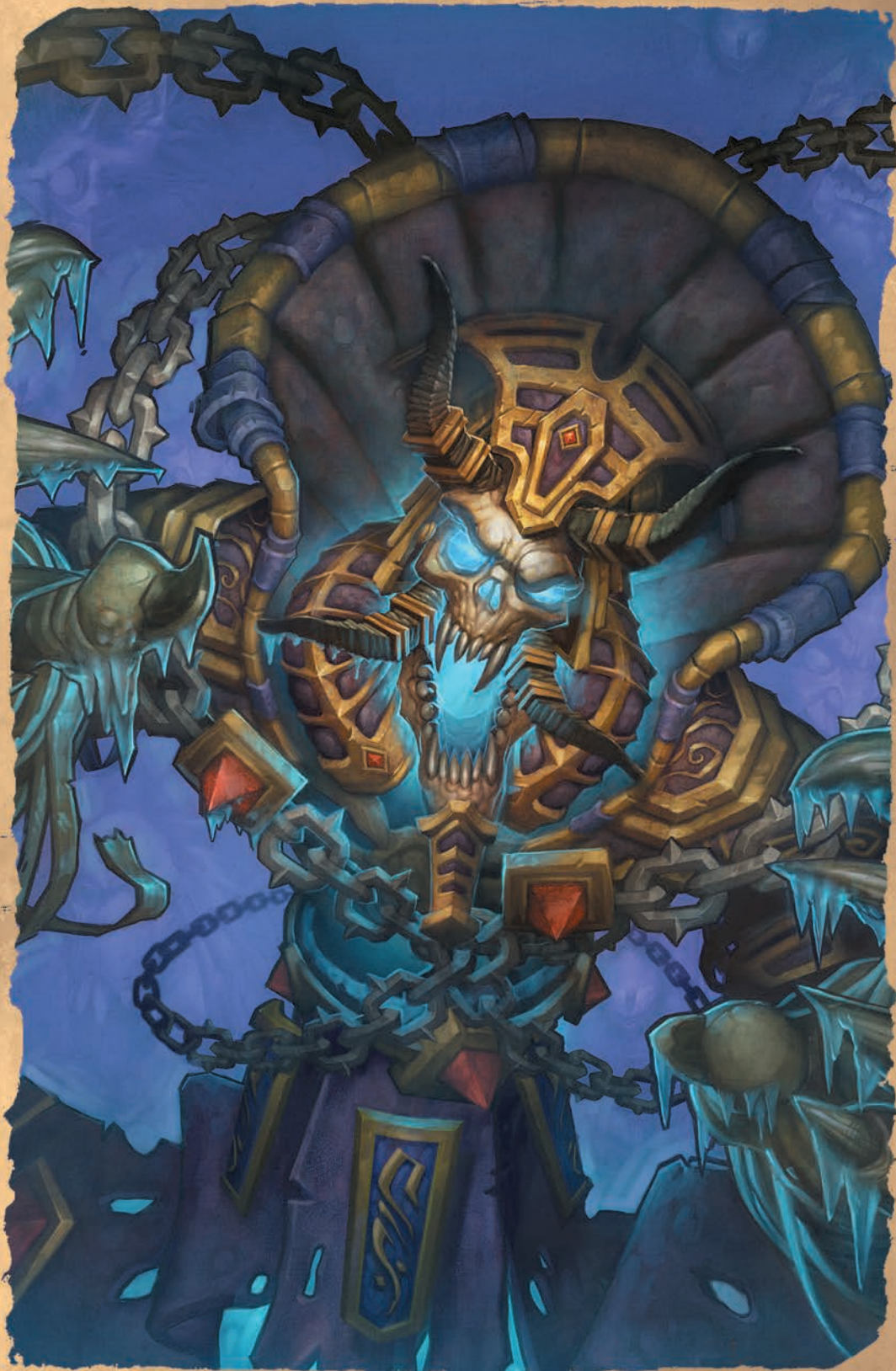


IT CAN'T BE!

F-FORGIVE ME, FATHER! FORGIVE ME, I BEG YOU!



CHAPTER 4



Cover by Chris Robinson



Ludo
Lullabi
Tony

Cover by Ludo Lullabi and Tony Washington

A CHARNEL HOUSE *STENCH* PRECEDED THE ARRIVAL OF THE *SCOURGE*.

YET DESPITE THE ADVANCE *WARNING*...

THE CITY'S OUTER DEFENSES PROVED *INCAPABLE* OF REPELLING THE UNDEAD *HOST*.

GENERAL ABBENDIS!
LADY ABBENDIS! MAKE READY FOR ANOTHER *SURGE*! THERE SEEMS TO BE NO *END* TO THEM!

DUST TO DUST

SAVE YOUR **PESSIMISM**, ISILLIEN! JUST BE READY TO **HEAL** US SHOULD WE BE **OVERWHELMED!**

I KNOW WELL MY **ROLE**, BRIGITTE. DON'T SEEK TO COUNSEL ME!

FOCUS, BOTH OF YOU!

SHAGH!

PERHAPS GRAND CRUSADER DATHROHAN FARES **BETTER** AND MIGHT SOON LEND **SUPPORT**.

AN **UPLIFTING** THOUGHT, TAE LAN, BUT JUDGING BY THE STEADY **STREAM** OF UNDEAD I'VE SPIED RUSHING TO THE **EAST WARD...**

"I'D SAY HE'S IN IT JUST AS **DEEP** AS WE ARE!"

DURGEN! LORIK! **HOLD THE LINE**, DAMN YOU!

WE... **SHARGH!**...DO OUR **BEST**, GRAND CRUSADER!

GRRRUALLGHH--



COME THEN, YOU **FETID** LOU!!

GAAHHH!!



LIMMPH!

**SW
SM
ACU
CU**



MMRALGGH...

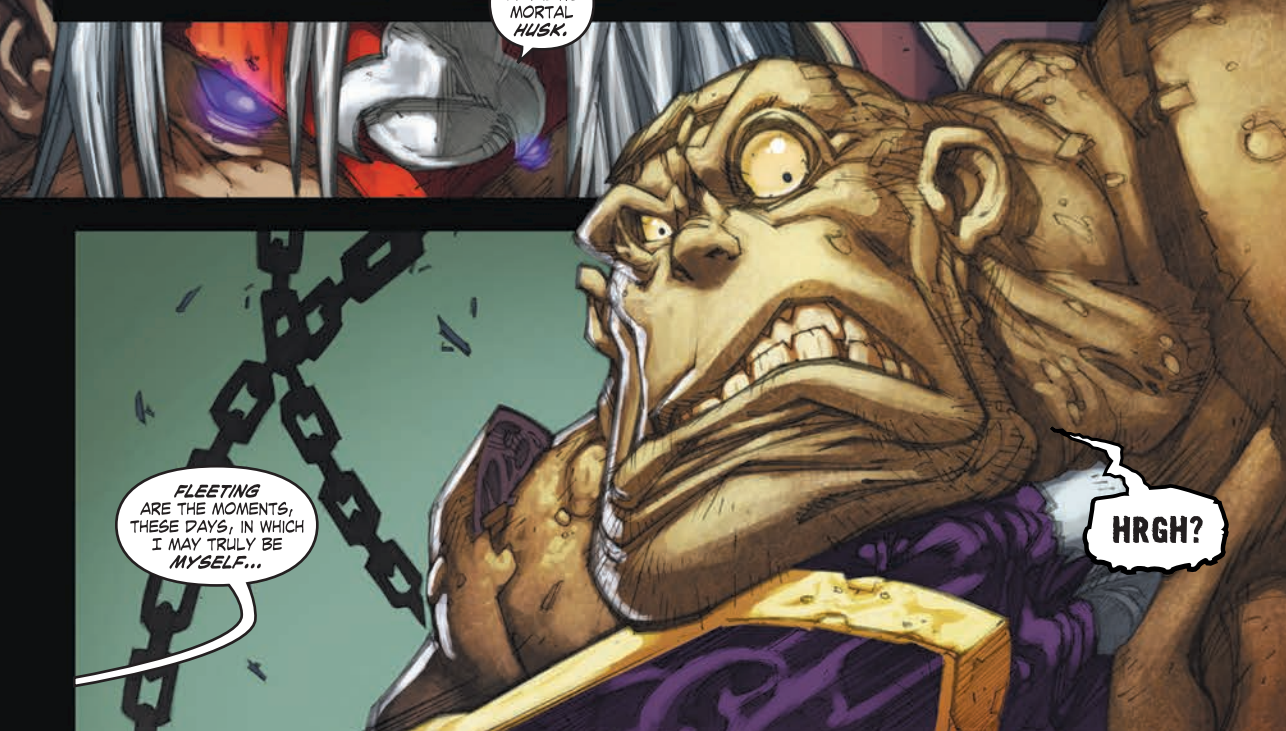
THE GRAND CRUSADER, IS HE--
I CAN'T SEE. KEEP FIGHTING, LEST WE JOIN HIM!

NNGGH...



COME...CLOSER, YOU WITLESS OAF, AND BEAR WITNESS TO THE SHEPPING...

OF THIS PATHETIC MORTAL HUSK.



FLEETING ARE THE MOMENTS, THESE DAYS, IN WHICH I MAY TRULY BE MYSELF...

HRGH?



HAKK-GLLK!

THAT I MAY *REND* FLESH, *SHED* BLOOD, AND *SHIVER* BONE, NOT AS THE FALLIBLE MORTAL *DATHROHAN*...



BUT AS THE UNDAUNTED AND REDOUBTABLE NATHREZIM *BALNAZZAR*, *CHEATER* OF DEATH, *MASTER* OF MORTAL PAWNS...

AND *BANE* OF YOU ROTTING DEAD!

SPU LCHT



NOT FAR AWAY...

ARCHIMONDE'S BONES! ISILLIEN, CAN YOU AND DOAN DO NOTHING TO STEM THIS CURSED TIDE?

WE'RE DOING ALL WE CAN! THE WRETCHES HAVE GAINED THE BASTION WALLS!

BRIG, LOOK OUT!



WHAT--

GULGH!

NO, WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?* REST EASY-- I'LL HEAL YOU!



FATHER?

FATHER?

HARAGH!



DOAN!
COME TO YOUR
SENSES AND
JOIN THE **FIGHT**,
FOR **PITY'S**
SAKE!

PATIENCE.
ISILLIEN. EXPERIENCE HAS
TAUGHT ME TO **CONSERVE**
MY ENERGY FOR WHEN IT
IS NEEDED **MOST**.

IT IS NO
SMALL FEAT, AFTER
ALL, TO CALL FORTH
A **BLIZZARD...**

...FROM
CLOUDLESS
SKIES!

SMASH

WHOOSH

SOME OF THE SCOURGE ARE
SWEPT AWAY. OTHERS ARE
CRUSHED BY FALLING STONE...

AND STILL OTHERS ARE
BOMBARDED BY MASSIVE,
DAGGER-LIKE **CHUNKS** OF ICE.
BUT FOR EVERY ONE OF THEIR
NUMBER THAT **FALLS...**

TWO OTHERS STEP IN
TO TAKE ITS PLACE.

WHILE ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY...

A SCARLET CRUSADE SOLDIER FAILS
TO NOTICE THE PRETERNATURAL
MIST FORMING **BEHIND** HIM.

IT IS ONLY WHEN THE
HACKLES **RISE** ON
THE BACK OF HIS NECK
THAT HE **TURNS**.



GRAND CRUSADER!
YOUR WOUND...CAN YOU
NOT HEAL?

YES...
I CAN. ONE
WAY...



...OR
ANOTHER!



FELLOW CRUSADERS,
LOOK TO THE HORIZON!
HIGH INQUISITOR WHITEMANE AND
REINFORCEMENTS FROM THE
SCARLET MONASTERY!

WE MAY
COME THROUGH
THIS YET!



IT SEEMS WE
ARRIVED NONE TOO
SOON. LET THIS BE A
LESSON TO ALL
SCOURGE:

FAWOOM

THE SCARLET
CRUSADE WILL
NOT BE TAKEN
SO EASILY!



GRAND CRUSADER, YOU
EMERGE...UNSCATHED.

YOU EXPECTED
OTHERWISE?

WELL,
NO, I--

TELL HIGH
GENERAL ABBENDIS
I WANT AN IMMEDIATE
ASSESSMENT OF
CASUALTIES.

BEGGING YOUR
PARDON, GRAND
CRUSADER, BUT THE
GENERAL...



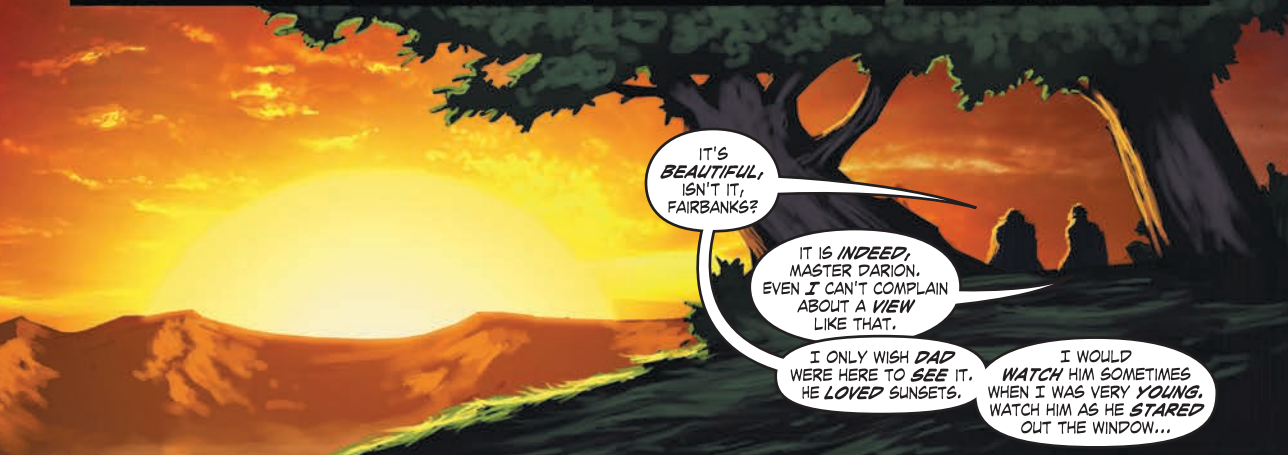
"...IS AMONG THE CASUALTIES."

STUPID OLD MAN.
STUPID, STUPID
OLD MAN!

GET UP!
GET UP!



GET UP.
GET UP.
GET UP...



IT'S
BEAUTIFUL,
ISN'T IT,
FAIRBANKS?

IT IS *INDEED*,
MASTER DARION.
EVEN *I* CAN'T COMPLAIN
ABOUT A VIEW
LIKE THAT.

I ONLY WISH *DAD*
WERE HERE TO *SEE* IT.
HE *LOVED* SUNSETS.

I WOULD
WATCH HIM SOMETIMES
WHEN I WAS VERY *YOUNG*.
WATCH HIM AS HE *STARED*
OUT THE WINDOW...



HE WOULD SAY
THAT IN THOSE MOMENTS
HE FELT AT *ONE* WITH
THE *LIGHT*.

BUT THE LIGHT NEVER
SPOKE TO ME AS IT DID TO *HIM*.
TO ME IT ALWAYS FELT...*DISTANT*.
JUST OUTSIDE MY *GRASP*.

THE LIGHT
TOUCHES *EACH*
OF US IN ITS *OWN*
WAY.

DAD SAID WE ALL
HAVE A *PURPOSE*. I HAVE NO
IDEA WHAT MY *PURPOSE IS*. I'VE
BUNGLED EVERYTHING.

I SHOULD HAVE
LISTENED TO MAXWELL WHEN
HE TOLD ME WHAT YOU SAID
ABOUT *RENAULT*.

I SHOULDN'T HAVE
TAKEN THE *SWORD* TO THE
MONASTERY; I--

BEWARE OF *REGRET*, DARION. IT'S A *PLAGUE* ALL ITS OWN. THERE ARE *TOO* MANY THINGS YOU COULDN'T HAVE *KNOWN*.

I WON'T *GIVE UP* ON HIM, FAIRBANKS. I'LL SEE TO IT THAT HIS SOUL BE *REPEEMED*.



THAT'S THE *SPIRIT!*

TELL ME SOMETHING: IN ALL *HONESTY*...

THIS IS A *DREAM*, ISN'T IT?



YOU'RE *DEAD*.

YES. WHAT'S LEFT OF MY MORTAL SHELL *ROTS* EVEN NOW IN THE SCARLET MONASTERY.

SO WHAT *IS* THIS? WHY ARE YOU *HERE*?

THE LIGHT TOUCHES *EACH* OF US--

IN ITS *OWN WAY*. YOU *SAID* THAT.

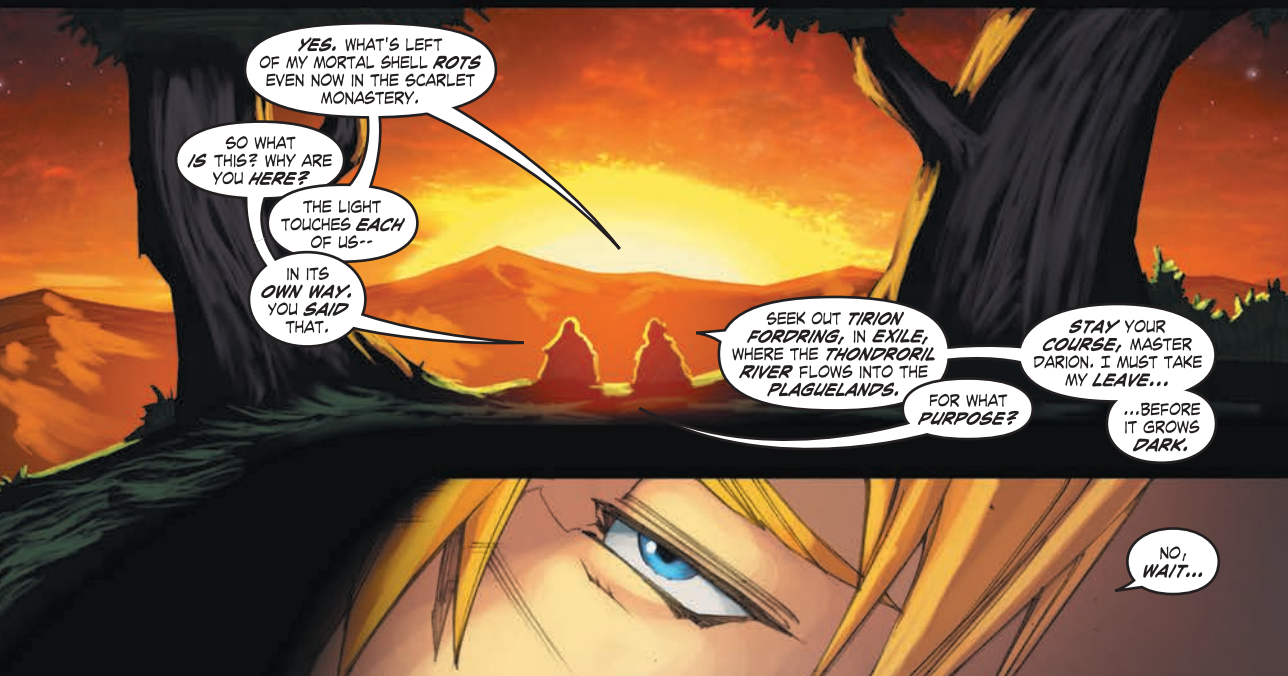
SEEK OUT *TIRION FORDRING*, IN EXILE, WHERE THE *THONDROL RIVER* FLOWS INTO THE *PLAGUELANDS*.

STAY YOUR COURSE, MASTER DARION. I MUST TAKE MY LEAVE...

FOR WHAT *PURPOSE*?

...BEFORE IT GROWS *DARK*.

NO, *WAIT*...





WAIT!

A DREAM, AFTER ALL. OR PERHAPS A MESSAGE? ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.



SO NOW IT'S THE SILENT TREATMENT? YOU DON'T WISH TO MATERIALIZE AND LOP OFF MY HEAD?

SO BE IT. WE RIDE FOR THONDORIL RIVER BEFORE THE SCARLET CRUSADE COMES TO RECLAIM ITS STOLEN HORSE.



WHAT SAY YOU, DAD?



EASTERN PLAGUELANDS

THIS MUST BE IT.

HO, TIRION!
TIRION FORDRING!



AND WHAT BUSINESS MIGHT YOU HAVE, BOY?

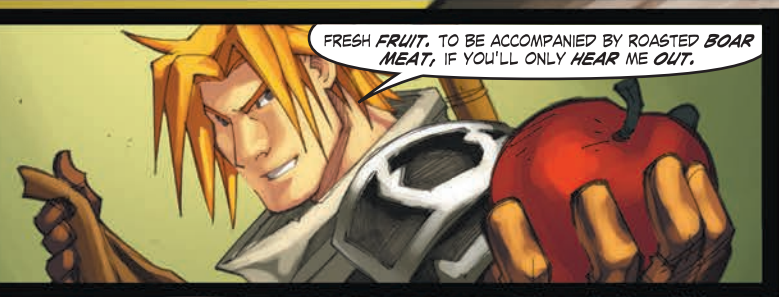
DARION... IS THE NAME. DARION MOGRAINE, SIR. I SEEK YOUR AID.



ALEXANDROS' YOUNGEST? I HAVE NO HELP TO OFFER YOU. BEST BE ON YOUR WAY.

THE LIGHT GRANTED ME A VISION, AND WITH IT A SUGGESTION THAT YOU WOULD PROVIDE AID...OR AT THE VERY LEAST, ADVICE!

THEN THE LIGHT HAS MISLED YOU. I'M AN EXILE, A PARIAH. MY ADVICE IS THAT YOU TURN AWAY...AND SEEK YOUR COUNSEL ELSEWHERE.



FRESH FRUIT. TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY ROASTED BOAR MEAT, IF YOU'LL ONLY HEAR ME OUT.



YES, WELL, DESPITE THE SCARCITY OF UNTAINTED FOOD HERE IN THE PLAGUELANDS...

MY LOYALTIES WILL NOT BE SO EASILY PURCHASED.

MY FATHER'S SOUL IS AT STAKE! YOU MAY BE A PARIAH, AN EXILE, BUT YOU MAY ALSO BE THE ONLY PERSON LEFT FOR ME TO TURN TO.

YOUR FATHER'S SOUL, YOU SAY? ALEXANDROS WAS AN EXEMPLAR OF PURITY. I CAN SCARCELY IMAGINE HIS SOUL IN PERIL.

STILL... I'LL HEAR YOU OUT. FOR YOUR FATHER'S SAKE. COME.



LATER...

YOUR TALE IS DISTURBING, TO SAY THE LEAST. IF ALEXANDROS' SPIRIT AND THE SWORD ARE LINKED, AS YOU SAY...

WHEN I WAS JUDGED--WHEN I WAS STRIPPED OF MY RANK AND MY STATION--I FEARED THAT THE LIGHT HAD ABANDONED ME.

BUT THE LIGHT CARES LITTLE FOR THE JUDGMENT OF MEN.

THE SWORD. LET ME SEE IT.



BY THE GRACE OF THE LIGHT, LET ME SEE WHAT OTHERS CANNOT.



=BAGH!:=

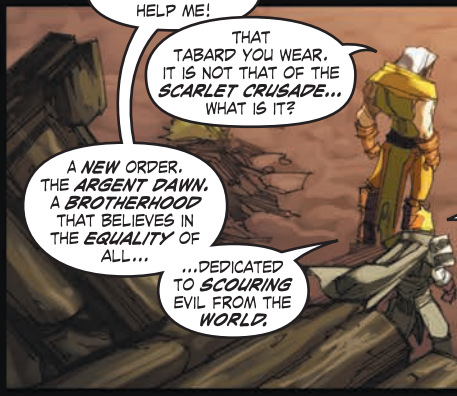
THE SWORD IS **CORRUPTED**. AND THERE IS A SOUL TRAPPED WITHIN. IF IT IS TRULY THAT OF **ALEXANDROS...**

...I FEAR THERE IS NOTHING LEFT OF HIM.



MEANING?

MEANING YOUR FATHER'S SPIRIT IS **FORFEIT**, BOY. YOU'VE DONE ALL YOU CAN. BEST NOW TO LET IT GO.



WE MUST **FIND** A WAY! YOU **MUST** HELP ME!

THAT TABARD YOU WEAR. IT IS NOT THAT OF THE **SCARLET CRUSADE...** WHAT IS IT?

A **NEW ORDER**. THE **ARGENT DAWN**. A **BROTHERHOOD** THAT BELIEVES IN THE **EQUALITY** OF ALL...

...DEDICATED TO **SCOURING** EVIL FROM THE **WORLD**.

HA! POOR **FOOL...** YOU HAVE A NEVER-ENDING BATTLE **AHEAD** OF YOU.

HAVE YOU **TRULY** BECOME SO **EMBITTERED?**

MY FATHER **BELIEVED** IN YOU WHEN OTHERS **CURSED** YOUR NAME! WILL YOU TURN YOUR **BACK** ON ME NOW, AS YOU'VE TURNED YOUR **BACK** ON **TAE LAN?**



SNOT-NOSED WHELP! DO NOT **SPEAK** TO ME AS IF YOU KNOW THE TRUTH! YOU KNOW NOTHING!

YOU'RE **RIGHT**--I KNOW **NOTHING!**



TAE LAN NEVER **SPEAKS** OF IT. ALL I'VE HEARD ARE **RUMORS**. IF YOU **REFUSE** TO HELP, THE LEAST YOU CAN DO IS **TELL** ME...

TELL ME **WHY** YOU WERE **BRANDED** A **TRAITOR**.

I want you to know that
I love you dearly and that I'll
always carry you close to my heart.
Your life and your deeds will
be my redemption, son.
You are my pride and my hope.
Be a good man.
Be a hero.
Goodbye.

WHAT IS
THIS?

YOUR FATHER'S LETTER...
I'D HEARD YOU STILL CARRY
IT WITH YOU.

WE'VE NEVER *SPOKEN* OF
TIRION'S TRIAL. I WAS *THERE*,
OF COURSE, WHEN *JUDGMENT*
WAS PASSED.

I WAS MORE
SHOCKED THAN
ANYONE WHEN HE
REFUSED TO *ATONE*,
WHEN HE REFUSED
THE *MERCY* OF
THE COURT.

IT FELT LIKE HE WAS *BETRAYING* US ALL OVER AGAIN.
AS *PAINFUL* AS IT IS TO *SAY*, YOUR FATHER
DESERVED TO BE EXILED.

HE LANGUISHES NOW IN
OBSCURITY WHILE YOU DO THE
LIGHT'S *WORK*. I HAVE *PLANS*
FOR YOU, TAE LAN...

I WISH FOR YOU TO
TAKE *RENAULT'S PLACE* AS
THE NEW *COMMANDER* AT THE
SCARLET MONASTERY.

ME? WELL, I
WOULD BE *HONORED*,
OF COURSE.

SO LET IT *BE*. YOUR PROSPECTS
ARE *LIMITLESS*, SO LONG AS
YOU LOOK TO THE *FUTURE* AND
TAKE CARE NOT TO *DWELL*
ON THE PAST.

TAKE
MY *ADVICE*,
SON...

BURN
THE NOTE.



VIRION'S HOME

PLAGUELANDS

I FOUND THE **TRACKS** WHILE HUNTING. **ORC TRACKS. MIND YOU,** BACK THEN THE ORCS WERE OUR SWORN **ENEMIES. EVIL MONSTERS,** OR SO WE **THOUGHT...**

THE TRACKS LED ME TO A CRUMBLING **TOWER,** AND THERE I DISCOVERED AN **ORC.** NO LONGER IN THE PRIME OF HIS **YOUTH,** BUT AN ORC JUST THE **SAME.**

WE **FOUGHT,** AND TO MY SURPRISE I FOUND OUR **SKILLS** TO BE EVENLY **MATCHED...**



"OUR BATTLE BROUGHT THE TOWER **DOWN** AROUND US, AND **DARKNESS** CLOSED IN. I **AWOKE** LATER IN MY **OWN** BED."

"IN TIME, I LEARNED THAT THE ORC HAD **PULLED** ME FROM THE RUBBLE...**TIED** ME TO MY SADDLE. MY TRUSTED STEED, **MIRADOR,** HAD CARRIED ME **HOME.**

"I RETURNED TO **SPEAK** WITH THE ORC. I LEARNED HIS NAME: **EITRIGG.** AND I LEARNED THAT THIS '**GREENSKIN,**' WHOSE KIND I HAD **GROWN** TO **HATE...**

"...VALUED **HONOR** AS MUCH AS I. HE ONLY **WISHED** TO BE LEFT **ALONE.** I **SWORE** A SOLEMN OATH TO **HONOR** THAT WISH, BUT FATE CONSPIRED AGAINST US..."

"LORD COMMANDER **DATHROHAN** LEARNED OF EITRIGG AND **ORDERED** ME TO LEAD HIM AND A PARTY OF **SOLDIERS** TO THE ORC'S **HIDING** PLACE."




"EITRIGG **FOUGHT** BUT WAS **ARRESTED.** I TRIED TO **INTERVENE,** BUT...**TOO LATE.** THE **DAMAGE** WAS **DONE.**

"I WAS **TRIED** FOR **TREASON.** STILL, I **REFUSED** TO RENOUNCE MY **OATH** TO EITRIGG. I WAS LABELED A **TRAITOR** AND **EXCOMMUNICATED.**



"EITRIGG WAS TO BE **EXECUTED** IN STRATHOLME, BUT BEFORE HE COULD BE **HANGED,** I ACTED, **SAVING** HIS LIFE AS HE HAD **SAVED** MINE."

"SOON AFTER, THE WARCHIEF OF THE HORDE, **THRALL...** ARRIVED AND SPIRITED EITRIGG AWAY. THAT WAS THE **LAST** I SAW OF HIM."



IT WAS A MATTER OF HONOR. A MAN HAS NOTHING IF HE HAS NOT HONOR.


OF COURSE, LUTHER, DATHROHAN, AND THE OTHERS DIDN'T SEE IT THAT WAY. DESPITE MY "OUTCAST" STATUS, I'VE KEPT WATCH THROUGH THE YEARS...

THE DAY TAE LAN WAS KNIGHTED, I SNUCK INTO THE CEREMONY. I WAS SO PROUD OF HIM...

BUT NOW... NOW HE CASTS HIS LOT WITH THIS SCARLET CRUSADE...



A CORRUPT TRAVESTY THAT'S AS MUCH A BLIGHT UPON THE LAND AS THE PLAGUE ITSELF.



TAE LAN ISN'T LIKE THE OTHERS. IF I HAD TO GUESS, I'D SAY THAT MAYBE HE'S LOST HIS WAY...

I UNDERSTAND WHAT HE'S GOING THROUGH. I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE...



...TO LOSE A FATHER.

THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR TALE, BROTHER TIRION. I REALIZE NOW THAT YOU WERE FACED WITH AN IMPOSSIBLE CHOICE...

AND YOU MADE THE ONLY DECISION YOU COULD. JUST AS I'VE MADE MINE: I MUST SET OFF TO MEET THE OTHERS AT LIGHT'S HOPE...



...AND CONTINUE MY QUEST.



AN ACT OF LOVE.

WHAT?



I'VE BEEN GIVING IT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION...

I BELIEVE THAT ONLY AN ACT OF LOVE GREATER THAN THE ACT OF EVIL THAT CORRUPTED THE SWORD WILL BE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO FREE YOUR FATHER'S SOUL.

BUT BE WARNED: SUCH AN ACT IS OFTEN THE ULTIMATE TEST OF FAITH.



AN ACT OF LOVE...
THANK YOU.

YOU SHOULD **JOIN US**. YOU **INSPIRED** MY FATHER; YOU COULD **INSPIRE OTHERS** AS WELL.



THE ARGENT DAWN **NEEDS** MEN LIKE YOU.

I'VE SEEN **EVERYTHING** THAT WAS GOOD IN MY LIFE **WITHER** ON THE VINE. AND ALL FOR **WHAT?** NO; I DO NOT **CARE** TO BE INVOLVED.

YOU WERE A **LIVING VESSEL** OF THE LIGHT ONCE. FAITH, WISDOM, VALOR...**HONOR**. THOSE IDEALS **MEANT** SOMETHING TO YOU.

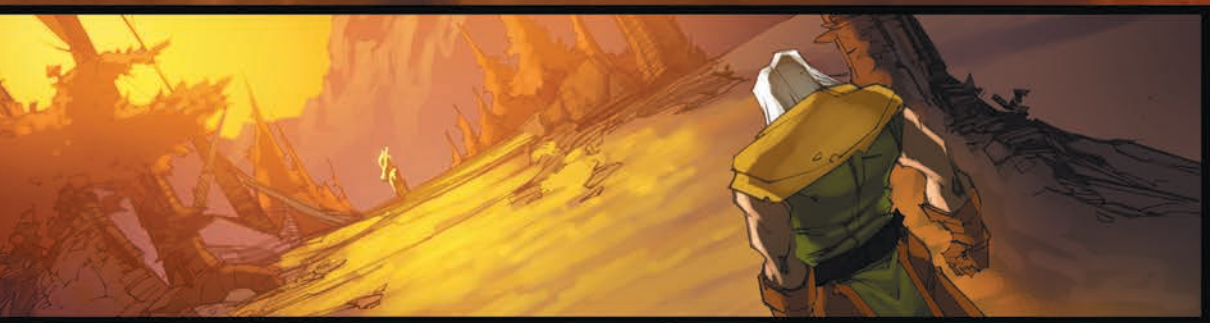


YOU CAN **BE** THAT MAN **AGAIN**. BE A **PALADIN**. BE AN **INSPIRATION**. BE A **FORCE**.



BE A **HERO**.



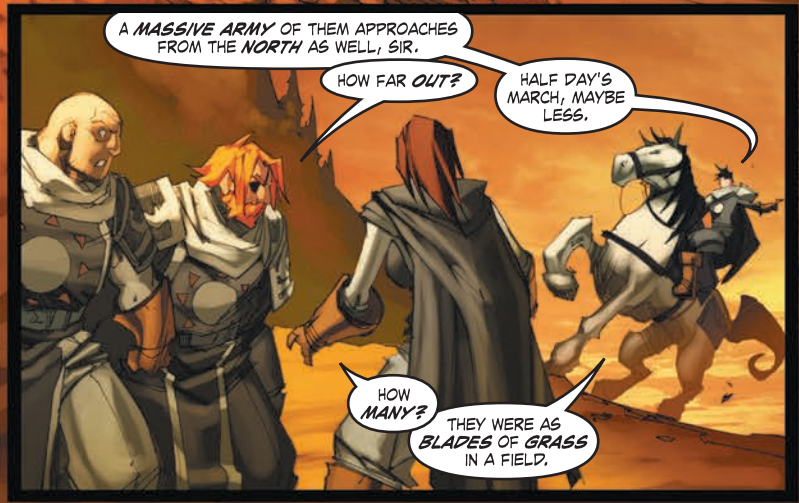
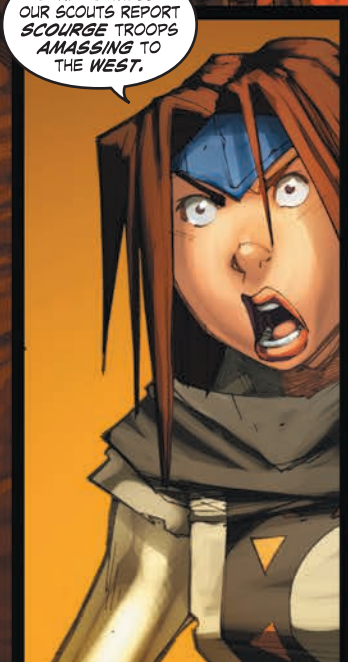


LIGHT'S HOPE CHAPEL:

BASE OF THE ARGENT DAWN.



LORD MAXWELL, OUR SCOUTS REPORT SCOURGE TROOPS AMASSING TO THE WEST.



A MASSIVE ARMY OF THEM APPROACHES FROM THE NORTH AS WELL, SIR.

HOW FAR OUT?

HALF DAY'S MARCH, MAYBE LESS.

HOW MANY?

THEY WERE AS BLADES OF GRASS IN A FIELD.



THE NOOSE
TIGHTENS.


IT ISN'T TOO
LATE FOR YOU AN'
THE OTHERS TO SAVE
YOUR *SKINS*, SIR.
THERE'S STILL *TIME*
TO MAKE TRACKS.

YOU'VE
GUARDED THE
SECRET OF LIGHT'S
HOPE WELL, BROTHER
BRIGGS. BUT IT
APPEARS TO BE
A SECRET NO
LONGER.

IT'S UP TO
ALL OF US NOW...TO
PROTECT WHAT LIES
BENEATH.



KNIGHTS!
SOLDIERS!
TEMPLAR!
GATHER
'ROUND!



YOU HAVE ALL
BEEN TOLD WHAT IS AT
STAKE. SHOULD ANY OF YOU
WISH TO DEPART, NOW IS
THE TIME.

NO ONE? STAND
WITH ME, THEN, BROTHERS
AND SISTERS...AND TOGETHER,
HORDE, ALLIANCE, NIGHT ELF,
BLOOD ELF...

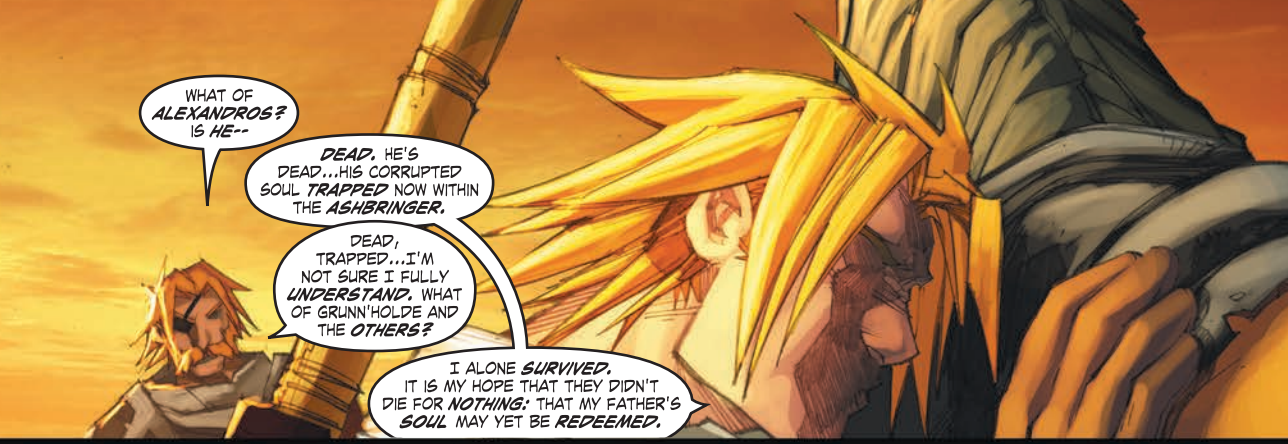
WE SHALL WIN
THE DAY. FOR EACH OF YOU
POSSESS THAT WHICH OUR
ENEMY DOES NOT...

THE FERVENTLY
BEATING HEART OF
A WARRIOR!



YOU'VE PREPARED QUITE A
WELCOME FOR ME, BROTHER
MAXWELL!

DARION!
LIGHT BE PRAISED,
YOU'RE SAFE!



WHAT OF
ALEXANDROS?
IS HE--

DEAD. HE'S
DEAD...HIS CORRUPTED
SOUL **TRAPPED** NOW WITHIN
THE **ASHBRINGER.**

DEAD,
TRAPPED...I'M
NOT SURE I FULLY
UNDERSTAND. WHAT
OF GRUNN'HOLDE AND
THE **OTHERS?**

I ALONE **SURVIVED.**
IT IS MY HOPE THAT THEY DIDN'T
DIE FOR **NOTHING:** THAT MY FATHER'S
SOUL MAY YET BE **REDEEMED.**



HOPE, YOU'VE
COME TO THE **RIGHT PLACE...**
PROVIDED WE CAN **PROTECT** IT
FROM THE **SCOURGE.**

EVEN NOW THEY
ARRAY THEMSELVES
AGAINST US.

BUT **WHY?**
WHAT DOES THE
SCOURGE **WANT** FROM
SOME **TINY** CHAPEL
IN THE MIDDLE OF
NOWHERE?

IT'S PRECISELY
THE CHAPEL'S **REMOTE**
LOCATION THAT MADE IT THE
PERFECT **CHOICE.**

FOR
WHAT?

"**FOLLOW ME, AND
I'LL SHOW YOU.**"



I WAS **AMONG**
A VERY SELECT **FEW**
CHOSEN FOR A **SECRET**
TASK...

AFTER
ARTHAS **KILLED** HIS
FATHER, OUR BELOVED **KING,**
AND THE **SCOURGE RAMPAGED**
THROUGH **LORDAERON** AND
CAPITAL CITY...



IT WAS **DECIDED**
THAT OUR **HONORED DEAD**
MUST NOT BE LEFT **BEHIND,**
ABANDONED ONLY TO LATER
BOLSTER THE RANKS OF THE
LICH KING'S **ARMY.**

FWOOSH!

AND SO WE **TOOK** THE BODIES **OUT** OF THE **CEMETERIES** AND THE **CATACOMBS**: BODIES OF WARRIORS, PRIESTS, PALADINS...**CHAMPIONS** OF BATTLES LONG PAST...

AND WE **TRANSPORTED** THEM **HERE**, TO THIS SMALL, **OUT-OF-THE-WAY CHAPEL**, WHERE WE **INTERRED** THEM ONCE MORE IN **SACRED** GROUND.

A **THOUSAND** OF THE **BRAVEST** SOULS TO WALK THE EARTH. YET SHOULD THEY **FALL** INTO THE HANDS OF THE **SCOURGE**...

THEY WOULD BE **RAISED** IN THE **LICH KING'S SERVICE**.

YES. **COGS** IN AN **UNSTOPPABLE** MACHINE OF **DESTRUCTION**.

I SEE NOW WHY SO MANY WAIT OUTSIDE, **READY TO FIGHT**. IT'LL BE MY **HONOR** TO TAKE MY PLACE **AMONG** YOU.

THAT NIGHT... DURING THE BRIEF **SNIPPETS OF SLEEP** HE IS ABLE TO **CATCH**, DARION IS **TROUBLED** BY **NIGHTMARES**...

OF **DROWNING** IN **MURKY FATHOMS**, SINKING **DEEPER** AND **DEEPER** INTO A WORLD **UNTOUCHED** BY LIGHT. YET EVEN IN THE **INKY DEPTHS**...

DARION CATCHES **GLIMPSES** OF HIS **FATHER** SLIPPING FURTHER INTO **OBLIVION**.

MORNING.

TO ARMS!
TO ARMS! THE **HOUR IS UPON** US!

THERE IS NO *PAUSE*
IN THEIR *ADVANCE*.

IN HIS *MIND'S EYE*, DARION IMAGINES THE VAST
ARMIES OF THE UNDEAD *MARCHING* NONSTOP,
WITHOUT NEED FOR *SLEEP* OR *SUSTENANCE*...

A *PESTILENCE* SWEEPING EVER
ONWARD, LEAVING ONLY FALLOW
EMPTINESS IN ITS *WAKE*...

MOVING *INEXORABLY* TOWARD
THE LONG-*SOUGHT PRIZE* NOW
WITHIN ITS *GRASP*.



THE UNDEAD HASTEN
THEIR *APPROACH*.
AND IN AN *INSTANT*...



BATTLE IS *JOINED*.

MRUALLGH!!

SCHL

UNK





**NOW,
YOU SOLDIERS
OF THE LIGHT! LET US
STARE DOWN DEATH
TOGETHER! FOR VALOR!
FOR FREEDOM!
FOR AZEROTH!!**



**NO QUARTER IS GIVEN
FROM THE SCOURGE.
NOT FROM THE NIGHTMARE
GARGOYLES ABOVE...**



**NOR FROM THE
ARGENT DAWN'S
OWN FALLEN
COMRADES...**



RAISED FROM DEATH BY FOUL NECROMANCERS...



...TO UNFLINCHINGLY SERVE THE WILL OF THE LICH KING.



FACED WITH CERTAIN ANNIHILATION, THE SOLDIERS OF THE ARGENT DAWN...



NONETHELESS FIGHT ON.



THEY PERSEVERE. PERHAPS WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT SOMETIMES...



...EVEN IN THE DARKEST OF HOURS...

...A BEACON
SHINES THROUGH.

HA-HAGGHH!!

GRULCH!!

TIRION...
LOOKS LIKE
FATHER WAS
RIGHT ABOUT
YOU AFTER
ALL.

LET THE
HERALDS
OF THE DAMNED
PROCLAIM OUR
VICTORY, FOR
KEL'THUZAD
STANDS BEFORE
YOU NOW!!

THE ASHBRINGER
ALONE IS NOT POWERFUL
ENOUGH, BOY... NO WEAPON
CAN STAND LONG AGAINST
THE MIGHT OF THE
SCOURGE.



EVEN NOW
YOUR NUMBERS
DWINDE. YOUR
SOLDIERS TIRE.
YOUR CAUSE IS
ALL BUT LOST.

WHAT PURPOSE
IS THERE TO
YOUR PATHETIC
EXISTENCE...

...BUT TO
SUCCUMB
TO DEATH?
SUCCUMB TO THE
MASTER.

HRR'AGGH!!

KRRRAK!

WHERE IS
THIS LIGHT NOW,
THAT YOU BELIEVE
IN WITH SUCH BLIND
DEVOTION?

THAT'S IT!
THAT'S WHY THE
LIGHT NEVER REACHED
ME THE WAY IT DID
MY FATHER...

I DIDN'T
BELIEVE ENOUGH.
THE LIGHT LED ME OUT
OF THE DARKNESS ONCE.
PERHAPS IT CAN DO
SO AGAIN.

IT MAY
BE OUR ONLY
CHANCE.

THIS IS MY PURPOSE, THEN. SO BE IT.

MY SOUL FOR YOURS.

I LOVE YOU, DAD.

THE ULTIMATE TEST OF FAITH...
AN ACT OF LOVE.

DARION...

SCHLUNK!

ONCE AGAIN, DARION IS OVERWHELMED BY A SENSATION OF SINKING BENEATH MURKY FATHOMS, OF STRUGGLING FOR BREATH...

YET EVEN AS OBLIVION BECKONS, HE IS ABLE TO CATCH A BRIEF GLIMPSE...



OF THE LIGHT.

AS THE WORLD SLIPS AWAY, DARION HEARS A DISTANT VOICE, A VOICE HE HAD FEARED HE MIGHT NEVER HEAR AGAIN...

THE VOICE OF HIS FATHER.

I LOVE YOU, SON. WITH ALL THAT I AM...



WHAT IS THIS, TYROSUS? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

IT'S A RECKONING, OFFICER PUREHEART. THE RECKONING OF A THOUSAND VENGEFUL SOULS.



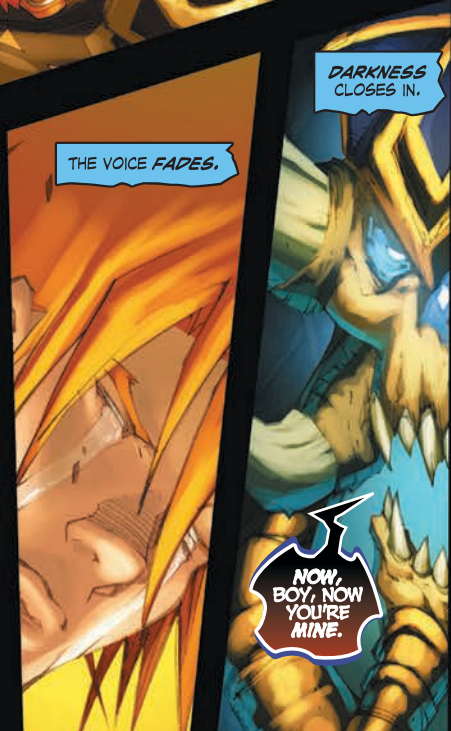
DARKNESS CLOSES IN.

THE VOICE FADES.



ALL I WAS...

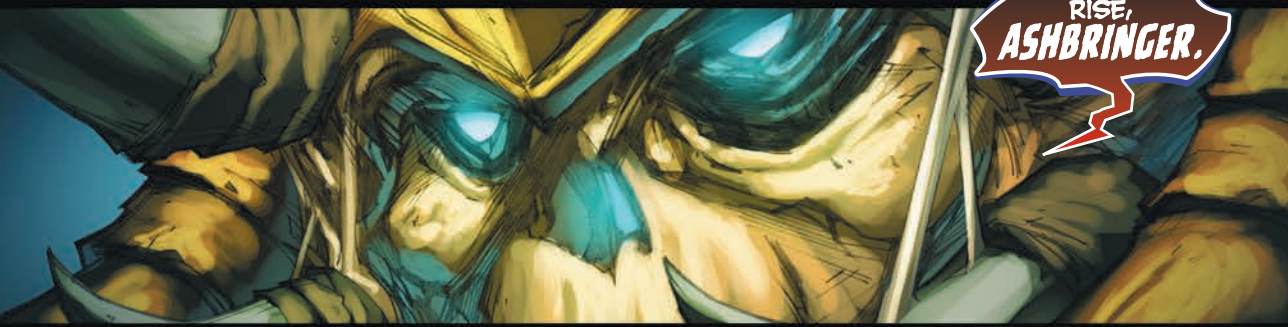
ALL I EVER WILL BE.



NOW, BOY, NOW YOU'RE MINE.



RISE, DARION MOGRAINE...



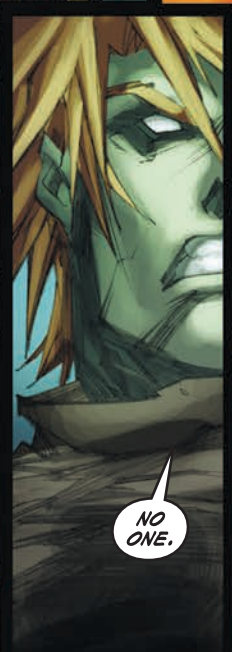
RISE, ASHBRINGER.



OUR PRIMARY GOAL MAY HAVE ELUDED US, BUT I'LL BE CONTENT TO TAKE YOU AS MY PRIZE.
THE SCOURGE CAN ALWAYS RETURN TO LIGHT'S HOPE. NOW TELL ME, BOY...

WHO DO YOU LOVE?

SHULK



NO ONE.



ALTHOUGH DARION COULD NO LONGER HEAR IT, THE VOICE OF ALEXANDROS' SPIRIT, JOINING THE VALIANT SOULS OF LIGHT'S HOPE CHAPEL, SPOKE A FINAL TIME:

MY SOUL WILL FOREVER BEAR THE WEIGHT OF YOUR SACRIFICE, MY SON.

AND JUST AS YOU NEVER GAVE UP ON ME, I SHALL NEVER GIVE UP ON YOU.

FOR YOU'VE TAUGHT ME THE MOST VALUABLE LESSON OF ALL:

HOPE...

NEVER DIES.

EPILOGUE



Cover #1 by Ludo Lullabi and Tony Washington

Epilogue

WEEKS LATER...

TRISFAL GLADES, NORTH OF THE SCARLET MONASTERY.



WELCOME, BROTHER.

ARE YOU NOT WELL? YOU LOOK...WEAK. PALE.



HOW AMUSING YOU TAKE FOR GRANTED YOUR GOOD FORTUNE TO LIVE AS YOU ARE, AS VARIMATHRAS...

...AND NOT BE FORCED TO HIDE BEHIND A FACADE OF MORTAL FLESH.

THERE NOW YOU MAY ADDRESS ME AS YOUR EQUAL.

AS IT SHOULD BE. WE WORK FOR THE DAY WHEN YOU MAY CAST OFF THAT MORTAL GUISE FOREVER. WHAT OF THE SCOURGE?

THEY HAVE BEEN DEALT A SERIOUS BLOW, BOTH BY THE CRUSADE AND MOST RECENTLY BY MAXWELL TYROSUS AND HIS ARGENT DAWN.

YET THE SETBACK IS ONLY TEMPORARY. THE SCOURGE HAS THE ASHBRINGER ONCE AGAIN.

NO MATTER.

THE BOARD IS NEARLY SET; THE PIECES ARE ALMOST ALL IN PLACE. IN FACT, ONE OF THOSE PIECES SHOULD BE ARRIVING...



ANY
TIME
NOW.

SHAZZAKK



COME
FORTH...

...CASTILLIAN.




ONE OF OUR MOST FAITHFUL
DEVOTEES. HE WAS ABLE TO
INFILTRATE THE ARGENT DAWN
MONTHS AGO.

CIRCUMSTANCES THEN
LED HIM TO NAXXRAMAS, WHERE
HE WAS ABLE TO ACQUIRE THIS:
PLAGUE BASE SPORES...

THE
PENULTIMATE
COMPONENT FOR
OUR OWN PLAGUE, A
CONTAGION THAT WILL
DECIMATE HUMAN,
ORC, AND UNDEAD
ALIKE.

NOW... ONE FINAL
INGREDIENT REMAINS,
AND THE RECIPE WILL
BE COMPLETE. GRAND
APOTHECARY PUTRESS
WILL BE MOST PLEASED.



THIS
PLEASES ME AS
WELL. AND SO I'LL
CONTINUE THIS LITTLE
CHARADE, DISTASTEFUL
THOUGH IT MAY BE.
NOW IF YOU'LL
EXCUSE ME...

"I HAVE A CEREMONY
TO ATTEND."

IT IS
TIME, LORD
TAE LAN.

IN THE LIGHT, WE
GATHER TO *EMPOWER* OUR
BROTHER. IN ITS *GRACE*, HE
WILL BE MADE *ANEW*. IN ITS
POWER, HE SHALL EDUCATE
THE *MASSSES*.

IN ITS
STRENGTH, HE SHALL
COMBAT THE *SHADOW*. AND IN
ITS *WISDOM*, HE SHALL LEAD
HIS *BRETHREN*...

"TO THE ETERNAL
REWARDS OF
PARADISE."

GRAND CRUSADER
DATHROHAN...

IF YOU *DEEM*
TAE LAN FORDRING
WORTHY, PLACE
YOUR *BLESSINGS*
UPON HIM.

BY THE *GRACE*
OF THE *LIGHT*, MAY
YOUR BRETHREN BE
HEALED.

BY THE
STRENGTH OF
THE *LIGHT*, MAY
YOUR *ENEMIES*
BE *LINDONE*.

ARISE AND BE
RECOGNIZED; TAE LAN
FORPRING.

DO YOU VOW TO
UPHOLD THE HONOR AND
CODES OF THE SCARLET
CRUSADE...

TO CLEANSE THE
WORLD OF CORRUPTION
WHEREVER IT MAY BE
FOUND?



"TAE LAN?"

HAIL,
BROTHER
TIRION.

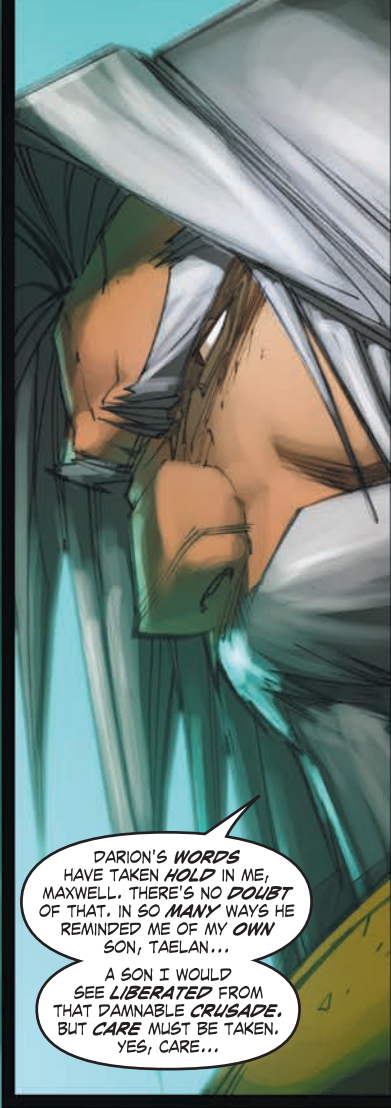
HOW DID
YOU FIND
ME?

OUR SHAMAN
BRETHREN POSSESS A
REMARKABLE ABILITY TO
"SEE" ACROSS GREAT
DISTANCES.

WE ARE
ALL MOURNING THE
LOSS OF DARION, BUT
THERE IS STILL MUCH
TO BE DONE.

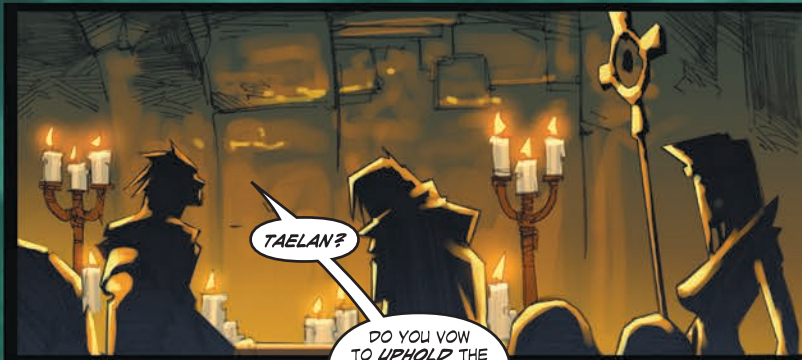
THE ARGENT DAWN
COULD BENEFIT GREATLY
FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE,
YOUR LEADERSHIP.

"AND TIME AS WELL."



DARION'S WORDS HAVE TAKEN HOLD IN ME, MAXWELL. THERE'S NO DOUBT OF THAT. IN SO MANY WAYS HE REMINDED ME OF MY OWN SON, TAE LAN...

A SON I WOULD SEE LIBERATED FROM THAT DAMNABLE CRUSADE. BUT CARE MUST BE TAKEN. YES, CARE...

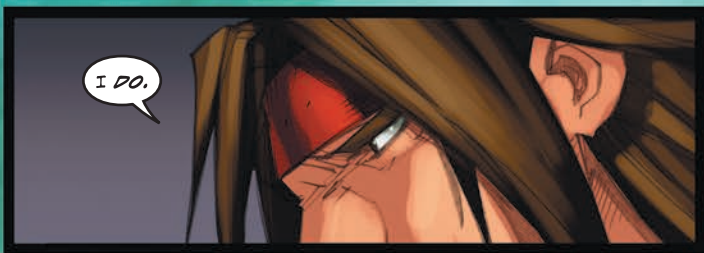


TAE LAN?

DO YOU VOW TO UPHOLD THE HONOR AND CODES OF THE SCARLET CRUSADE?



I...



I DO.



IT MAY BE THAT TAE LAN IS BEYOND SAVING, THOUGH I PRAY WITH ALL MY HEART OTHERWISE. COME WHAT MAY, I'LL FIND OUT.

AND ONCE I HAVE, I MIGHT CALL UPON YOU, MAXWELL. IN THE MEANTIME, SHOULD ANY HARM BEFALL MY SON...

"LIGHT HELP THE SCARLET CRUSADE."

The End

PAGE ONE

CREATING A PAGE: PENCILS

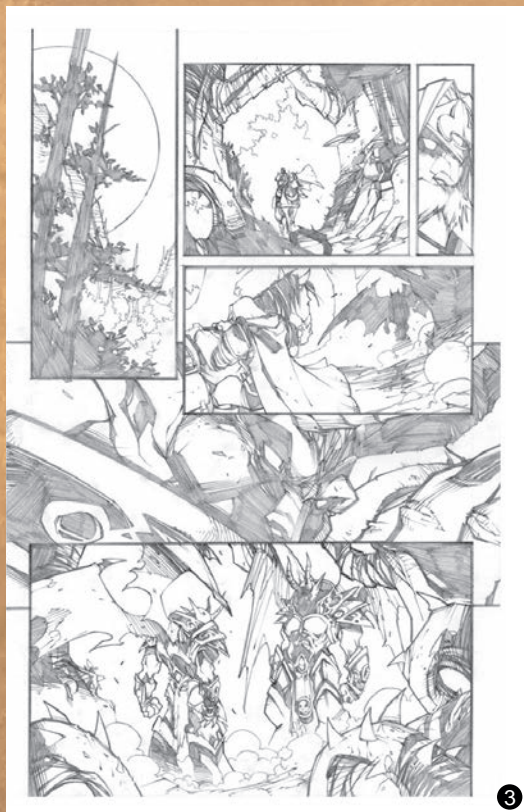
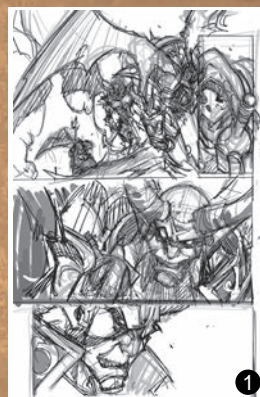
Stage 1: Roughed in
Ludo starts by breaking the page into panels, and laying out the figures. In page 1, panel 1, you can see that he's broken out the markers to place the trees against the moon.

Stage 2: Tightened Sketches

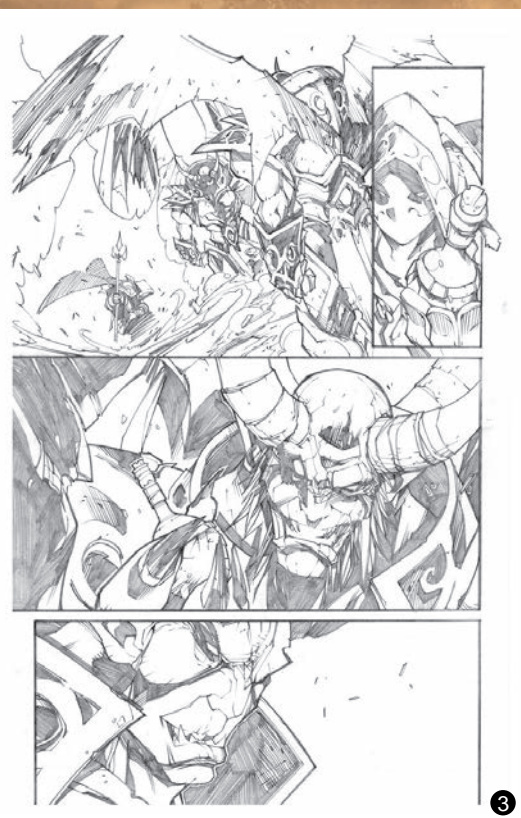
For these pages, Ludo chose to re-do the sketches and tighten them up before moving to the final boards with his pencils. Page 2, panel 2 is almost complete, but panel 3 shows that he's still working out how the shadows fall on Balnazzar's wings—gray markers this time!

Stage 3: Final Pencils

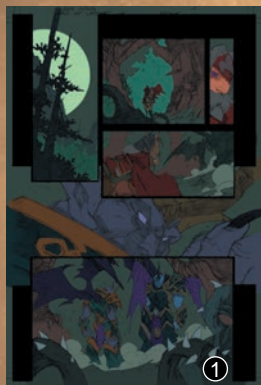
This is the final stage before we send them off to Tony. Pencils only, drawn on Strathmore art boards, working area approximately 11" x 17". Of course, Ludo has to draw on the reverse of our regular boards, so the scanner doesn't pick up the live area and crop lines.



PAGE TWO



PAGE ONE



CREATING A PAGE: COLORS

Stage 1: Flats

The first step in digital coloring is flattening. You select the main shapes and assign them a color—but overall, the piece stays dark. Tony's a glutton for punishment and handles this himself, though a lot of professional colorists opt to have an assistant take care of this step.

Stage 2: Rendering

This is where you see most of the change happening. Background trees reappear in page 1, panel 2. Dathrohan's hair and skin tones are refined to match his regular appearance. Overall, this is where all the details take shape.

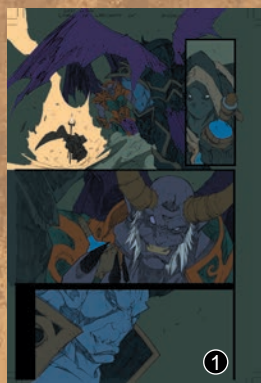
Stage 3: Effects

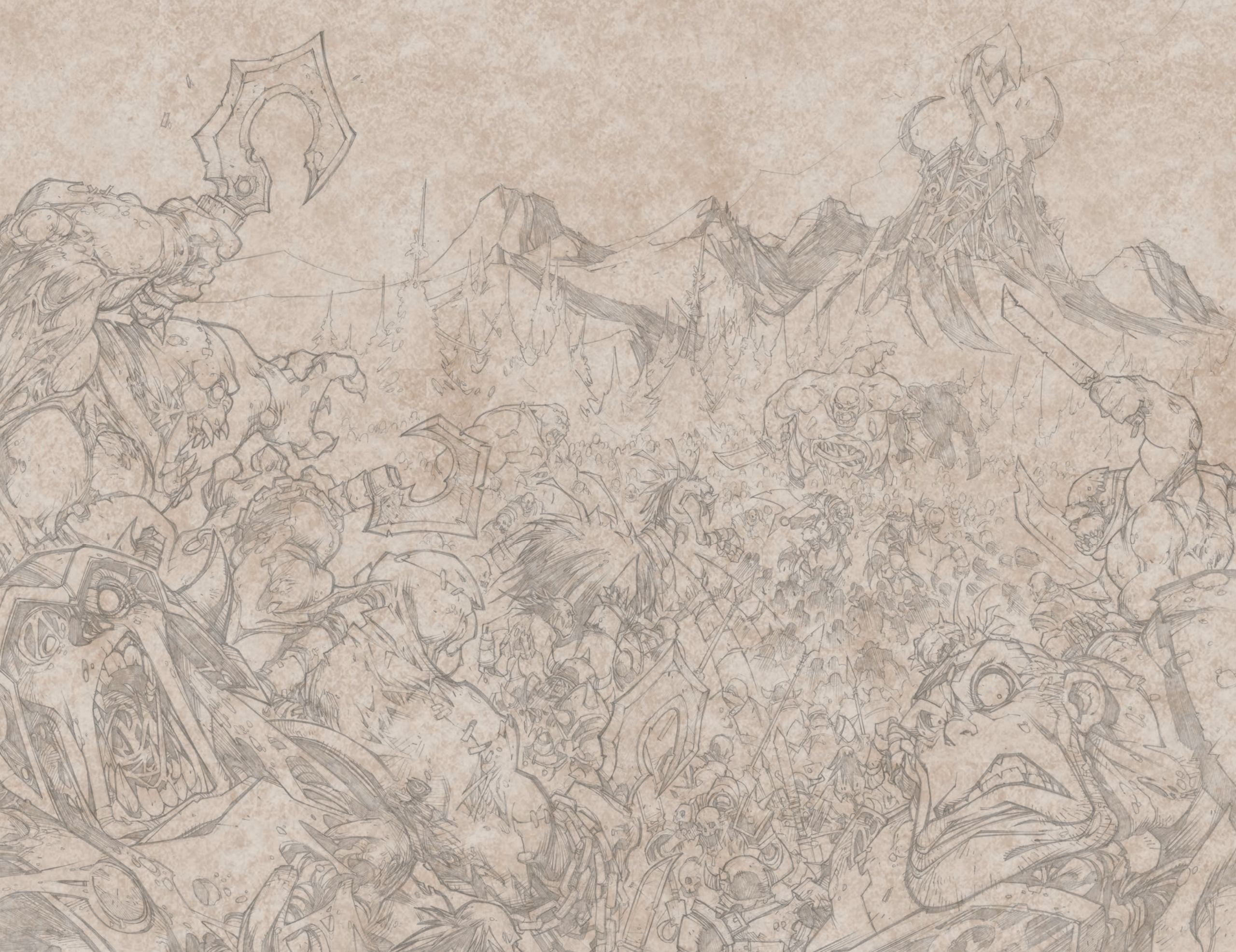
By this point, the changes are all subtle. Looking at page 2, panel 1, Castillian's arrival goes from a harsh tan blob in stage 1, to a fiery yellow-orange in stage 2, to a glowing fire-burst in stage 3. Suddenly, he's not "just" stepping out of a yellow glare. The light reflects off his cloak and staff, and the glow hits Balnazzar's wings—but not as obviously, increasing the distance between them, which is a nice trick when you're coloring on a flat plane.

Stage 4: Final colors

If you turn back to pages 127 and 128, you can see the final colors for these pages. There are changes, because while Tony's good, with this many characters in play, the editors occasionally do have to request tweaks to make sure we're consistent with previous appearances.

PAGE TWO





“Lullabi really delivers, particularly when the scope is increased for lush nature scenes or huge battles.” - IGN.

Before the Scarlet Crusade and Argent Dawn took up arms against each other, they stood as a united force against the evils of the Scourge. **WORLD OF WARCRAFT: ASHBRINGER** explores the divide—and the role the good can play in the emergence of evil! Written by Micky Neilson and illustrated by Ludo Lullabi (Lanfeust Quest, **WORLD OF WARCRAFT BOOK ONE**) and Tony Washington.



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