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WORLD OF WARCRAFT

BOOK TWO

SIMONSON • BURAN • BOWDEN

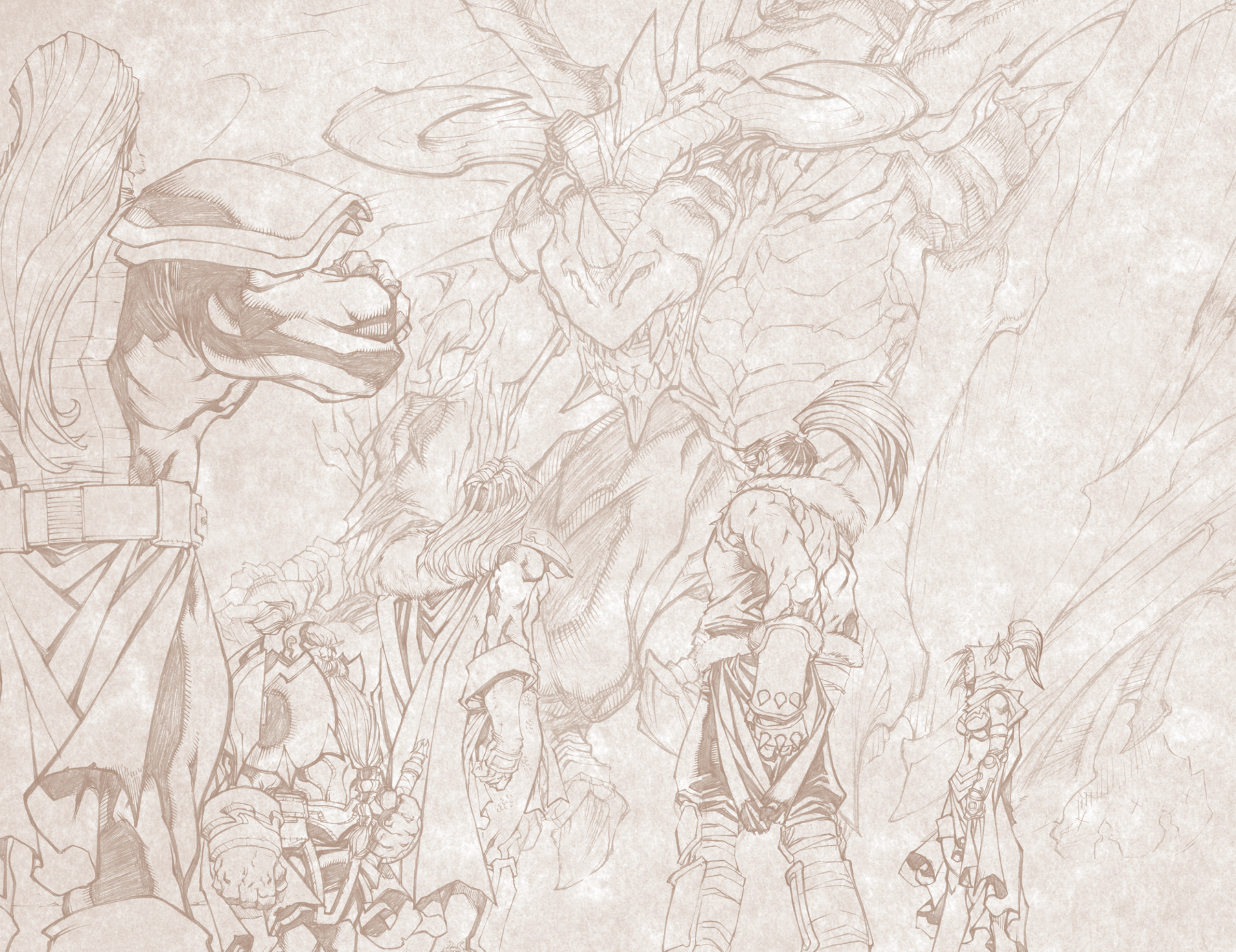


WORLD OF WARCRAFT

BOOK TWO



SIMONSON • BURAN • BOWDEN



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

BOOK TWO



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PREVIOUSLY, IN THE PAGES OF WORLD OF WARCRAFT...



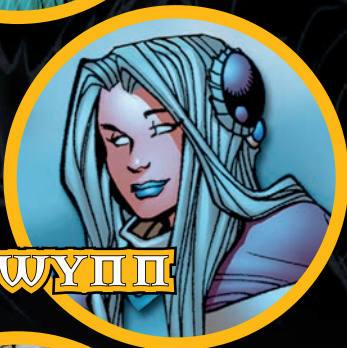
Lo'GOSH



VALEERA



BROLL



AEGWYNN



JAINA

WHEN A MAN WASHED UP ON THE SHORES OF DVRO'TAR, A CROCODILE PREPARED FOR A FEAST. BUT THIS WAS NO ORDINARY HUMAN: THIS WAS A SKILLED WARRIOR, WHO SOUNDLY DEFEATED THE HUNGRY BEAST. IMPRESSED BY HIS PROWESS AND PLEASED TO DISCOVER THE WARRIOR HAD NO MEMORY, THE ORC SHAMAN REHGAR EARTHFURY CHOSE THIS STRANGER TO LEAD A TEAM OF GLADIATORS INTO BATTLE AT DIRE MAUL.

THE WARRIOR QUICKLY GAINED A REPUTATION AS A FIERCE OPPONENT, AND THE NAME LO'GOSH. HIS FELLOW SLAVES—THE BLOOD ELF VALEERA SANGVINAR AND THE NIGHT ELF BROLL BEARMANTLE—JOINED HIS EPIC QUEST TO REGAIN HIS MEMORY, AND ALL THAT HE'D LOST. THEIR ADVENTURES TOOK THEM ACROSS THE CONTINENT, INTO A REALM OF CONFLICT AND MAGIC. ALONG THE WAY, BROLL GAINED CONTROL OF HIS MAGIC BY CONFRONTING THE IDOL OF REMVLOS AND THUS RECLAIMED HIS ABILITY TO ASSUME VARIOUS FORMS.

VALEERA, AFTER BEING SEPARATED FROM HER COMPANIONS, UNCOVERED A PLOT AGAINST LO'GOSH. UPON DEFEATING THE ASSASSIN, A CHANCE MEETING WITH THE SORCERESS AEGWYNN SENT HER TO REJOIN HER FRIENDS ON THE ISLAND FORTRESS THERAMORE. ITS RULER, JAINA PROUDMOORE, IS ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE WITH THE ABILITY TO RESTORE LO'GOSH'S MEMORY. THOUGH UNABLE TO DISCOVER THE SOURCE OF HIS AMNESIA, SHE REVEALS HIS TRUE IDENTITY: HE'S VARIAN WRYNN, THE LOST KING OF STORMWIND!

AS THE THREE FRIENDS SET OUT TO RESTORE HIS KINGDOM, AN ATTACK UPON THEIR SHIP BY THE WATER-DWELLING NAGA LED VALEERA TO TAKE HER FIRST TASTE OF THE DANGEROUS ARCANIC ENERGY SHE'S GROWING ADDICTED TO. BUT EVEN THAT IS NOT ENOUGH TO DIM THEIR VICTORY, AND THEY SET OUT ONCE AGAIN TO RECLAIM VARIAN'S THRONE...

CHAPTER I



Samuel 08



STORMWIND

THIS CITY-STATE WAS FOUNDED ON THE WESTERN COAST OF THE EASTERN KINGDOMS OVER A THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

IT BORE THE BRUNT OF THE INITIAL FIGHTING WHEN THE DARK PORTAL WAS OPENED AND THE ORCISH INVASION OF AZEROTH BEGAN.

A SEMBLANCE OF PEACE WAS EVENTUALLY RESTORED, BUT STRIFE AND TURMOIL WERE NEVER FAR BELOW THE SURFACE.

OVER A YEAR AGO, STORMWIND'S KING DEPARTED THE CITY ON A DIPLOMATIC MISSION...

...AND DID NOT RETURN.

IN A POLITICAL MOVE TO QUELL GROWING UNREST, HIS YOUNG SON, ANDUIN, WAS CROWNED IN HIS ABSENCE.

BUT TODAY, HER CITIZENS CROWD THE CITY SQUARES, CHEERING MADLY...

...PART OF THE ROYAL PAGEANTRY THAT WELCOMES THE LOST KING VARIAN HOME.

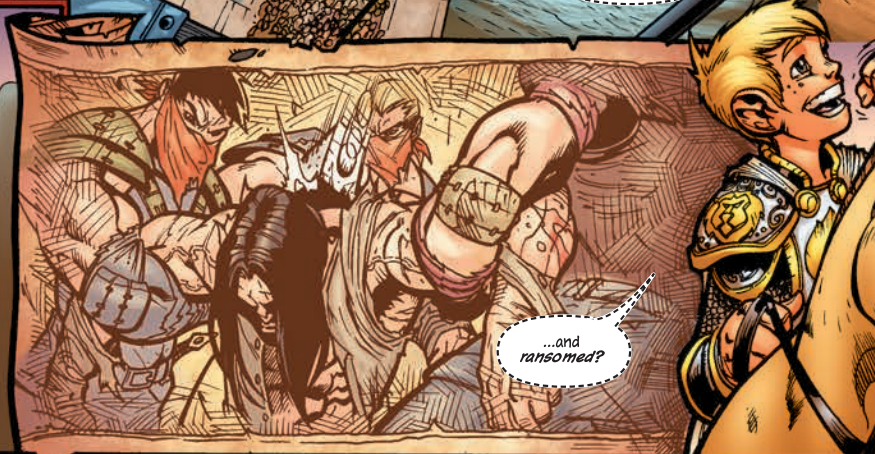
THERE'S YOUNG ANDUIN!

No longer king!

He was a figurehead. Highlord Bolvar Foradragon and Lady Katrina Prestor were the real rulers in Varian's absence.



The people know only that Father was captured by the *Defias*...



...and ransomed?



With gold wrung from them with a special tax. *Wait!* What do you mean "know only?"

JUST BECAUSE I'M A CHILD DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T HEAR THINGS AT COURT, BOLVAR. CAN WE TALK LATER?



Beautiful as a queen!

She and the whole, corrupt *House of Nobles!* This ransom has cost us dearly!

Haughty as one, too!

FOR YOU, LADY KATRANA!

THE RETURN

THE MAGNIFICENT **STORMWIND CITY**, DESTROYED DURING THE FIRST WAR, WAS **REBUILT** IN SPLENDOR BY CRAFTSMEN FROM ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

MANY OF THESE ARTISANS, INADEQUATELY PAID FOR THEIR LABORS BY THE **HOUSE OF NOBLES** WHO SPONSORED THE PROJECT, RIOTED, DEMANDING FAIR COMPENSATION.

THE UPRISING CULMINATED IN THE ACCIDENTAL **DEATH** OF THE **YOUNG QUEEN**. IN THE WAKE OF THE VIOLENCE, THE **RIOTERS' LEADER** FLED THE CITY, VOWING VENGEANCE...

...AND, FINALLY, FOUNDED THE **DEFIAS BROTHERHOOD**. TODAY, THE **REPERCUSSIONS** LINGER...

THERE HE IS!

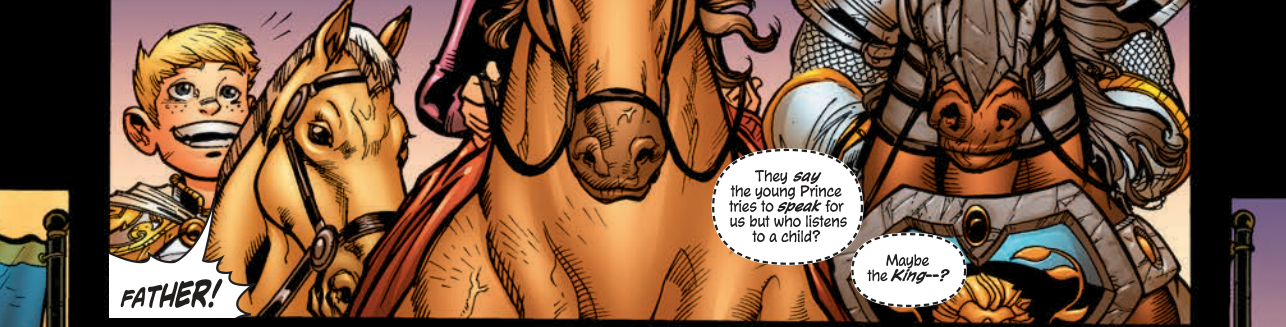
GOOD KING **VARIAN**! THINGS WILL BE **BETTER** NOW HE'S BACK!

snorts
It's been a while since he's taken **our** welfare seriously.

His wife's death nearly **destroyed** him, poor man. It's good to see him finally smile again.

Maybe there **is** hope after all.

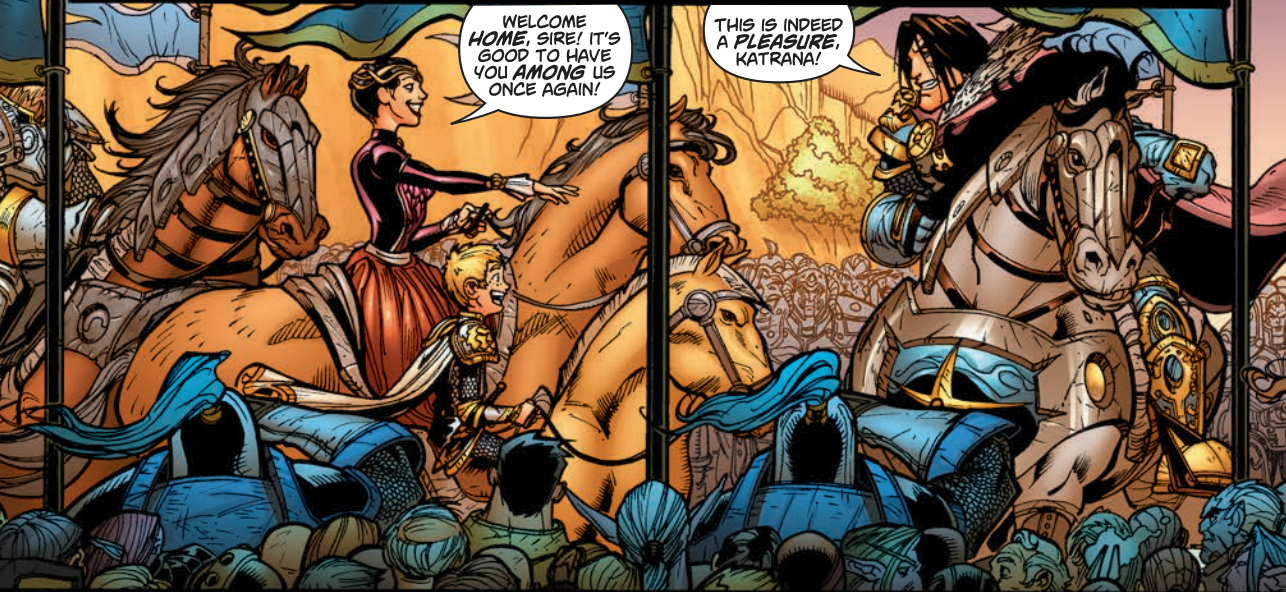
How handsome he looks!



FATHER!

They say the young Prince tries to speak for us but who listens to a child?

Maybe the King--?



WELCOME HOME, SIRE! IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU AMONG US ONCE AGAIN!

THIS IS INDEED A PLEASURE, KATRANA!



YOUR BEAUTY IS LIKE THE LIGHTHOUSE BEACON...



...CALLING THE LOST SAILOR HOME!



FATHER! WHILE YOU WERE AWAY THE HOUSE OF NOBLES RAISED TAXES! AGAIN! OUR PEOPLE--

--COMPLAIN AS THEY ALWAYS DO, LAD!



NOTHING KATRANA CAN'T HANDLE.

But--



YOU'LL SIT BESIDE ME AT THE BANQUET, KATRANA.

AS ALWAYS, SIRE, I AM YOURS TO COMMAND.

MENETHIL HARBOR

THIS PORT TOWN ON THE NORTHWEST COAST OF KHAZ MODAN PLAYS HOST TO SAILORS AND TRAVELERS, SMUGGLERS AND PIRATES.

NOT A PLACE YOU'D EXPECT TO FIND A **DIPLomat**, EVEN ONE WITH A DECIDEDLY UNDIPLOMATIC ATTITUDE...

ANOTHER STORM-TOSSED SHIP LIMPING INTO PORT! IS THERE ANY CHANCE IT'S THE ONE I'M LOOKING FOR?

WHAT WAS **KING MAGNI** THINKING, SENDING ME HOTFOOTING IT INTO THIS WATERLOGGED HELL WHEN SOME LOCAL DWARF COULD HAVE DONE THE JOB?

"MEET A SHIP FROM THERAMORE ISLE," HE SAYS! "MAKE CONTACT WITH THE DIGNITARY IT CARRIES!"

BUT DOES HE GIVE ME A NAME? OH NO! WOULDN'T WANT TO MAKE IT TOO EASY FOR OLD **THARGAS**. "PLAY IT QUIET," HE SAYS. "KEEP IT SECRET!"

"YOU'LL RECOGNIZE HIM! AID HIM AS NECESSARY!" HE TELLS ME. "BRING HIM TO IRONFORGE!" HUMPH!

AS IF I'D RECOGNIZE ANYONE IN THIS DOWNPOUR!

SHIP'S DEFINITELY FROM THERAMORE! PASSENGERS HAVE TO WALK RIGHT PAST ME!

MADORAN'S HAMMER, LET MAGNI'S BIGWIG BE ON BOARD. ANOTHER DAY IN THIS BOG AND I'LL BE GROWING MOSS BETWEEN MY TOES!



SO THIS IS
MENEHIL HARBOR,
LO'GOSH!

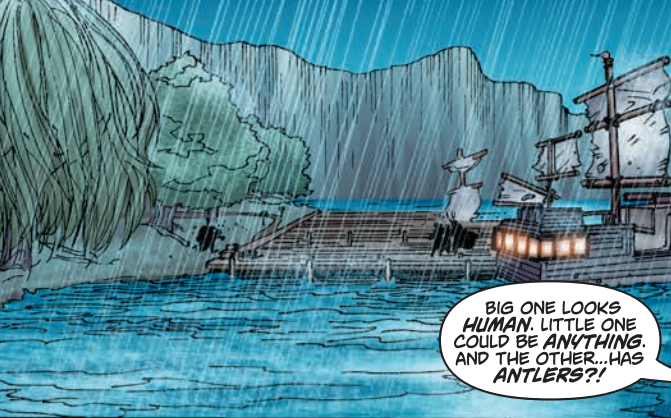
A SMALL
PART OF THE
BRONZEBEARD
DWARVES' VAST
KINGDOM.

NOT
MUCH TO LOOK
AT, IS IT?

NEITHER
ARE WE,
VALEERA.

JUST AS
WELL. WE DON'T
WANT TO ATTRACT ANY
UNWELCOME ATTENTION
UNTIL WE GET THE LAY
OF THE LAND.

SO
WE'LL KEEP OUR
HEADS DOWN AND
OUR MOUTHS
SHUT.



BIG ONE LOOKS HUMAN. LITTLE ONE COULD BE ANYTHING. AND THE OTHER...HAS ANTLERS?!



BIGWISS!
HA! MORE LIKE A MIXED BAG OF THUGS!



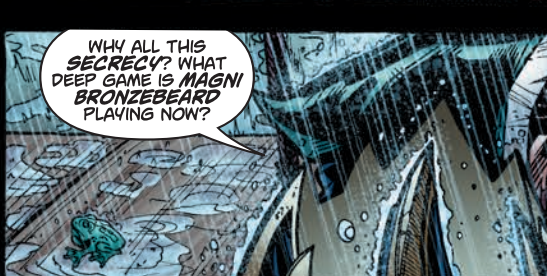
THAT'S IT FOR DISEMBARKING PASSENGERS. NO OTHER SHIP'S MAKING PORT.



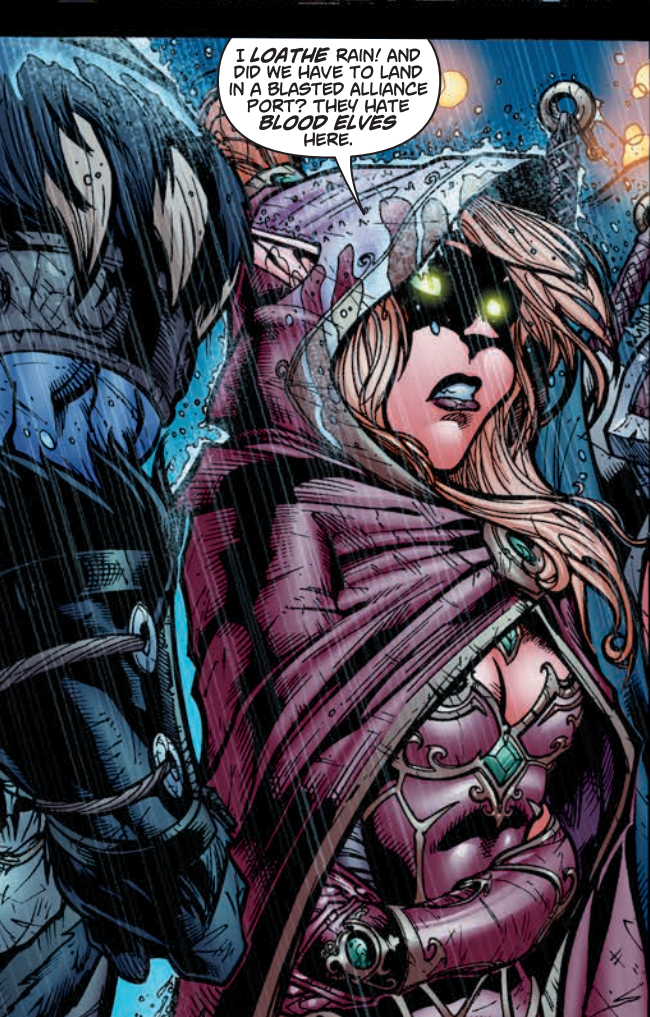
MIGHT AS WELL FOLLOW. TRY TO GET A LOOK AT THEM...



THARGAS ANVILMAR!
SLOGGING THROUGH MUD UP TO MY ANKLES—
LURKING IN ALLEYS LIKE A COMMON SPY.



WHY ALL THIS SECRECY? WHAT DEEP GAME IS MAGNI BRONZEBEARD PLAYING NOW?



I LOATHE RAIN! AND DID WE HAVE TO LAND IN A BLASTED ALLIANCE PORT? THEY HATE BLOOD ELVES HERE.



THEY HATE BLOOD ELVES EVERYWHERE.

KEEP YOUR HOOD UP AND YOU'LL BE SAFE ENOUGH.

EVERYTHING HURTS. MY HEAD...EVEN MY SKIN ACHES.



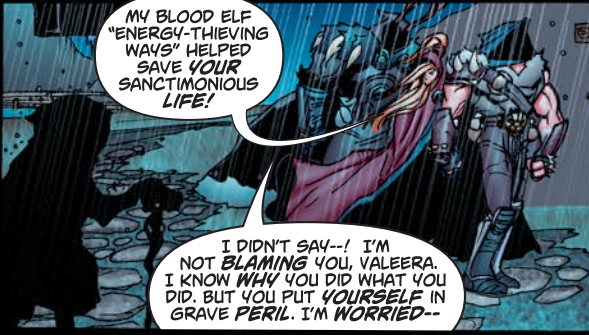
DURING OUR BATTLE WITH THE NAGA, YOU ABSORBED AN UNTOLD AMOUNT OF ARCAN E ENERGY, VALEERA...



...MORE THAN YOU'RE USED TO, EVEN IF YOU ARE A BLOOD ELF. MORE THAN WAS GOOD FOR YOU. WHAT YOU'RE FEELING IS WITHDRAWAL.

I KNOW THAT! DON'T PATRONIZE ME, BROLL!

HARD NOT TO, SOMETIMES.



MY BLOOD ELF "ENERGY-THIEVING WAYS" HELPED SAVE *YOUR* SANCTIMONIOUS LIFE!

I DIDN'T SAY--! I'M NOT *BLAMING* YOU, VALEERA. I KNOW *WHY* YOU DID WHAT YOU DID. BUT YOU PUT *YOURSELF* IN GRAVE PERIL. I'M WORRIED--



CROSS MY PALM WITH A COPPER, KIND SIR...



EHH?



...AND I WILL TELL YOUR FORTUNE.

I--



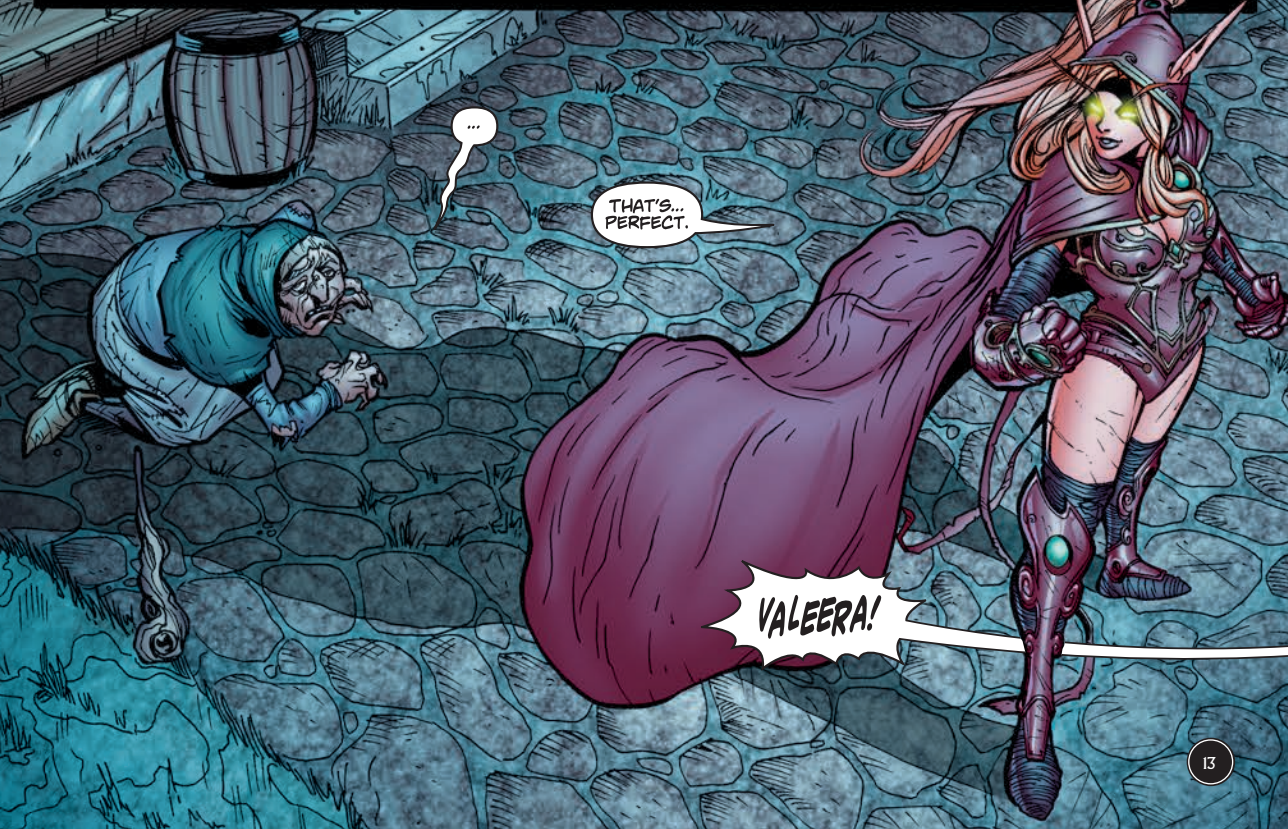
HERE.



GGGTTKKK!



I'LL HANDLE THIS. AHHHHHHHHH.



...

THAT'S.. PERFECT.

VALEERA!



THAT'S NOT PERFECT, VALEERA. IT'S GIVING IN TO YOUR INCREASED CRAVING. THAT WAY LIES DANGER AND CORRUPTION--

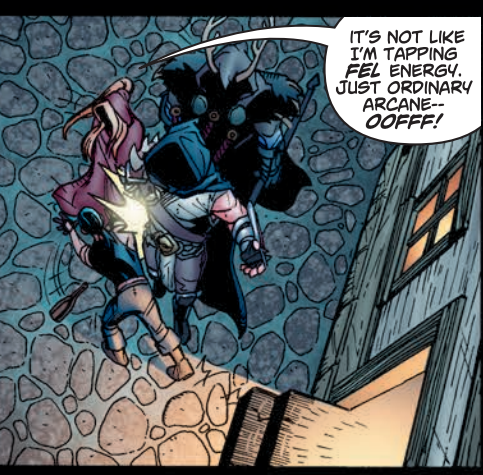
IT DOESN'T, BROLL! THAT'S JUST...NIGHT ELF PROPAGANDA!

LOOK, I KNOW I ABSORBED TOO MUCH ARCANIC ENERGY FROM THAT TRIDENT BUT...I HAD TO. I NEEDED THE BOOST TO FIGHT THROUGH TO YOU.



AND... ONCE I STARTED, I JUST COULDN'T SEEM TO STOP! IT FELT--

I'LL JUST... TAPER OFF, OKAY. TAKE A LITTLE LESS EACH TIME. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?



IT'S NOT LIKE I'M TAPPING FEL ENERGY. JUST ORDINARY ARCANIC-- OOFFF!



HEY! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE--



I MEAN... S-SORRY, MISTER! REALLY. I--



YOU--???
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!



NO PROBLEM. WE'LL JUST KEEP OUR HEADS DOWN AND OUR MOUTHS SHUT.

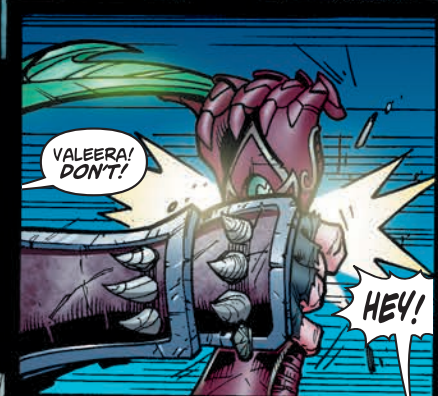
HE KNOWS SOMETHING! COME ON!



HE'S HEADING FOR THAT TAVERN!



WELL, HE'S NOT GOING TO MAKE IT.



VALEERA! DON'T!

HEY!



DEAD MEN CAN'T TALK...



AND HE AND I NEED TO HAVE A CONVERSATION.



...I TELL YOU, IT WAS HIM! ALIVE! I SWEAR IT!



I WAS THERE...JUST LIKE YOU WERE.

I SNUCK OUR GUY HENDEL ABOARD THE KING'S SHIP WHILE IT WAS IN THE HARBOR.



GO FISH.

HENDEL WAS A WITNESS. HE SWORE HE SAW HIM DROWN. HE MUST HAVE DROWNED. BUT--



YOU'RE DRUNK AGAIN, SLIM. HE DROWNED!



YEAH?! SO HOW COME HE'S STANDING THERE?!



APPARENTLY, IT'S NICE TO SEE YOU ALL AGAIN. BUT I'M NOT LOOKING FOR TROUBLE. I JUST WANT A FEW ANSWERS.



KILL THEM!

THAT'S NOT THE ANSWER I'M LOOKING FOR.

KREASH

SHHRING

BLANNING



WELL, I'M DONE HERE. YOU?

I'M GOOD TO GO.



Guy with the pointy hat's a wizard! Teleported when we walked in! Watch out for him!

Eye-patch is a mage! Powerful. Quite a glow--



BROLL! WATCH OUT FOR--

WHENEVER YOU'RE READY, BROLL? WE NEED TO GET THIS OVER WITH QUICKLY.

Broll?

SHRINK

KKRIKKK



GRRRRR!

SKRRASSH

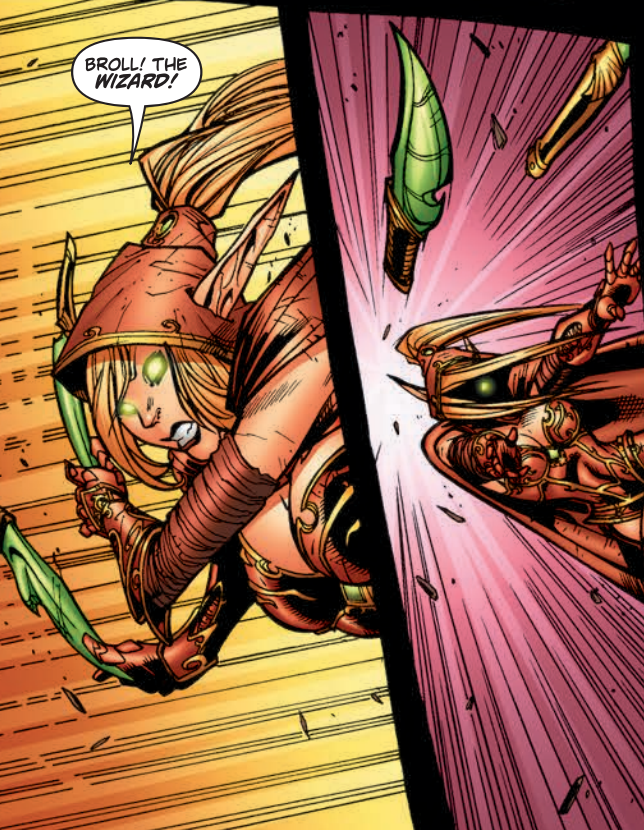
WELL, THAT BLEW UP QUICK!



SLIKKT



ONE OF 'EM CAN SHAPE-SHIFT--AKK!



BROLL! THE WIZARD!



URK!



DAMNATION!



THANKS!
WHO ARE
YOU?



I'M...AN
AMBASSADOR
OF SORTS.

I WAS
SUPPOSED TO
MEET YOUR PARTY
AT THE DOCKS
AND SLIP AWAY
WITH YOU
QUIETLY.

AND YOUR
FALLBACK
PLAN?

HELP YOU END
THIS FAST AND GET
OUT OF TOWN, WITH AS
MUCH HASTE AS WE
CAN MANAGE.



MAGNI MIGHT HAVE TOLD ME WHO THE HELL I WAS MEETING!

ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE IN STORMWIND, AREN'T YOU...

...HAVING JUST BEEN RESCUED...

...FROM YOUR DEFIAS KIDNAPPERS?

Ahhhhhhh!
Finally.



YOU'RE MISSING IT ALL!

THE BIG BASH STORMWIND IS HOLDING IN YOUR HONOR!

"PARADE."



"FEAST."



WORD ON THE STREET IS THAT LADY PRESTOR WAS EXTREMELY... GLAD TO SEE YOU.



SO WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



VALEERA! THAT'S ENOUGH!

IT'S OKAY. I'M THROUGH WITH HIM ANYWAY.



YOU KNOW ME?
HOW?

MY NAME IS
THARGAS ANVILMAR.
I SERVE KING MAGNI
BRONZEBEARD.



YOU WERE
TRAINED BY THE BEST
ALLIANCE WARRIORS FROM
EVERY KINGDOM. ONE OF
THEM WAS MY BROTHER
HJALMAR.

FEW HUMANS
KNOW DWARVEN
COMBAT STANCES!
YOU ALONE HAD
BEEN TAUGHT THE
ANVILMAR
FEINT!

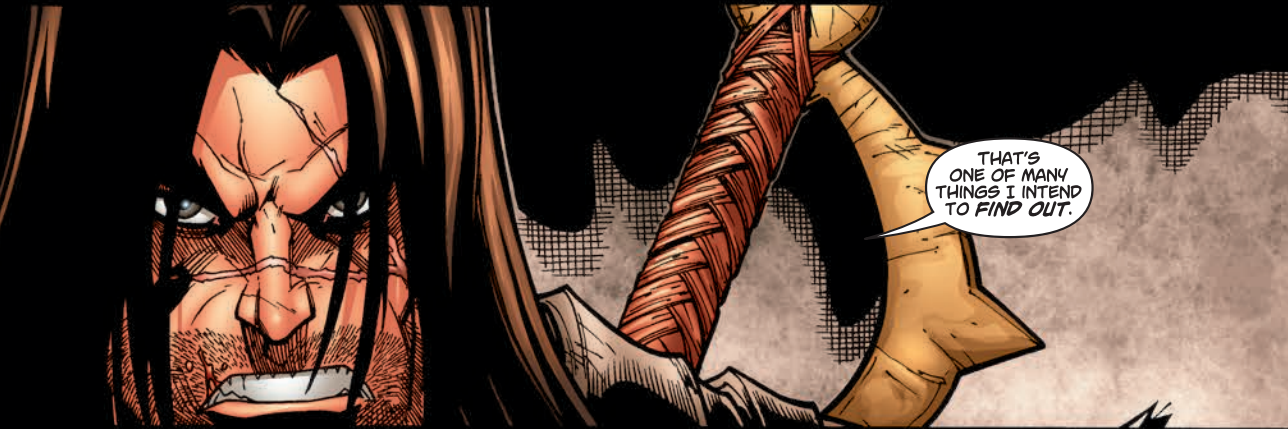


HJALMAR SAID HE
NEVER HAD A LIKELIER
PUPIL...EVEN IF YOU
WERE A HUMAN!



WHO ELSE
COULD YOU
BE?

BUT IF YOU'RE
HERE, THEN
WHO ARE THEY
EMBRACING AT
STORMWIND?

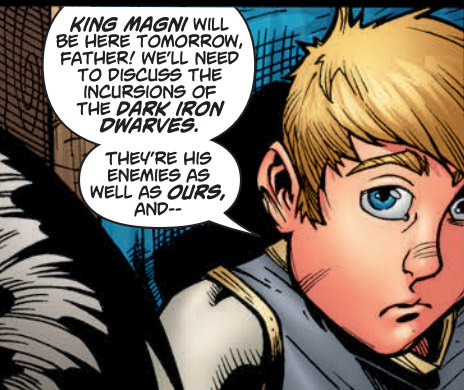
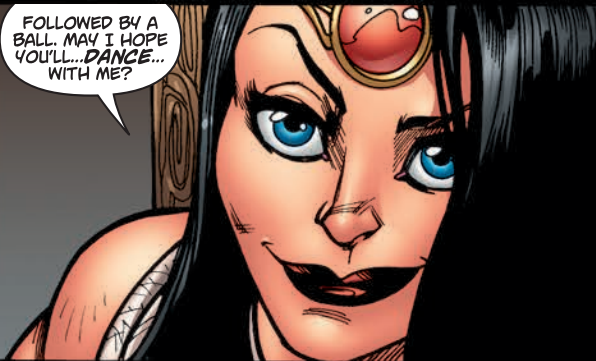


THAT'S
ONE OF MANY
THINGS I INTEND
TO FIND OUT.

STORMWIND KEEP

"THE BLACKROCK ORCS HAVE STEPPED UP THEIR INFILTRATION INTO ALLIANCE LANDS, SIRE. WHILE THE DEFIAS--"

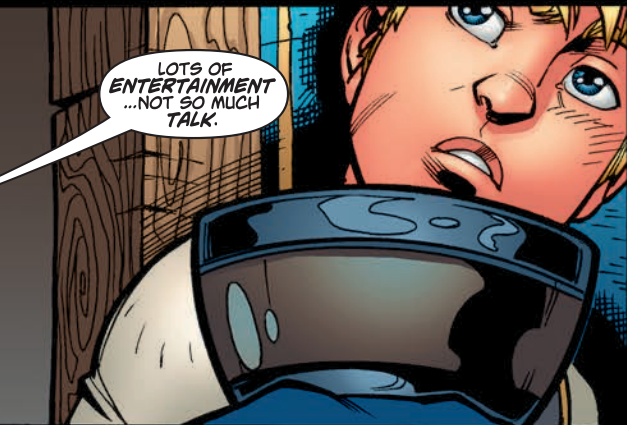
YES, BOLVAR. ~~YAWN~~ MOST ENLIGHTENING...



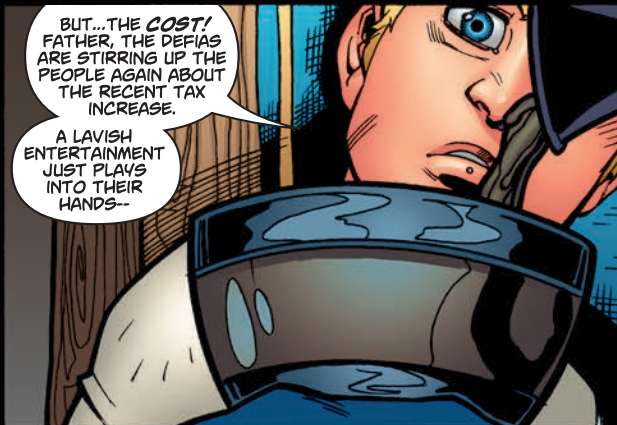


NICE OLD DUFFER, MAGNI! BE GOOD TO SEE HIM AGAIN! MAYBE WE SHOULD PLAN ANOTHER HUNT IN HIS HONOR. BOAR, I THINK.

AND A MASQUED BALL. WITH JUGGLERS!



LOTS OF ENTERTAINMENT ...NOT SO MUCH TALK.



BUT...THE COST! FATHER, THE DEFIAS ARE STIRRING UP THE PEOPLE AGAIN ABOUT THE RECENT TAX INCREASE.

A LAVISH ENTERTAINMENT JUST PLAYS INTO THEIR HANDS--



DON'T WORRY, SON. BOLVAR AND KATRANA WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE THE DEFIAS...AND OUR PEOPLE.



I UNDERSTAND YOU'VE PLANNED FIREWORKS TO FINISH OFF THE EVENING.

I HOPED THEY WOULD AMUSE YOU.



That's not like my father, Bolvar.

He's changed.



What's happened to him?



THE BAR...

TALL, SKINNY HUMAN, HUH? DON'T SEE HIM HERE!

ME, EITHER. SO WHO ARE THESE GUYS?

DEFIAS. THEY PRACTICALLY RUN THIS PART OF TOWN.

WHAT'S... DEFIAS?



A BAND OF THIEVES, SMUGGLERS, AND MERCENARIES WHO WORK TO DESTROY STORMWIND WHEN THEY AREN'T LINING THEIR OWN POCKETS.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?



THE SHORT VERSION-- I WASHED UP ON THE SHORE OF DUROTAR WITH AMNESIA. NO IDEA HOW I GOT THERE. HAD... ADVENTURES IN WHICH YOUR BROTHER'S TRAINING CAME IN HANDY...

...MADE TWO GOOD FRIENDS AND EARNED THE NAME LO'GOSH.

MOST OF MY MEMORIES HAVE RETURNED. I KNOW WHO I AM. WHAT I DON'T KNOW IS HOW I CAME TO BE... LOST.

I NEED TO FIND THAT OUT. AND... I NEED TO FIND MY SON.



HUMPH! FIGURES I'D FIND A DARK IRON AMONG THIS SCUM. WHY DID YOU ATTACK US?

DON'T... KNOW. BOSS SAID "KILL" WE... TRIED!

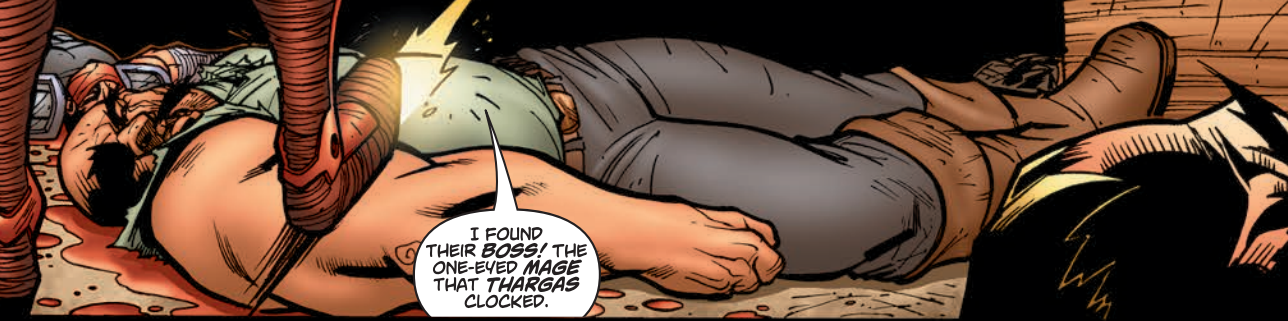


FAILED, TOO! WORTHLESS LOU!

THWUMP



THE DRUNK WE FOLLOWED ISN'T HERE, LO'GOSH.



I FOUND THEIR **BOSS!** THE ONE-EYED MAGE THAT THARGAS CLOKED.



»GROAN»

HE'S STILL ALIVE.



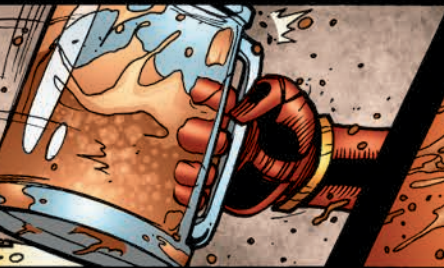
And looks about the way I feel.



THE DRUNK WAS REPORTING TO HIM. HE KNOWS SOMETHING.



BRING HIM AROUND.



HIS ARCANES GLOW IS FADING. TALK FAST. HE WON'T LAST LONG.



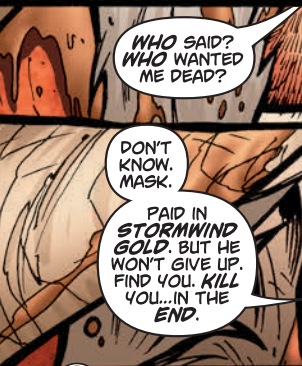
YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

THE WORTHLESS KING OF STORM-WIND!

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

LED THE DEFIAS...WHO DELIVERED YOU TO THE SHIP.

THEY SAID YOU DIED.



WHO SAID? WHO WANTED ME DEAD?

DON'T KNOW. MASK.

PAID IN STORMWIND GOLD. BUT HE WON'T GIVE UP. FIND YOU. KILL YOU...IN THE END.

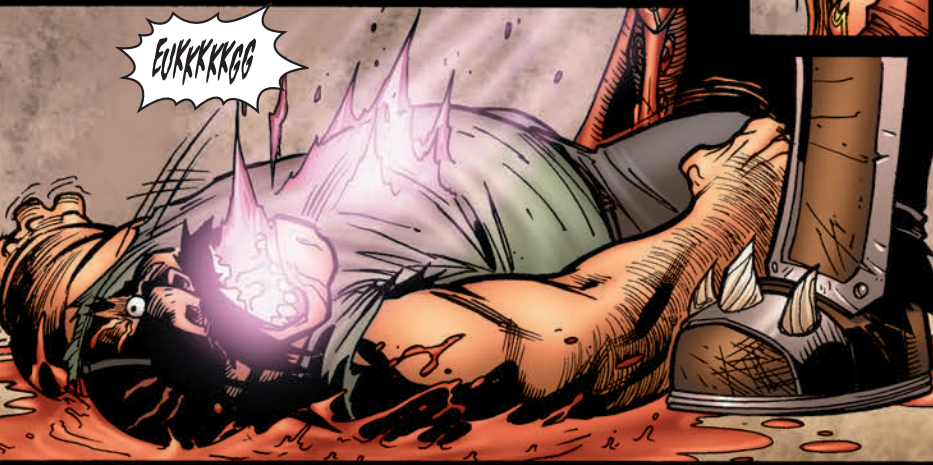




DESTROY YOUR KINGDOM...AND MURDER YOUR SON!



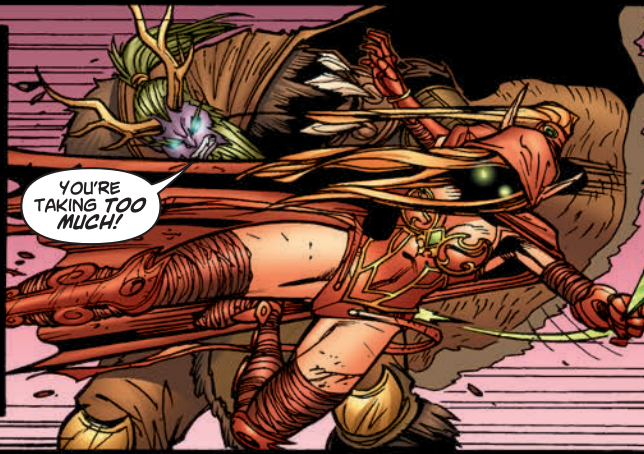
LO'GOSH, LOOK OUT!



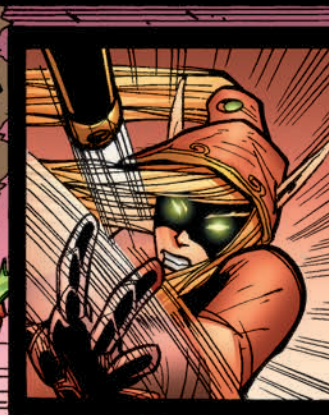
EUKKKKKGG



VALEERA! NO!



YOU'RE TAKING TOO MUCH!



SLIKT



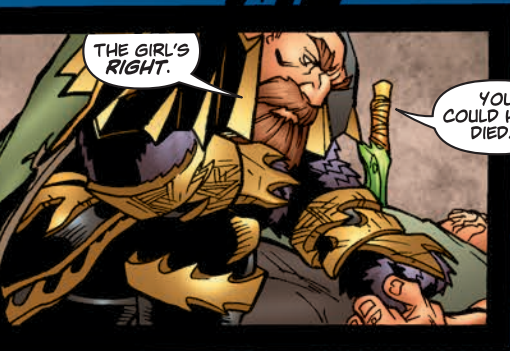
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

I WASN'T FINISHED QUESTIONING HIM.

HE WAS GOING TO USE THE LAST OF HIS MAGIC TO KILL YOU. THE PIG WAS DYING ANYWAY. WE'D LEARNED ALL WE COULD FROM HIM.

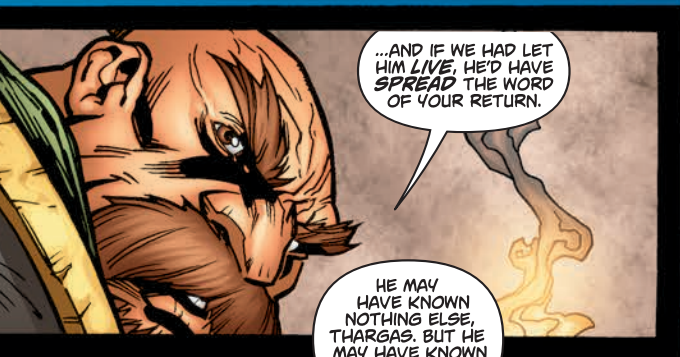
I FIGURED... WHY WASTE HIS ENERGY WHEN I COULD USE IT? WE COULDN'T LET HIM LIVE, IN ANY CASE.





THE GIRL'S RIGHT.

YOU COULD HAVE DIED...



...AND IF WE HAD LET HIM LIVE, HE'D HAVE SPREAD THE WORD OF YOUR RETURN.

HE MAY HAVE KNOWN NOTHING ELSE, THARGAS. BUT HE MAY HAVE KNOWN MORE. NOW WE'LL NEVER KNOW.



THAT WASN'T YOUR DECISION TO MAKE, VALEERA. HAVE A CARE LEST YOUR THIRST BETRAY US ALL IN THE END.



VALEERA...

DON'T YOU START, BROLL! I'M GLAD HE'S DEAD! I HATE PEOPLE WHO THREATEN CHILDREN.

I'LL NEVER LET LO'GOSH'S SON BE ORPHANED, LIKE I WAS, BY A WORTHLESS SLUG LIKE HIM.



WHAT'LL I DO? RUN! FIND THE BROTHERHOOD! THAT'S IT.

GOT TO TELL THEM WHAT HAPPENED. TELL THEM...THE KING HAS RETURNED! REALLY!

CHAPTER 2



STANLEY
08



Lupo
Lullabi
HOPE

THROUGH THE MIRROR DARKLY

MENETHIL HARBOR

THE RAIN HAS STOPPED BUT THE SEA AND THE SKY ARE STILL AN ANGRY GRAY...

...AND ANGER IS REFLECTED IN THE SLITTED EYES OF WATCHERS...

...AS A SMALL PARTY OF TRAVELERS WENDS ITS WAY THROUGH THE NARROW STREETS.

DEEP IN CONVERSATION, THEY SEEM UNAWARE OF THE MALICE CLOSING IN AROUND THEM.

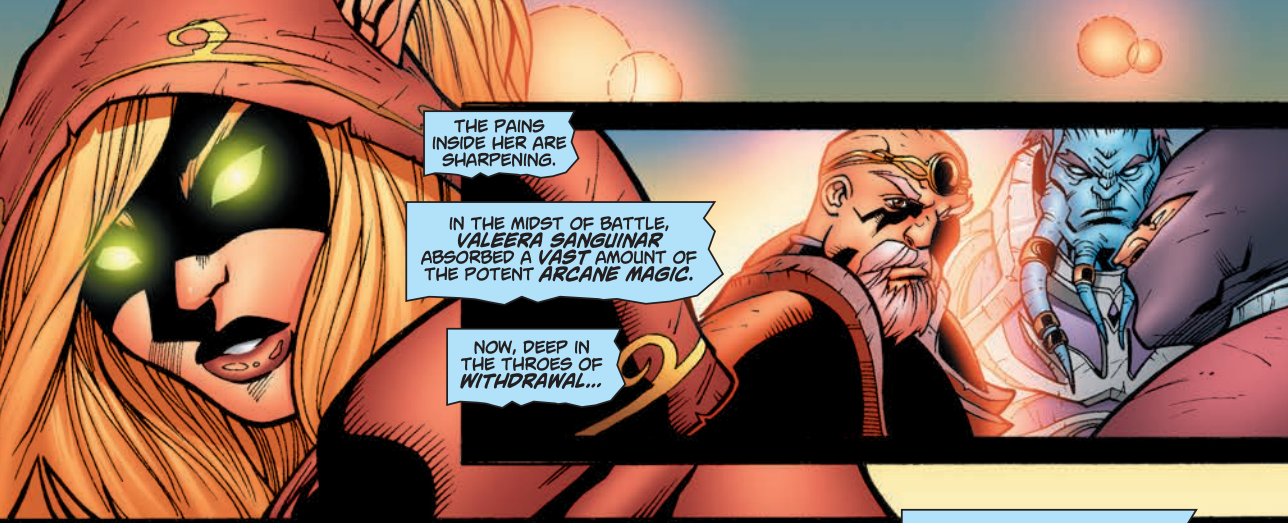
OBVIOUSLY, SOMEONE WANTS YOU DEAD, LO'GOSH. AND JUST AS OBVIOUSLY, THEIR FAILURE THUS FAR TO RETURN YOU TO THE CLAY WILL ENRAGE THEM.

I'M GUESSING THEY'LL EXPECT YOU TO TRAVEL FROM MENETHIL HARBOR TO IRONFORGE BY SEA OR AIR--SO WE'LL GO BY LAND.

THE MORE CIRCUITOUS LAND ROUTE THROUGH THE WETLANDS WILL BE SAFER?

THAT. AND SEA AND AIR TRAVEL MAKE ME SICK.

BUT THE LONGER ROUTE MEANS WE'LL HAVE TO HURRY...

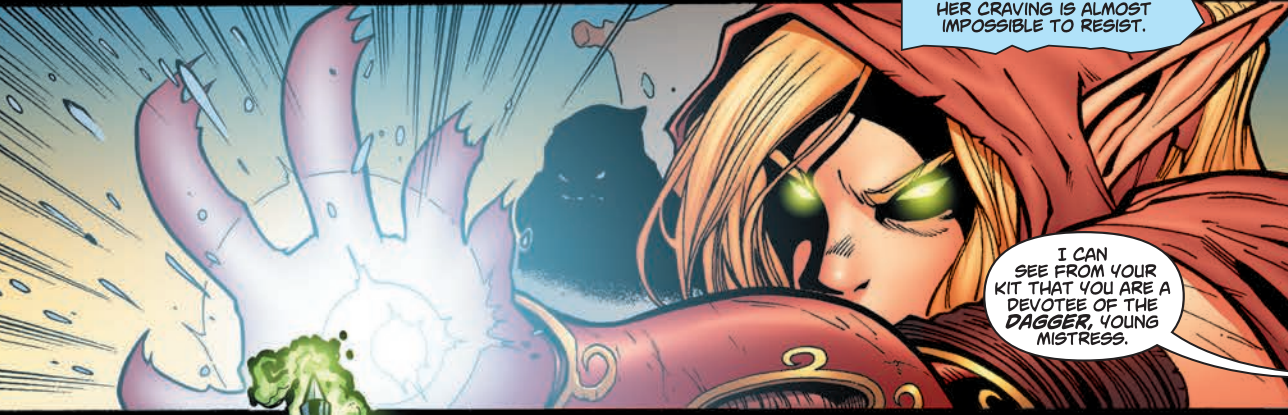


THE PAINS
INSIDE HER ARE
SHARPENING.

IN THE MIDST OF BATTLE,
VALEERA SANGUINAR
ABSORBED A VAST AMOUNT OF
THE POTENT ARCANIC MAGIC.

NOW, DEEP IN
THE THROES OF
WITHDRAWAL...

...SHE DISCOVERS THAT ANY
ENERGY SOURCE THAT SATIS
HER CRAVING IS ALMOST
IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST.



I CAN
SEE FROM YOUR
KIT THAT YOU ARE A
DEVOTEE OF THE
DAGGER, YOUNG
MISTRESS.



THIS ONE
IS SPECIAL--A
FEL DAGGER--
FELL OFF A
WARLOCK'S
CART.



FOR YOU, A
MERE TWO
HUNDRED
GOLD--

I DON'T--?!



OH!!!



IT'S
WONDERF--



BROLL!
STOP!
WAIT!

WE NEED TO GO BACK!
I BARELY TOUCHED THAT
DAGGER AND NOW I FEEL
SO MUCH BETTER.

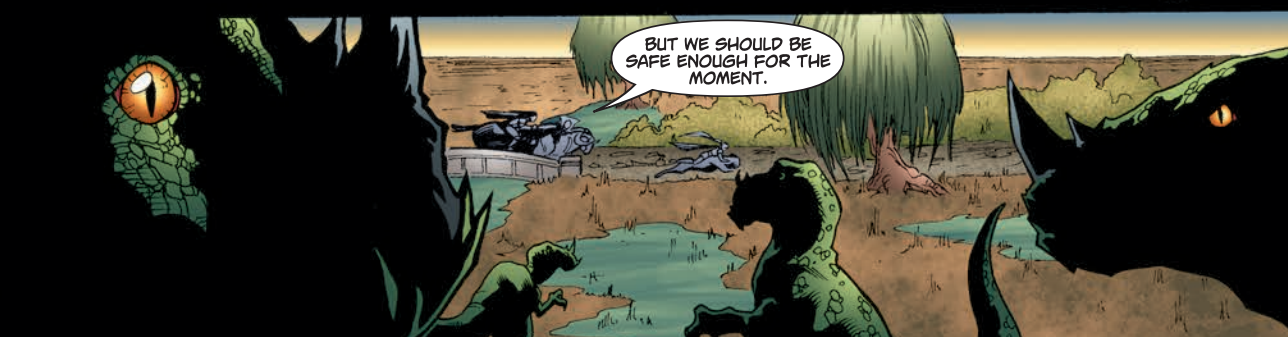
THARGAS!
QUICKLY!
FOLLOW AFTER
THEM!



HUMPH! IF I'D WANTED
TO FLY THERE, I'D HAVE
TAKEN A GRYPHON!

THE ROAD THROUGH
THE WETLANDS
WOULDN'T BE SO BAD
IF IT WASN'T FOR THE
CONSTANT RAIN...

...AND THE
CROCOLISKS,
GNOLLS,
MURLOCS, AND
OZES.



BUT WE SHOULD BE
SAFE ENOUGH FOR THE
MOMENT.

ELSEWHERE IN THE DARK...

I AM SORELY **DISPLEASED**. THE ASSASSINS' GUILD REPRESENTATIVE HAS FAILED.

AMATEURS. WHICH IS WHY I CHOOSE TO WORK ALONE.

BUT IF YOU WISH TO ENGAGE ME, MY PRICE IS HIGH. I REQUIRE THE ASSASSINS' GUILD FEE AND A REMARKABLY EXORBITANT SURCHARGE.

I'LL PAY YOU **HALF NOW**—AND THE **REST** WHEN THE JOB IS **DONE**.

YOU PAY **ALL NOW** OR THIS **CONVERSATION** IS AT AN END.

I REGRET TO SAY THAT THE NOBLES OF STORMWIND HAVE A CERTAIN...**REPUTATION**... FOR RENEGING ON THEIR DEBTS.

YOU SEE, MY LADY, I **KNOW** YOU FOR WHAT YOU ARE.

AS YOU WISH, **VENDELLIN SOULFIRE**. FULL PAYMENT...IN **ADVANCE**.

CHINK

WHOM DO YOU WANT ME TO KILL?

YOUR TARGET IS CALLED **LO'GOSH**.

HE IS THE CHAMPION OF THE **CRIMSON RING** IN DIRE MAUL—A **FORMIDABLE** OPPONENT.

HE LANDED IN **MENETHIL HARBOR** IN THE NORTH. HE IS AIDED BY A PAIR OF **ELVES** AND A **DWARF**. I HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO NEUTRALIZE THEM, BUT IT IS **LO'GOSH** I WANT.

DO NOT FAIL IN YOUR COMMISSION. OR I **PROMISE** YOU...

...YOU WILL SEE ME AS I REALLY AM.



RAPTORS!
LOOK TO YOUR
WEAPONS!

GROWRR

SLIKKT

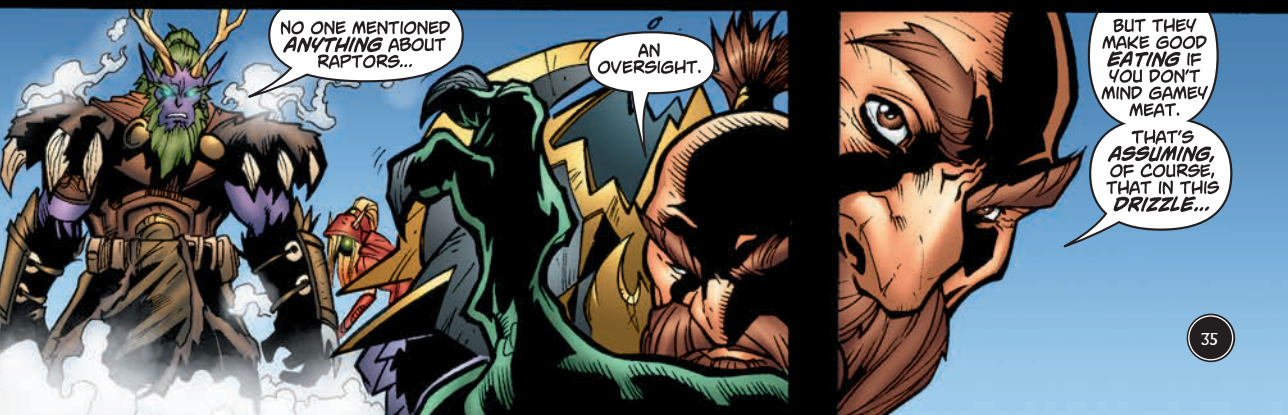
KAEL'S
TEETH,
BROLL...

...YOU MIGHT
HAVE WARNED
ME!

CHOKT



FOR WARRIORS OF THIS
CALIBER USED TO FIGHTING
AS A TEAM, EVEN A LARGE
GROUP OF RAPTORS IS ONLY
A MINOR DISTRACTION...



NO ONE MENTIONED
ANYTHING ABOUT
RAPTORS...

AN
OVERSIGHT.

BUT THEY
MAKE GOOD
EATING IF
YOU DON'T
MIND GAMEY
MEAT.

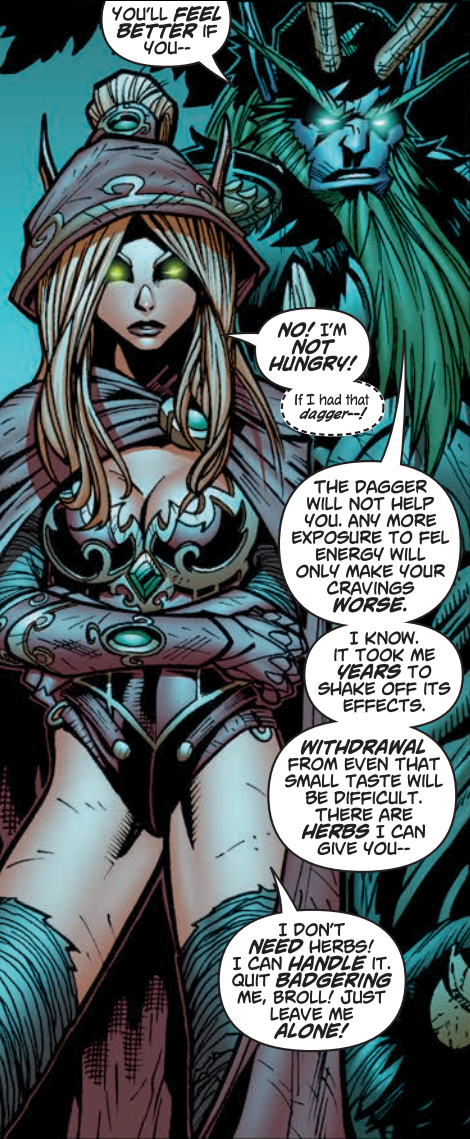
THAT'S
ASSUMING,
OF COURSE,
THAT IN THIS
DRIZZLE...



"...WE CAN GET A FIRE GOING."

VALEERA, IT'S NEARLY READY.

I DON'T WANT ANY.



YOU'LL FEEL BETTER IF YOU--

NO! I'M NOT HUNGRY!

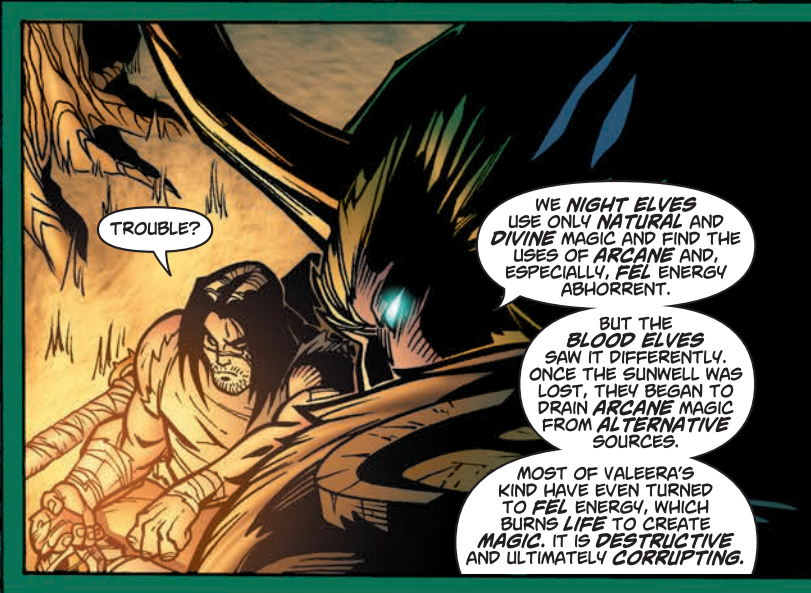
If I had that dagger--

THE DAGGER WILL NOT HELP YOU. ANY MORE EXPOSURE TO FEL ENERGY WILL ONLY MAKE YOUR CRAVINGS WORSE.

I KNOW. IT TOOK ME YEARS TO SHAKE OFF ITS EFFECTS.

WITHDRAWAL FROM EVEN THAT SMALL TASTE WILL BE DIFFICULT. THERE ARE HERBS I CAN GIVE YOU--

I DON'T NEED HERBS! I CAN HANDLE IT. QUIT BADGERING ME, BROLL! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!



TROUBLE?

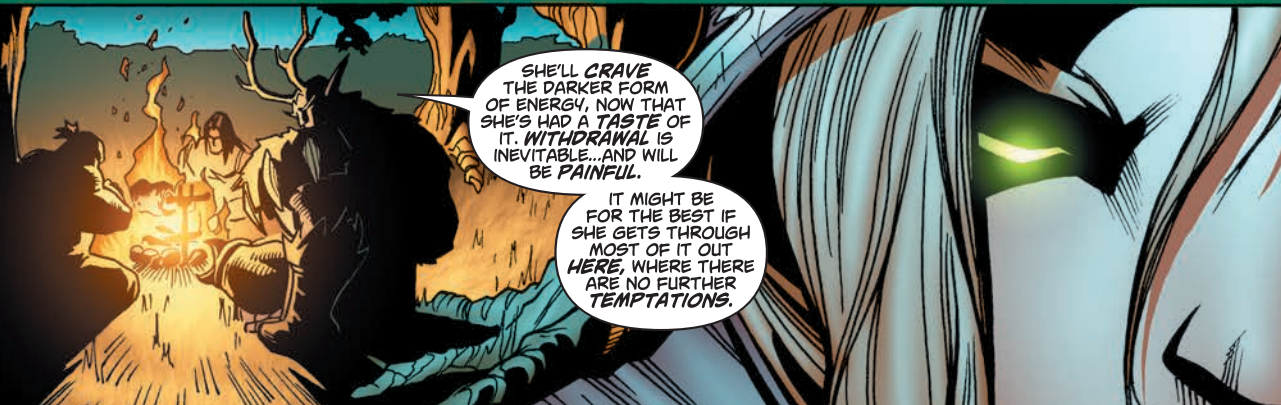
WE NIGHT ELVES USE ONLY NATURAL AND DIVINE MAGIC AND FIND THE USES OF ARCANES AND, ESPECIALLY, FEL ENERGY ABHORRENT.

BUT THE BLOOD ELVES SAW IT DIFFERENTLY. ONCE THE SUNWELL WAS LOST, THEY BEGAN TO DRAIN ARCANES FROM ALTERNATIVE SOURCES.

MOST OF VALEERA'S KIND HAVE EVEN TURNED TO FEL ENERGY, WHICH BURNS LIFE TO CREATE MAGIC. IT IS DESTRUCTIVE AND ULTIMATELY CORRUPTING.



THAT IS VALEERA'S LEGACY.



SHE'LL CRAVE THE DARKER FORM OF ENERGY, NOW THAT SHE'S HAD A TASTE OF IT. WITHDRAWAL IS INEVITABLE...AND WILL BE PAINFUL.

IT MIGHT BE FOR THE BEST IF SHE GETS THROUGH MOST OF IT OUT HERE, WHERE THERE ARE NO FURTHER TEMPTATIONS.

THE NEXT MORNING, IN STORMWIND KEEP...

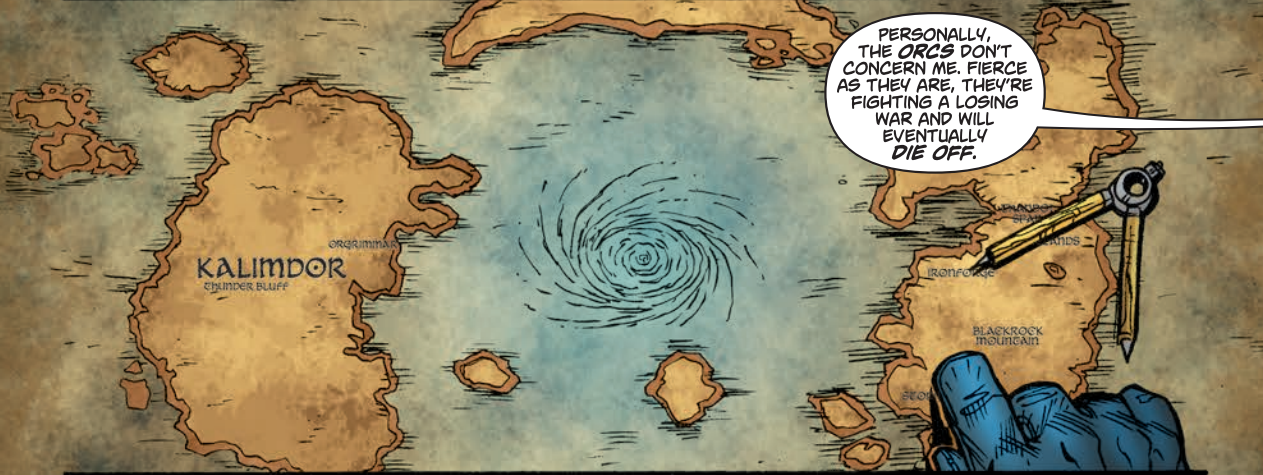
KING MAGNI BRONZEBEARD, RULER OF THE DWARVEN KINGDOM OF KHAZ MODAN, MEETS WITH VARIAN WRYNN, THE NEWLY RETURNED LOST KING OF STORMWIND, AND HIS ADVISOR, HIGHLORD BOLVAR FORDRAGON...

THE DARK IRON DWARVES HAVE LEFT THEIR CAPITAL IN THE DEPTHS OF BLACKROCK MOUNTAIN, AND HAVE INFILTRATED INTO THE BADLANDS, THE WETLANDS, AND DUN MOROGH.

WHAT ABOUT THE BLACKROCK ORCS? WE'VE HAD DESPERATE REPORTS FROM MAGISTRATE SOLOMON IN LAKESHIRE THAT THE MEN FEAR AN ATTACK...

...BUT, AS OF YET, WE'VE SEEN NO PROOF.

PERSONALLY, THE ORCS DON'T CONCERN ME. FIERCE AS THEY ARE, THEY'RE FIGHTING A LOSING WAR AND WILL EVENTUALLY DIE OFF.



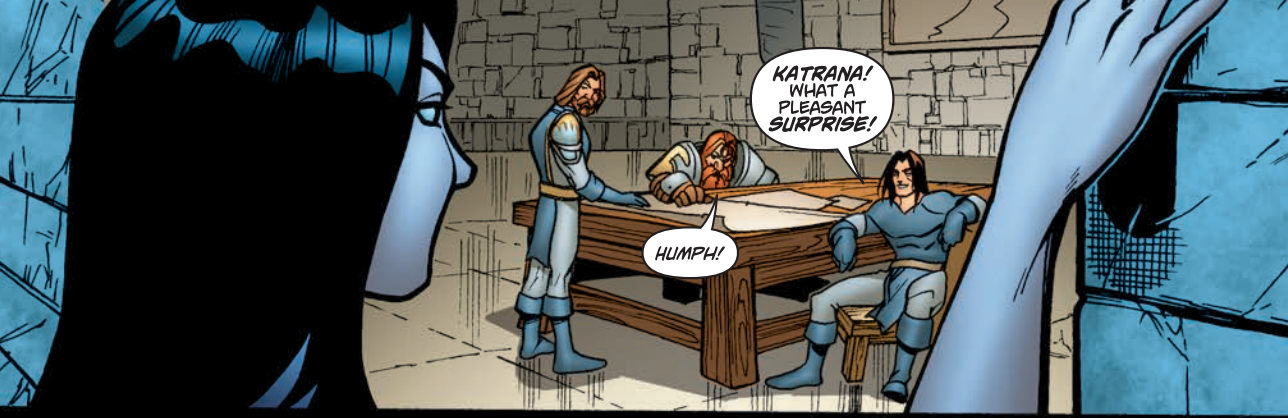
THE DARK IRONS ARE ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY.

THEY'RE TREACHEROUS WORSHIPERS OF THE DEMIGOD FIRE ELEMENTAL RAGNAROS.

THEY HAVE NEITHER LOYALTY NOR HONOR AND, UNLESS WE MAINTAIN OUR VIGILANCE, THEY MAY FURTHER THREATEN THANDOL SPAN AND OUR ACCESS TO LORDAERON...

SO I'VE HEARD YOU SAY, KING MAGNI...





KATRANA!
WHAT A PLEASANT
SURPRISE!

HUMPH!



I DO WONDER, THOUGH, HOW MUCH YOUR ANGER IS FUELED BY YOUR DAUGHTER MOIRA'S RUMORED LIAISON WITH...
...AND PREGNANCY BY... THE DARK IRON EMPEROR, DAGRAN THAURISSAN.



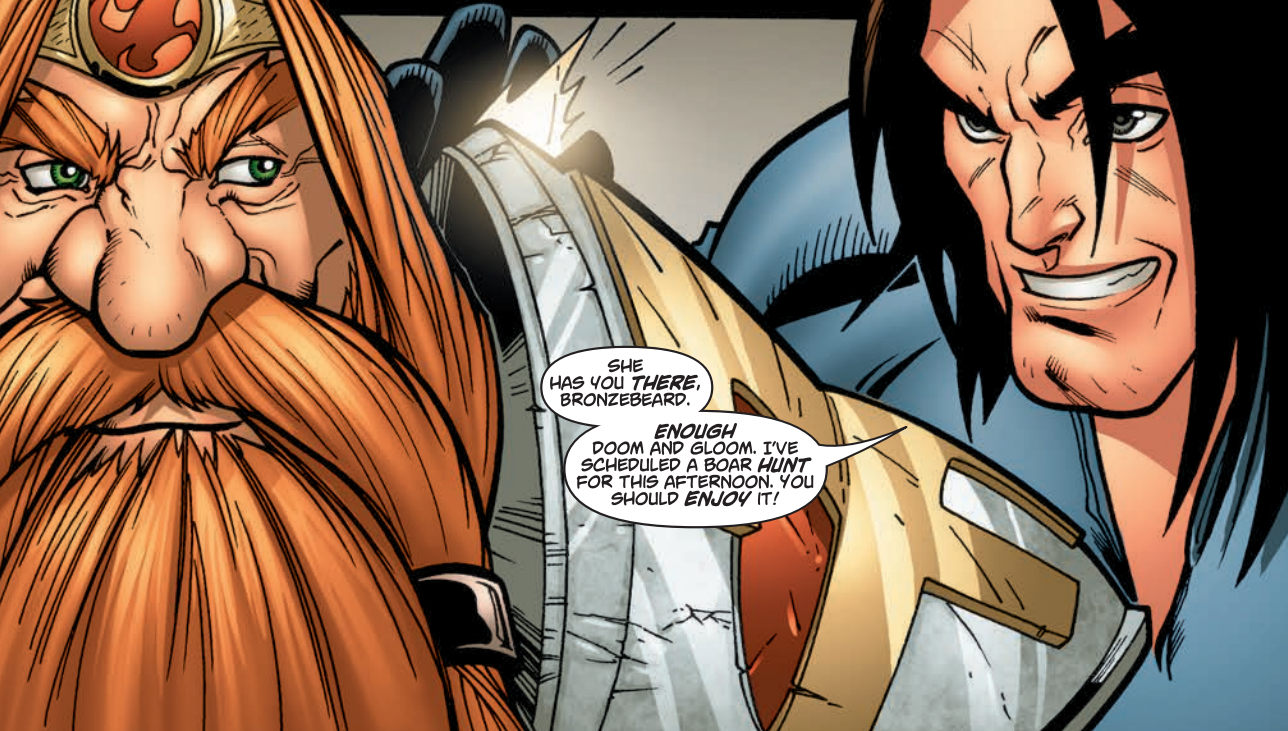
THAT WAS NO LIAISON, BUT CAPTURE AND SEDUCTION THROUGH MAGICAL MEANS!

IF THAT'S SO, WHY HAVEN'T YOU GONE TO WAR AGAINST THE DARK IRONS TO GET YOUR DAUGHTER BACK?



OR DID YOU COME HERE TO GET ALLIES, WITH YOUR RUMORS OF INCURSIONS?

IT SEEMS UNWISE TO INVOLVE OUR KINGDOM IN A PERSONAL FEUD BETWEEN TWO WARRING DWARF NATIONS.



SHE HAS YOU THERE, BRONZEBEARD.

ENOUGH DOOM AND GLOOM. I'VE SCHEDULED A BOAR HUNT FOR THIS AFTERNOON. YOU SHOULD ENJOY IT!

WHILE IN THE WETLANDS...

WE TURN SOUTH HERE AND BEGIN OUR CLIMB TOWARD IRONFORGE.

SOMETHING'S WRONG, THARGAS. IT'S TOO QUIET.

THIS IS A PERFECT SETUP FOR AN AMBUSH.

GROWL!

BROLL AGREES... THOUGH HIS SHAPE LIMITS FURTHER ELABORATION.

THANK THE SUN! I'M TOTALLY SICK OF HIS LECTURES.

LISTEN!

SHWIPPP
THWIPPT
SHWIP SHWIP

ARROWS COMING--THICK AS RAIN!
MOVE IT!



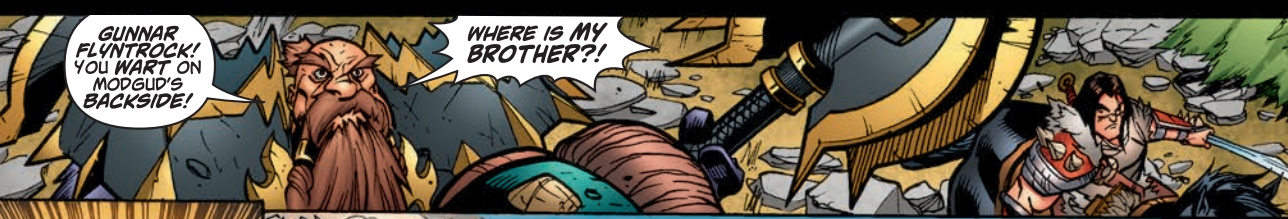


WELL, WELL, IF IT ISN'T THARGAS ANVILMAR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING ROAMING THE WETLANDS?

LET ME GUESS! YOU'RE TRYING TO SPY FOR OLD KING MAGNI, LIKE YOUR WORTHLESS BROTHER, AND JUST AS LOUSY AT IT!

WE'VE CAUGHT HJALMAR, BRONZEBEARD, AND WE HAVE HIM UNDER TORTURE, SQUEALING LIKE A PIG.

BUT YOU'RE EVEN MORE IN MAGNI'S CONFIDENCE—AND, THUS, A GREATER PRIZE.



GUNNAR FLYNTROCK! YOU WART ON MODGLIP'S BACKSIDE!

WHERE IS MY BROTHER?!



YOU'LL JOIN HIM SOON, ANVILMAR—IN CHAINS IN A DARK IRON CELL!
IF YOU LIVE THROUGH THE NEXT FEW MINUTES.

WATCH OVER VALEERA, BROLL! SHE CAN'T FIGHT AS SHE IS.

THARGAS AND I CAN DEAL WITH THESE SCUM!





THE WORLD IS IN A SORRY STATE WHEN COWARDS LIKE YOU--

--NOT FIT TO CLEAN THE BOOTS OF AN ANVILMAR--

--WOULD DARE TO HOLD ONE UNDER TORTURE!

GRARRRH!



DON'T WORRY, BROLL!

I'LL GUARD YOUR BACK...

...AS YOU GUARD MINE--!

HA!

CHONK

GRAKKK!



VALEERA, SEE TO BROLL!
I'LL DEAL WITH THIS
WRETCH.

AAARRRGH!

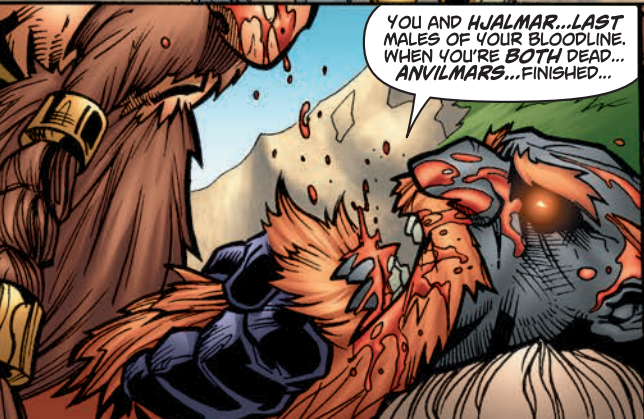
THE FIGHT IS SHORT, SHARP,
AND WITHOUT MERCY.



THE REST OF YOUR
COMPANY IS DEAD, DARK
IRON SCUM--NOW TELL
ME WHERE TO FIND
MY BROTHER!

THANDOL
SPAN!

WHY DON'T
YOU GO THERE,
THARGAS...SO
THEY CAN
CAPTURE YOU,
AS WELL?



YOU AND HJALMAR...LAST
MALES OF YOUR BLOODLINE.
WHEN YOU'RE BOTH DEAD...
ANVILMARS...FINISHED...



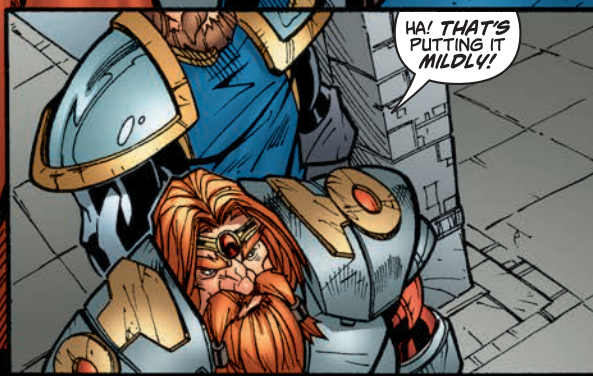
GOOD...
RIDDAN--
AAK...



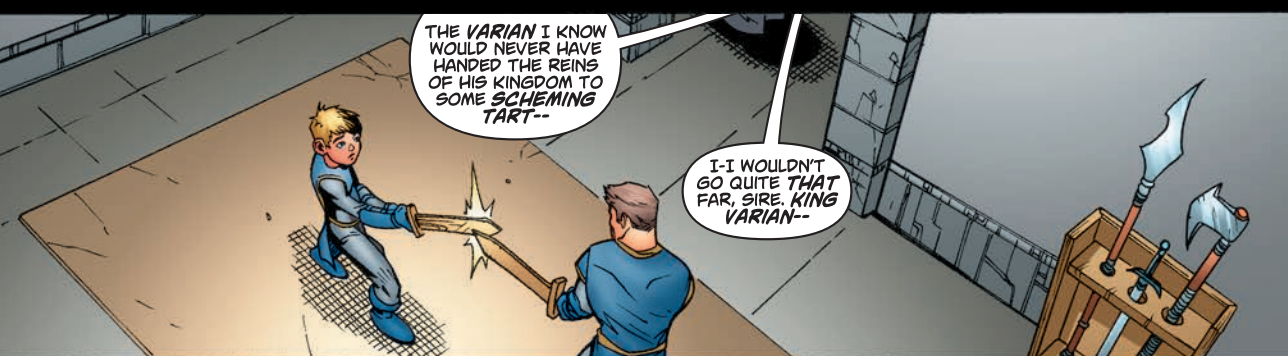
WAIT, KING MAGNI! DON'T LEAVE YET--!

I'VE LEARNED WHAT I NEEDED TO KNOW, BOLVAR.

I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU'RE DISPLEASED, SIRE. I KNOW THAT, SINCE HIS RETURN, KING VARIAN HASN'T SEEMED HIS OLD SELF, BUT--



HA! THAT'S PUTTING IT MILDLY!



THE VARIAN I KNOW WOULD NEVER HAVE HANDED THE REINS OF HIS KINGDOM TO SOME SCHEMING TART--

I-I WOULDN'T GO QUITE THAT FAR, SIRE, KING VARIAN--



TWAKKKK

OWWWW!

YOU ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE DISTRACTED, PRINCE ANDUIN. THUS LEAVING YOURSELF OPEN TO RUIN.

THE LADY KATRANA WON'T BE PLEASED!

GRAWWRRP!

YOU'VE ALWAYS MADE A FINE PINCUSHION, BROLL. STILL...THIS MUST BE SOME KIND OF RECORD!

DON'T JOKE, LO'GOSH! IN HIS DRUID FORM, BROLL COULD HAVE CALLED DOWN LIGHTNING, BUT HE STAYED IN BEAR FORM TO SHIELD ME.

AND I...I WAS SHAKING SO HARD I COULDN'T THROW STRAIGHT.

I'M SORRY, BROLL. I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU TELL ME TO GET BETTER. JUST...PLEASE DON'T DIE.

HE'LL LIVE, VALEERA...IF ONLY FOR THE PLEASURE OF LECTURING YOU FURTHER.

WITH THE ARROWS REMOVED, I CAN HEAL MYSELF. I'LL STILL BE SORE, BUT I JUST WISH I COULD HELP YOU AS EASILY.

IRONFORGE IS STILL SEVERAL DAYS DISTANT. BUT IF WE MOVE FAST--

WE'RE NOT GOING TO IRONFORGE, THARGAS. WE'RE GOING TO FIND YOUR BROTHER.

THEN COME ALONG TO PROTECT US WHILE WE RESCUE HJALMAR.

I WON'T LEAVE MY OLD TEACHER IN THE HANDS OF TORTURERS.

I APPRECIATE THAT, LO'GOSH. BUT KING OF STORMWIND OR NO, I FOLLOW MAGNI'S ORDERS.

GIVE IT UP, THARGAS. YOU CAN'T BUDGE LO'GOSH ONCE HE'S SET ON A COURSE.

HE MAY REALLY BE KING.

STORMWIND KEEP

WE'LL TAKE THE DEEPRUN TRAM TO IRONFORGE--

KING MAGNI! WAIT!

PRINCE ANDUIN! WHAT IS IT, LAD?

ANDUIN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE...

...AWAY FROM YOUR TUTOR?

I HEARD YOU TALKING, SIR. I TOO THINK THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY FATHER. IT'S LIKE HE'S BEING--

GIVE THE BOY A BREAK, KATRANA. I BET HE'D RATHER HUNT WITH ME.

MAGNI, I WISH YOU--

I--

NEVER MIND! WE'LL HANDLE THIS OURSELVES!

VARIAN'S BEEN AWAY. HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW THIN OUR FORCES ARE BEING STRETCHED.

NO DOUBT. GET ME A DIRIGIBLE LARGE ENOUGH TO TRANSPORT MY GUARDS! WE'LL FLY FROM STORMWIND STRAIGHT TO THANDOL SPAN!

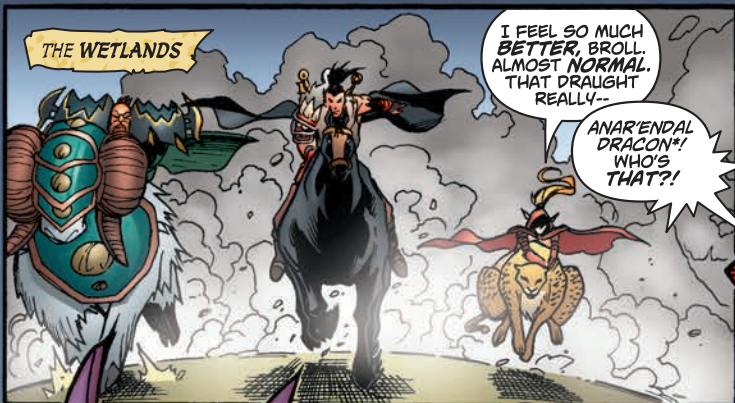
UHHH... GOOD LUCK.

KING MAGNI! SIRE! WE'VE JUST HAD WORD. LONGBRAID AND HIS MEN HAVE BEEN DRIVEN BACK FROM THANDOL SPAN, LEAVING IT IN SOLE POSSESSION OF THE DARK IRONS.

DIDN'T I TELL YOU--? VARIAN! YOU'LL SEND REINFORCEMENTS?

AND AFTER THAT, I'LL FIND THIS LOGOSH JAINA BELIEVES IN AND SEE WHAT HE'S REALLY ABOUT.

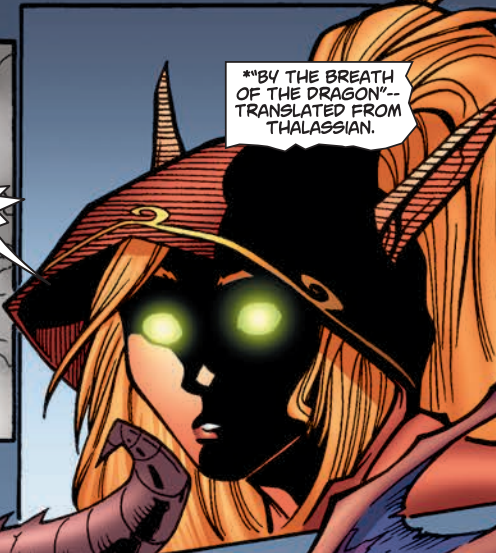
THE WETLANDS



I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER, BROLL. ALMOST NORMAL. THAT DRAUGHT REALLY--

ANAREN'DAL DRAGON?! WHO'S THAT?!

**BY THE BREATH OF THE DRAGON"-- TRANSLATED FROM THALASSIAN.



YOU KEEP STRANGE COMPANY, BLOOD ELF, FOR ONE OF OUR OWN.

AH, I SEE YOU'RE STILL A CHILD. HUNGRY... BUT AS YET UNCORRUPTED. I SHALL CHANGE THAT. YOU'LL THANK ME IN TIME.

BLOOD ELF WARLOCK! WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?



WHAT HE'S BEEN PAID TO DO, I IMAGINE.

CAN YOU FEEL THAT, ELF CHILD?

FEL ENERGY. YOU'VE ALREADY TASTED WHAT I CAN OFFER, HAVEN'T YOU, AND FOUND IT SWEET?

YES, I CAN FEEL YOUR DESIRE. AND I AM MERCIFUL. YOU SHALL HAVE WHAT YOU CRAVE.

I CAST UPON YOU THE MARK OF KATHRA'NATIR! MAY YOU GAZE UNENDING INTO THE DARK HEART OF THE TWISTING NETHER!

AAAAAHHHHH!

KRAKYYK

UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU!

NOOOO!

NOW FOR THE REST OF YOU. I AM VENDELLIN SOULFIRE! TO FACE ME IS TO KNOW FEAR!



CONTROL YOUR STEED, THARGAS! FORCE HIM TO STAND AND FIGHT!

I'M TRYING, LO'GOSH! BUT HIS SPELL'S TOO POWERFUL!

TOO LATE! TOO LATE! THAT MONSTER HAS Poured IN HIS FOUL MAGICKS THROUGH THE FLOODGATES OF VALEERA'S SOUL.

HER WEAKENED STATE MADE HER MORE VULNERABLE TO HIS CURSE!

THEN WE'LL HAVE TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT HE DIES, HERE AND NOW.

WINDS COME--AND SWEEP THOSE STINKING MONSTERS INTO THE VOID!

HE'S A POWERFUL WARLOCK... BUT HE'S ONLY ONE AND WE ARE MANY.

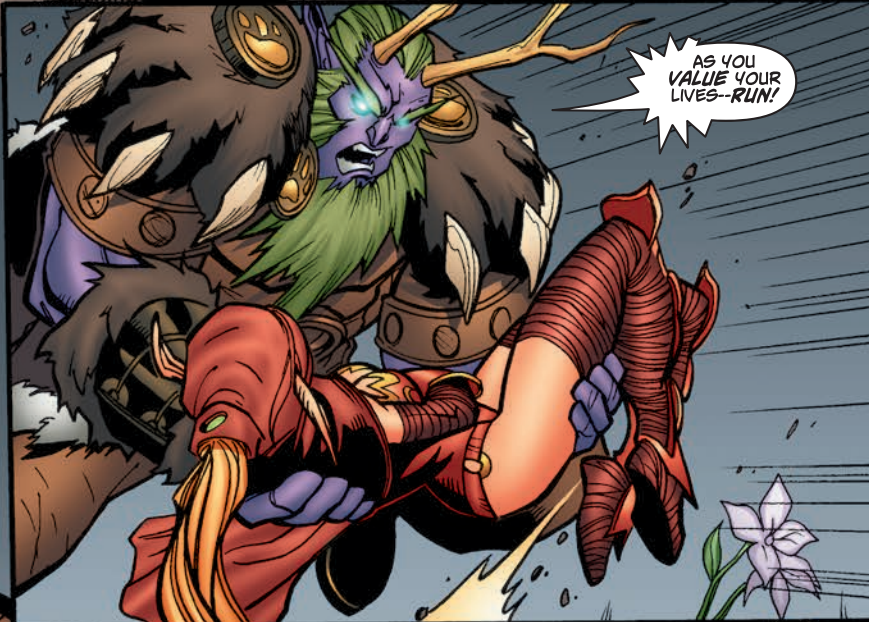
YOU ARE ALREADY LNDONE. I WAS FOREWARNED OF YOUR ALLIANCE...



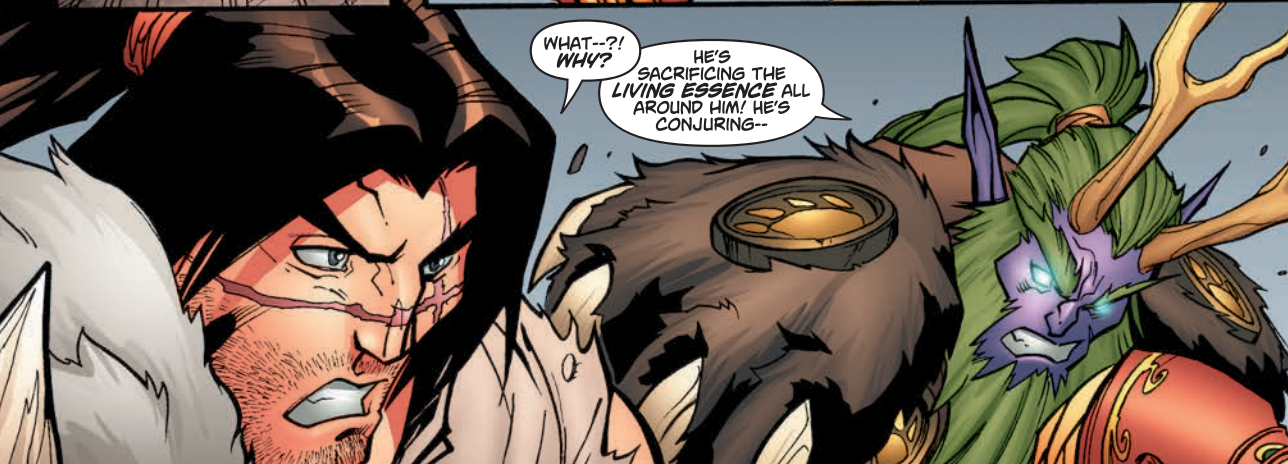
...AND I CAME PREPARED TO DEAL WITH SUCH MINOR DISTRACTIONS.



RUN!



AS YOU VALUE YOUR LIVES--RUN!

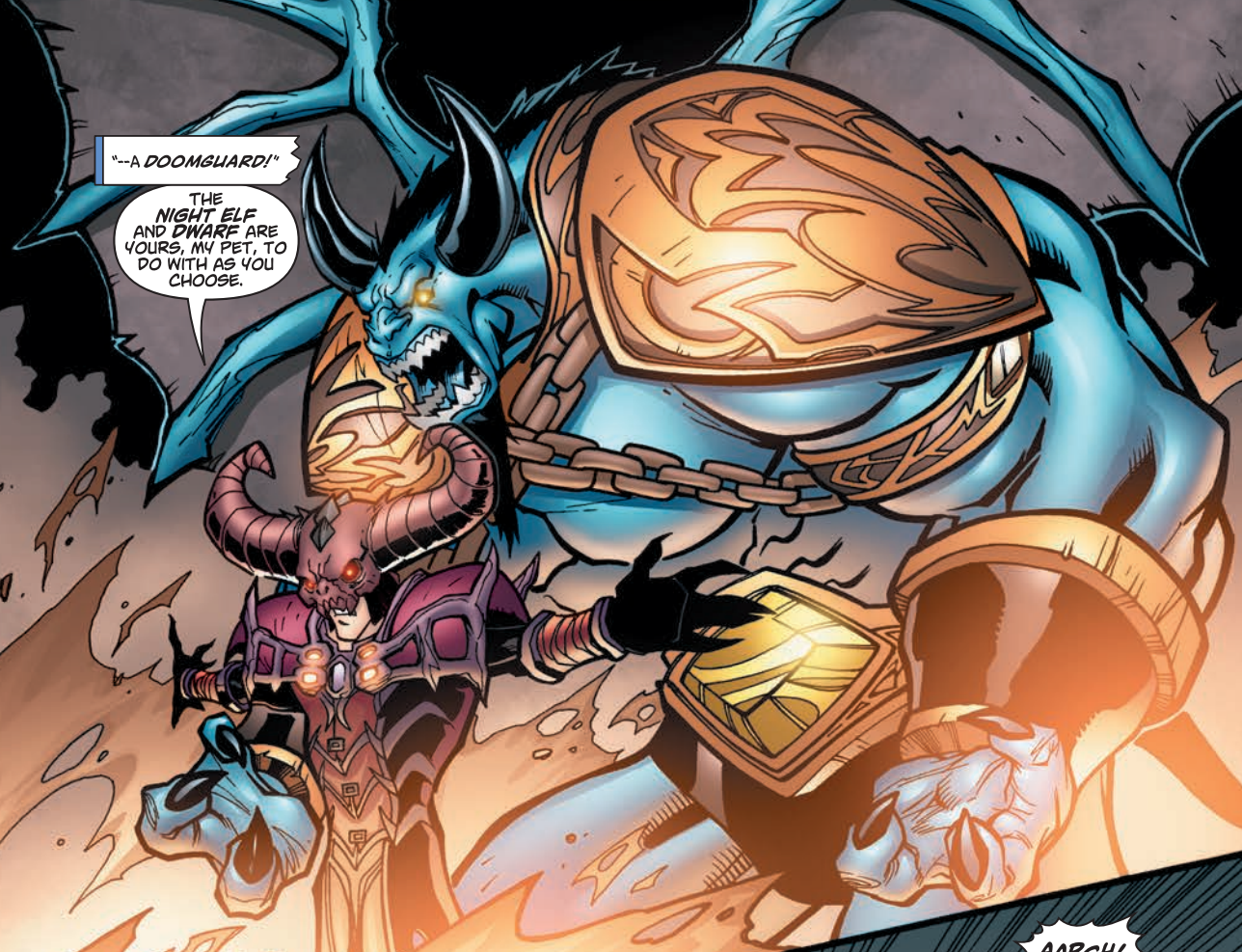


WHAT--?! WHY?

HE'S SACRIFICING THE LIVING ESSENCE ALL AROUND HIM! HE'S CONJURING--

"--A DOOMSGUARD!"

THE NIGHT ELF AND DWARF ARE YOURS, MY PET, TO DO WITH AS YOU CHOOSE.



I'D SAY YOUR UNSEEN ENEMY IS EMPLOYING A BETTER GRADE OF ASSASSIN, LO'GOSH!
GAAK!



THE HUMAN IS MINE!

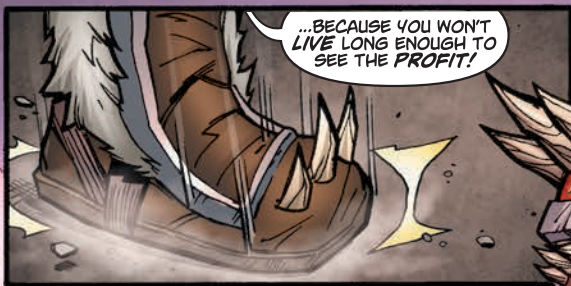


AARGH!

WRITHE, LITTLE MORTAL! YOUR DEATH IS FOR MY PROFIT--
--BUT YOUR PAIN IS FOR MY PLEASURE!



THEN I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED THE PLEASURE, MONSTER...



...BECAUSE YOU WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THE PROFIT!



ONLY--

--YOUR OWN DEATH!



THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!



URRRKKK!

MEANWHILE, A FEW YARDS AWAY...

PLANTS OF THE EARTH, RISE UP AND SNARE THE DEMON!



PULL IT BENEATH YOUR SWAMPY WATERS AND TEAR IT TO PIECES!

SHWUHMPPF



BROLL! GRAB THARGAS FROM THE DEMON'S HAND BEFORE HE'S PULLED DOWN WITH IT!

BIDE A MOMENT, VENDELLIN. I'LL TEND TO YOU NEXT.

SCHUNK



NO!



SCHWUNK

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF, VENDELLIN. TO FACE ME IS TO KNOW FEAR!



REST EASILY,
VALEERA. THE
BLOOD ELF
WARLOCK IS
NO MORE.

↳GROAN



IT...IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I FEEL...SICK AND...SOME-
THING DARK STILL
CALLS TO ME!

I CAN
HEAR IT--FEEL
ITS FEL ENERGY--
CRAWLING LIKE
MAGGOTS
THROUGH MY
SOUL.



PUT ME
DOWN, BROLL!
DON'T TOUCH ME! I'M
TOO BEFOULED...
TOO FILTHY...TO
BEAR IT!



LOOK AT MY HANDS!
AT THE FOUL RUNES
SCRAWLED ACROSS
THEM!

DON'T LET MY
FATE BE SEALED
BY HIS FEL
CURSE!

BROLL...
PLEASE...BY
ALL THAT IS
HOLY--HELP
ME!

I'LL DO
ALL I CAN,
VALEERA, THOUGH
IN DAYS TO COME,
IT MAY BE
BITTER.

YOU
HAVE MY
PROMISE.

CHAPTER 3



SAMUEL
08



LAST OF THE LINE

THE DARK IRON DWARVES OF BLACKROCK DEPTHS ARE A BRUTAL AND TREACHEROUS CLAN.

IN THE HILLS ABOVE THANDOL SPAN, THEY'VE UNCOVERED A SMALL PARTY OF TRAVELERS AND ATTACKED.

THEY OUTNUMBER THE WAYFARERS BETTER THAN THREE TO ONE.

IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE.

DON'T KILL THEM ALL, THARGAS! WE NEED A FEW OF THESE DARK IRONS ALIVE FOR QUESTIONING.

SHORINNG
KLANGGGHT

THAWHANNG



WE ONLY NEED ONE TO TELL US WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW!

TRUE ENOUGH. BUT SUPPOSE YOU SPARE THE WRONG ONE? SUPPOSE HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT WE--

CHUNKKKK

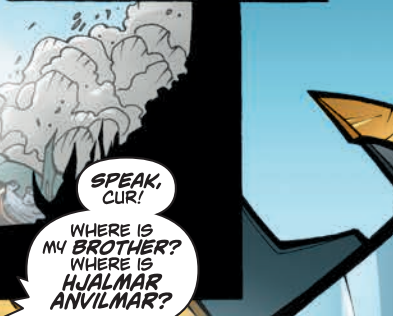


NEVER MIND.



LET US HOPE YOU HAVE CHOSEN... WISELY.

HMMMM!



SPEAK, CUR!

WHERE IS MY BROTHER? WHERE IS HJALMAR ANVILMAR?



BALGARAS THE FOUL HOLDS HIM CAPTIVE AT THANDOL SPAN.

YOU LIE, DARK IRON! YOUR CLAN TRIED TO DESTROY THE BRIDGE AND FAILED. IT IS SAFELY IN ALLIANCE HANDS!

OLD NEWS, ANVILMAR! WE DARK IRONS HAVE RETAKEN THE SPAN!



YOUR BROTHER DISCOVERED OUR PLAN ~~COUGH~~ BUT COULD NOT STOP US, BRONZEBEARD!

BY DAY'S END, THANDOL SPAN WILL BE DESTROYED! AND ~~COUGH COUGH~~ HJALMAR WILL BE BLOWN TO BITS AND SCATTERED TO--



A LONGER INTERVIEW MIGHT HAVE PROVED USEFUL, THARGAS.

HAD I WANTED SOMEONE TO FORESTALL US FROM GETTING ALL THE INFORMATION WE NEED, I'D HAVE BROUGHT VALEERA WITH US!



SORRY. I WAS ALWAYS THE IMPETUOUS BROTHER.

HJALMAR IS THE LEVELHEADED ONE.



STILL... WE'VE LEARNED WHAT WE NEEDED TO KNOW! MY BROTHER YET LIVES.

BUT WHERE ARE LONGBRAID'S FORCES?

HOW CAN THE ALLIANCE HAVE ABANDONED THANDOL SPAN?



MEANWHILE, NOT FAR AWAY...

I FEEL... UNCLEAN.

AND I HATE THAT YOU'RE LEFT TO NURSEMAID ME, WHILE LO'GOSH AND THARGAS SCOUT THE AREA!



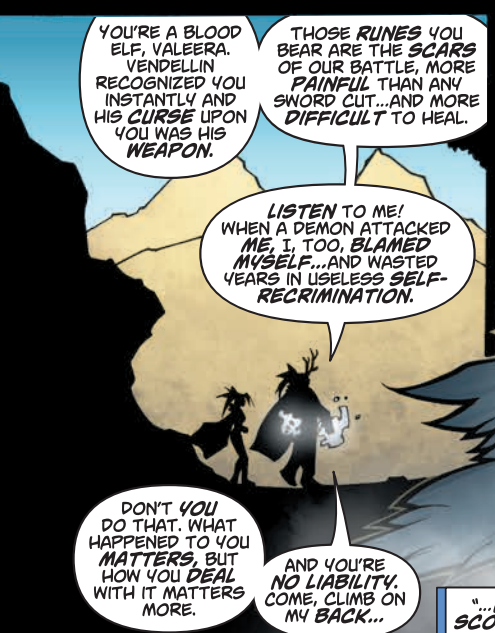
DRINK THIS. IT MIGHT HELP A BIT.

I'M NO GOOD FOR ANYTHING RIGHT NOW. I CAN HARDLY STAND, MUCH LESS FIGHT.

YOU WERE ATTACKED WITH FEL ENERGY. UNTIL IT'S OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM...



BUT BROLL--THAT MONSTER SAW WHAT I WAS! HE KNEW WHAT I WANTED. WHAT I STILL WANT--!



YOU'RE A BLOOD ELF, VALEERA. VENDELLIN RECOGNIZED YOU INSTANTLY AND HIS CURSE UPON YOU WAS HIS WEAPON.

THOSE RUNES YOU BEAR ARE THE SCARS OF OUR BATTLE, MORE PAINFUL THAN ANY SWORD CUT...AND MORE DIFFICULT TO HEAL.

LISTEN TO ME! WHEN A DEMON ATTACKED ME, I, TOO, BLAMED MYSELF...AND WASTED YEARS IN USELESS SELF-RECRIMINATION.

DON'T YOU DO THAT. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU MATTERS, BUT HOW YOU DEAL WITH IT MATTERS MORE.

AND YOU'RE NO LIABILITY. COME, CLIMB ON MY BACK...

"...AND WE'LL DO SOME SCOUTING OF OUR OWN."



IT WAS MY FAULT, BROLL. YOU WARNED ME, BUT I TOUCHED THAT FEL DAGGER ANYWAY...THE MEREST BRUSH...AND IT FELT WONDERFUL.



I CRAVED THE FEL ENERGY THE WARLOCK OFFERED. ONLY...IT WASN'T WHAT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE. AND NOW I...I'M SCARED...

...OF WHAT I AM...AND WHAT I COULD BECOME.



THE DRAUGHT
YOU GAVE ME DID
HELP...A BIT. I FEEL
BETTER--!

LOOK! THE
LEGENDARY
THANDOL
SPAN!

EVEN IN FAR
KALIMDOR, THEY TELL
THE TALE OF HOW
THE DARK IRONS
DESTROYED ONE OF
THE BRIDGES.

THE **SECOND**
BRIDGE STILL STANDS--
IT'S **BEAUTIFUL**, ISN'T IT?
THOUGH THE DARK IRONS
ARE SAID TO BE FIGHTING
TO **DESTROY** IT
AS WELL!

BROLL...
IS THAT
SMOKE...?

IT'S SOME KIND OF MACHINE! WHAT IS IT? I'LL BET YOU KNOW, DON'T YOU?

OH, I WISH YOUR ANIMAL FORMS COULD TALK!

AND DWARVES, BROLL! DARK IRONS BY THE LOOKS OF THEM! BUT...I THOUGHT THE ALLIANCE HELD THANDOL SPAN!

AND THEY'VE A PRISONER! A BRONZEBEARD. SAME BIG NOSE AS THARGAS. I'LL BET THAT'S HIS BROTHER.

"THERE'S A WARLOCK, TOO...I CAN SEE HIS DARK AURA. HE MUST BE THEIR BOSS."

"AND THAT...THING BESIDE HIM. IS THAT A FELHUNTER? IT'S MONSTROUS. SUFFUSED WITH FEL ENERGY."

"BROLL--FLY CLOSER! ARE THOSE EXPLOSIVES--"

EH?

ALLIANCE SPIES! SHOOT THEM DOWN!

BAM
BLAM

BAM

HURRY, BROLL! WE HAVE TO FIND LO'GOSH AND THARGAS AND TELL THEM WHAT WE'VE SEEN!

THE DIRIGIBLE MOORING DOCK AT STORMWIND KEEP

SORRY I CAN'T TRANSPORT YOUR CANNONS, KING MAGNI. BUT YOU AND THE DARK IRONS HAVE LONG BEEN AT WAR...

...AND, THOUGH I DON'T MIND CARRYING ARMED PASSENGERS, TO TRANSPORT HEAVY ARTILLERY WOULD COMPROMISE THE GOBLINS' NEUTRALITY.

HUMPH!

GUARDS OF IRONFORGE! AS BRONZEBEARDS, WE LIKE TO KEEP OUR FEET ON SOLID GROUND.

BUT A TERRIBLE THREAT NOW CALLS FOR AN HEROIC RESPONSE.

HJALMAR ANVILMAR HAS REPORTED THAT LONGBRAID'S FORCES HAVE BEEN DRIVEN BACK AND THANDOL SPAN IS LEFT UNDEFENDED.

THE FATE OF KHAZ MODAN-- PERHAPS THE FATE OF ALL THE EASTERN KINGDOMS--RIDES UPON YOUR VALOR.

WHERE YOU LEAD, SIRE, WE FOLLOW!

Even onto the deck of that infernal flying craft!

Could be worse. Magni could have asked us to ride into battle on gryphons like those mad Wilhammers.

I DON'T KNOW HOW THIS HAPPENED, KING MAGNI. I ORDERED REINFORCEMENTS...

...WHICH I COUNTERMANDED, BOLVAR. WITH OUR FORCES STRETCHED SO THIN, SURELY THE DARK IRONS AREN'T SOMETHING WE NEED TO CONCERN OURSELVES WITH. THEY'RE MAGNI'S BRETHREN.

THEY'RE WHAT?!

LADY PRESTOR INSULTS ME WHILE VARIAN DOES NOTHING. CLEARLY, HE IS A PUPPET KING, WHILE PRESTOR HOLDS THE SCEPTER.

IT MAKES ME EAGER TO MEET WITH THE "OTHER" VARIAN--WHO CALLS HIMSELF LO'GOSH--

--AND WHOM JAINA PROUDMOORE BELIEVES IS THE TRUE KING OF STORMWIND.



WHILE TO THE NORTH...

LO'GOSH! THARGAS! BROLL AND I HAVE BEEN SCOUTING!

THERE ARE DARK IRONS ON THANDOL SPAN, LED BY A WARLOCK CARRYING A HORNED HELMET--

A DARK IRON WARLOCK HAS TAKEN MY BROTHER'S HELM?! HE'LL PAY DEARLY FOR THAT INSULT!

THERE WAS ALSO A RUSTY OLD MACHINE BELCHING STEAM. IT LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE OFF-LOADING EXPLOSIVES.

WE MAY GET LUCKY. THEY COULD BE WATCHING THE SKIES WHILE WE KILL THEIR SCOUTS AND SENTRIES AS WE GO IN.

AND WE SAW A BRONZEBEARD IN CHAINS WHO MUST BE HJALMAR.

THE DARK IRONS SAW US, LO'GOSH. I'M SORRY. THAT WILL MAKE THEM WARY.



AN IMPOSTOR SITS ON THE THRONE OF STORMWIND, LO'GOSH.

IN RETURN FOR YOUR HELP HERE, I PLEDGE MY AID IN ROUTING THE USURPER...AND DESTROYING THOSE BEHIND HIM.

I THANK YOU, MY FRIEND. I FEAR THE USURPER COULD THREATEN MY SON.

KING MAGNI WILL ASSURE HIMSELF OF ANDUIN'S SAFETY, LO'GOSH.

WHILE WE WILL SAVE YOUR BROTHER...AND PREVENT THE DESTRUCTION OF THANDOL SPAN.



THE DARK IRONS HAVE **SENTRIES** POSTED ATOP THE TOWERS AND AT BOTH ENDS OF THE BRIDGE.

NO SURPRISE THERE.



SEE ANYTHING?

"THEIR PRESENCE MEANS WE HAVE SOME TIME..."

"...THEY'LL PULL THEIR MEN OFF THE BRIDGE BEFORE IGNITING THE EXPLOSIVES."



ALL QUIET, SO FAR.



THERE ARE ONLY **FOUR** OF US TO THEIR SQUADRON.

OUR ODDS ARE IMPROVING.



WE'LL NEED **COVER**... BOTH TO STEAL ONTO THE BRIDGE AND TO GAIN TIME TO FOIL THEIR PLANS.



FOG, I THINK. **DENSE**... MOVING IN SLOWLY... FOLLOWED BY **WIND**... AND DRIVING **RAIN**.

JUST KEEP IT **SUBTLE**, BROLL.



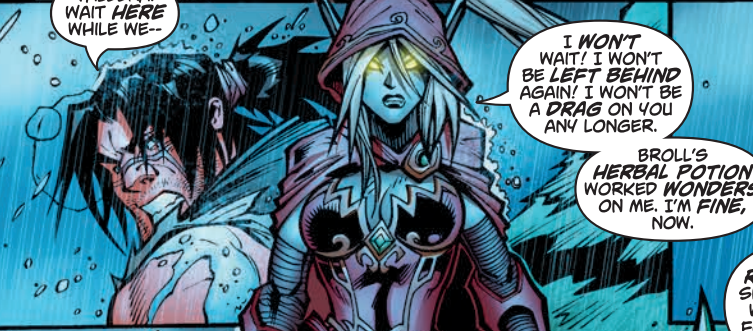
NO LIGHTNING!
REMEMBER THE EXPLOSIVES.



I HEAR YOU, MY FRIEND. THE ANCIENTS FORBID THAT WE SHOULD AID THE DARK IRONS AND BLOW UP THE BRIDGE OURSELVES!



BLAST THIS STORM! RAIN...AND FOG THICK AS A SHROUD! UNNATURALLY THICK...!



VALEERA. WAIT HERE WHILE WE--

I WON'T WAIT! I WON'T BE LEFT BEHIND AGAIN! I WON'T BE A DRAG ON YOU ANY LONGER.

BROLL'S HERBAL POTION WORKED WONDERS ON ME. I'M FINE, NOW.

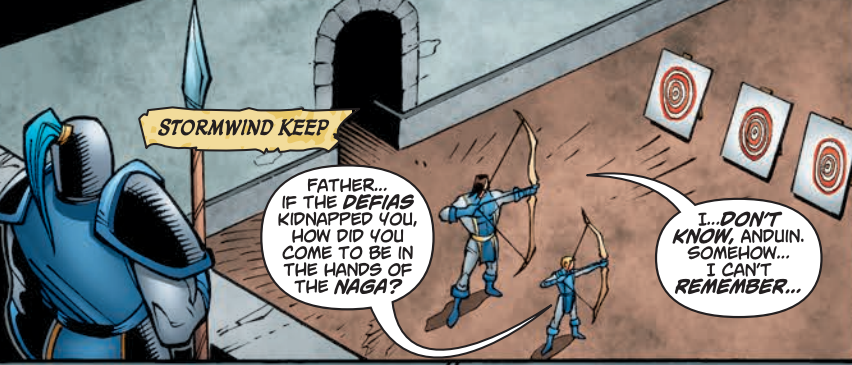
YOU'RE NOT!

YOU'RE RIGHT, LO'GOSH. SHE'S NOT. BUT IT WOULD BE RISKY FOR HER TO STAY HERE ALONE.



JOINING THE RESCUE--AND THE BATTLE--WILL GIVE HER FOCUS BEYOND HER OWN PAIN.

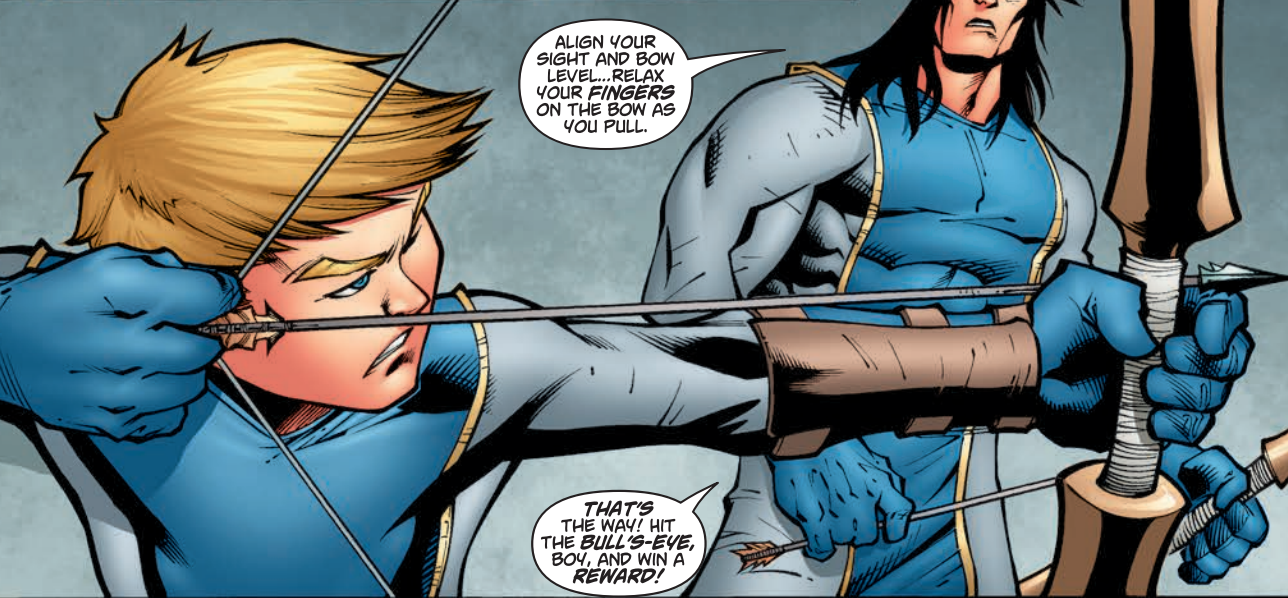
SHE'S EARNED THE RIGHT.



STORMWIND KEEP

FATHER... IF THE DEFIAS KIDNAPPED YOU, HOW DID YOU COME TO BE IN THE HANDS OF THE NAGA?

I...DON'T KNOW, ANDUIN. SOMEHOW... I CAN'T REMEMBER...



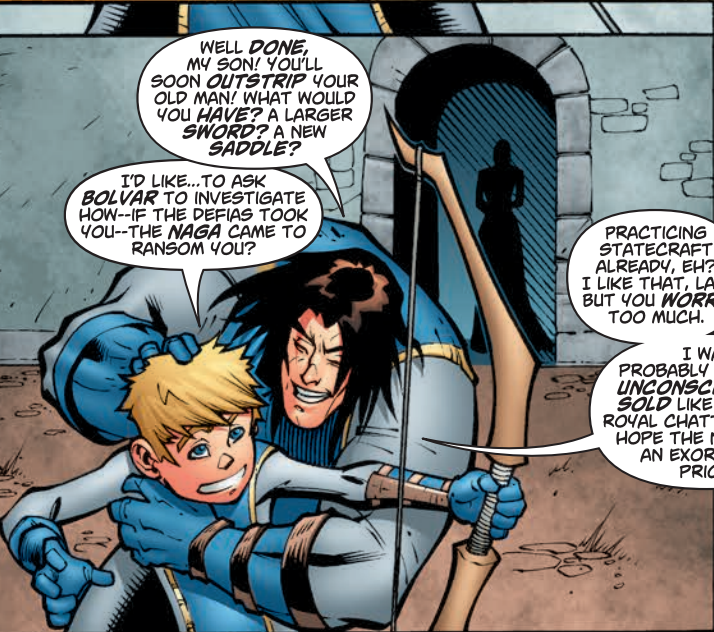
ALIGN YOUR SIGHT AND BOW LEVEL...RELAX YOUR FINGERS ON THE BOW AS YOU PULL.

THAT'S THE WAY! HIT THE BULL'S-EYE, BOY, AND WIN A REWARD!



THWANGGG

BETHONK



WELL DONE, MY SON! YOU'LL SOON OUTSTRIP YOUR OLD MAN! WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE? A LARGER SWORD? A NEW SADDLE?

I'D LIKE...TO ASK BOLVAR TO INVESTIGATE HOW--IF THE DEFIAS TOOK YOU--THE NAGA CAME TO RANSOM YOU?

PRACTICING STATECRAFT ALREADY, EH? I LIKE THAT, LAD. BUT YOU WORRY TOO MUCH.

I WAS PROBABLY KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS AND SOLD LIKE SO MUCH ROYAL CHATTEL...I ONLY HOPE THE NAGA PAID AN EXORBITANT PRICE!



THE BOY IS TOO PERCEPTIVE AND VARIAN INDULGES HIM.

THIS THREAT MUST BE NEUTRALIZED... PERMANENTLY.

AND SOMEWHERE IN THE
MIDST OF A THICK FOG...

Ready your sword,
Thargas. Hjalmar must
be in the central
tower.

Broll,
we can
sneak in
together.

Wait! I
sense fel
energy
ahead.

Broll!
The fog--

It's dispersing...

...The warlock must have
suspected trickery. He's
called his *felhunter* to
counter your spell.


GRRRRR

THERE!
INTRUDERS!
FIRE!

**CUK
PAFF
CUK
PFFT**

NO GOOD,
BALGARAS! BLASTED
RAIN'S WET OUR
POWDER.

SO MUCH FOR
SECURITY.



TAKE THEM ALIVE!
WE'LL BURN THEIR SECRETS FROM THEM!

NOW WE MUST TRUST TO SINEW AND STEEL! AND DO SOME SERIOUS KILLING!

THARGAS! GO! FIND YOUR BROTHER IN THE TOWER.

FOR ANVILMAR!
DEATH TO THE DARK IRONS!

A BRONZEBEARD!
AND SEVERAL OF MY FIGHTERS HAVE ALREADY FALLEN! THESE WARRIORS MIGHT PREVAIL--EVEN AGAINST THE MIGHT OF THE DARK IRON CLAN!

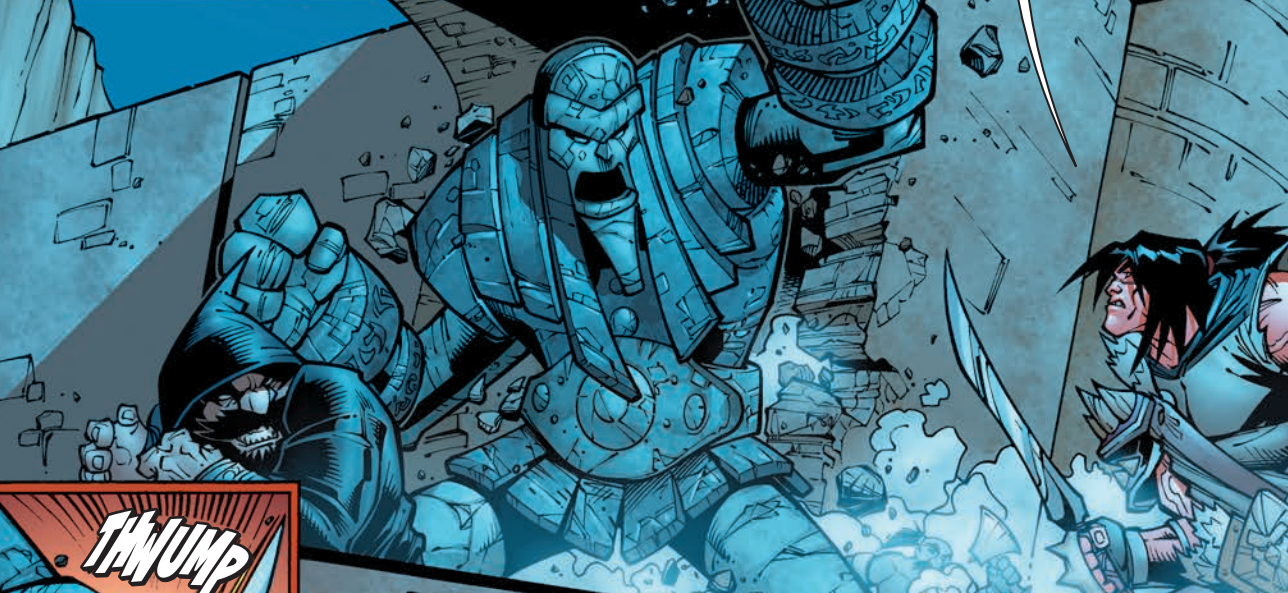
WELL, POWDER AND STEEL MAY FAIL--BUT SOME WEAPONS CANNOT BE WITHSTOOD!

GOLEM!
ARISE AND DEFEND!



WAR GOLEM!
BROLL, GO
WITH THARGAS!
TAKE VALEERA
WITH YOU!

IT WILL
BE IMMUNE TO
MAGIC...BUT NOT
TO STEEL!



THUMP

UGGGHH!

EVEN YOU ARE NOT A
MATCH FOR A WAR
GOLEM'S FISTS,
MY FRIEND!
SO IF
YOU'LL STEP
ASIDE...

...YOU'LL FIND THAT THE
DARK IRONS THEMSELVES
HAVE PROVIDED THE KEY
TO OUR VICTORY!

THE SIEGE
ENGINE IS ANCIENT.
STILL...SHOULD BE
SIMPLE ENOUGH TO
OPERATE IF EVEN
A DARK IRON
CAN DO IT!



SHIFT
URRRRRRRRR

YES!



VRRRRMM

LO'GOSH!
MOVE!
NOW!

SKREEEG

WHAMM

SQUEEEEEEE

KRASH



HJALMAR!
HOLD ON! I'M
COMING!



LET'S GO,
BROLL! THE WAY
IS CLEAR.

VALEERA--?!?

VALEERA!
NO!

CHOKK

ARRRGHHH!

SKRIKTTT

WHY
SO ANGRY,
BROLL?
THE
MAGIC-EATER IS
DEAD! NOW YOUR
SPELLS WILL
WORK!!

YOU
KNOW YOU
SHOULDN'T
HAVE--!

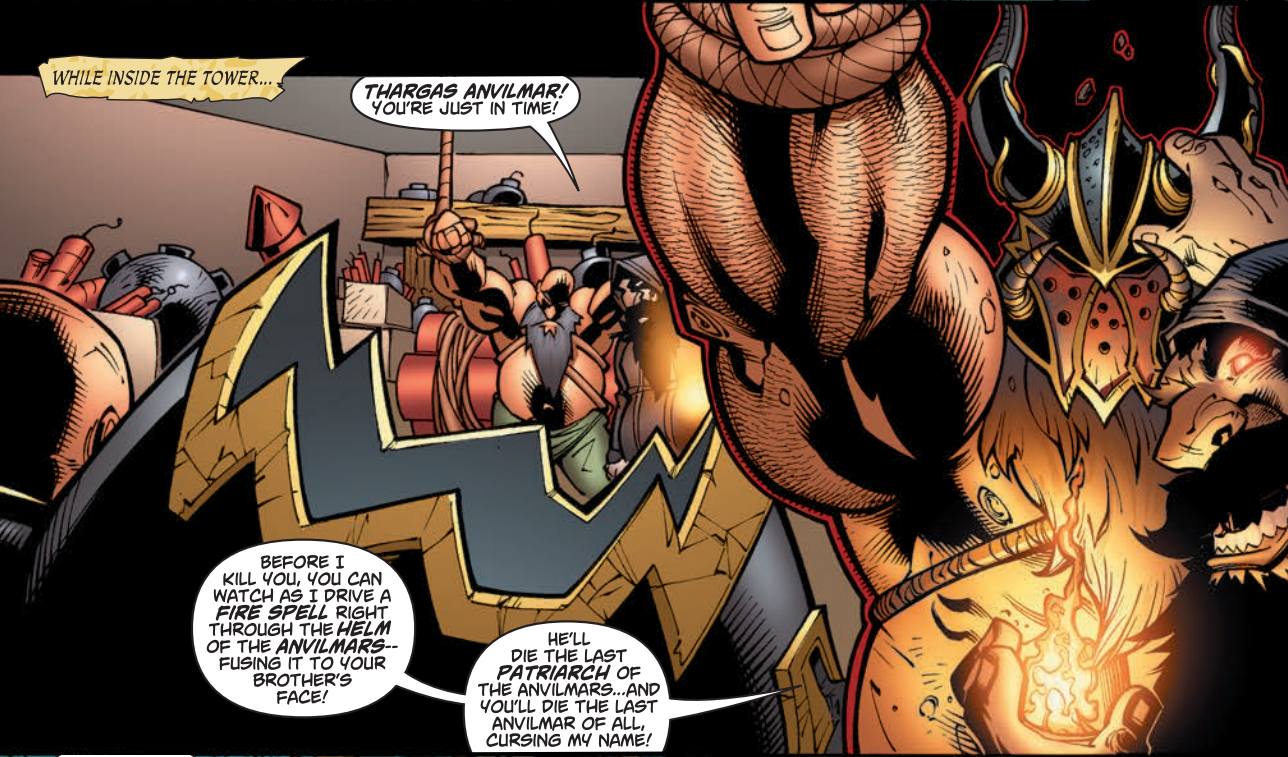


SHE'S RIGHT, BROLL!

SUMMON THE HOWLING RAIN--BUT NO LIGHTNING! WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THEIR POWDER'S SOAKED!

YOU CAN DISCUSS THE FINER POINTS OF HER BEHAVIOR LATER!

R-RIGHT!



WHILE INSIDE THE TOWER...

THARGAS ANVILMAR! YOU'RE JUST IN TIME!

BEFORE I KILL YOU, YOU CAN WATCH AS I DRIVE A FIRE SPELL RIGHT THROUGH THE HELM OF THE ANVILMARS--FUSING IT TO YOUR BROTHER'S FACE!

HE'LL DIE THE LAST PATRIARCH OF THE ANVILMARS...AND YOU'LL DIE THE LAST ANVILMAR OF ALL, CURSING MY NAME!



THINK MORE AND TALK LESS, WARLOCK!

PTHUNKKX

AGGGGHHH!



THWAK



I'LL HAVE YOU FREE
IN A MOMENT,
HJALMAR!



FORGET
ME! BRIDGE...
THREATENED!

IT'S ALL
UNDER CONTROL.
HJAL! EVEN NOW,
THE EXPLOSIVES
OUTSIDE ARE BEING
DESTROYED!



THANDOL
SPAN IS
SAVED!

HSSSS

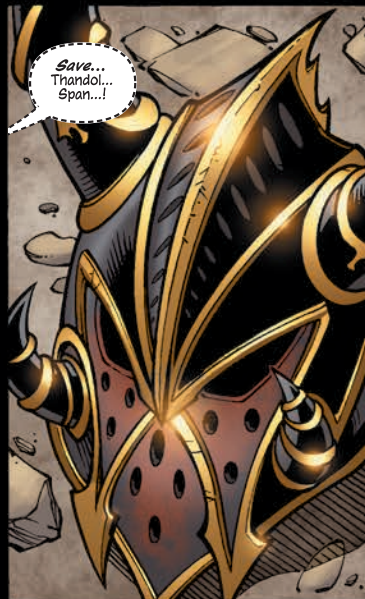


NOT--



--YET!

BHHHOOOUMMM



WHILE OUTSIDE...

WHERE'S THE BRONZEBEARD?

I WANT TO SEE HIM DIE!

HERE, DARK IRON!

SEE ME...AND DIE!

FOR ANVILMAR!
FOR HJALMAR!

FOR MY BROTHER!

RRRRRRRR

DAMNATION!
THE DARK IRONS
HAVE FIRED
UP THE SIEGE
ENGINE!

FALL BACK
AND--

**CRANKT
BAWHOUM**

CRASH

AIEEEEEEEEEE!

OUR
TANK'S
BEEN
BLOWN!

WHO THE
HELL IS
THAT--?!!

WELL AIMED,
HOTSHOT!

IT SEEMS
THAT WE'VE
ARRIVED IN
THE NICK OF
TIME.

NOW LET'S
MOP UP THE
REST OF THE
DARK IRON
SCUM!

RAKE THE
BRIDGE WITH
GRAPESHOT!
THE REST OF YOU
SKIRMISHERS!
OPEN FIRE!

BAROUM

**BAM
BAM**

**BANG
BAM**



KING MAGNI! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU CAN'T HAVE A CANNON ON BOARD!

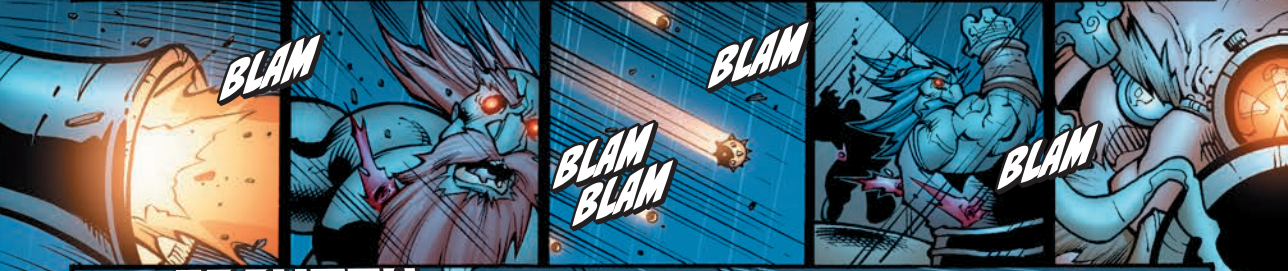
I TOLD YOU--IT'S AGAINST GOBLIN NEUTRALITY.

CANNON?



WHAT CANNON?

KNOCCOCK



BLAM

**BLAM
BLAM**

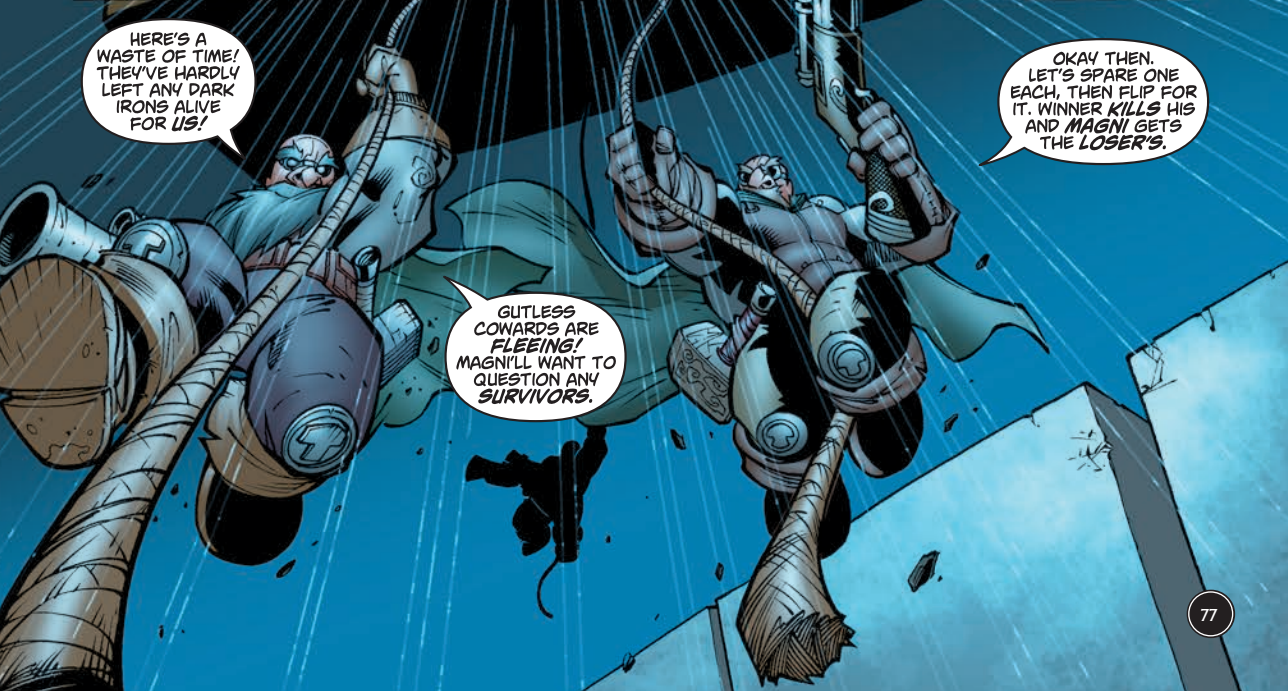
BLAM

BLAM



KREASSHHHH!

GAKKKKKKKKK!



HERE'S A WASTE OF TIME! THEY'VE HARDLY LEFT ANY DARK IRONS ALIVE FOR US!

OKAY THEN. LET'S SPARE ONE EACH, THEN FLIP FOR IT. WINNER KILLS HIS AND MAGNI GETS THE LOSER'S.

GUTLESS COWARDS ARE FLEEING! MAGNI'LL WANT TO QUESTION ANY SURVIVORS.

SHORTLY...

SO HJALMAR IS DEAD. IT WAS YOUR BROTHER'S WARNING THAT BROUGHT ME HERE TO THANDOL SPAN. I AM SORRY, THARGAS.

IT WAS HIS LAST ACT OF HEROISM THAT SAVED THE BRIDGE FROM DESTRUCTION.

NEVERTHELESS, I CAN SEE THAT, WITHOUT YOUR INTERVENTION, WE WOULD HAVE ARRIVED TOO LATE.

I SEEM TO REMEMBER ORDERING YOU TO TAKE YOUR CHARGE TO IRONFORGE.

THAT WAS MY DOING. I ORDERED THARGAS TO BRING ME HERE, INSTEAD.

HJALMAR WAS MY OLD TEACHER. I COULDN'T LEAVE HIM IN DARK IRON HANDS.

NOR COULD I LET THANDOL SPAN BE DESTROYED.

HOW DID IT HAPPEN THAT THE BRIDGE WAS LEFT UNDEFENDED AND FELL TO THE DARK IRONS WHILE I WAS AWAY?

THAT IS BUT ONE OF THE THINGS WE NEED TO FIND OUT.

YOUR DOPPELGANGER IN STORMWIND HAS BEEN REMARKABLY INEFFECTIVE IN HIS BRIEF TENURE.

I AM ADDRESSING KING VARIAN, I PRESUME?


CHAPTER 4



SAMWIS
08



Lupo
Lullabi
HOPE



ONCE, LONG AGO,
IRONFORGE WAS THE
ANCESTRAL HOME OF
ALL THE DWARVES.

NOW IT IS THE
FORTRESS OF THE
BRONZE BEARD
CLAN.

ABOARD A DIRIGIBLE, THE
VICTORIOUS KING **MAGNI
BRONZEBEARD** AND HIS
ROYAL GUARD RETURN
HOME...

...WHILE HIS LOYAL
SUBJECTS LOOK
SKYWARD EAGER TO
HEAR NEWS OF THE
GREAT **BATTLE** SO
RECENTLY FOUGHT...

...AND CATCH A GLIMPSE
OF THE MYSTERIOUS
HUMAN AND **ELVES** WHO
ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN
CRUCIAL IN THE DEFENSE
OF **THANDOL SPAN**.

DESCENT



YOU'RE TALLER, ELF! CAN YOU SEE ANY-ONE?

NOT YET. BUT YOU BRONZE-BEARDS ARE NERVOUS FLYERS! KING MAGNI AND THE OTHERS WILL BE EAGER TO SET FOOT ON SOLID GROUND AGAIN.

THERE'S THE HUMAN! BETWEEN MAGNI AND THARGAS!

LOOKS A LOT LIKE KING VARIAN OF STORMWIND!

EXCEPT FOR THE SCAR, HE COULD ALMOST BE VARIAN!



AND...IS THAT A NIGHT ELF?

WITH THOSE ANTLERS? IS IT POSSIBLE THE DRUIDIC HERO MALFURION STORMRAGE HAS RETURNED?

THE FEMALE! SURELY SHE'S NOT A BLOOD ELF! SHE SHOULD BE DRAWN AND QUARTERED, NOT WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS TO IRONFORGE!

YOU'LL KEEP SUCH THOUGHTS TO YOURSELF IF YOU'RE WISE. WHATEVER SHE IS, SHE'S MAGNI'S GUEST!

WHAT'S THAT ON HER SKIN?

VARIAN, I--

UNTIL I REVEAL MYSELF, KING MAGNI, PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST IF I REMAIN LO'GOSH, A SIMPLE GLADIATOR.

HUMPH! HARDLY SIMPLE, BY ANY MEASURE. STILL, UNTIL WE KNOW MORE ABOUT THAT IMPOSTOR WHO SITS ON YOUR THRONE, YOU MAY BE RIGHT. THOUGH RUMORS ARE ALREADY ABROAD IN THE LAND.

YOU HAVE AN ENEMY SOMEWHERE, LO'GOSH, WHO UNDERSTANDS YOUR SIGNIFICANCE AND HAS SOUGHT TO TERMINATE YOU MORE THAN ONCE.

YOUNG PRINCE ANDUIN--A FINE BOY, THAT--HAS INSISTED HIGHLORD BOLVAR FORDRAGON LOOK INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCE BEHIND HIS FATHER'S DISAPPEARANCE AND RECENT RETURN. HE KNOWS SOMETHING'S WRONG.

AND I MYSELF HAVE TALKED BOTH TO BOLVAR AND TO MARSHALL WINDSOR ABOUT WHAT'S AMISS.

WINDSOR'S A GOOD MAN...AND A LOYAL FRIEND.

WE STUDIED SWORDCRAFT TOGETHER, THOUGH THE HAMMER PROVED TO BE HIS FAVORED WEAPON.

LIKE ME, WINDSOR WAS TROUBLED BY THE KING'S ODD PASSIVENESS.

HE BEGAN TO SUSPECT THAT AN IMPOSTOR--PERHAPS EVEN A DRAGON--HAD TAKEN VARIAN'S FORM. HE PLANNED TO DO A BIT OF DIGGING...



I FEEL... HUNGRY!

THERE WILL BE A FEAST--

IT'S NOT...FOOD... I WANT.

I KNOW, VALEERA. YOU CRAVE THE ENERGY OF MAGIC! ARCANIC FEL. IT DOESN'T MATTER.

UNTIL THE FEL ENERGY IS OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM, YOU'LL DO ANYTHING TO FEED YOUR ADDICTION.

I FEAR YOU WILL FACE INCREASINGLY TERRIBLE PANGS AS YOU WITHDRAW UNTIL--

BROLL! THAT HUMAN! HIS HAND...!

CAN'T YOU SEE IT?! SHARP AND DANGEROUS...

...POINTED AT LO'GOSH'S BACK! AND BURNING WITH ARCANIC ENERGY! I MUST HAVE IT!!

SHAZA-KIEL!*



YEARGGGH!

VALEERA! WHAT--??



**SURRENDER YOUR SOUL!™

WHO HAS DARED TO WOUND ME?! YOU'RE NO DEMON! I WILL KILL YOU FIRST--

--THOREL OSH'ONZA!*

A BLACK DRAGON!

KATRA ZIL SHUKIL!***

* "INSOLENT YOUNG ELF!"

*** "SUFFER AND PERISH!"

GRAAGGGH!

ANAKH KYREE!***

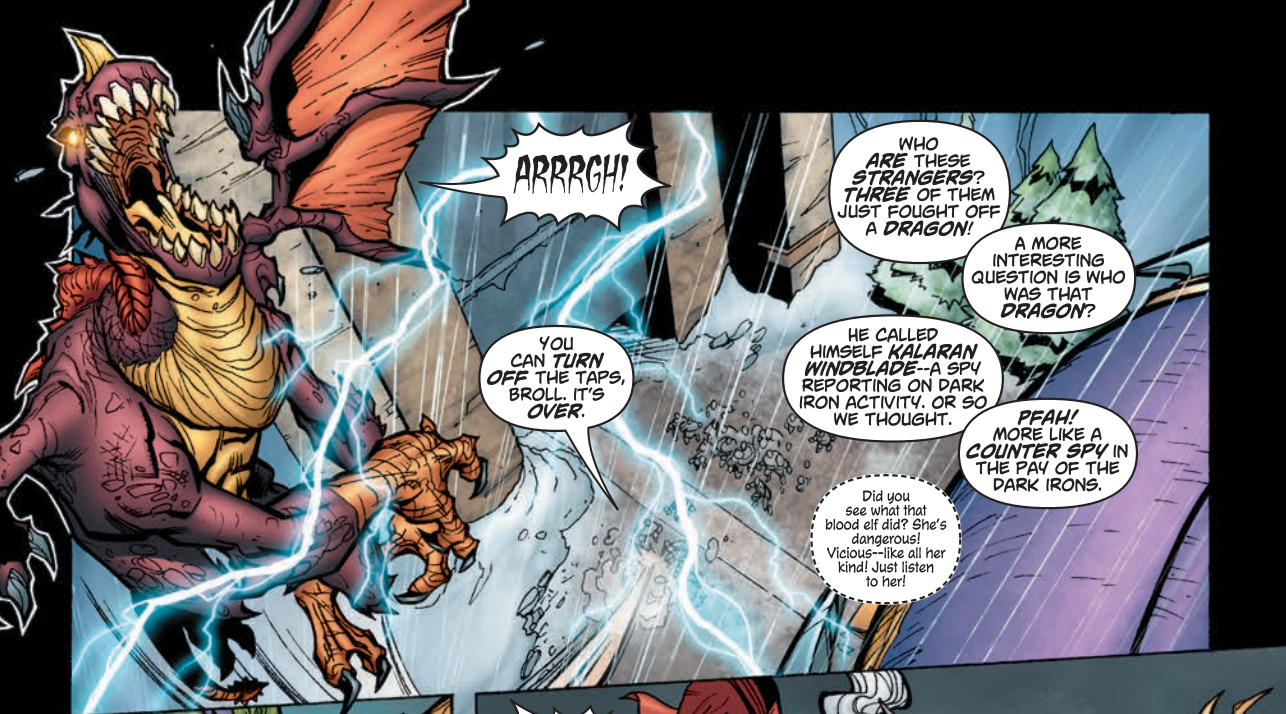
*** "MISERABLE INSECT!!"

VALEERA! GET BACK!

I CALL UPON LIGHTNING AND STORM TO STRIKE--

GRAB VALEERA, BROLL!

I'M ON IT!



ARRRGH!

WHO ARE THESE STRANGERS? THREE OF THEM JUST FOUGHT OFF A DRAGON!

A MORE INTERESTING QUESTION IS WHO WAS THAT DRAGON?

YOU CAN TURN OFF THE TAPS, BROLL. IT'S OVER.

HE CALLED HIMSELF KALARAN WINDBLADE--A SPY REPORTING ON DARK IRON ACTIVITY. OR SO WE THOUGHT.

PFHA! MORE LIKE A COUNTER SPY IN THE PAY OF THE DARK IRONS.

Did you see what that blood elf did? She's dangerous! Vicious--like all her kind! Just listen to her!



GOR'OM HAGULL!**

LO'GOSH-- SHE'S GONE MAD!

* "MEDDLING DOG!"



A-RUL SHACH KIGON!**

*** "I WILL EAT YOUR HEART!"

HELP ME! I DON'T WANT TO HURT HER!



SHE'S PASSED OUT.

DID YOU HEAR HER? SHE WAS CURSING THE DRAGON! CURSING ME! IN EREDUN.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BURNING LEGION--? BUT...HOW--?

WE'LL NEED TO PURSUE THAT INQUIRY, BUT AT A LATER DAY.

I THINK WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS YET ANOTHER ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT.

AND IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS NOW THAT BLACK DRAGONS ARE INVOLVED SOMEHOW.

STORMWIND

FATHER--
BOLVAR SAYS MARSHAL
WINDSOR HAS A THEORY
ABOUT WHAT'S BEEN GOING
ON IN STORMWIND.
HE SAYS--

FASCINATING,
LAD. BUT WHILE YOU
TALK, BE SURE TO WATCH
WHERE YOUR HORSE PUTS
HIS FEET. THIS PART
OF THE TRAIL CAN BE
TREACHEROUS--

SPAKK

FATHER!

ANDUIN!
NO!



AND AS HE HOLDS HIS SON'S LIFE IN HIS HANDS...

...VARIAN WRYNN IS SUDDENLY ENVELOPED BY VISIONS!

OF THE DEFIAS BROTHERHOOD AND TREACHERY...

...OF SEARING AGONY...

...OF THE NAGA...

...OF ANOTHER CLIFF AND ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH...

...WHERE SALVATION SEEMS JUST BEYOND HIS GRASP...

...EVEN AS HE AND ANDUIN ARE PULLED TO SAFETY.

YOU SAVED ME, FATHER! THAT WAS.. AWESOME!

IT REALLY IS YOU! I WAS SO WORRIED!

NOW WHO ELSE WOULD I BE?

BUT IT WAS VERY ODD.

WHILE HANGING FROM THAT CLIFF, I HAD THE MOST BIZARRE WASH OF MEMORIES.

AT LEAST... I THINK THEY WERE MEMORIES... OF EVENTS THAT OCCURRED WHILE I WAS MISSING...

THE DEFIAS... HOODED DARK WIZARDS... A NAGA ATTACK.

DARK WIZARDS?! WERE THEY DEFIAS?

I..DON'T KNOW. THEY SEEMED TO BE TORTURING ME AND THEIR FACES WERE HIDDEN...

HOW AWFUL FOR YOU! AND YET THROUGH IT ALL, YOU REMAIN SO CHEERFUL AND BRAVE.

OH, WELL.. HEROIC DEEDS ARE A SPECIALTY, MY LADY!

AND, THUS, DESERVING OF A SPECIAL... REWARD... MY LORD! LATER.

AT KATRANA'S TOUCH, VARIAN HAS ONCE AGAIN BECOME BEFUDDLED... ALMOST AS IF HE WERE BENTCHED.

ANDUIN IS RIGHT. WE NEED TO LEARN WHAT HAPPENED THE NIGHT THE KING DISAPPEARED.

AND, IN THE MEANTIME, PERHAPS WE'D ALL DO WELL TO KEEP AS FAR AWAY FROM THE LADY AS POSSIBLE, ESPECIALLY VARIAN.

MARSHAL WINDSOR'S REPORT OUGHT TO BE THERE WHEN WE GET BACK. IT SHOULD MAKE INTERESTING READING...

IRONFORGE

I CAN'T SAY TOO MUCH VIA SCRYING GLASS--POWERFUL SORCERY SEEMS TO BE INVOLVED AND I DON'T WANT SECRET INFORMATION INTERCEPTED--BUT MARSHAL WINDSOR WAS RIGHT.

DRAGONS--BLACK DRAGONS--ARE DEFINITELY INVOLVED IN THIS STORMWIND BUSINESS.

WINDSOR'S LAST REPORT STATED THAT HE WAS CLOSE TO DISCOVERING THE DRAGON'S IDENTITY.

NOW MARSHAL MAXWELL REPORTS THAT WINDSOR HAS BEEN CAPTURED BY THE DARK IRONS AND IS BEING HELD IN BLACKROCK DEPTHS.

I'LL BE IN TOUCH AGAIN WHEN WE KNOW MORE.

"BOLVAR, WE'VE HAD AN ATTACK HERE."

LATER...

THE FACT THAT WINDSOR WAS TAKEN SUGGESTS HE WAS ON THE RIGHT PATH.

WE NEED TO RESCUE HIM AND FIND OUT WHAT HE'S LEARNED.

BLAH, BLAH. LESS TALK, MORE ACTION. WHEN DO WE LEAVE?

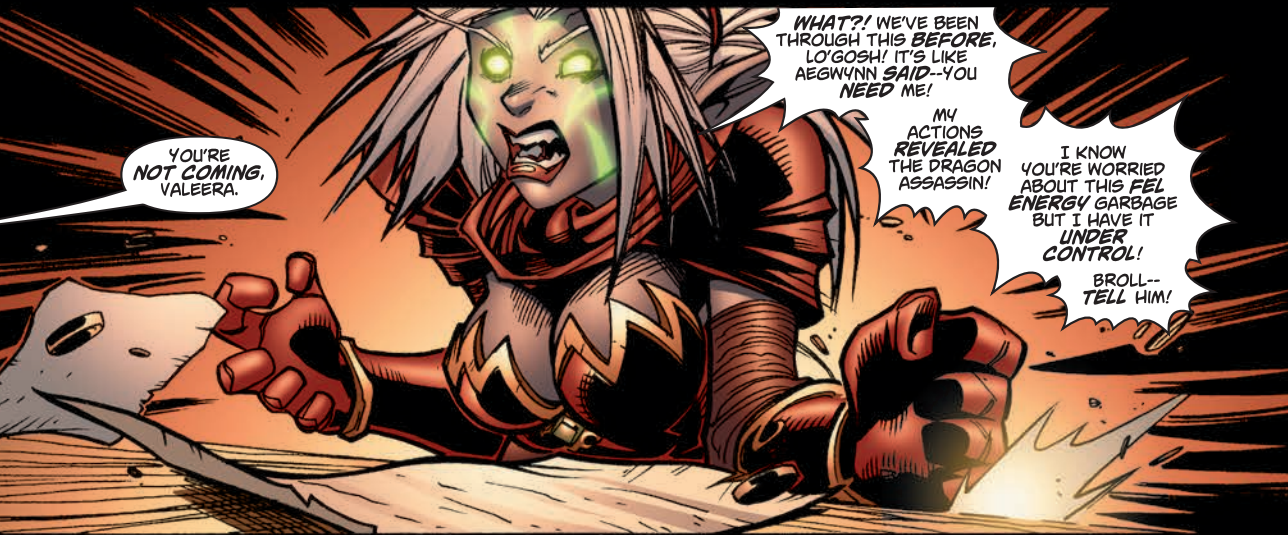
WE DON'T EVEN KNOW IF HE'S STILL ALIVE, VALEERA.

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT...!

I THINK IT'S HERO TIME AGAIN, LO'GOSH.

THE ENTRANCE TO BLACKROCK DEPTHS WILL BE WELL GUARDED. BUT A SMALL PARTY USING A STEALTHY APPROACH MIGHT BE ABLE TO ENTER UNDETECTED...

STEALTH! THAT'S MY MIDDLE NAME!



YOU'RE NOT COMING, VALEERA.

WHAT?! WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE. LO'GOSH! IT'S LIKE AEGWYNN SAID--YOU NEED ME!

MY ACTIONS REVEALED THE DRAGON ASSASSIN!

I KNOW YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT THIS FEL ENERGY GARBAGE BUT I HAVE IT UNDER CONTROL!

BROLL--TELL HIM!



FEL AND ARCANIC ARTIFACTS ARE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT BLACKROCK DEPTHS, VALEERA.

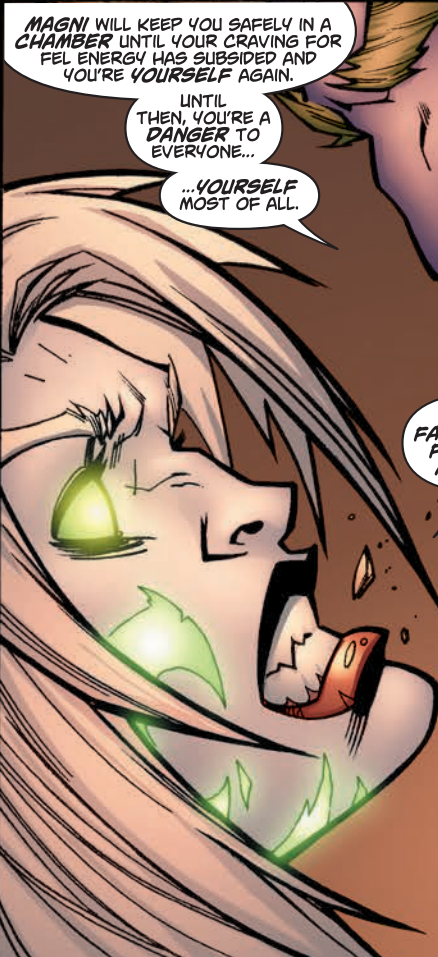
BUT--

IN YOUR UNBRIDLED HUNGER FOR DARKER FORMS OF ENERGY, YOU WOULD REACH OUT FOR THEM AND BETRAY OUR NEED FOR SECRECY.



VALEERA, YOU COULDN'T HELP YOURSELF. YOU...CURSED IN EREDUN.

AT THE VERY LEAST, THAT TELLS ME YOU'RE BEYOND OUR HELP UNTIL THE FEL ENERGY HAS LEFT YOUR SYSTEM.



MAGNI WILL KEEP YOU SAFELY IN A CHAMBER UNTIL YOUR CRAVING FOR FEL ENERGY HAS SUBSIDED AND YOU'RE YOURSELF AGAIN.

UNTIL THEN, YOU'RE A DANGER TO EVERYONE...

...YOURSELF MOST OF ALL.

THAT'S NOT FAIR! IT ISN'T MY FAULT! I WAS ATTACKED!

THIS ISN'T ABOUT FAULT OR BLAME, VALEERA.

BACK IN THE WETLANDS, I PROMISED TO HELP YOU. NOW THAT YOU'VE COME SO FAR DOWN THE FEL PATH, THIS SANCTUARY IS THE ONLY HELP I CAN OFFER.



SANCTUARY!
MORE LIKE
PRISON! ONCE
AGAIN, I'M LEFT
BEHIND! I--



I HATE THIS! NO
HERBAL DRAUGHT
COULD DULL THIS PAIN!
THEY DON'T CARE
ABOUT ME! THEY'RE
JUST ABANDONING
ME WITHOUT A
BACKWARD
GLANCE!

I COULD
HAVE HELD IT
TOGETHER, IF ONLY
THEY'D LET ME
HAVE ONE SMALL
TASTE OF--



OHHHHHHHHH
SOBS
WHO AM I
KIDDING?! BROLL'S
RIGHT! THEY'RE ALL
RIGHT TO LEAVE ME!
I WOULD BETRAY
THEM!

IT'S...
IT'S SO
UNFAIR!

I CAN'T
STAND BEING
COOPED UP HERE.
BUT I'LL ESCAPE.
GO AFTER THEM. IF
I DON'T GET FREE, I
THINK I'LL TRULY
DIE...!



I KNOW YOU HATE LEAVING VALEERA BEHIND,
BROLL, BUT YOU CONCOCTED A VAT FULL OF
HERBAL DRAUGHTS TO DULL THE PAIN
OF HER WITHDRAWAL.

AND MAGN
WILL WATCH
OVER HER.

IF WE--IF YOU--
HAD ACTED LESS
FORCEFULLY, BROLL,
VALEERA WOULD
NEVER HAVE
RECOVERED.

NOW, AT
LEAST, NOW
SHE HAS A
CHANCE.



"DARK IRON SECURITY HAS GROWN LAX SINCE I WAS LAST AT BLACKROCK DEPTHS."

"THERE WERE TOO FEW GUARDS...AND THOSE WE'VE MET HAVE BEEN TOO EASY TO KILL."



MAYBE THIS TIME, YOU'RE KEEPING COMPANY WITH A MORE FORMIDABLE CLASS OF WARRIOR.

YOU KNOW THIS PLACE, THARGAS?

BETTER THAN I'D LIKE!



DURING THE FIRST WAR, I WAS CAPTURED AND...DETAINED HERE. MY BROTHER FINALLY RESCUED ME.

THE INTERIOR IS RIDDLED WITH LAVA PITS, AND AT ITS CORE RESTS THE BURNING DEMIGOD RAGNAROS.

AN ENTITY WE'D DO WELL TO AVOID.


BUT-- DISCOUNTING RAGNAROS--THIS RESCUE WILL BE A STROLL THROUGH THE PARK?

ONLY BY COMPARISON. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO KILL ANOTHER PATROL... QUIETLY.




GRRROOWHH!

INTRUDERS! GET THEM!



NO PYROTECHNICS, BROLL! THARGAS IS RIGHT. WE DON'T WANT TO DRAW MORE ATTENTION THAN WE CAN HELP!



WE COULD BE IN FOR IT NOW. THE NOISE FROM THAT LITTLE FRACAS MAY HAVE ALERTED MORE GUARDS...OR WORSE.

RAGNAROS HAS FOUND A WAY TO CREATE BEINGS OF LIVING STONE. THAT WAS ONE OF HIS WAR GOLEMS WE FACED ON THANDOL SPAN.

"GOLEM LORD ARGELMACH IS BUILDING AN ARMY OF SUCH MONSTERS. HIS LAB IS NEARBY..."

AH! I THOUGHT I CAUGHT THE BRONZEBEARD STENCH!

YOU'LL NOT ESCAPE US A SECOND TIME. THARGAS, YOUR BROTHER IS DEAD AND CAN NO LONGER SAVE YOU!

GOLEMS-- KILL THIS BRONZEBEARD SCUM AND HIS ALLIES!

THARGAS-- TAKE THE OTHER GOLEM!

GRRWL!

**SLIKT
KRAK**



NO PROBLEM!

WATCH OUT, LO'GOSH! ARGELMACH'S DANGEROUS!

KRSMASH

NOT ANY MORE.

URK--!

THWACK



OUR DARK IRONS WATCHED AS YOU LEFT BLACKROCK SPIRE, MARSHAL WINDSOR, WITH FIFTY ORCS ON YOUR HEELS.

That's the voice of High Interrogator Gerstain!



I take it you're acquainted with the lady?

With her dark sorcery and leg irons? Intimately. Listen.

OUR DWARVES WATCHED YOU SLAY THEM ALL.

AND THEN YOUR DARK IRONS ATTACKED, TORTURER.

EVEN SO, HAD I NOT BEEN INJURED, I WOULD HAVE SLAIN THEM ALL, AS WELL.

BUT YOU DIDN'T, AND NOW, YOU'RE MINE. TELL ME, WINDSOR, WHY WERE YOU SPYING IN BLACKROCK SPIRE?

WHILE MILES AWAY IN A CELL OF A DIFFERENT KIND...

I DON'T WANT YOUR STUPID DRAUGHT, BROLL! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT ME HERE! YOU SHOULDN'T!

Why does every-one always leave me??

CRASH



MY POOR DAUGHTER! HOW DARE HE PUNISH YOU IN THIS FASHION?

AFTER ALL YOU DID TO SAVE HIM AND THE OTHERS... TO HAVE IMPRISONED AND ABANDONED YOU!

Ann'dal!*

THAT NIGHT ELF SCUM IS ARROGANT AND WITHOUT HONOR LIKE ALL HIS KIND! AND THE HUMAN AND DWARF ARE NO BETTER!

YOU SEE HOW THEY REPAY YOUR SACRIFICE! HOW THEY DISPARAGE YOU AND TRY TO TWIST YOU INTO SOMETHING YOU ARE NOT!

AND NOW YOU CRINGE, WHIMPERING FOR HIM! YOU ARE WORTHY ONLY OF OUR CONTEMPT!



NO!

I'M NOT! I'LL BE BRAVE! I PROMISE! JUST...DON'T GO!

Ann'dal! Minn'dal!>**

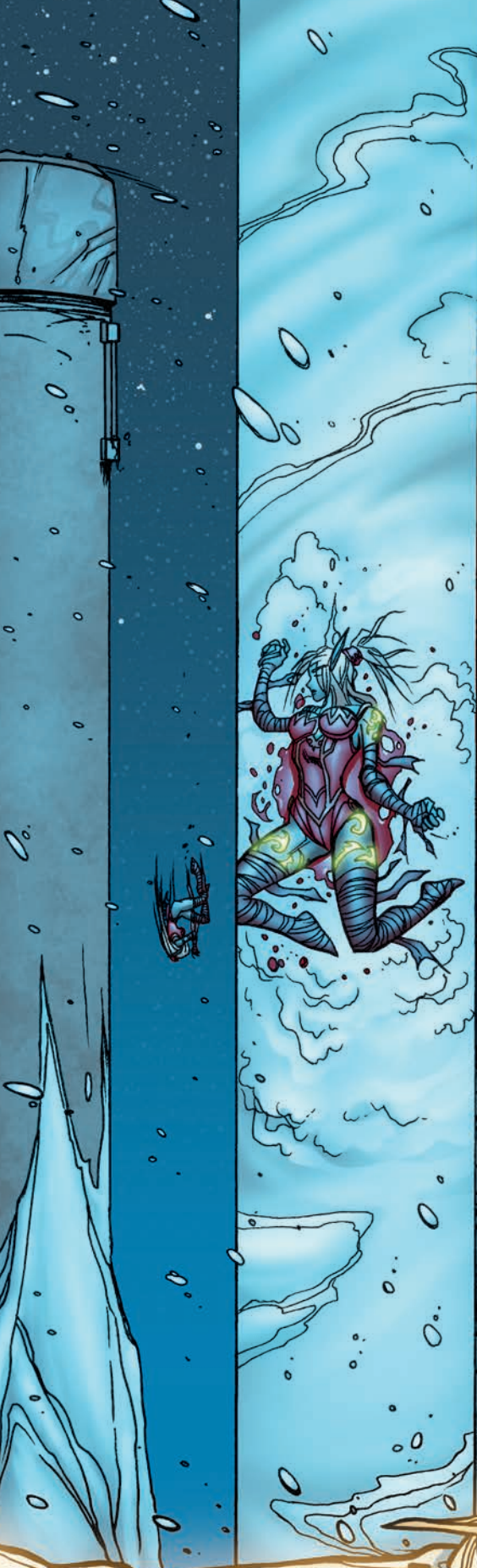
Wait for me!



I'm coming!

** "PAPA! MAMA!"

* "PAPA!"



THE WORLD IS CORRUPT AND BROKEN, DAUGHTER. LIKE YOU.

AND LIKE YOU, IT CAN ONLY BE HEALED BY DEATH. THE DEATH OF ALL WHO LIVE.



SO COME. JOIN US.

AND LET THE WORLD BEGIN ANEW!



NO!

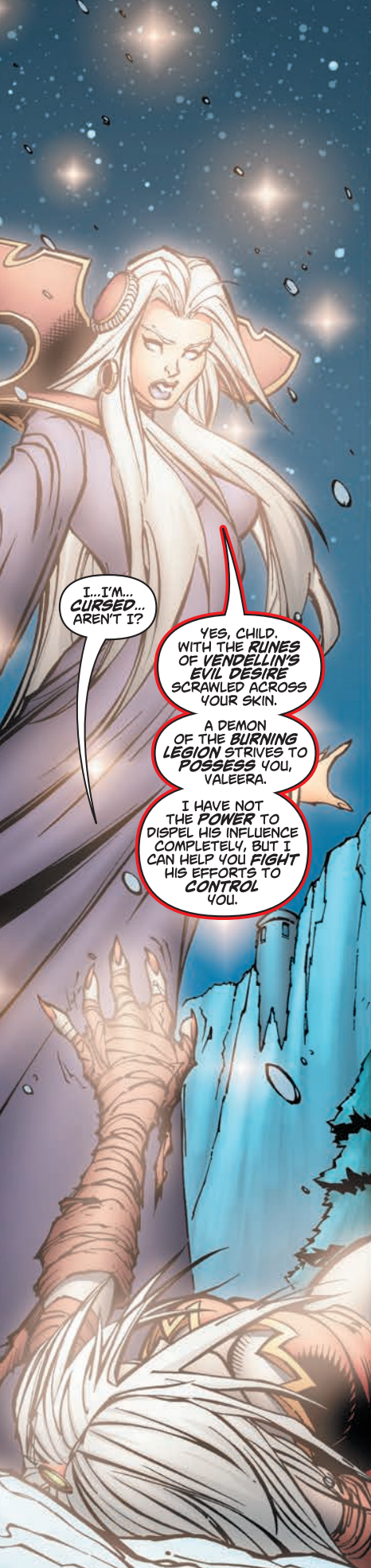
SHARK KIT

BEGONE!

DO NOT LISTEN TO THEM, CHILD. THEY ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM.

ARRGHK!

A...AEGWYNN...?



I...I'M...
CURSED...
AREN'T I?

YES, CHILD.
WITH THE **RUNES**
OF **VENDELLIN'S**
EVIL DESIRE
SCRAWLED ACROSS
YOUR SKIN.

A **DEMON**
OF THE **BURNING**
LEGION STRIVES TO
POSSESS YOU,
VALEERA.

I HAVE NOT
THE **POWER** TO
DISPEL HIS INFLUENCE
COMPLETELY, BUT I
CAN HELP YOU **FIGHT**
HIS EFFORTS TO
CONTROL
YOU.

WHY...
ME...?

THE
ETERNAL
QUESTION, MY
CHILD. THAT IS
BUT ONE OF MANY
ANSWERS
YOU MUST
DISCOVER.

BUT ALWAYS
REMEMBER,
VALEERA, THAT
YOU ARE **NOT**
ALONE...



Aegwynn??

...AND THAT
THERE ARE THOSE
WHO TRULY **CARE**
FOR YOU AND WILL **AID** YOU IN
YOUR STRUGGLES. THEY
WILL **NOT** ABANDON
YOU...

...WHETHER
YOU WOULD
HAVE IT SO
OR **NOT**...



Lo'Gosh...
...Broll...

...AND
NEITHER
WILL I.

...Aegwynn...

YOU HAVE LOST YOUR HAMMER, WINDSOR! DO YOU WISH TO LOSE YOUR LIFE?

WHY WERE YOU ACTING THE SPY? ANSWER ME...OR DO I NEED TO... PERSUADE YOU?

UFFFFF!

THUNK

WHAT? WHO'S THERE?

STEP OUT WHERE I CAN KILL YOU!

PTHWKK

I BELIEVE I DETECT A HINT OF FEAR IN YOUR VOICE, OH HIGH INTERROGATOR. VERY GRATIFYING.

GREETINGS, GERSTAHN!

PTHWKK

THARGAS ANVILMAR!!

MAY THIS MEETING BE OUR LAST!

KRAK

VARIAN?! WHAT? HOW--?!

GRAB YOUR HAMMER, WINDSOR. WE'RE IN A HURRY!

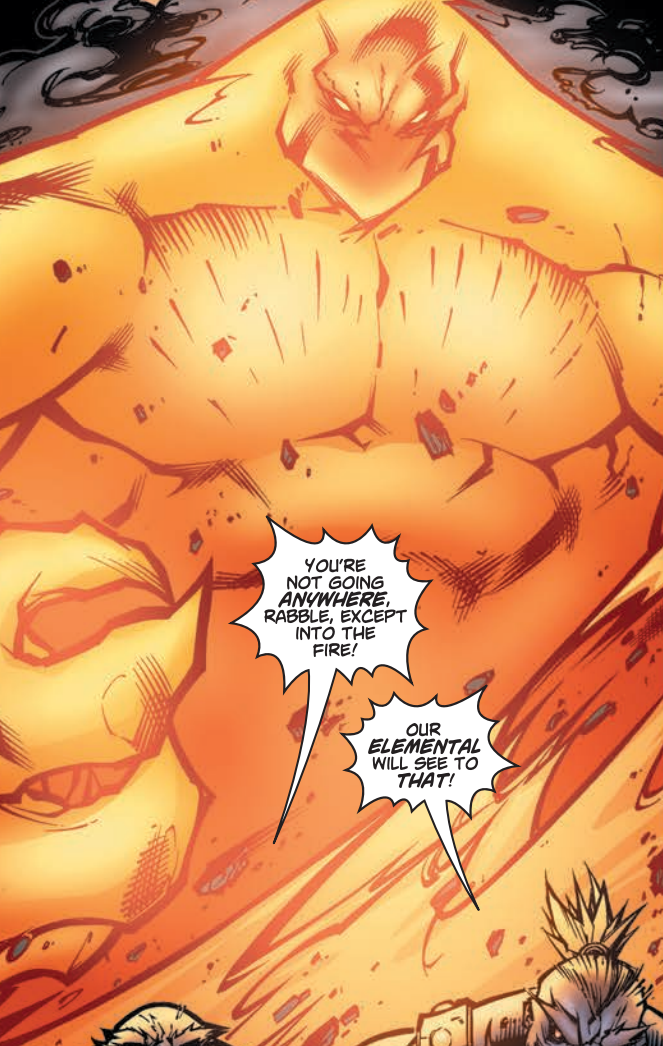


GOT IT!
BUT--

LONG STORY.
YOU KNOW WHO
THE DRAGON
IS?

YES.
BUT--

UH-OH.
WINDSOR!
RUN!



YOU'RE
NOT GOING
ANYWHERE,
RABBLE, EXCEPT
INTO THE
FIRE!

OUR
ELEMENTAL
WILL SEE TO
THAT!



ATTACK!
NOW!!

A DEMONIC
BLOODHOUND!
THARGAS,
BREAK LEFT!

RORARR



SPARR

THE
HOUND'S
HISTORY!



LO'GOSH!
BROLL! I
KNEW YOU'D
COME BACK
FOR ME!

I'M OKAY
NOW. THE RUNES
ARE GONE. IT WAS
HARD, BROLL, BUT
YOUR DRAUGHTS
HELPED SO
MUCH!

KING MAGNI
SAYS I CAN GO
WITH YOU...IF YOU
KNOW WHO THE
DRAGON IS.

WE
KNOW.

Good.
That's
good.

But Broll--
while you were
gone, I had
the strangest
dream...



WELCOME BACK,
KING VARIAN! AND
WINDSOR...IT'S
GOOD TO SEE YOU
ALL IN ONE
PIECE!



COME INSIDE, ALL
OF YOU! WE'LL EAT
WHILE WE DISCUSS
STRATEGY!

AND THEN
YOU'LL RIDE FOR
STORMWIND...TO
DESTROY THE DRAGON
AND RETAKE YOUR PLACE
AS STORMWIND'S
RIGHTFUL KING!

I IMAGINE
YOU CAN
HARDLY
WAIT.

CHAPTER 5



Samwise
2008



Lupo
Tullabi
Phi

THE ENEMY REVEALED

IT IS A STRANGELY ASSORTED COMPANY THAT FOLLOWS THE ONCE AMNESIAC HUMAN WARRIOR, **LO'GOSH**, ACROSS THE VALLEY OF HEROES INTO STORMWIND.

THARGAS-- BRONZEBEARD DWARF, LAST OF THE ANVILMARS.

THE NIGHT ELF SHAPE-SHIFTER, **BROLL BEARMANTLE**, WHO CARRIES ON HIS BACK THE BLOOD ELF **VALEERA SANGUINAR**.

AND MARSHAL **REGINALD WINDSOR** WHO HAS DISCOVERED THE DANGEROUS PLOT OF A **BLACK DRAGON** TO USURP STORMWIND'S THRONE.

I STILL SAY A CLANDESTINE APPROACH TO STORMWIND KEEP WOULD HAVE BEEN **SAFER**, LO'GOSH!

SAFER, PERHAPS, THARGAS--



--BUT A PUBLIC SPECTACLE WILL FORCE THE DRAGON INTO THE OPEN AND EXPOSE THE FRAUD WHO WEARS MY CROWN.

MY DOUBLE WILL BE REVEALED AS AN IMPOSTOR FOR ALL TO SEE.



WHAT ARE ALL THESE STATUES, LO'GOSH?

THEY ARE A TRIBUTE, VALEERA, TO THE VALIANT WHO DIED TO INSURE STORMWIND'S SURVIVAL.

DIED! HUMPH! IF WE DON'T PULL OFF THIS COUP, WE COULD WELL BE JOINING THEM.

AND A FINE STATUE YOU'LL MAKE, THARGAS.

Valeera! Shriiiiiiiii!

THERE'S THE KING! I HADN'T REALIZED HE'D LEFT THE KEEP.

GUARDS! AT ATTENTION!

HERALDS! TRUMPET KING VARIAN'S RETURN!



YES, GENERAL JONATHAN--!

BUT, SIR, IS THAT OUR KING? VARIAN BEARS NO SUCH SCARRING!

AND WHO ARE THE OTHERS?



BWAH BWAH BWAH



TOMORROW'S WEATHER SHOULD BE PERFECT, SIRE. PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO SCHEDULE A BOAR HUNT!

A HUNT! YES, THAT SOUNDS--

NO, KATRANA. I THINK NOT. ANDUIN HAS QUESTIONS ABOUT MY RECENT KIDNAPPING AND RANSOM. HE NEEDS ME--

ANDUIN? YOUR SON IS A CHILD, VARIAN. SURELY, THOSE ANSWERS ARE NOT IMPORTANT. AND THERE ARE RUMORS OF A GREAT NEW BOAR IN THE FOREST.

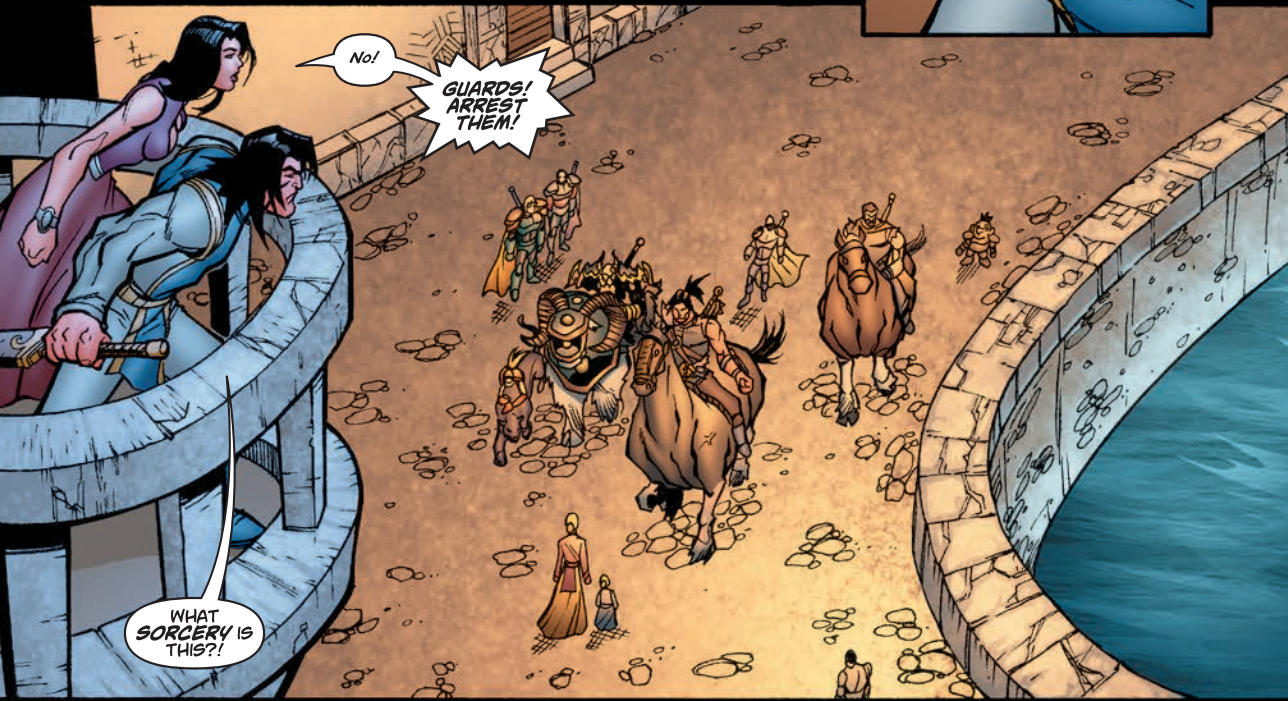
NO. YES. WELL, I--

BWAH BWAH BWAH



TRUMPETS! HERALDING THE RETURN OF THE KING!

BUT--I'M HERE!



No!

GUARDS! ARREST THEM!

WHAT SORcery IS THIS?!



THAT LEAD RIDER LOOKS LIKE ME!

ELSEWHERE AT THAT MOMENT, AS PRINCE ANDUIN CHANGES FOR DINNER, HE AND HIGHLORD BOLVAR FORDRAGON ARE DISCUSSING STATECRAFT...

...IT WAS ALL SO... CONFUSING.

AFTER WE RANSOMED FATHER FROM THE NAGA HE SEEMED NOT... LIKE HIMSELF. LIKE HE JUST WANTED TO HAVE FUN.

IT WAS ALMOST... LIKE HE WAS SOMEONE ELSE. I EVEN THOUGHT MAYBE HE WAS AN IMPOSTOR.

BUT SINCE HE SAVED MY LIFE... AND REMEMBERED A LITTLE ABOUT HIS CAPTIVITY... HE'S SEEMED MORE LIKE HIS OLD SELF. AT LEAST... SOMETIMES. BUT AT OTHERS--

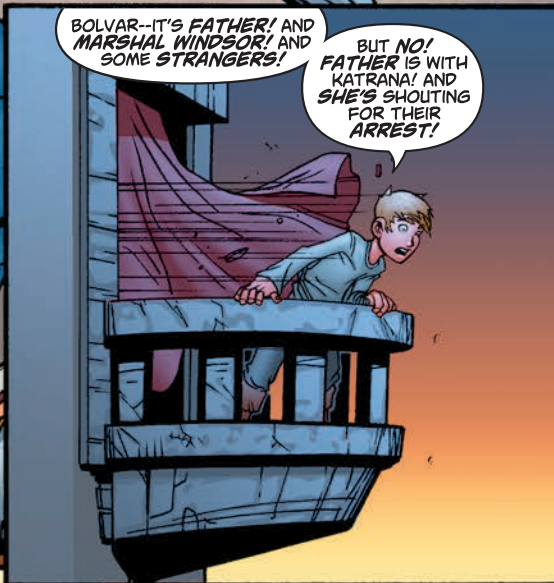
I AGREE, LAD. WHEN KATRANA IS NEAR--



THE KING HAS RETURNED? BUT--



BWAH



BOLVAR--IT'S FATHER! AND MARSHAL WINDSOR! AND SOME STRANGERS!

BUT NO! FATHER IS WITH KATRANA! AND SHE'S SHOUTING FOR THEIR ARREST!



COME ON!

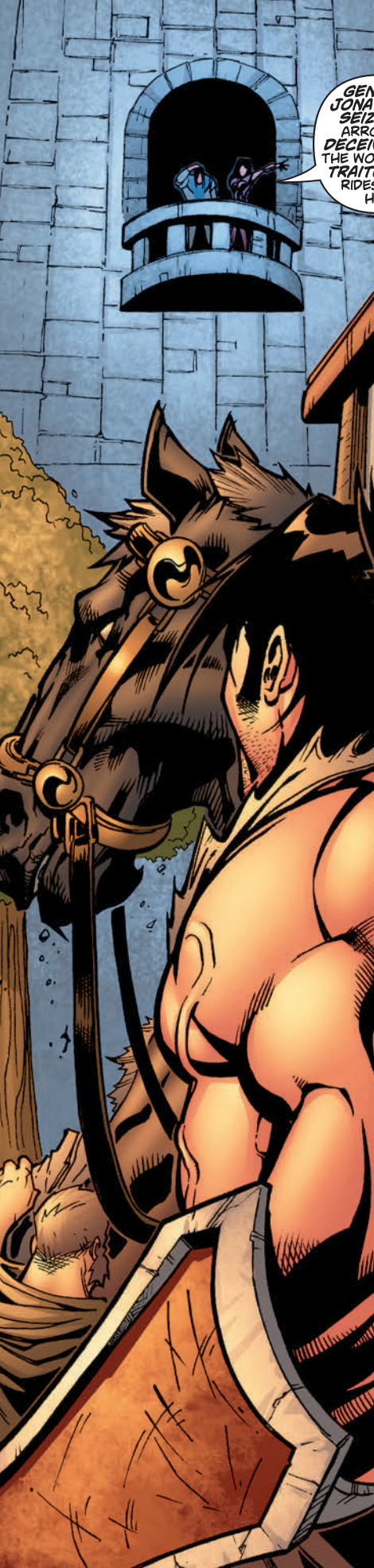
WHOA! WAIT, LAD. THERE COULD BE DANGER!

YOU KNOW WINDSOR THINKS WE HAVE A BLACK DRAGON AMONG US!

DISGUISED AS A HUMAN! I KNOW! THAT'S WHY WE NEED TO HEAR WHAT MARSHAL WINDSOR HAS TO SAY!

DESPITE WHAT KATRANA MAY THINK, SHE DOESN'T RULE HERE! WE NEED TO TAKE A HAND IN WHATEVER IS GOING ON!





GENERAL JONATHAN--
SEIZE THE
ARROGANT
DECEIVER AND
THE WORTHLESS
TRAITOR WHO
RIDES WITH
HIM!



TOSS
HIM AND HIS
PARTY INTO THE
DEEPEST
DUNGEON
TO AWAIT
EXECUTION!

TREAD
SOFTLY,
MARCUS!

DESPITE
WHAT YOU HAVE
BEEN TOLD, I AM
VARIAN, THE
TRUE KING OF
STORMWIND.



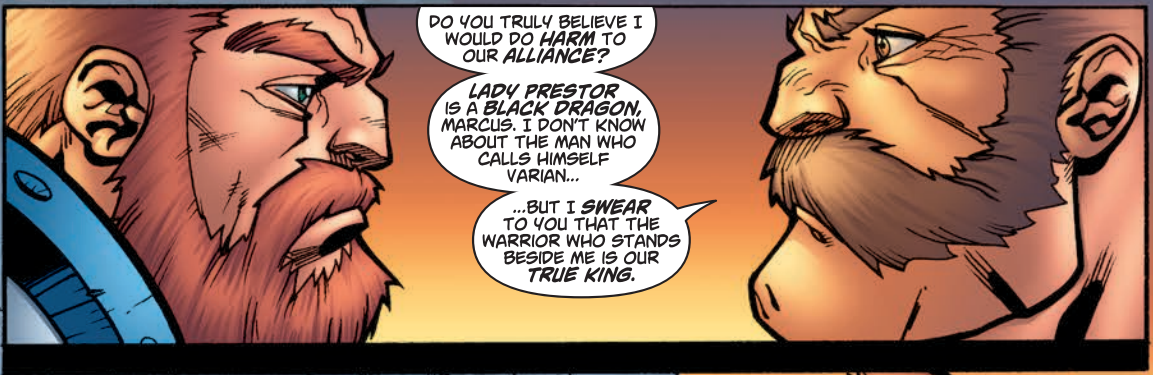
OUR KINGDOM
IS THREATENED
BY A BLACK
DRAGON
MASQUERADING
AS A HUMAN.

AND THAT
MAN ON THE
BALCONY, WHO
PRETENDS TO BE
YOUR KING, IS AN
IMPOSTOR.



REGINALD,
YOU KNOW THAT
I CANNOT LET
YOU PASS.

MARCUS,
WE SERVED
TOGETHER UNDER
TURALYON.



DO YOU TRULY BELIEVE I WOULD DO HARM TO OUR ALLIANCE?

LADY PRESTOR IS A BLACK DRAGON, MARCUS. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF VARIAN...

...BUT I SWEAR TO YOU THAT THE WARRIOR WHO STANDS BESIDE ME IS OUR TRUE KING.



ARREST THEM, MARCUS! I COMMAND IT!

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?



YOU WOULD NOT LIE!

IT IS AS WINDSOR TELLS US! LET THEM PASS!

AND MAY THE LIGHT GUIDE YOUR HAND.



GUARDS! THE IMPOSTOR AND HIS RETINUE DARE ENTER THE KEEP!

STOP THEM! KILL THEM--ONE AND ALL!

KATRANA! HOLD! YOU DON'T COMMAND HERE!



DON'T I? GUARD, FETCH PRINCE ANDUIN!

YES, MISTRESS.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS, KATRANA?

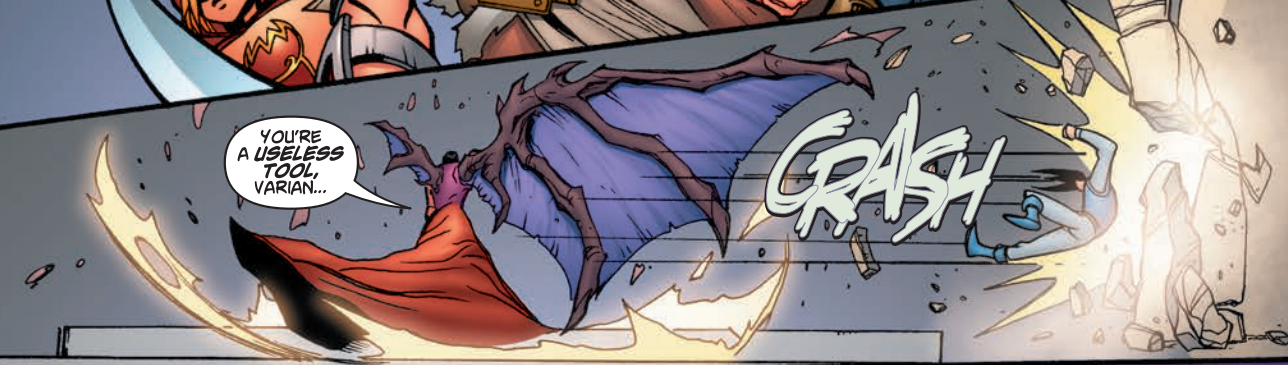


WHY DID YOU SEND FOR MY SON?



THE MASQUERADE IS OVER, LADY PRESTOR.

OR SHOULD WE CALL YOU BY YOUR TRUE NAME-- ONYXIA?!



YOU'RE A USELESS TOOL, VARIAN...

CRASH



...AND FAR MORE TROUBLE THAN ANY HUMAN I'VE EVER DEALT WITH!



THAT, DRAGON, IS ONLY BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T YET DEALT WITH ME!



NO! THAT ONLY SHOWS HOW LITTLE YOU KNOW, FOOL!

BUT I WILL DEAL WITH YOU NOW--

PERMANENTLY!



GET HER!

LO'GOSH--
THOSE GUARDS!
THEY AREN'T
HUMAN!

THE GIRL'S
RIGHT!
THEY'RE--



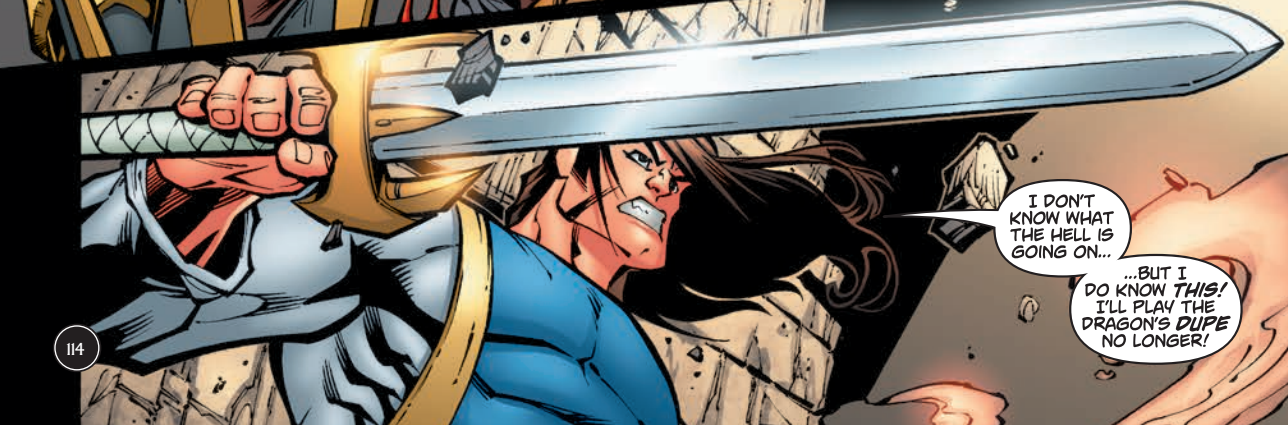
"--DRAGONSPAWN."

KILL THE INTERLOPERS!
DEFEND OUR
MISTRESS!



WELL SAID,
DRAGONSPAWN!
WE'LL MAKE SURE
YOU DEFEND
HER TO THE
DEATH!

GGKKKKKKK!



I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
THE HELL IS
GOING ON...

...BUT I
DO KNOW THIS!
I'LL PLAY THE
DRAGON'S DUPE
NO LONGER!

'WARE,
LO'GOSH!
THE DRAGON
BELCHES FIRE
AND LAVA!

AND DOESN'T
CARE IF SHE INCINERATES
ONE OF HER OWN, PROVIDED
WE PERISH AS WELL!

VALEERA,
GET BACK! YOU'RE
UNARMORED! AND
YOUR DAGGERS WON'T
EVEN SCRATCH A
DRAGON'S HIDE!

NOT HER
HIDE. HER EYES,
THARGAS! IF I
CAN JUST--
BROLL!
NO!

BOLVAR!
DO YOU HEAR
THE CLASH OF
SWORDS?

AYE, LAD.
THERE'S A
BATTLE RAGING
IN THE THRONE
ROOM!

AH!
THE **YOUNG
PRINCE!** JUST
IN TIME! YOU'RE
COMING WITH
ME!

NO--!



FLIKKT

NOT TODAY,
MONSTER!

WINDSOR
WAS
RIGHT!
THE DRAGON
HAS MADE ITS
MOVE!



BOLVAR!
WELCOME TO THE
FIGHT! AS YOU SEE, LADY
PRESTOR IS NO MORE.
MAY I INTRODUCE YOU TO
THE BLACK BROOD QUEEN
HERSELF, **ONYXIA!**





YOU MIGHT HAVE WARNED ME, REGINALD!

TOO DANGEROUS, FORDRAGON! THE DRAGON HAD SPIES EVERYWHERE!

AND MANY WERE UNDER HER SWAY...! EVEN THOSE CLOSEST TO THE KING--!



WINDSOR! YOU, AT LEAST, WILL NOT ESSSSCAPE ME!



WHUMMMPH!

AEEEEEEEEE!

YOUR MISTRESS
WILL PAY FOR THAT
DEATH, DRAGONSPAWN--
WITH HER LIFE!

CHOK

AH, PRETENDER!
WE MEET AT LAST!
I'VE WAITED A LONG
TIME FOR THIS!

IT'S LIKE
LOOKING IN A
CRACKED
MIRROR! WHO
ARE YOU?

THE RIGHTFUL KING OF
STORMWIND...

...AND YOUR
BANE!

THAT
ISSUE, MY
GOOD FELLOW,
HAS YET TO BE
DECIDED.

I MAY
SURPRISE
YOU!

KLANGGG



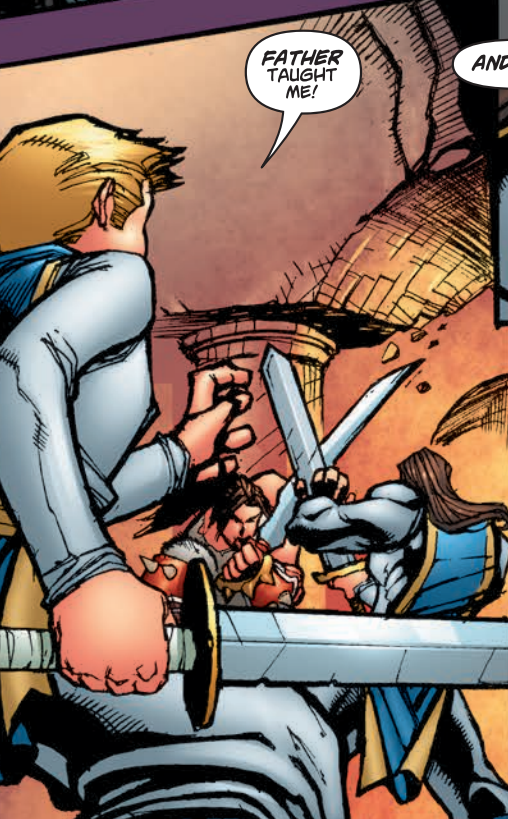
THWUKK

GET AWAY FROM HIM, DRAGONSPAWN!

WELL DONE, LAD! BUT I'M SUPPOSED TO BE PROTECTING YOU, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND!



WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO SHOOT LIKE THAT?!



FATHER TAUGHT ME!



ANDUIN?!



SON-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



I KNEW YOU NEEDED HELP SO I... I... UHH...

F-Father??



THE BOY'S RIGHT.

WE'RE BOTH FOOLS.

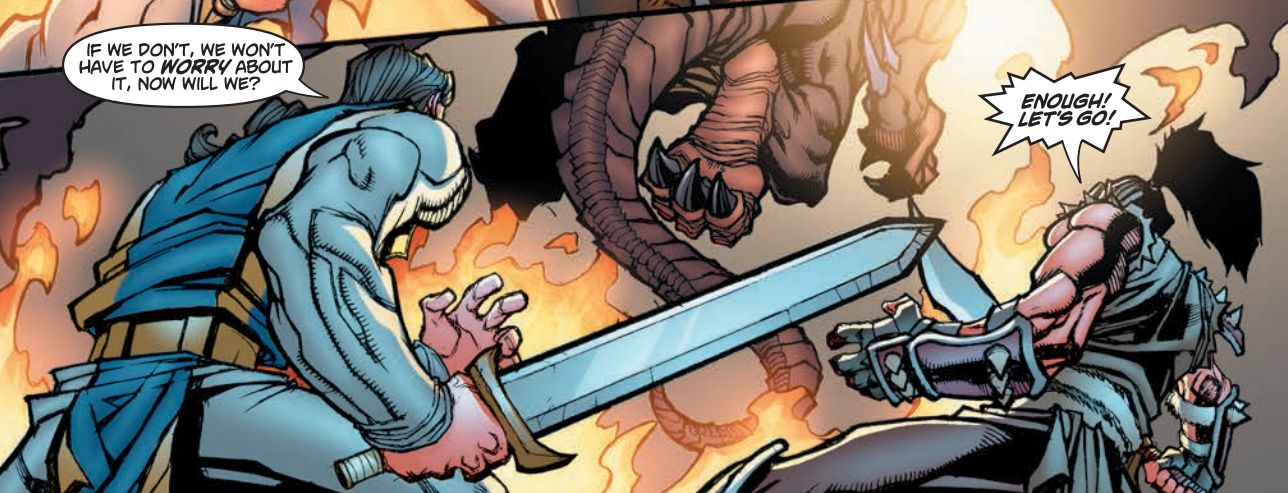


WE CAN SORT THIS OUT LATER...



...AFTER WE'VE SORTED OUT THE DRAGON.

IF WE LIVE LONG ENOUGH.



IF WE DON'T, WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT IT, NOW WILL WE?

ENOUGH! LET'S GO!



MIGHT AS WELL TRY TO CUT STEEL WITH A STRAW!

MY MIGHTIEST BLOW BARELY MAKES A SCRATCH!



HOLD ON, LO'GOSH! WE'RE COMING!

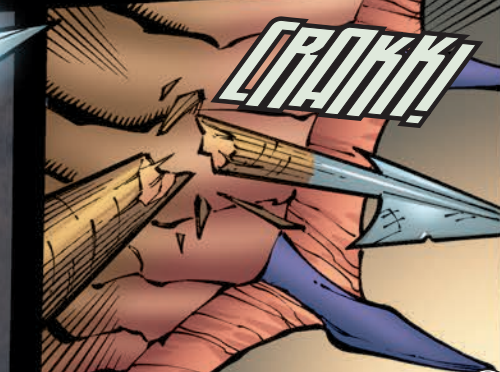
AN' WE'LL SEE HOW ONYXIA FARES AGAINST HARDENED DWARF WEAPONS!!



OCH! SHE'S TAKEN TO THE AIR!



HER EYES AREN'T ARMORED -! IF SHE'D JUST HOLD STILL...!



CRACK!



AH! THE YOUNG PRINCE! SO VALIANT! SO VULNERABLE!

FORGIVE ME!

I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN YOU!



FATHER! HELP!



FATHER!

HE CAN'T AID YOU NOW, CHILD. NEITHER OF THEM CAN! AND I'VE A SPECIAL WELCOME PREPARED FOR YOU AT HOME!

WE WILL SOON TEST YOUR METTLE... AND SEE IF YOU ARE AS MUCH TROUBLE AS YOUR MADDENING SIRE!



ANDUIN!

SHE'S GONE...!

AND SHE'S TAKEN MY SON WITH HER!



WHOEVER YOU ARE, I'LL SAY THIS FOR YOU... YOU ARE A RUM HAND WITH A BLADE.

BUT OUR CENTRAL PROBLEM REMAINS.

OUR CENTRAL PROBLEM, WARRIOR, IS ANDUIN. I THINK THE TIME HAS NOT YET COME FOR US TO SETTLE OUR DIFFERENCES.

TRUCE?

FOR THE MOMENT. TRUCE.

I'VE BEGUN TO REMEMBER SOME OF WHAT HAPPENED TO ME WHILE I WAS LOST.

THE TALE INVOLVES TREACHERY.

AND DARKEST SORCERY.

NO SURPRISE THERE—CONSIDERING THAT ONYXIA IS INVOLVED!

PERHAPS...ONCE SHE IS DESTROYED, ONE OF YOU--THE FALSE VARIAN--WILL SIMPLY...DISAPPEAR.

WE SHOULD BE SO LUCKY!

AGAINST THAT EVENTUALITY, LET US COMPARE MEMORIES...AS WE TOURNAY TO ONYXIA'S LAIR.

WE ARE LINKED IN SOME WAY I DO NOT UNDERSTAND... AND TOGETHER, WE MAY HOLD THE KEY TO HER DESTRUCTION!

CHAPTER 6



SAMUJIS



Lyro
Lullabi
HOPE



THE BLACK DRAGON HAS MY SON AND I WANT HIM BACK!

MARSHAL WINDSOR SAID ONYXIA'S LAIR IS NEAR THERAMORE. JAINA PROUDMOORE MUST KNOW ITS EXACT LOCATION.

ORDER A ZEPPELIN, BOLVAR, FOR IMMEDIATE DEPLOYMENT. WE NEED TO REACH KALIMDOR AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. YOU WILL REMAIN HERE--

BUT-- THIS WOULD BE USURPER DOESN'T HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO ISSUE THAT ORDER...

...OR ANY ORDER.



BUT IT SO HAPPENS, OLD FRIEND, THAT, IN THIS CASE, I AGREE WITH HIM.

YOU LOVE MY SON, BOLVAR, AND WOULD WILLINGLY DIE TO RESTORE HIM TO STORMWIND. BUT HE WOULD WANT YOU TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR THE KINGDOM.

HE WOULD TRUST YOU, ABOVE ALL OTHERS, TO HOLD STORMWIND TOGETHER WHILE MY UNPLEASANT DOPPELGÄNGER AND I PAY A CALL ON THE DRAGON.

FLASHBACK

FOR A SHORT TIME, HIGHLORD BOLVAR FORDRAGON HAD FELT THAT THE SCARRED WARRIOR CALLED LO'GOSH WAS THE TRUE KING OF STORMWIND, MIRACULOUSLY RETURNED TO WREST BACK HIS STOLEN THRONE...

...AND THAT THE KING THEY HAD CALLED VARIAN WAS AN IMPOSTOR.

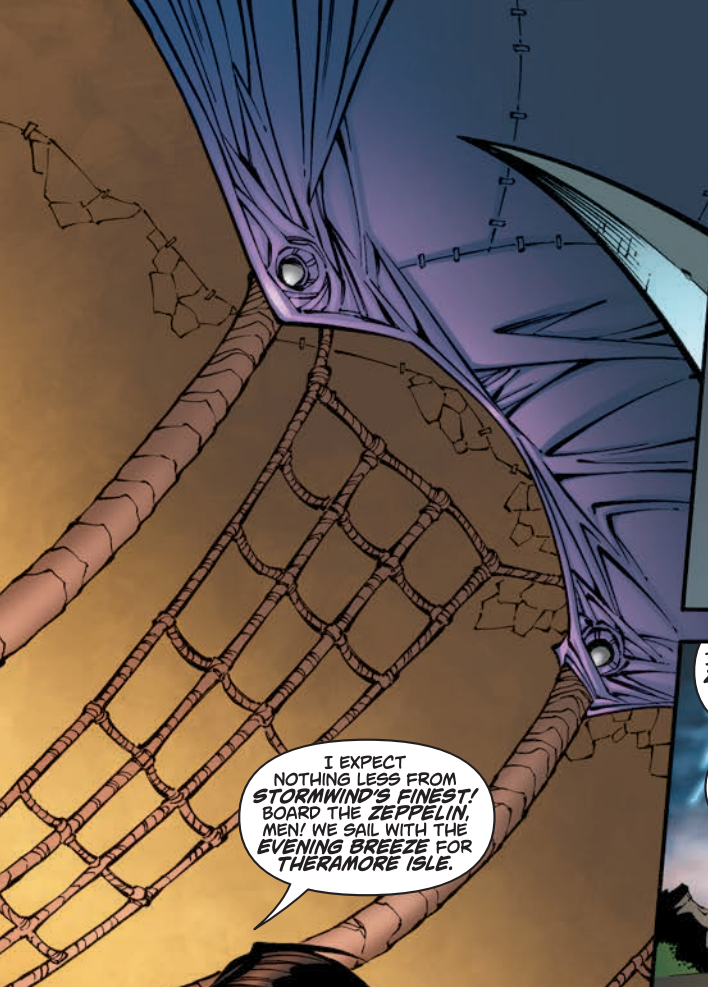
BUT FREED FROM ONYXIA'S CONTROL, VARIAN SEEMED MUCH LIKE THE ENGAGING YOUNG RULER BOLVAR HAD KNOWN LONG AGO. WHILE LO'GOSH...

LO'GOSH IS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE KING'S GRIM WILL. BUT VARIAN HAS HIS CHARM. THEY'RE LIKE TWO FACES OF THE SAME COIN...

...TWINS, BUT FOR THAT SCAR.

EVERY GUARD HAS VOLUNTEERED TO RIDE WITH US, DESPITE THE DANGER. LET US BE AWAY.





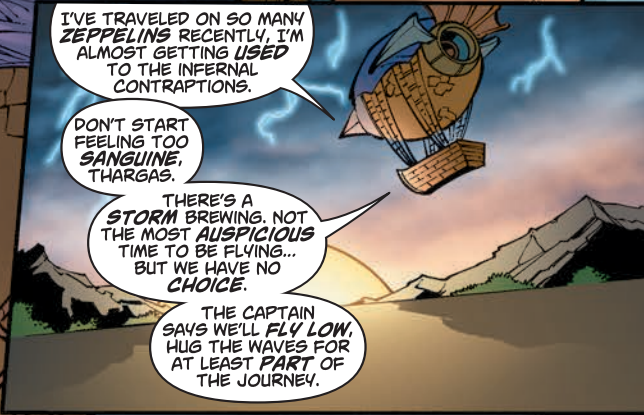
I EXPECT NOTHING LESS FROM STORMWIND'S FINEST! BOARD THE ZEPPELIN, MEN! WE SAIL WITH THE EVENING BREEZE FOR THERAMORE ISLE.



WHICH ONE DO YOU THINK IS OUR TRUE KING, SIR?

NO POINT IN TAKING SIDES YET, STEN. MAYHAP IN THIS CASE, TWO KINGS WILL BE BETTER THAN ONE.

AND, WHOEVER PROVES TO BE THE KING, PRINCE ANDUIN IS, INDISPUTABLY, THE HEIR TO STORMWIND'S THRONE.



I'VE TRAVELED ON SO MANY ZEPPELINS RECENTLY, I'M ALMOST GETTING USED TO THE INFERNAL CONTRACTIONS.

DON'T START FEELING TOO SANGUINE, THARGAS.

THERE'S A STORM BREWING. NOT THE MOST AUSPICIOUS TIME TO BE FLYING... BUT WE HAVE NO CHOICE.

THE CAPTAIN SAYS WE'LL FLY LOW, HUG THE WAVES FOR AT LEAST PART OF THE JOURNEY.



I'LL DO WHAT I CAN TO CALM THE WINDS AND DIRECT ANY LIGHTNING AWAY FROM US, BUT--!

I DON'T WANT TO KNOW, JUST HURRY. *SHUMPH!* YOUNG ANDUIN'S A FINE LAD.

OTHERWISE I WOULD NEVER HAVE OPTED TO FLY THROUGH A GATHERING STORM HALFWAY ACROSS THE WORLD...

"...TO ONYXIA'S LAIR."

I HAVE A PLAN, ANDUIN, TO ENSLAVE YOUR BLOODLINE TO ME AND MINE FOREVER.

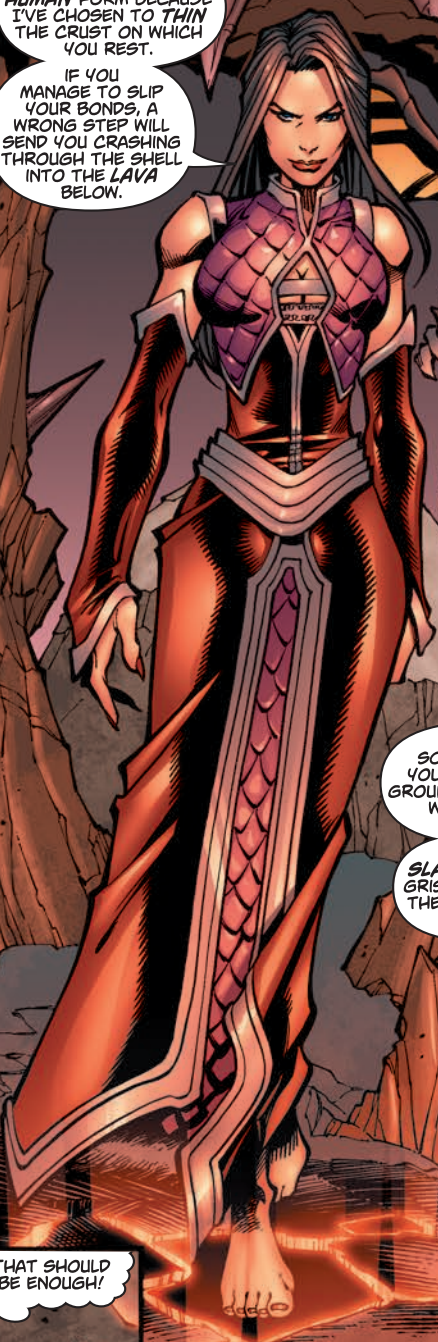
AS PUPPETS TO DO YOUR BIDDING, DRAGON? LIKE I'LL LET THAT HAPPEN!

AMUSING. I CAN SEE YOU'RE ALREADY PLOTTING YOUR ESCAPE.

YOU CAN TRY, OF COURSE. BUT, YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES.

I'M IN MY LIGHTER HUMAN FORM BECAUSE I'VE CHOSEN TO THIN THE CRUST ON WHICH YOU REST.

IF YOU MANAGE TO SLIP YOUR BONDS, A WRONG STEP WILL SEND YOU CRASHING THROUGH THE SHELL INTO THE LAVA BELOW.



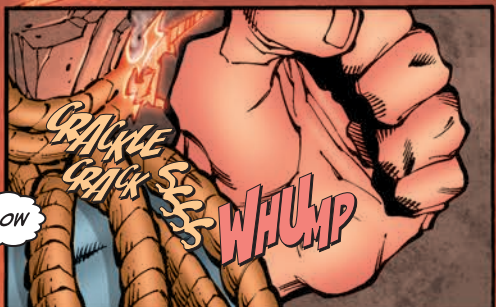
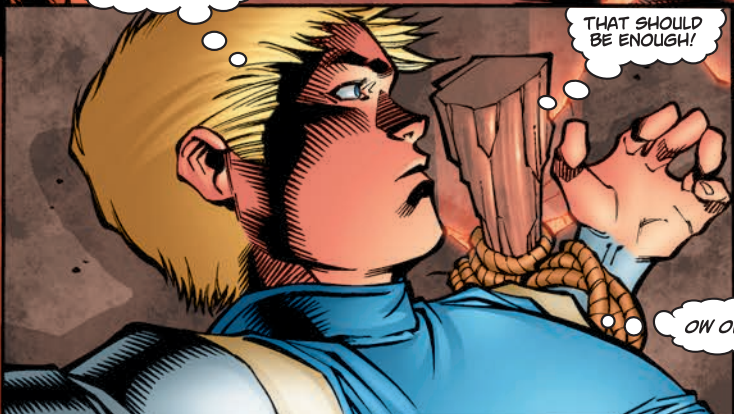
IF, BY SOME MIRACLE, YOU REACH SOLID GROUND, MY WHELPS WILL DEVOUR YOU.

ETERNAL SLAVERY OR A GRISLY DEATH-- THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

I CHOOSE NEITHER, DRAGON.

THERE ARE CRACKS IN THE CRUST WHERE ONYXIA DROVE THE STAKES.

THAT SHOULD BE ENOUGH!



OW OW OW



YES!



SO YOU HAVE CHOSEN DEATH, YOUNG PRINCE.

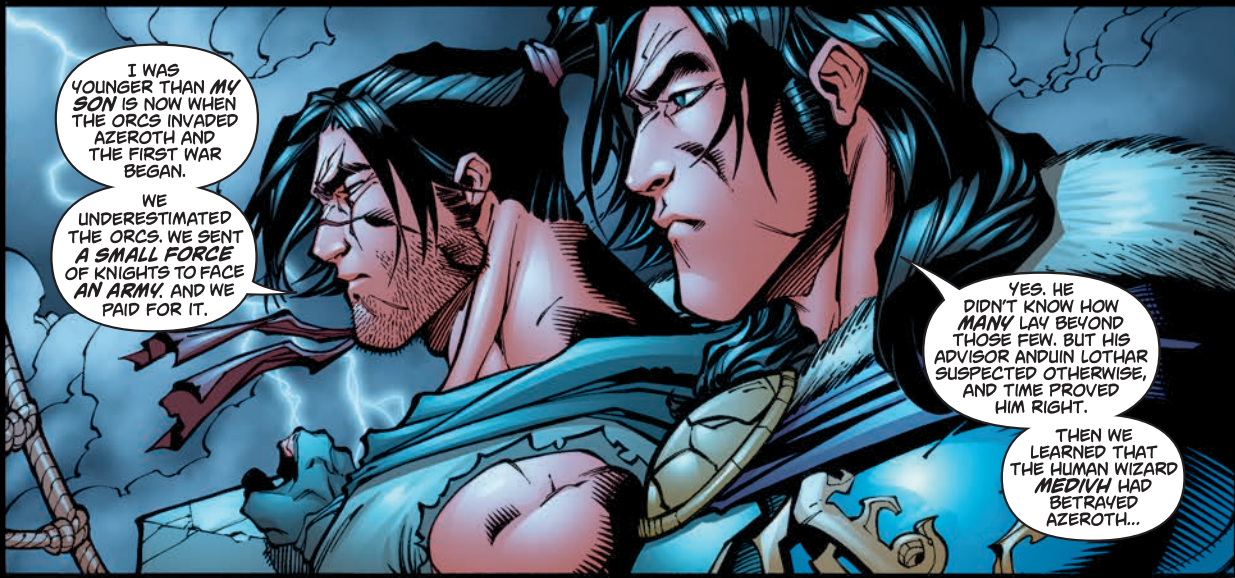


PERHAPS THAT'S FOR THE BEST. I CAN SEE YOUR LINE WOULD HAVE MADE WORTHLESS SLAVES.

FEAST ROYALLY, MY WHELPS, ON THE BLOOD OF STORMWIND'S FUTURE KING...!

AND SOMEDAY, ONE OF YOU MAY WELL BECOME A RULER AMONG OUR KIND.





I WAS YOUNGER THAN MY SON IS NOW WHEN THE ORCS INVADED AZEROTH AND THE FIRST WAR BEGAN.

WE UNDERESTIMATED THE ORCS. WE SENT A SMALL FORCE OF KNIGHTS TO FACE AN ARMY, AND WE PAID FOR IT.

YES. HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW MANY LAY BEYOND THOSE FEW. BUT HIS ADVISOR ANDUIN LOTHAR SUSPECTED OTHERWISE, AND TIME PROVED HIM RIGHT.

THEN WE LEARNED THAT THE HUMAN WIZARD MEDIVH HAD BETRAYED AZEROTH...

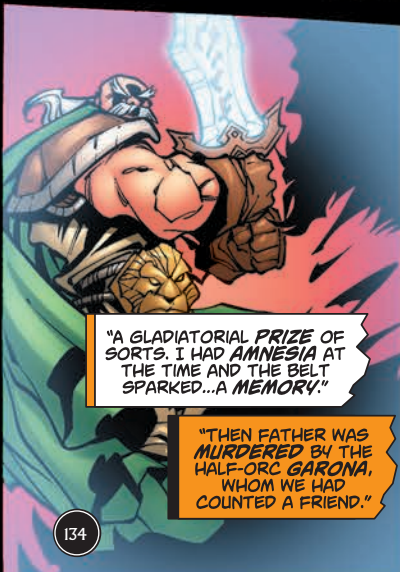


"...AND OPENED THE DARK PORTAL FROM DRAENOR.

"TOGETHER, LOTHAR AND MEDIVH'S APPRENTICE, KHADGAR, SLEW MEDIVH."



"I SEE YOU WEAR LOTHAR'S BELT, L'O'GOSH."



"A GLADIATORIAL PRIZE OF SORTS. I HAD AMNESIA AT THE TIME AND THE BELT SPARKED...A MEMORY."


"THEN FATHER WAS MURDERED BY THE HALF-ORC GARONA, WHOM WE HAD COUNTED A FRIEND."



"I REMEMBER. I CAME INTO THE ROOM..."

"...AND FOUND GARONA CLUTCHING THE BLOODY KNIFE, TEARS STREAMING DOWN HER CHEEKS. TO THIS DAY, I DON'T UNDERSTAND..."

"THEN THE ORCS DESTROYED STORMWIND, AND ANDUIN LOTHAR TOOK ME TO SANCTUARY IN LORDAERON."




"FOLLOWING THE SECOND WAR, UPON MY EIGHTEENTH BIRTHDAY, I WAS CROWNED."



"I RODE FROM ONE END OF MY KINGDOM TO THE OTHER..."

"...PROTECTING MY PEOPLE FROM RAIDING PARTIES OF ORC STRAGGLERS, MEETING WITH THE SPIES WHO WERE SEARCHING FOR THE ASSASSIN GARONA, AND DIRECTING THE RESTORATION OF MY KINGDOM."



"I WAS ABSENT FROM STORMWIND FOR MONTHS ON END AND DELEGATED THE OVERSIGHT FOR THE REBUILDING OF STORMWIND KEEP TO THE HOUSE OF NOBLES."


"I WED MY LOVING TIFFIN...AND ANDUIN WAS OUR BLESSING, NAMED FOR THE HERO ANDUIN LOTHAR."

"UPON RETURNING FROM A FORAY, I FOUND THAT THE COUNCIL OF NOBLES—WHO, I NOW REALIZE, WERE UNLUDILY INFLUENCED BY LADY KATRANA PRESTOR—HAD REFUSED TO PAY THE STONEMASONS' GUILD WHAT THEY FELT WAS THEIR DUE."



"INFLUENCED? I SUSPECT HALF THE NOBLES WERE PROBABLY ENSORCELLED, AND HALF THE STONEMASONS."

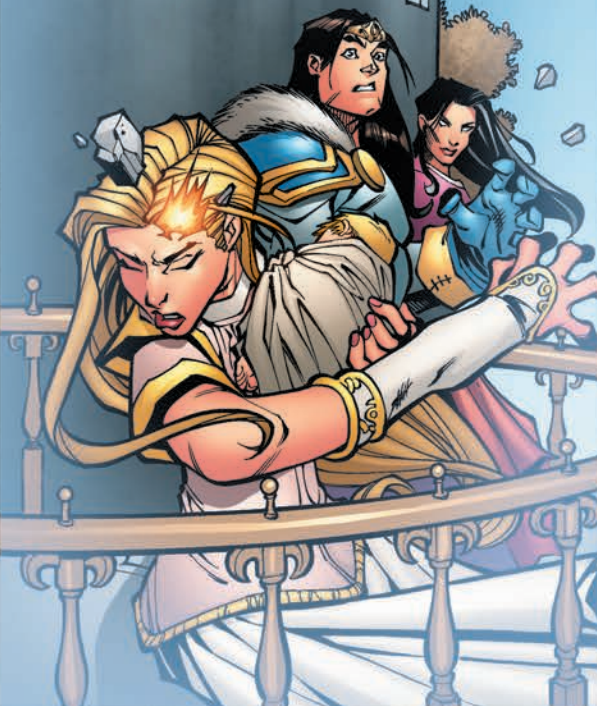
"THOUGH I COULD BE WRONG. FOR MOST MEN, GREED ITSELF IS A GREAT PERSUADER."



"I AGREED THAT THE STONEMASONS' FEES WERE EXCESSIVE, BUT THOUGHT THE AMOUNT OFFERED BY THE COUNCIL OF NOBLES TOO NIGGARDLY."

"I TRIED TO
MEDIATE... AND A LOT
OF GOOD THAT DID!"

"OUR... MY SADDEST MEMORY.
THE DISAGREEMENT BECAME
A RIOT. TIFFIN WAS KILLED..."



"...AND I WAS DESTROYED.
MY MIND COULD HARDLY
HOLD A THOUGHT. MY WILL
WAS MUTED."

"DEPRESSION...OR
MORE OF KATRANA'S
FOUL SORCERY?"

"PERHAPS IT BEGAN AS
DEPRESSION. BUT...FOR
TEN YEARS, I WAS LIKE
ONE OF THE UNDEAD."



"UNNATURAL! ONYXIA IS
THOUSANDS OF YEARS OLD AND A
DRAGON. SUCH MAGIC WOULD
HAVE BEEN CHILD'S PLAY FOR HER."

"ONLY ANDUIN COULD HOLD MY
ATTENTION. HE WAS PRECOCIOUS, A
BORN RULER. AS HE GREW, AND HIS
FOCUS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE THE
WORLD AROUND HIM, SO DID MINE."



"AS I BECAME
AWARE, I BEGAN
TO ASSERT MY WILL,
TO FIGHT OFF MY
LETHARGY."

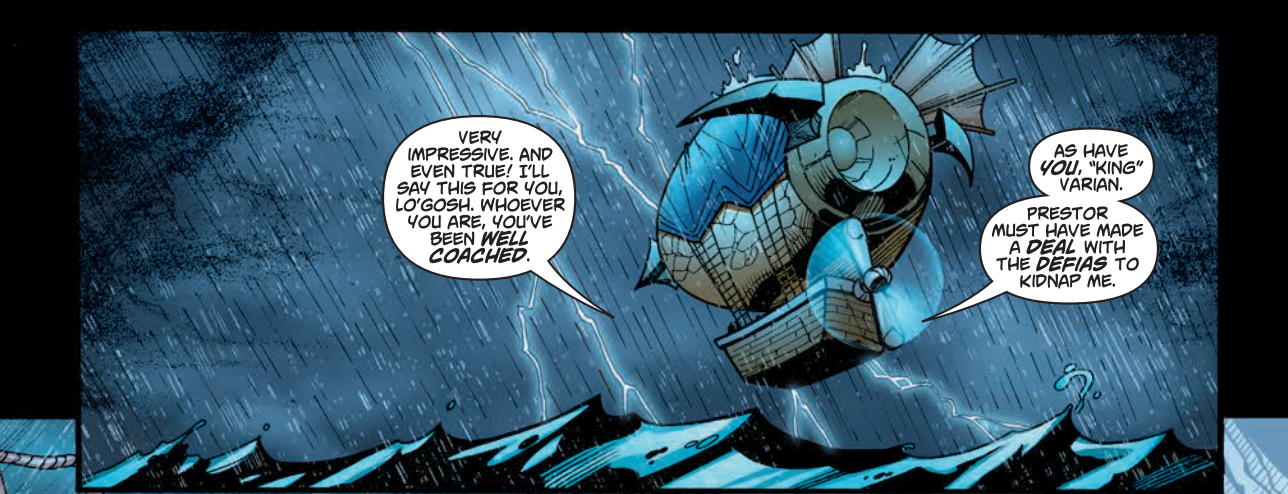
"THEN JAINA
PROUDMOORE SUGGESTED
A CONFERENCE IN
THERAMORE TO DISCUSS A
PACT BETWEEN THE ORC
LEADER THRALL AND
STORMWIND."

AT FIRST I REFUSED!
PEACE AND COOPERATION?
BETWEEN ME AND ONE OF
THE MONSTERS WHO HAD
SLAIN MY FATHER AND
RAZED MY KINGDOM?

BUT ANDUIN
CONVINCED ME AT
LEAST TO GO AND
HEAR THRALL OUT. HE
THOUGHT THRALL'S
REPUTATION WAS...
ENCOURAGING.



OVER
KATRANA'S
OBJECTIONS, I
AGREED TO ATTEND.
AND, AT ANDUIN'S
PRODDING, LEFT
KATRANA BEHIND
IN STORMWIND.



VERY IMPRESSIVE, AND EVEN TRUE! I'LL SAY THIS FOR YOU, LO'GOSH. WHOEVER YOU ARE, YOU'VE BEEN WELL COACHED.

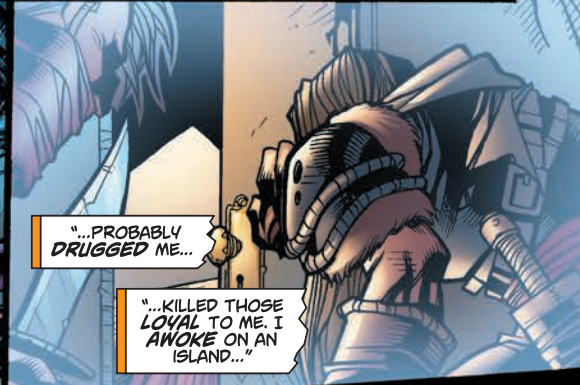
AS HAVE YOU, "KING" VARIAN.

PRESTOR MUST HAVE MADE A DEAL WITH THE DEFIAS TO KIDNAP ME.



THEIR FIRST ATTEMPT FAILED. BUT THEIR SECOND...

DEFIAS HID AMONG MY CREW. THEY ATTACKED ME AS I SLEPT...



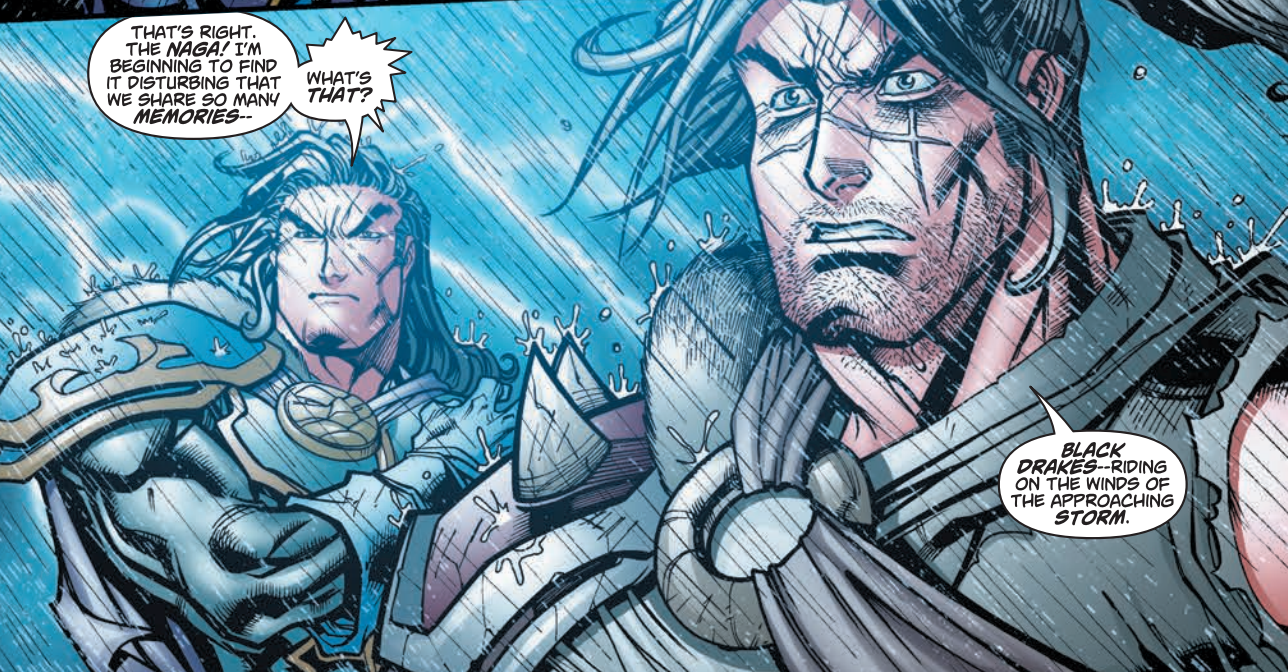
"...PROBABLY DRUGGED ME..."

"...KILLED THOSE LOYAL TO ME. I AWOKE ON AN ISLAND..."



YES. I'VE... SEEN IT. BUT BEYOND THAT... I REMEMBER ALMOST NOTHING. HOODED MEN...

...AND NAGA.



THAT'S RIGHT. THE NAGA! I'M BEGINNING TO FIND IT DISTURBING THAT WE SHARE SO MANY MEMORIES--

WHAT'S THAT?

BLACK DRAKES--RIDING ON THE WINDS OF THE APPROACHING STORM.

ONYXIA'S
MINIONS--SENT
TO DESTROY
US!

THEN
TOGETHER LET US
BE CERTAIN THAT THE
BLACK-HEARTED
BITCH REGRETS
SENDING THEM...TO
THEIR DEATHS!

GROOOR!

BROLL--! QUIT
SHOWING OFF AND USE
YOUR DRUIDIC MAGIC
TO STOP THESE
MONSTERS!

WE CAN'T
AFFORD TO
HAVE ANYONE
INJURED!

HOWEVER
SATISFYING THE
BATTLE IS, YOU
HAVE A POINT.

RISE UP,
YOU CHURNING
CLOUDS!



KRAKABOOM

LIGHTNING STRIKE AND INCINERATE OUR ENEMIES!



SEAWEED--
ERUPT FROM
THE OCEAN'S
DEPTHS...



...AND DROWN
THE DRAKES BENEATH
THE TUMBLING
WAVES!

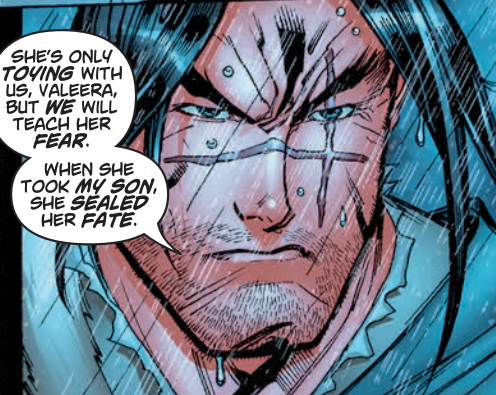


ONYXIA
WILL SHED
BITTER TEARS
WHEN THIS NEWS
REACHES
HER.

THE BLASTED
SHE-DRAGON
HAS SPIES EVERY-
WHERE. SHE KNOWS
WE'RE COMING.



I
BET SHE'S
AFRAID.



SHE'S ONLY
TOYING WITH
US, VALEERA,
BUT WE WILL
TEACH HER
FEAR.

WHEN SHE
TOOK MY SON,
SHE SEALED
HER FATE.

THERAMORE KEEP

SOLE BASTION OF HUMANKIND ON KALIMDOR, RULED BY THE SORCERESS JAINA PROUDMOORE.

WELL MET, JAINA!

IT'S GOOD OF YOU TO AID US IN OUR QUEST.

ONYXIA HAS LONG BEEN A MENACE. BUT THIS TIME, SHE HAS GONE TOO FAR.

INCREDIBLE. SAVE FOR THAT SCAR, YOU TWO ARE AS ALIKE AS TWINS...DOWN TO THE AURA OF ARCANESORCERY THAT SURROUNDS YOU.

CHAMBERLAIN AEGWYNN! I HAD AN...ODD DREAM. I WAS IN DANGER AND YOU SAVED ME. BUT YOU SAID--

I KNOW WHAT I SAID, CHILD. I'M OLD, NOT SENILE.

THE DANGER TO YOU IS REAL AND PRESENT...BUT I WILL HELP YOU AS MUCH AS I CAN. NOW COME, WE NEED TO TALK.

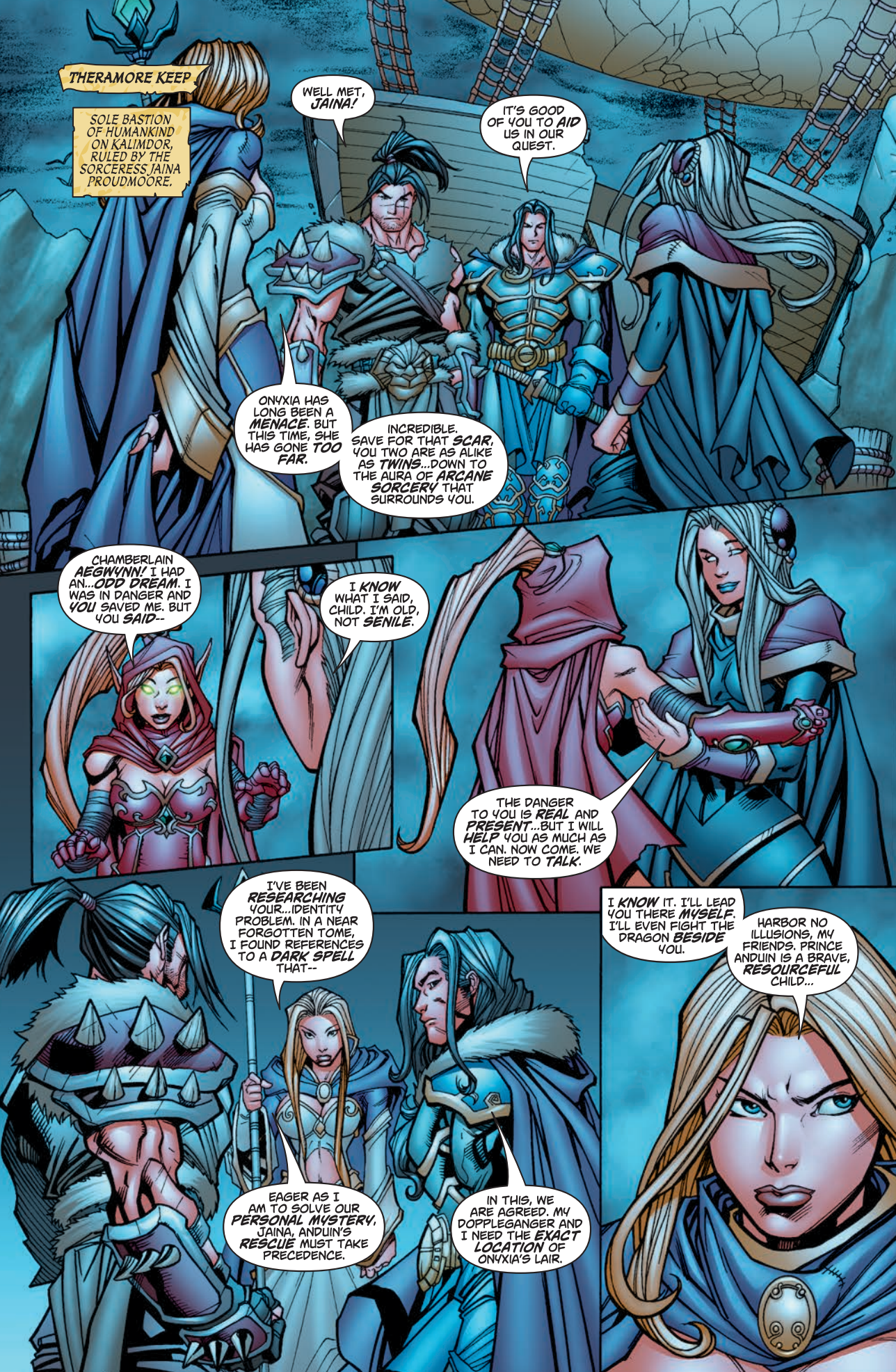
I'VE BEEN RESEARCHING YOUR...IDENTITY PROBLEM. IN A NEAR FORGOTTEN TOME, I FOUND REFERENCES TO A DARK SPELL THAT--

I KNOW IT. I'LL LEAD YOU THERE MYSELF. I'LL EVEN FIGHT THE DRAGON BESIDE YOU.

HARBOR NO ILLUSIONS, MY FRIENDS. PRINCE ANDUIN IS A BRAVE, RESOURCEFUL CHILD...

EAGER AS I AM TO SOLVE OUR PERSONAL MYSTERY, JAINA, ANDUIN'S RESCUE MUST TAKE PRECEDENCE.

IN THIS, WE ARE AGREED. MY DOPPELGANGER AND I NEED THE EXACT LOCATION OF ONYXIA'S LAIR.



"...BUT HE IS NO MATCH FOR A DRAGON..."

I CAN'T **OUTRUN** ONYXIA. OR **FIGHT** HER, EITHER. THIS **SPLINTER** WOULD HARDLY SCRATCH HER HIDE.

SHE'S **PLAYING** WITH ME. **USING** ME.

LIKE A **CAT**, **RELEASING** A **MOUSE** BEFORE HER **LITTER**, TO **TEACH** THEM **HOW** TO **HUNT**.

BUT **MAYBE--!**



PERFECT! ONLY A **SINGLE** **WHELP** CAN ENTER AT A **TIME!**

COME THEN, **MONSTER!** WE'LL **TEST** YOUR **TEETH** AGAINST MY **BLADE!**

I DON'T **HAVE** TO **KILL** YOUR **DAM**. I **JUST** **NEED** TO **STAY** **ALIVE** TILL **FATHER** **COMES** **FOR** **ME**.

BUT I **SURE** **HOPe** HE **GETS** **HERE** **FAST--**



"--WHICHEVER ONE HE IS!"

THE HORSES AND MEN WILL BE ASSEMBLED SHORTLY. ONYXIA'S LAIR IS SEVERAL HOURS RIDE.

THE SHE-DRAGON IS ANCIENT AND POWERFUL. DEFEATING HER WON'T BE EASY.

I SYMPATHIZE WITH YOUR IMPATIENCE, LO'GOSH. BUT I SENSE ONYXIA'S HAND IN THE DARK AURA THAT SURROUNDS YOU BOTH.

I KNOW. IT SEEMS THAT, FOR THE LAST DECADE, HALF OF STORMWIND HAS BEEN UNDER HER SPELL AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.

HER MEDDLING ENDS TODAY, WITH HER DEATH! WE MUST HURRY--

BEFORE WE CONFRONT HER, WE MUST KNOW WHAT SHE HAS DONE. THE DARK SPELL I SPOKE OF. COME.

MOMENTS LATER IN THE MAGE TOWER...

AS ANDUIN BEGAN TO GROW, THE KING BEGAN TO SHAKE OFF HER ENCHANTMENT.

HER NEED TO REASSERT CONTROL LED TO HER PACT WITH THE DEFIAS AND, THEN, TO THAT DARK CEREMONY THAT ALTERED YOUR EXISTENCE.

THE SPELL I BELIEVE SHE USED WAS DESIGNED TO REMOVE AND DESTROY YOUR CONSCIENCE, YOUR WILL, YOUR SENSE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY...

...AND TO MAKE YOU, ONCE AGAIN, HER MALLEABLE PUPPET. IN THAT, SHE FAILED. WE MUST KNOW WHY.

PLACE YOUR RIGHT HANDS ON EACH OTHER'S SHOULDERS. I HAVE SET A PROTECTIVE ENCHANTMENT AROUND THE TOWER THAT WILL FREE YOU...



"...TO REMEMBER..."

I...I
REMEMBER...
...THE
ISLAND...AND
CHANTING...IN
TONGUES!



"I DON'T KNOW THE
LANGUAGE. I TRY TO
SPEAK WITH THEM...
TRY TO LEARN...TO
UNDERSTAND...TO
REASON WITH THEM."

"IT'S AS IF I WERE MUTE. I'M
NOTHING TO THEM. I HOWL
MY FURY. TO MAKE THEM
ACKNOWLEDGE MY EXISTENCE
AS I FIGHT TO BREAK FREE."



"MY RAGE BECOMES
INCANDESCENT. IT
ARCS FROM THE CENTER
OF MY BEING."

"I FEEL RIPPING PAIN. I
SCREAM AGAIN...THIS
TIME IN AGONY..."



"...AND I AM TORN
IN TWO!"

"DARKNESS SURROUNDS ME.
BUT I WON'T SURRENDER. I FIGHT
MY WAY TO CONSCIOUSNESS..."

"...AND I SEE MY
SELF LYING THERE.
UNCONSCIOUS? DEAD?
I CAN'T BE SURE."

"I LOOK AROUND
WILDLY, AND REALIZE
I'M A SEPARATE
BEING...MYSELF TORN
FROM MYSELF..."



IT IS *DONE!* I HAVE SUNDERED YOUR WILL!



NOW, BY MY POWER I SHALL ANNIHILATE IT! AND YOU WILL BE MY CREATURE-- BODY AND SOUL!

"IN THAT MOMENT, I KNOW MY TORMENTOR! THE LADY PRESTOR."



"BUT WHEREVER THE ISLAND IS, APPARENTLY IT ISN'T AS DESERTED AS THE LADY THINKS."

HUMAN FOOL--!

NAGA!

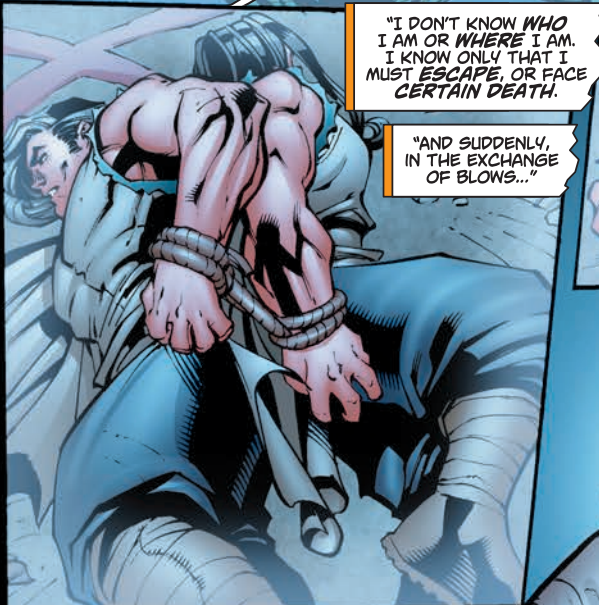
*TRANSLATED FROM NAZJA.



YOU, WHO DARE TO OCCUPY OUR ISLAND ARE NOW PRISONERS TO MORGALA DARKSQUALL!

"BATTLE RAGES ALL AROUND ME."

THE DEAD TAKE NO PRISONERS, SIREN!
KILL THEM!




"I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM OR WHERE I AM. I KNOW ONLY THAT I MUST ESCAPE, OR FACE CERTAIN DEATH."

"AND SUDDENLY, IN THE EXCHANGE OF BLOWS..."



"...FREEDOM BECKONS...!"



"MY MIND IS BLANK BUT MY BODY KNOWS ITS BUSINESS."

"THE GROUND IS LITTERED WITH THE WEAPONS OF THE FALLEN."



"THAT IS ALL WE NEED!"

FIND A WEAPON! WIELD IT--

BUT--

CUT YOUR WAY THROUGH IF YOU WANT TO LIVE! THEN FLEE!



DRAGONSPAWN WARRIORS! SHED YOUR HUMAN GUISE!

GRAB THE PULING HUMAN! HE IS THE ONE I MUST HAVE!

DESTROY THE OTHER!

AND SLAY THE NAGA WHO WOULD BEAR WITNESS TO THIS NIGHT'S WORK!



AS YOU COMMAND, MY MISTRESS!



"WE'RE CAUGHT IN A MAELSTROM OF CLAWS AND FANGS AND WHIPPING TAILS. THE AIR IS THICK WITH MAGIC AND THE CLASH OF WEAPONS."

"I DODGE AS BEST I CAN!"

"I RAIN BLOWS WHERE I AM ABLE!"

"I HAVE BUT A SINGLE THOUGHT--ESCAPE OR DIE!"



"I AM UPENDED!"

"BUT VALIANTLY, I REFUSE TO BE DASHED TO PIECES ON THE ROCKS BELOW."



"A MOMENT LATER..."

"...AND I AM PULLED BENEATH THE ANGRY WAVES BY THE CURSED NAGA."



"MY TWIN IS GONE.

"MOST OF THE DRAGONSPAWN ARE DEAD AROUND ME.

"BUT THERE ARE TOO MANY NAGA.

"AND THE SIREN IS AS POWERFUL AS THE FEW REMAINING WIZARDS.

"THEN THINGS REALLY BEGIN TO GET UGLY."

<A DRAGON!>




"SHE'S A LAVA BREATHER..."

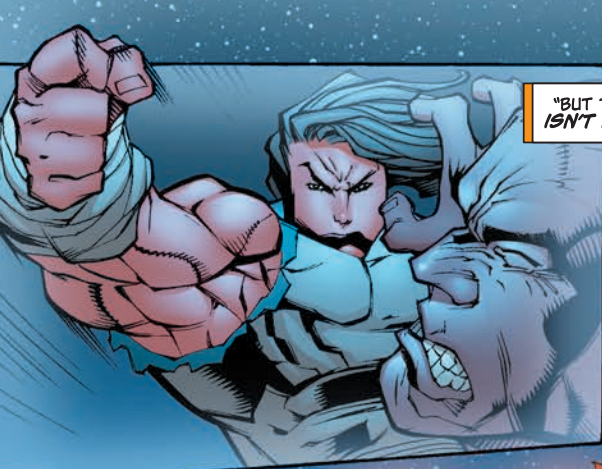


"...AS THE NAGA DISCOVER TO THEIR DISMAY..."

KEEEEGGGH!



"...WHILE MY PROBLEMS CONTINUE TO MULTIPLY, EVEN I CAN SENSE THE SEARING MAGIC IN THE WIZARD'S BLADE!"



"BUT THE WIZARD ISN'T A WARRIOR."

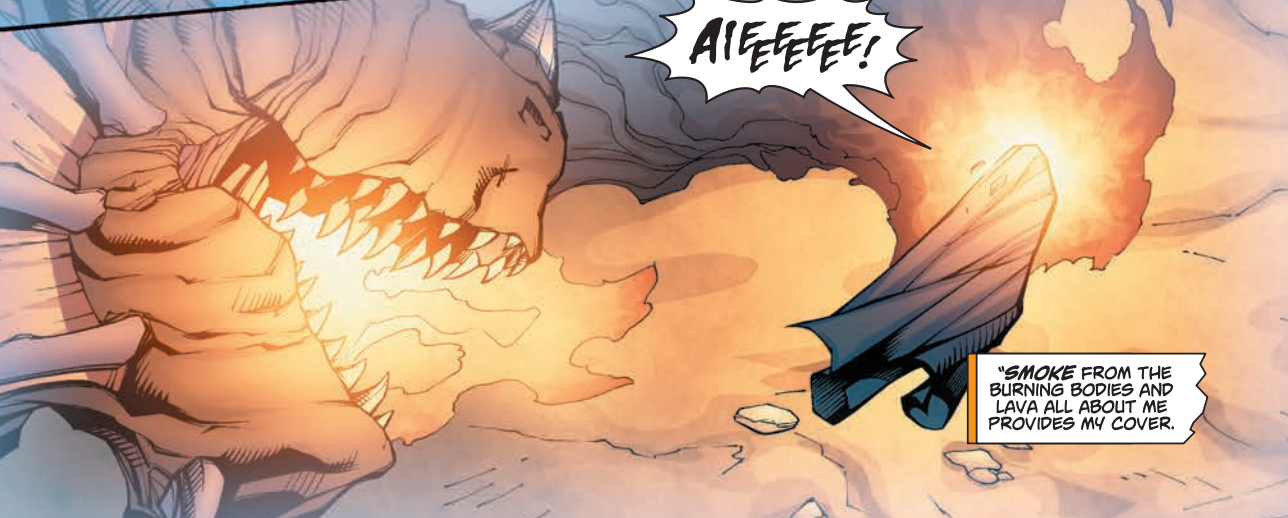


"HE'S SLOW."

"AND HIS PRESENCE SUGGESTS A SOLUTION TO MY IMMEDIATE PROBLEM!"



WHUMPH!



AIEEE!

"SMOKE FROM THE BURNING BODIES AND LAVA ALL ABOUT ME PROVIDES MY COVER."



"WITH A SNORT, THE DRAGON DEPARTS, WELL PLEASED WITH THIS NIGHT'S WORK..."

"...CERTAIN THAT THE WILL OF VARIAN HAS BEEN DESTROYED. FOOLISH, PRIDEFUL MONSTER!"



"THE NAGA KNOW DIFFERENTLY!"

<HOLD, HUMAN!>

I DIDN'T ESCAPE THE DRAGON TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF SEA SCUM..."

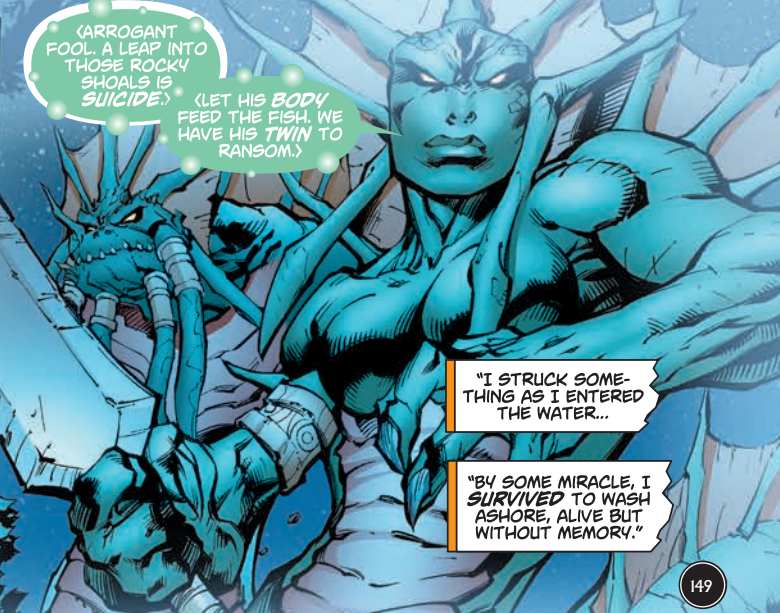
"...THOUGH I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR INTERVENTION!"



THUS, I GRANT YOU YOUR LIVES.

<ARROGANT FOOL, A LEAP INTO THOSE ROCKY SHOALS IS SUICIDE.>

<LET HIS BODY FEED THE FISH. WE HAVE HIS TWIN TO RANSOM.>



"I STRUCK SOMETHING AS I ENTERED THE WATER..."

"BY SOME MIRACLE, I SURVIVED TO WASH ASHORE, ALIVE BUT WITHOUT MEMORY."



WE ARE NOT BROTHERS.
WE ARE MORE.

WE ARE... ONE.

DIVIDED...

...AND EACH ONLY HALF A MAN.

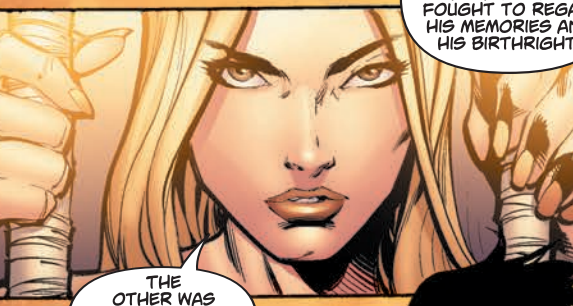


YOU'RE WRONG. BOTH OF YOU FOUND THE STRENGTH TO LIVE YOUR LIVES.

ONE BECAME LO'GOSH, CHAMPION GLADIATOR, WHO FOUGHT TO REGAIN HIS MEMORIES AND HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

"FORGED DURING THE WAR OF THE ANCIENTS, THEY WERE WIELDED BY THE TWIN WARRIORS VOR'ILLIAN AND LOVELLIAN.

"BETWEEN YOU, YOU HAVE TWICE THE STRENGTH, TWICE THE WISDOM, TWICE THE WILL TO STRIKE AT ONYXIA'S DARK HEART."



THE OTHER WAS RANSOMED AND RETURNED TO RULE STORMWIND...

...TO REENTER THE DRAGON'S WEB AND BE FURTHER ENSORCELLED.

BUT WHO, BEREFT OF WILL, FOUND RESOLVE TO BREAK FREE ONCE AGAIN.

AND FOR SUCH FORMIDABLE TWINS, A TWIN GIFT.

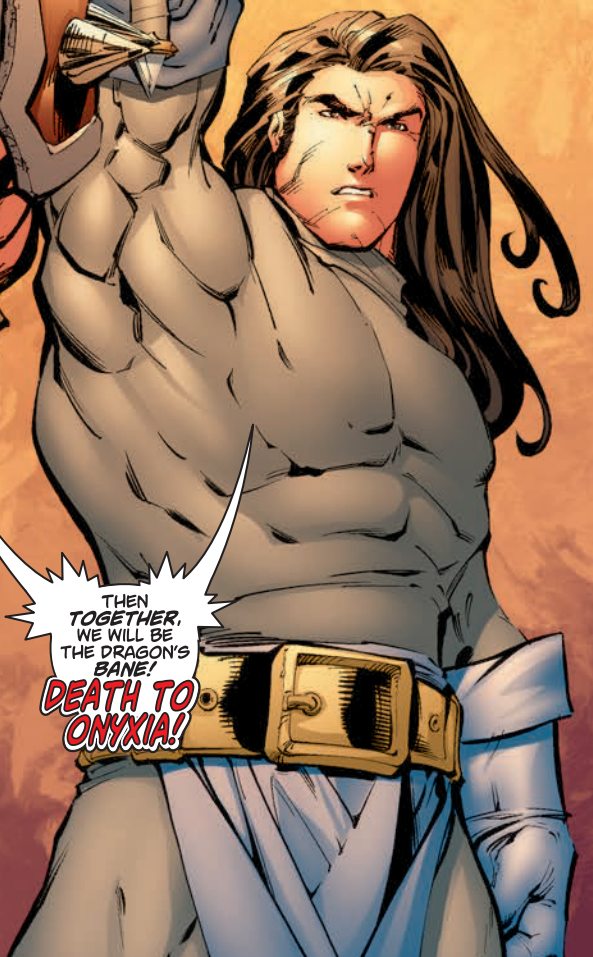
THESE ARE THE MAGIC ELVEN BLADES, SHAL'LATOR AND ELLEMAYNE!*



THEN TOGETHER, WE WILL BE THE DRAGON'S BANE!

DEATH TO ONYXIA!

*TRANSLATION FROM DARNASSIAN: SHADOW REAPER AND REAPER.



CHAPTER 7





Lupo.
Lullabi
HOE



THERE!
THROUGH THE
MIST. DO YOU
SEE IT?

THE RESCUE PARTY HAS RIDDEN FAR INTO THE NIGHT, LED BY VARIAN AND LO'GOSH--THE SUNDERED KINGS OF STORMWIND, THEIR DWARF AND ELVEN ALLIES, AND JAINA PROUDMOORE, A POWERFUL HUMAN SORCERESS.

THEIR GOAL IS TO RESCUE THE YOUNG PRINCE ANDUIN, KIDNAPPED BY THE BLACK DRAGON ONYXIA.

THAT'S THE ENTRANCE TO ONYXIA'S LAIR? DECOR'S A LITTLE OBVIOUS!

THEIR DESIRE IS TO KILL THE DRAGON!



SHE PROBABLY DOESN'T GET MANY VISITORS.

NEVERTHELESS, I SEE SHE'S PREPARED A WELCOMING PARTY!



"DRAGONSPAWN AND DRAGON WHELPS...INCLUDING A SMALL ARMY OF WYRMLING!"

"NOT THE BRIGHTEST... BUT FIERCE FIGHTERS."



BUT OUR SWORDS ARE MAGIC. AND JAINA HAS ENCHANTED OUR PARTY'S WEAPONS.

NO DRAGONSPAWN ALIVE WILL BE ABLE TO KEEP US FROM MY SON.

INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH!

DEATH TO
THE ENEMIES OF
STORMWIND!



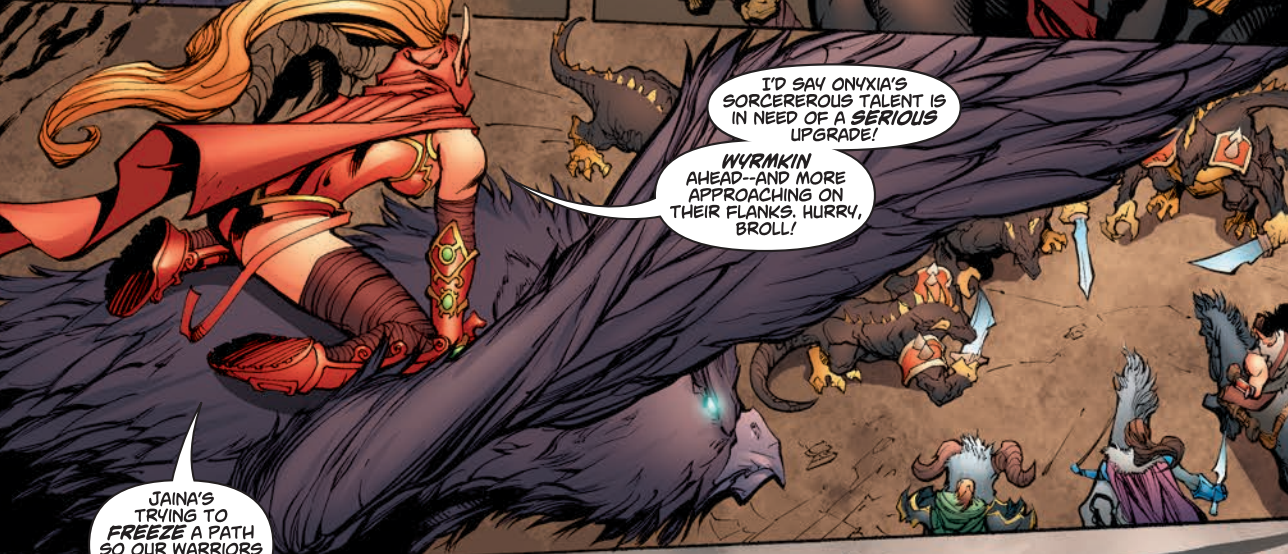
SKREEEEEEEEEEEEEEE



ONYXIA HAS A SORCERER-- A POWERFUL ONE!



BROLL AND I ARE ON IT!



I'D SAY ONYXIA'S SORCEREROUS TALENT IS IN NEED OF A SERIOUS UPGRADE!

WYRMKIN AHEAD--AND MORE APPROACHING ON THEIR FLANKS. HURRY, BROLL!

AAARGH!

JAINA'S TRYING TO FREEZE A PATH SO OUR WARRIORS CAN WIN THROUGH...



AAK!

"...BUT EVEN SHE CAN'T HALT AN ARMY!"



BROLL--
ISN'T THERE
SOMETHING
YOU CAN--?

YELL!



ROOTS
OF THE
EARTH--HEAR ME!
THE FIERY ENEMY
IS WITHIN YOUR
GRASP! RISE
UP...

...AND CRUSH THE
DRAGON'S SPAWN!



BROLL'S WORK?
LO'GOSH, MY BEST
AND OTHER SELF--YOU
HAVE MADE SOME
SERIOUSLY USEFUL
FRIENDS!



WE'RE
ALMOST
THERE!
ANDUIN IS
CAPTIVE--




"...SOMEWHERE
INSIDE."

TWO AT
ONCE? THEN
YOU'LL DIE
TOGETH--



→--ULP!←



HOW
APT THAT
YOU SPEAK
OF DEATH,
YOUNG
PRINCE.



NOW THAT
YOU HAVE
PERFORMED A
FINAL SERVICE
AND BROUGHT
YOUR FATHER
WITHIN MY
GRASP...

... 'TIS TIME
MY NEWEST
HATCHLINGS
SHOULD GORGE ON
YOUR ROYAL
FLESH.



ONYXIA'S
ARMY HAS BEEN
DESTROYED.

BUT THE
OPENING IS STILL
BLOCKED BY
HER MAGIC.

WERE I
NOT WITH YOU,
YOU WOULD BE
STYMIED...UNLESS
YOU HAD THE
HIDDEN KEY THAT
WOULD UNLOCK
HER SPELL.



BUT I HAVE,
IN MY ARSENAL
OF MAGICS, AN
ENCHANTMENT THAT
SHOULD OPEN MANY
DOORS...EVEN THIS
EVIL PORTAL!



SO FAR, SO
GOOD...BUT
THINGS ARE
ABOUT TO GET
WORSE, AREN'T
THEY?

ALMOST
IMMEDIATELY!

ONYXIA'S
WARDERS!

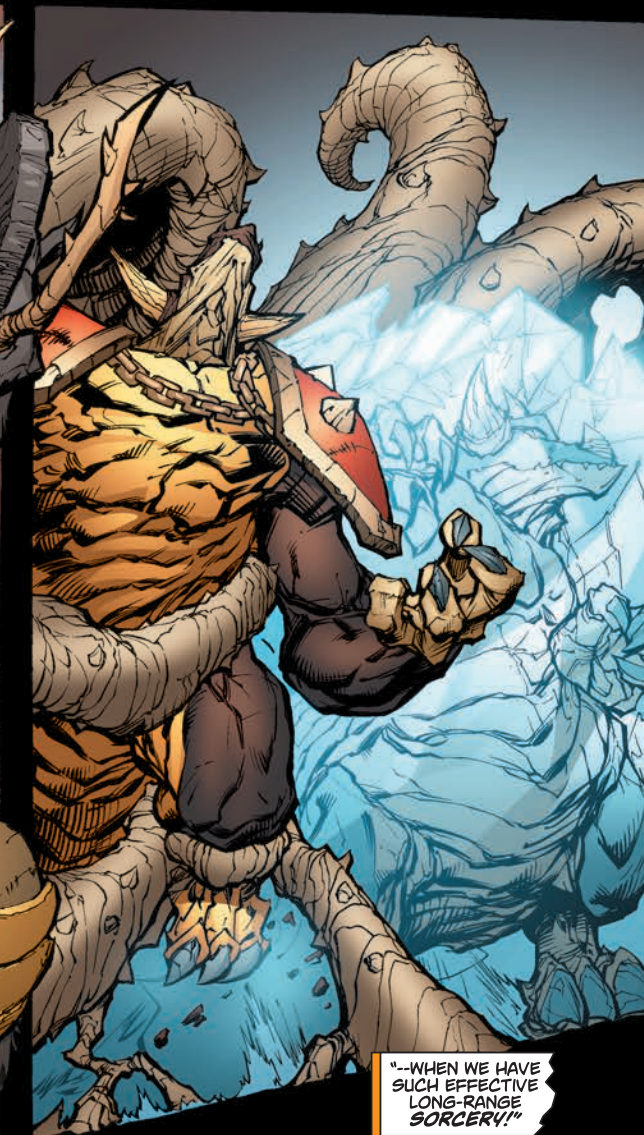
WARRIORS
OF STORMWIND--
ENGAGE THE
MONSTERS!



THE
REST OF
YOU--STAY
BACK!



"NO POINT FIGHTING AT
CLOSE QUARTERS--"



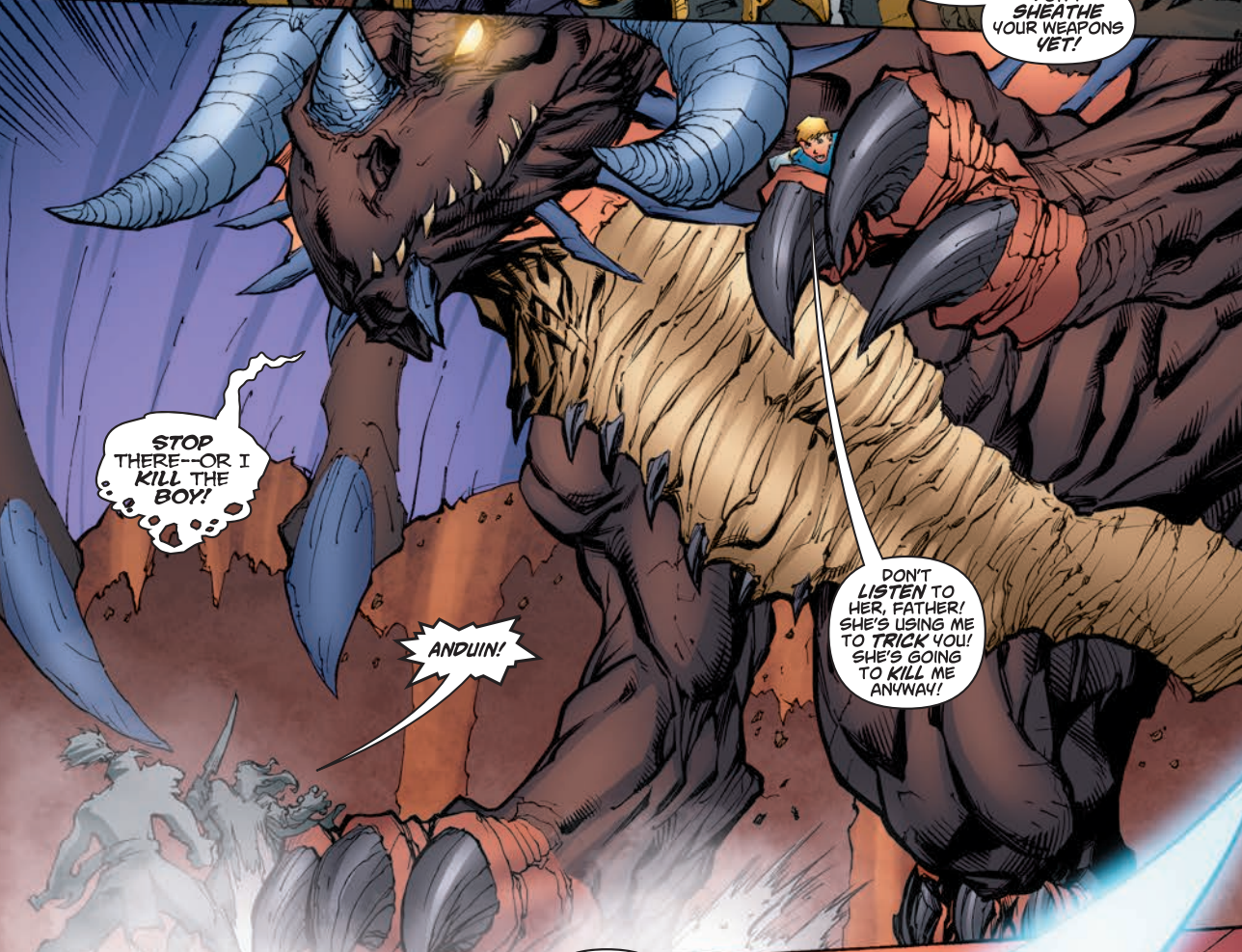
"--WHEN WE HAVE
SUCH EFFECTIVE
LONG-RANGE
SORCERY!"



SHUMPH! WITH YOU TWO IN OUR MIDST, THE REST OF US WILL HARDLY NEED TO LIFT OUR BLADES!

ONYXIA IS DEATHWING'S DAUGHTER, THARGAS. SHE HAS HAD THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO PERFECT HER MAGICAL SKILLS.

DON'T SHEATHE YOUR WEAPONS YET!



STOP THERE--OR I KILL THE BOY!

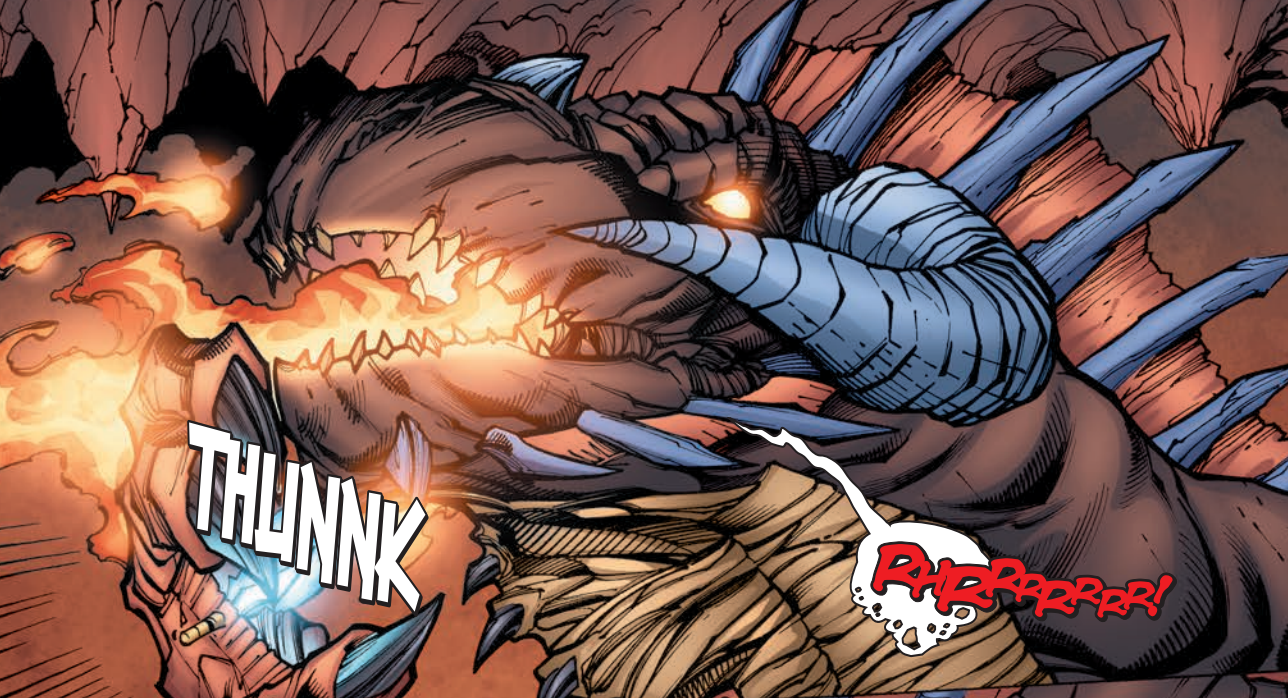
ANDUIN!

DON'T LISTEN TO HER, FATHER! SHE'S USING ME TO TRICK YOU! SHE'S GOING TO KILL ME ANYWAY!



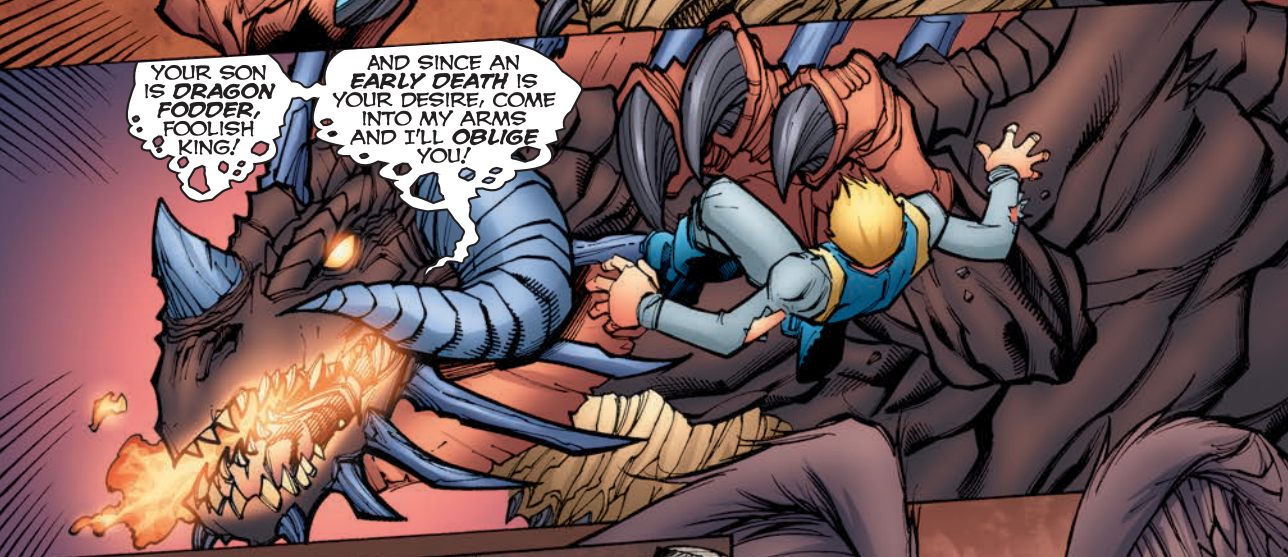
THEN WE'LL DIE TOGETHER, MY SON!

DEATH TO ONYXIA!



THUNK

RRRRRRR!



YOUR SON IS DRAGON FODDER, FOOLISH KING!

AND SINCE AN EARLY DEATH IS YOUR DESIRE, COME INTO MY ARMS AND I'LL OBLIGE YOU!



BOOOFF!

I'VE GOT TO GET OUT--!

CRACK

CRACK

CRACK



GRRRR
GROWRRR

I'M CAUGHT! AVENGE ME, FATHER!



BKAWW-KAW!



HA!
TOO SLOW,
YOU SCALY
SLUGS!

DON'T
PRESUME YOUR
MEAL BEFORE
IT'S IN YOUR
BELLY!



FWOOSH!

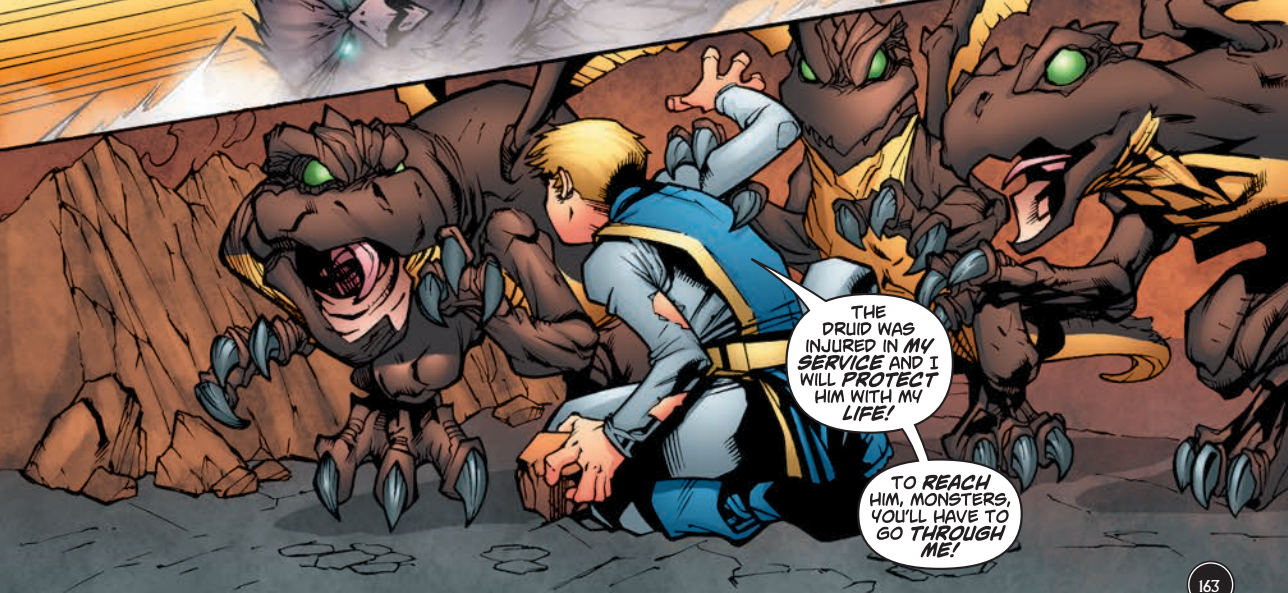
I DON'T
KNOW YOUR
NAME, BUT I
THANK YOU,
DRUID, FOR
YOUR--



--WATCH
OUT!

KRAK-
KAAAAK!

WHUMMPH



THE
DRUID WAS
INJURED IN MY
SERVICE AND I
WILL PROTECT
HIM WITH MY
LIFE!

TO REACH
HIM, MONSTERS,
YOU'LL HAVE TO
GO THROUGH
ME!



BRAVE
SPEECH FROM
A LAD WHOSE ONLY
WEAPON IS A ROCK.
FOOLHARDY
EVEN.
REMINDS
ME OF YOUR
FATHER!
BOTH OF
THEM!

THE
DRUID--?



HIS NAME
IS **BROLL!**
HE'LL BE
FINE!

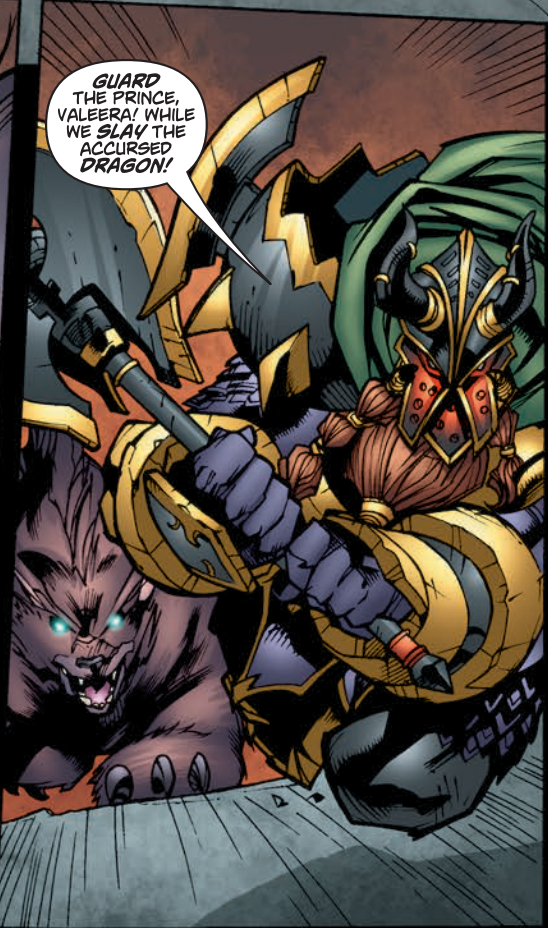
I'VE
SEEN HIM
RECOVER
FROM FAR
WORSE.

HERE--TAKE
ONE OF MY
DAGGERS! IT'S
ENCHANTED...AND
MORE LETHAL
THAN THAT
STONE!

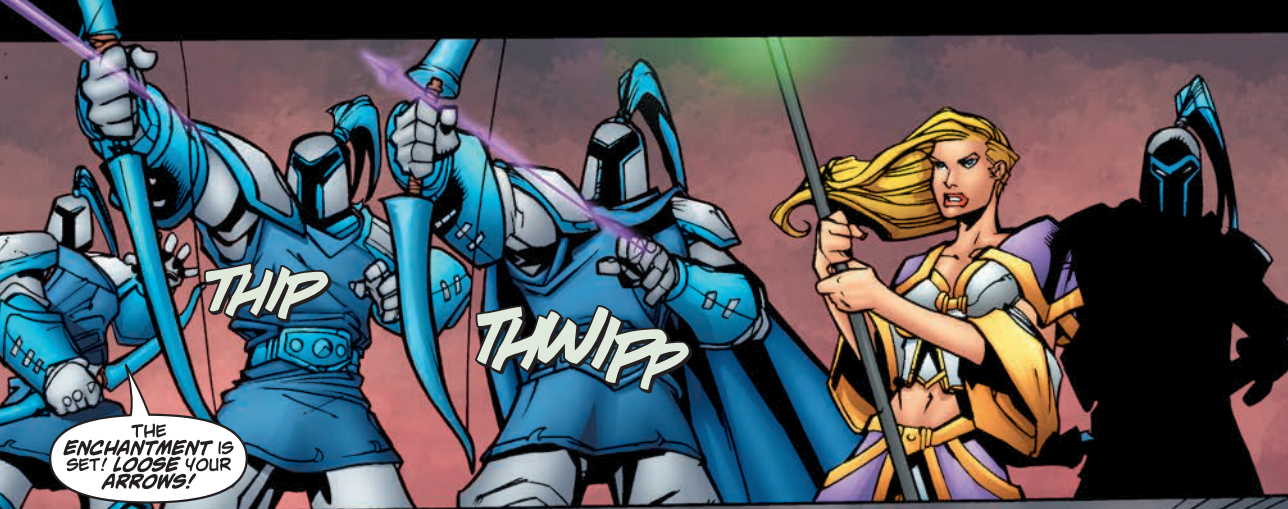
»RRRARRRRRR!»



SEE--HE'S
BETTER
ALREADY.



GUARD
THE PRINCE,
VALEERA! WHILE
WE **SLAY** THE
ACCURSED
DRAGON!



THE ENCHANTMENT IS SET! LOOSE YOUR ARROWS!

THIP

THWIP



RHHAAARR!

THOK
THOK



NOW!

AND MIND HER TAIL!



WHUNNK

UFFF!

IF YOU COULD ISSUE THESE WARNINGS IN A MORE TIMELY FASHION?



BATHLUNNIP

KRAK

CRACK

KRAK



THARGAS! YOU'RE HELPING MORE WHELPS TO HATCH!

MOVE! OR BE TORN APART!

CHOK



THE ROYAL SUNDERLINGS FIGHTING AS A UNIT?! HOW AMUSING!

AND EACH SO MUCH LESS THAN HALF THE WHOLE!

WE KNOW, NOW, MONSTER, WHAT YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU DID TO US!

FOR THAT ALONE, YOU ARE CONDEMNED TO DIE!



RHRRRR!

AIEEEEE!

GAHHH!



CHRRRRRRGR

GRRRR GROWRRI

SHE'S CALLED IN REINFORCEMENTS!

I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER HOW WELL THIS IS GOING TO TURN OUT!

SHUT UP AND KILL THEM FASTER!



ENOUGH!

ONYXIA'S BROOD SERVES ONLY TO DISTRACT US FROM OUR TRUE MISSION!

WE MUST TAKE THIS BATTLE TO ITS SOURCE!

RISE UP IN WRATH, YOU LIVING ROOTS BENEATH THE SOIL!

"SHOW THE DRAGON WITCH HOW THE RIGHTEOUS EARTH ITSELF..."



"...ABHORS HER PERFDIV!"



TOGETHER WE HAVE TWICE THE POWER!

FOLLOW ME! WE STRIKE TOGETHER AT HER DARK HEART!

LET ONYXIA'S FALL BE OF HER OWN MAKING!



RUNNNNK!

MEL ANDILAR BORUN MIRANOL!*

*YOUR SUFFERING SHALL BE LEGENDARY!



RUN!

NOOOO! THE DRAGON!

WE'RE UNDONE!



A FEAR SPELL--!

AIMED AT BROLL, LASS! TO MAKE HIM RELEASE HER!

WE'RE CATCHING ITS BACKWASH AND WE CAN HARDLY MOVE! BROLL...




HURRY! CAN'T HOLD HER...MUCH LONGER!

RRRR
HRR!



WORMS! I'LL FEAST UPON YOUR FLESH BEFORE THIS DAY IS THROUGH!

A large dragon with blue horns and wings is breathing fire at a man in a white and orange tunic. The man is holding a small object in his hands.

IT IS NOT I WHO WILL FALL THIS DAY... BUT THE ROYAL HOUSE OF WRYNN!

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a purple and white robe, is holding a staff with a glowing green orb at the top. She is looking towards the dragon.

AND WITH GREAT RELUCTANCE AND REGRET...

WHAPPPK

UHHH!

A large dragon with blue horns and wings is shown from a low angle, looking directly at the viewer. Its eyes are glowing purple. The background is a purple, stormy sky with lightning.

... THE LADY PRESTOR WILL BECOME THE REGENT... AND EVENTUAL RULER... OF STORMWIND!

I HAVE ALWAYS WANTED MY OWN KINGDOM!

RELN NU RAMANI AR RAVELAHN... *

*LET THE WILL OF THIS PUPPET BE BROKEN...



ABELA...*

LO'GOSH--
WE KNOW THAT
SPELL!

* ONCE...



GET
BEHIND
ME!

MAL...*

*AND...



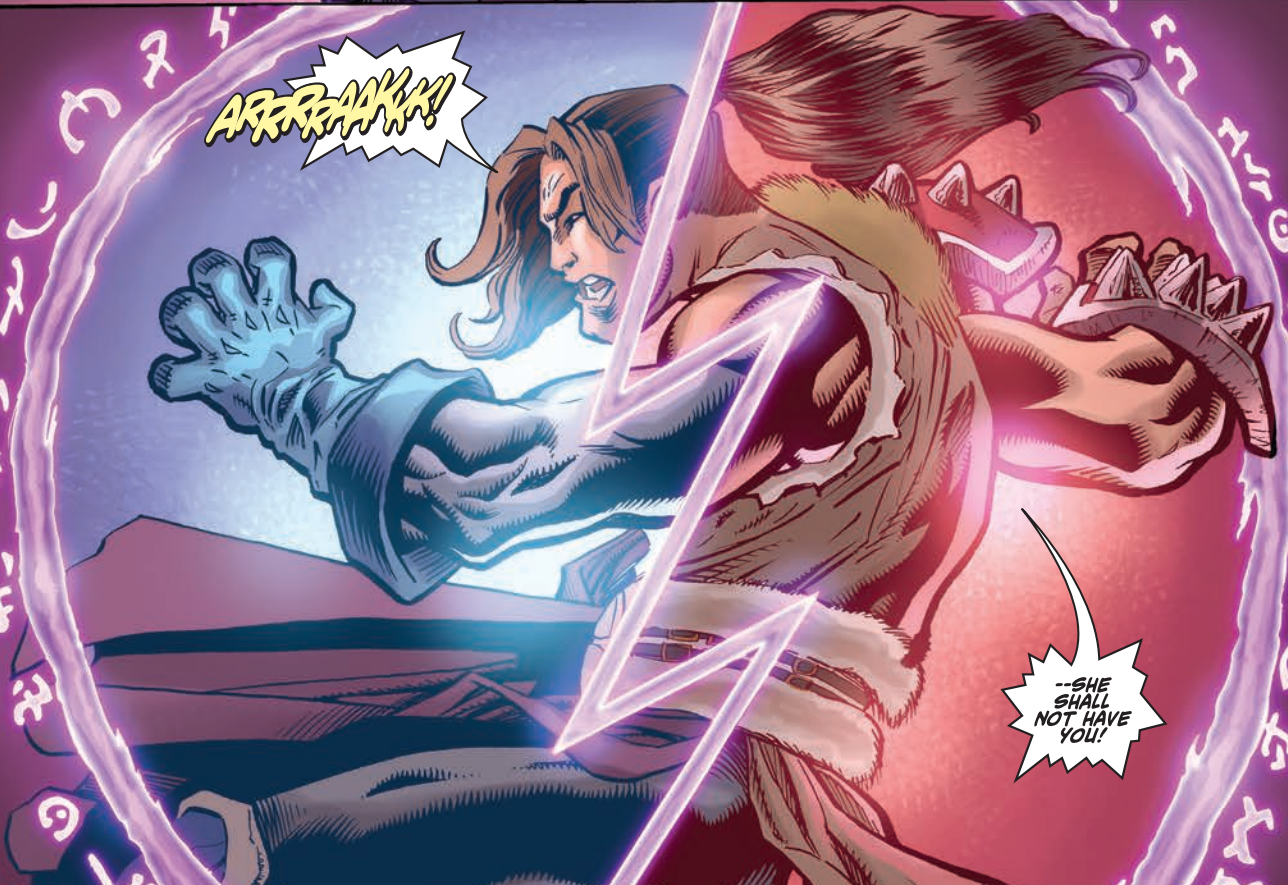
IT ALMOST DESTROYED
YOU BACK ON THE
ISLAND.

AW DAKANA!*

MY
BROTHER--
EMBODIMENT OF
MY WARRIOR
SELF! WILL OF
STORMWIND'S
KING--

VARIAN!

*FOR ALL!



ARRRAAKK!

--SHE
SHALL
NOT HAVE
YOU!



YOU MUST LIVE TO SLAY THE DRAGON!



AND SAVE...MY... SON!

FOR A LONG MOMENT...

...THERE IS DEAD SILENCE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE DRAGON'S LAIR.

...UNTIL...

WELL DONE, ONYXIA!

YOUR FONDEST WISH HAS COME TRUE.

VARIAN WRYNN, KING OF STORMWIND AND THE LANDS BEYOND, STANDS BEFORE YOU.



I AM RESTORED AT LAST. AND IF YOU WANT MY KINGDOM, YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE IT THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY!

WITH BLOOD AND IRON!



BLACK DRAGONS ARE MADE OF BLOOD AND IRON!
AND WE KILL WITH LAVA AND MAGIC!



RHHAAAH!!



SO DO HUMANS!

CHOKKK

AAAKKKKKK!!

YAAARRRRGGGGGGGGGK!



THRROOOOOOONNNNNNNNN



LO'GOSH?

VARIAN?

SIRE?



ONE AND THE SAME!
AND BOTH TOGETHER.



FATHER! I KNEW YOU'D COME!



AS I KNEW YOU'D FIGHT TO STAY ALIVE UNTIL I COULD COME FOR YOU, MY SON!

ONYXIA IS DEAD! OUR KINGDOM HAS BEEN FREED FROM HER POISONOUS INFLUENCE!

AND THE LINE OF STORMWIND'S KINGS HAS BEEN RESTORED!



MY LORD.



THROUGH HER MACHINATIONS, ONYXIA HAS MADE ME TWICE THE WARRIOR, TWICE THE STATESMAN, TWICE THE KING I WAS BEFORE!

MY OPEN HAND WILL REWARD MY FRIENDS AS BEFITS A GREAT KING.



BUT LET MY ENEMIES BEWARE!

FOR ON THIS NIGHT AND IN THIS HOUR, STORMWIND HAS BEEN REBORN!



