

Shadows over Khaz Modan

The Venture Co. - 2007

Gorfrunch

The sun fell below the cliff wall that separated Revantusk Village from the rest of the Hinterlands. The forest trolls began preparing for the yearly celebration in honor of their lost hero, Zul'jin. A roaring bonfire was lit in the village square despite the pouring rain, and the musicians made their way toward the hut holding the tribal drums. As they climbed the steps up, they pulled out their gryphon femur drumsticks and looked down at the bonfire below them. The flames of hope and posterity shone up at them and strengthened them for the celebration. They lifted their drumsticks together and let their arms drop in unison towards the drums. The orc wind rider master sitting under a canopy on the pier cursed the rain and cursed the trolls as he tried in vain to comfort his soaked beasts as the pounding music began.

The oars of the small transport hit the water. Roars and whip cracks could be heard coming from the small vessel over the roar of the sea and the drumming of rain on the wood and water.

"Faster, whelps! The warchief has ordered us on this mission, and should any of you lose strength and fail him...well you should hope for death before that." The boat shook and the grots whimpered as sea water poured in from the sides of the ship. "Kurks, you drunken rotter! Keep this thing afloat until we get there!"

The boat was small and poorly built. The captain made it no secret that he preferred his previous ship. It made no difference to the burly orc hunkering down below decks to hide from the seawater and pouring rain. He had a mission of the highest importance from his warchief, and nothing would stop him. He would have gladly run on foot to Revantusk Village if asked. Luckily this wreck had been salvaged and rebuilt before the orc was even let in on the events. The orc grinned and slid his hands over the wooden railing. Kurks might be upset about being on the boat but the orc thought of it as a luxury. His thoughts of comfort were soon broken by the ringing sounds of a drumbeat. He sprung onto the wooden ladder and heaved himself on deck.

"Are we there, Kurks?!"

"Looks like! I'm going to anchor her off shore until I get the signal. Looks like they have a canoe coming our way you can borrow to make it the rest of the way over. This piece of driftwood wouldn't survive coming in closer in this weather."

The orc squinted toward the shore, and, sure enough, the undead captain was correct. Two trolls were expertly paddling a long canoe toward them, with an expression of both fear and anger plain on their tattooed faces. The canoe drifted beside the now anchored transport and one of the trolls called out to the crew.

"Wha' choo be doin 'ere? Dis be a celebration dat be for us Revantusks only. No orcs be makin' dere way in da village tonight, choo know? Bad tings be 'appenin to dose 'oo walk in on da spirits."

The orc looked down at the troll and lifted an axe from the hilt with two fingers below the blade.

"Better I walk in on yer spirits than walkin' on you, eh?"

A few minutes later, the orc climbed onto the Revantusk dock with a troll and blood elf at his heels, the troll separated from the Revantusks by not only his Darkspear heritage, but the missing tooth at the front of his growling face. The orc's plate boots made loud thuds on the wooden pier. The Wind Rider master opened his mouth to greet them, but then his expression turned into a snarl of rage and fear as he saw their tabards and their faces. He barely resisted as the Darkspear put a blade to his throat, sliced, and shoved him off the edge of the pier with one boot. The orc in plate boots continued down the pier, the drumbeat making the moment euphoric and quickening his pace. He saw the bonfire where all the trolls were gathered and made his way toward it. He shoved trolls out of his way, not caring if they were man, woman, or child. He was on a mission and their well-being mattered little. Now the center of attention, he

climbed up the ruins next to the bonfire so all could look into his eyes. The drumbeat continued at a fast and louder pace, and Revantusks began to surround him and his entourage with weapons held in rain-slicked hands. The heat of the fire and water together made the air taste harsh and unloving. The orc let it all soak in and the trolls watched him, threatened, but mystified. Then the orc let out an enormous bellow that shook the village, made the trolls shiver and stopped the last bit of celebration. The drums went silent, and the trolls stopped almost all movement.

"Listen to me now, trolls. I am Sythegar Yagyu of the Blacktooth Grin. You may be angry at me for crashin yer holiday but I aint here ta kill unless ya force me. My warchief is extending a hand of alliance to yer ungrateful hides. He has noticed you are loyal to Thrall for somethin he aint doin, protecting your precious tusks from the dwarves 'n' Stormwind exiles over dat cliff. And he is willin ta fergive you. But you must forsake the peacechief Thrall, and pledge yer loyalty to my warchief. My warchief is planning a war that this world hasn't seen since the Second. Yer city is very important strategically and will be used with, or without, yer consent."

Yagyu turned to the bonfire and was mesmerized for a moment. Its flickering flames matched the fire that was shining in his eyes.

"Look at yer bonfire. What does it mean? I don't care what it used ta mean. I'll tell you what it means now. That fire is the symbol of how fast we will spread over Khaz Modan. That fire is a symbol of war! That fire is a symbol of the dwarven homes and the future for them! My warchief knew yer Zul'jin! Thrall probably ain't never met 'im! You wanna follow in yer leader's footsteps? Then I propose you see what has happened. I am 'ere on yer holiday with a proposition. Instead of failing to protect yer huts from dwarf fires, we bring flames to their burrows! Follow my warchief! Play yer drums! Play a song o' war! Kurks brings gifts of dwarf corpses in our ship. Tonight we feast! Tomorrow we fight! For Warchief Smashblade!"

The trolls, while apprehensive at the start of the speech, were swayed by the orc's words. The cannibalistic nature being tested weakened many other skeptics' resolve. After hurried counsel among the frightened village elders, a new banner was hoisted alongside the Horde banners around the Village, a black cloth with white teeth decorating it. Throughout the night a different drumbeat was heard. One that filled the denizens of the Hinterlands with fear and foreboding. But nothing caused more fear than a single orc bellowing an all too familiar war cry into the dark night...

Primal Raintusk gazed out over the broken remains of her village, the bodies of guards piled so high that they still hadn't managed proper burials for them a testament to the savagery of the Alliance counterattack. Although Aerie Peak now lay in ruins, was it worth the pain and suffering her people had gone through? Instead of defending them, the Grin had retreated away from her village and come in behind the Alliance force, sacrificing her people for a small advantage against the enemy.

But, the Peak *was* torched...

And the dwarf bodies were still fresh.

The funeral pyre continued to grow, as more Revantusks were added. The Grin troops sat off to one side, watching the rebuilding as they sat back and drank to their victory.

Morthala (TGC)

A dark figure emerged from the shadows of the Peak, surveying the carnage all around him. As Morthala climbed the steps going to the gryphon's chambers, he was greeted by none other than Dreamer herself.

"What business have you here, rogue? Come to loot the bodies just as you have relieved me of so many pocket watches?" Dreamer stepped forward menacingly.

"Not in the least...I came to see the damage that was wrought while we assaulted the Undercity. It seems that one of their leaders' lives was not worth a defeat of this one battle. It seems the Horde have something larger in mind than your Peak...if you need me, I am always available to fight the Old Horde."

With this Morthala faded back into the shadows, not even giving Dreamer enough time to attempt to check her pockets for yet another watch that now belonged to the rogue.

Mandeville

Mandeville was awoken by her hearthstone, which was alive with shouts and commotion. She sat bolt upright, suddenly very awake, and listened. From the sounds of it, there was an intense battle being waged far north in the Hinterlands, and possibly even...within Headquarters?! Mandeville snatched the stone off of the bedstand, bursting with questions, but unable to get a word in edgewise. She rose from the bed, her blazing hair falling haphazardly about her shoulders, and began to pace on the wooden floor. It sounded as if the battle had been going on for quite some time. There were calls for reinforcements to force the invading Horde down the stone ramp outside, and calls for medical assistance in the depths of Headquarters.

Mandeville threw a furtive look at her gear slumped in the corner of the room, knowing full well that she was too far away to reach the battle in time. She cast her eyes to the floor for a moment too, at the thought of her weak abilities compared to the brutality of the Horde forces. When her eyes lifted, however, that hesitation was gone, replaced by a cold determination. "It won't be long, I will make my name known amongst the Horde faction, and they will further regret the day that they challenged the Reveries."

Yagyu

A cool breeze blew along the cliffs as the Sythegar sat overlooking the limping reconstructive efforts at Revantusk. The orc was happy. There was no greater pleasure in his life than to be where he was, sitting with his clan, drinking ale, and thinking about the battle that had just ended.

He eyed the village down below contemptuously. They were undeserving of pity. Had they followed the ways of the Old Horde from the beginning and not fallen into the lazy stupor put forth by Thrall and his ilk, they bodies would not be piled higher than the roof of their inn. Yagyu sneered at the thought of the trolls down below crying into their soup pots. Perhaps this would be a lesson to them to remember why the Alliance deserved nothing but death.

The memory of the flowing dwarven blood and the shocked Alliance who fell under the weight of his axe at the Peak made him smile. This was what made life worth living. Yag drained the last remnants of ale from his mug and looked over at the rest of the Grin basking in the glory of war...he felt at home.

Cadrian (MR)

Ironforge was chaos. Armed soldiers and adventurers ran back and forth on the city's massive walks, heralds shouted the latest news from the field over the roar of the city, and flights of gryphons overwhelmed the capacity of the roost to hold them. Many bore the brand and distinctive quality of Aerie Peak.

Cadrian Stoneson was in a inn in the midst of this madness, the building's thick stone walls barely muffling the commotion outside. He had reached Ironforge only last night and had intended to reactivate his blacksmith in the city for a time. But now, he was repacking his gear and preparing to set out once more.

Anarea the Shadowed watched him unenthusiastically. Her gear remained strewn about the room. She had been hired by the paladin to investigate certain elements in Ironforge, while Cadrian's smithy provided a cover, not to suddenly rush off to the Hinterlands to fight the Horde. She informed Cadrian of this observation.

Cadrian shrugged. "So stay. Consider this latest job null and void."

Anarea sighed. "Cadrian, you're my only paying client right now. No one else has wet work to do."

Cadrian grinned at this comment. "Be patient. War has broken out, night elf. There will be plenty of call for your services soon enough."

Anarea accepted that was true. The Grunts and their allies in the Horde had made a beachhead along the Hinterlands and attacked Aerie Peak. Simultaneously, a coalition of Alliance forces had been formed and assaulted Undercity. The quietly-smoldering cold war had broken out into a full-fledged conflict almost overnight.

Regardless, she glared at Cadrian. "So you're going to run off to battle then? You and all the rest of the Guardians?"

Cadrian held his sword, checking the blade for imperfections. There were none. "The Guardians have been fighting. Remember Grom'gol? Remember Tarren Mill? We just have more of an excuse now."

Anarea brought her knees up to her chin and frowned. "I prefer a quiet war."

Cadrian laughed. "Guess rogues can't get all the fun anymore."

Whitewind (MR)

The battle might be over, but the war had surely just begun. Whitewind drifted through the wreckage that was Aerie Peak, tending to the wounded and dying dwarves who so valiantly defended their home. Her home. It seemed that every place she called home, the Horde soon destroyed with gleeful joy. Raking a blood crusted hand through her white hair she swore in frustration as yet another dwarf died before her, another soul gone too soon in the senseless conflict. It was becoming hard to keep the building rage inside that had started to burn the day Darnassus was attacked, their leaders wounded so severely she had finally consented to move to the Westbrook Garrison. A darker voice whispered through her thoughts as she wandered aimlessly among the Peak. Whispers of ancient battles and the rivers of blood that flowed, Horde blood at the hand of Alliance.

"Hush mother, I will not be tempted by you again," she murmured to herself, gaining strange looks from the bartender as she passed him.

The battle still raged at Raventusk, she knew, but had no stomach to stay even if her companions had need of her. Battles like this called out the truly bloodthirsty, but she had children to protect and could not leave them unattended for long with the Peak. Tucked safely away in a small nook, the twins cooed at her in their baby delight, and she couldn't help but smile. Such innocence in a place like this, it was no longer suited for infants with the Horde knocking on their door. She placed two slings over her shoulders and settled an infant in each, snug against her body and covered with her tabard. Her distraction with the children almost cost her her life, as a guttural orcish yell was heard and her husband came rushing around the corner. Together, Whitewind and Virendis made a dash for safety out of the Peak, only to be stopped at every corner by more and more Horde. Frustration driven by desperation, each called upon their hearthstone and disappeared into the night. Home was no longer safe.

Gorfrunch

"Jus' who the hell are they?!" cried Hansel Heavyhands, peering through a spyglass into the distance of the Searing Gorge.

"What?" asked Master Smith Burninate, moving to the edge of Thorium Point and squinting.

"Three riders, all of them have flags on their steeds," said Hansel.

"What flags they be flying? Alliance? Horde?" asked Master Smith Burninate, still peering off into the distance, trying to catch a glimpse of these riders. A group of human adventurers sitting down for a drink near the gryphon master listened on with interest.

"No." replied Hansel, continuing to look intently through his spyglass.

"Not Shadowforge City flags, right?" asked Master Smith Burninate in a worried tone.

“No, war torn flag. Pure black except for what looks an orc's mouth, white as snow that part is,” replied Hansel.

All but the Dark Iron dwarves seemed to freeze at the moment.

“Grin,” said the orcish flight master in an angry tone.

“You mad, lass? Got no reason to smile right now, so why grin?” asked Master Smith Burninate, turning to the orcish flight master with some level of confusion.

The flight master sighed, “The Blacktooth Grin. They refuse to follow the warchief’s commands. They are violent, bloodthirsty warmongers who are an echo of the Second War.” She spit on the ground as she finished.

“Pathetic, barbarous little -” The flight master was interrupted by the unnatural cry of an undead steed.

“Silence, gnome hugger.” hissed the rider of the undead steed.

All stepped back from the three riders as the other two made their way up the natural ramp, their steeds letting out frightening roars.

On the right of the horseman, an orc glared at the dwarves with sinister eyes. Thick mail armor was worn from head to toe, a thick golden shield on his back and axes and daggers hanging from his sides, the air around him crackling with the power of the elements.

On the left of the horseman was a blood elf adorned in dark brown and black chain, a long sharp pole arm fell from his side like a lance, and a longbow with a quiver full of arrows was at his back.

The undead horseman himself was perhaps the most intimidating of the three, his steed glowed with unholy energies, and the dark shadows created by his hood and mask were pierced only by two burning red eyes. His armor was as black as the shadows, but thick and heavy. The only thing easily visible were two long, sharp daggers that gleamed in the hot sun. The only similarities between the three riders were the missing teeth on their banners, tabards, and the mouths of the elf and orc.

The center horsemen leapt into the air, and the two on his sides followed suit. The blood elf fired several arrows, each of which found a place in the orcish flight master’s face.

The orc landed and began muttering some guttural words, lightning flying from his hands and slamming against the human flight master, frying her along with her gryphons.

The undead disappeared in mid-air, then reappeared behind one of the startled Alliance adventurers. Driving both of his daggers into the Alliance adventurer’s back, and then severing his head with another swing. The undead then turned and swiftly threw five throwing daggers, each of which landed in the back of a fleeing human merchant.

“Who... who are you?” asked Hansel, stepping back as the undead turned toward the Dark Iron dwarf.

“I am Bellmont, Champion of the Blacktooth Grin. And your little outpost is in a valuable position. We want it,” hissed Bellmont.

“Well then, lad, perhaps the slaughter wasn’t necessary, could have at least waited for them to finish their business,” said Master Smith Burninate.

“Alliance gold won't concern you much soon,” said Bellmont, letting out a small chuckle.

“Really then? Now ya got my attention,” said Hansel, standing up and brushing himself off.

“Glad you asked. Warchief Smashblade wants this position, and has sent me along with these two raiders to take it. We could have very well killed you all, but I come bearing... the easy way.” said Bellmont, motioning for Arkonn and Tharund, the two raiders who had accompanied him, to lower their weapons.

The Dark Iron dwarves of the Thorium Brotherhood let out a sigh of relief.

“Now, we use your base as an outpost, and allow you to trade with the Alliance. However, you must alert us whenever Alliance are in the area. Also, we will require several of your builders to help us expand our headquarters. The materials will be supplied, but we will rely on your crafting skills. In exchange for this, we will pay you a modest sum for the builders, and let you in on a portion of our toehold in Blackrock Spire, so you can get your own miners in there. So, is it a deal, Dark Iron?” asked Bellmont, his blood red eyes staring directly into Hansel’s.

"Any alternative to that, lad?" asked Hansel.

"We slaughter you all and take the area for ourselves," hissed Bellmont.

"That's what I thought. Any ale at your 'headquarters'?" asked Hansel.

"We've taken quite a bit from Alliance towns and fortresses, and might be able to let go of a few dozen kegs," replied Bellmont.

"Why didn't ya say that to start with?! It's a deal, lad! Of course, I'll have to ask you to wait for the Alliance to give us their coins before you kill 'em next time," said Hansel, grabbing Bellmont's hand and shaking it vigorously.

Bellmont let out a peal of loud, maniacal laughter, causing Tharund to wince visibly.

The shadow of the Grin grows closer to you, Bronzebeard, thought Bellmont as he and the two raiders trailed back to Taugrek's Stand, the Blacktooth Grin's hideout.

Cadrian (MR)

With some difficulty, Cadrian pulled his sword out of a blood elf paladin that had failed to run fast enough.

"Grin?" Anarea asked.

Cadrian examined the corpse at his feet, lifting its lips to see if any teeth were missing. "No. Damn."

Anarea bent down to cut the elf's ear off. "Well, we might be able to collect a bounty on her anyway." She stood back up and stretched. A few thin cuts marred her armor, the paladin's frantic efforts to defend herself. "Really, Cadrian, I think the Grin are farther north. Khaz Modan and whatnot."

Cadrian shook his head and pulled up some tufts of Westfall grass to clean his sword with. "Doesn't matter where the Grin are. We'll work our way to the frontline soon enough. But opportunists like this one," He nudged the dead paladin with his foot. "Still need to be dealt with."

Anarea sighed. "What happened to a nice, clean frontline?"

Cadrian sheathed his sword and began walking back to Sentinel Hill. "Reality."

Bellmont

Blood spurted from the dwarf's neck as he stumbled and fell to the ground, dying in a growing pool of his own blood. The dwarf's companion watched helplessly in the form of a panther, hiding within the shade of the trees of Redridge Mountains.

"One who hides from an assassin in the shadows signs their own death warrant," said Bellmont, in what little Common he remembered, jumping from the tree and eviscerating the young druid.

"If I was Adversarius you'd be dead by now, Bellmont. You should remain in the shadows if you're planning on slaughtering Alliance and stirring up trouble," said a familiar voice. Eddard stepped from the shadows behind Bellmont.

"Ah! Evening, Overlord Eddard. I was just patrolling the area...and a few curious adventurers peeked into our territory. So I dealt with them," said Bellmont, a bit startled.

"I'm going to assume being in the general radius of that derelict gate is close enough. The Blackrock orcs, cannon fodder as they may be, can provide their own version of basic security for this border...for now," said Eddard, walking out into the road. A large armored kodo came stomping from out of the Burning Steppes, quickly followed by a smaller armored kodo. The larger beast carried a rider in thick leather armor.

"Ah, Warlord Faquarl. Good to see you," said Bellmont, bowing.

The druidic warlord gave Bellmont a slight nod.

"We're going to let the humans know they're not safe from the Grin either. Finish your duties, then you can return to the stand or whatever it is you do. Get moving, Champion." said Eddard, mounting the smaller kodo and riding off with Faquarl.

Bellmont sighed and let out a loud whistle. An armored undead warhorse came running from the gates of Blackrock Pass, letting out a loud cry.

"Quiet down, Bayne. I don't want to be hassled by Blackrocks or Shadowforge soldiers," said Bellmont, patting his warhorse on its head and climbing into the saddle, riding off back into the Burning Steppes.

Yagyu

The hot ground burned through the thin soles of the human's leather boots as he ran wildly south towards Morgan's Vigil. Out of breath he collapsed near a copse of what were once trees, their blackened shells still smoking in heat of the Burning Steppes. His throat was raw from dehydration and blood flowed from the large gash on his back where the orcish war-axe had bitten into his skin. The once beautiful and ornately decorated leather tunic was now torn and stained with blood and grime. It had kept the orcish blade from cleaving him in two, but just barely. Now, it was little more than a rag only good for preventing a sunburn. Frantically he tried to remember his first aid training as he pulled a roll of runecloth bandages from his pocket and began, painfully to wind them around his back and shoulder. He knew he would need to stem the blood-loss if he hoped to make it back to the flight master alive.

After bandaging himself, he sat up against the burned out hulk of a tree and tried to catch his breath. His thoughts drifted back to his home in Westfall and the face of his young son, William. He imagined that right about now, William was probably sweeping the house and muttering under his breath about doing so; dreaming instead of being in Stormwind, training to fight for the kingdom. Ahh...the idealism of youth. It was so far removed from reality. Sitting on the steaming ground, covered in filth and wondering if he would make it home alive was not what he had imagined this day would hold for him.

A blood-curdling roar startled him out of his thoughts and brought him quickly back to reality. Shakily, he summoned the strength to get to his feet and through the haze and smoke he saw the outline of the massive black worg and the armored kodo following it. They hadn't spotted him yet, or had they? They just sat facing his direction calmly. His mind raced. What are they doing? Did they see me? Why aren't they charging? Why won't they leave us humans to live in peace? Anger burned in his heart as he thought of William alone in Westfall awaiting his return. In a rage, he screamed out into the blowing wind at the two distant figures, "Come on and kill me then, you bastards!" That was when he heard the laugh and saw the figures start to run towards him.

Adrenaline pumped through his veins as he ran for his life. He could hear the pounding footfalls of the creatures behind him, closer now. Every second brought the noise nearer. The stomping mixed with what sounded like drums...or was that his own pounding heart? He could almost feel the heat of the worg's steaming, stinking breath close on his wounded back. His lungs burst with the effort of trying to suck in as much oxygen as he could to keep running, running, running...then he saw it! The mountain path and the burning taper that indicated the pathway to Morgan's Vigil. He was almost there! He screamed out to any who might hear, "Help me...Horde...!" Suddenly the mountains stopped getting closer. He felt the entangling roots cutting into his legs, rooting him in place. The Alliance post was so close he could almost touch it. Tears welled in his eyes as the futility of his situation dawned on him. He hung his head in surrender as he heard the heavy plated boots jumping down to the ground from the back of the worg. Finally, he looked up and saw the massive orc holding an axe, smiling at him with a gap-toothed grin. It was the last sight he would ever behold as the axe fell across his neck and the laughter of the Blacktooth Grin echoed throughout the valley.

Whitewind (MR)

With bone deep weariness, Whitewind dragged her feet back to the Peak the next morning. Aching from places she had not felt in years, she nodded to the flight master and carefully descended the still blood-spattered stairs to survey the wreckage. Throughout the night, the dwarves had worked tirelessly to bury their dead, and worked still on the repairs. Whitewind marveled at their strength, having always avoided

Ironforge in the past; she hated the smell and closed in feel of the place. Dwarves were strange folk to her and she shook her head in tired wonder, a fleeting smile crossing her lips. If only it was as easy to repair a life as it was stone. Squaring her shoulders with a deep breath, she went to work. She has been a priestess much longer than any of these dwarves had been alive, yet tended to each and every one through their grumblings and complaints. Cuts and burns were smoothed over to fresh pink skin and those that were bandaged the night before with more serious wounds found themselves able to return to work that day. Flexing tired hands, she nodded to herself with a sigh of relief and eyed her gloves critically, adding one more item to her mental list of things to be repaired.

As the sun started to set, so did the work finally slow, for her patients as well as the dwarves. Was it even safe to sleep in her home at night? It felt so empty, devoid of all that made it actually home, and the burnt smell would always bother her. With her guildmates absent, recovering and celebrating their eventual victory in Stormwind no doubt, the great hall in the Peak had a desolate feel that made her skin crawl. Alarm bells started to ring in her head, or was it only the sound of her heartbeat? This was her home! She could not continue to look over her shoulder every moment of her life, could she? A rogue, it must be. They always loved toying with her. Growling in irritation she stalked back up to the guards at the gate and spoke with them quietly. They nodded in agreement and she headed up the darkened path once more. There was one place she still considered home that the Horde had not touched. At the least the sound of water always soothed her, and her children would need her this night as much as she needed them.

Faugarl

Human swords and human spells ripped apart yet another defender of Hammerfall, with his comrades hanging back in a bloodied mass as they were pushed farther and farther back into their camp. Despite warnings, the Divinity forces found that Hammerfall was as easy of pickings as they suspected.

"We march to defend Hammerfall, Grin." Gorfrunch's statement was met with confused looks, and even hisses, from the Grin gathered around him in a camp in the Hillsbrad Foothills. Only Warlord Faugarl held his tongue, arms crossed and standing away from the rest.

"But they serve Thrall with no question! We are at war, Chief, and a dead New Horde orc's as good as a dead human!" Dergs spoke what the rest were thinking.

"This is an opportunity to change that." Gorfrunch smacked Dergs across the face with the back of his plated fist, and the rest of the argument quieted down. "We march now." Faugarl made a signal to the watchman, and the entire Grin war party mounted up and began riding east.

The Grin war party arrived just in time; the Divinity troops had breached the wall and were approaching the inn. The Defilers stood by, concerned with nothing but defending the entrance to the Basin. If the human forces were here to fight Hammerfall and not them, they were fine to let it remain that way. The experienced Grin troops quickly routed the Divinity forces, who were completely unprepared for the bloody assault.

With Hammerfall safe, the Grin's bloodlust had not been sated, and neither had the thirst for revenge now hot in the camp. Gorfrunch smiled as he led his forces, along with a number of Hammerfall defenders, west to Refuge Pointe. The Divinity forces were nowhere to be found, and the outpost crumbled quickly. Many of the Hammerfall defenders exacted even more brutal retribution than the Grin's usual ferocity.

Upon their return to Hammerfall, Drum Fel, the captain of the guard, confronted Gorfrunch.

"Our forces are weak, after that bloody assault. We were already running low on supplies and sent for more reinforcements days ago. It pains me to ask you, Grinner, but we need your help to defend Hammerfall. Will you?" He slumped back against the side of the inn as a priest tended to his broken leg.

"Of course," the warchief grinned. Everything was now falling into place.

As for Orgrimmar's reinforcement column, the Grin made sure that they never made it past the Thoradin Wall.

Gorfrunch

Stromgarde was crushed. The Keepers put up a valiant defense, but...numbers aren't nothing.

Refuge Pointe was crushed. The remaining Keepers attempted to defend it, but failed.

Imperium reinforcements arrived and pushed the Grin troops out of Refuge Pointe, but were then destroyed, their leader mercilessly killed and repeatedly chased across the Highlands. After bringing in more reinforcements, the battle was pushed to Hammerfall, where wave upon wave of Alliance broke against the gates, failing to breach them for an hour, until they eventually retreated, and a large part of their force was butchered outside. The Grin left to have the traditional after-party in Brill.

Cadrian (MR)

Stromgarde, battered but resilient, held the line. The Keepers fought and died valiantly, as they had been formed to do.

Refuge Pointe was ravaged, but loss was something the people were used to. They were alive to rebuild the point in defiance of the Horde.

Arathi Highlands was scattered with piles of corpses, some of the combined Alliance forces who had held the line. Others, many more, were decorated with the black tabard and white teeth of the Blacktooth Grin. The road in front of Hammerfall was carpeted with bodies wearing the same emblem, testament to the Alliance blockade that had held for hours while taunting the Grin defenders, enraging them to their doom. Hammerfall's interior was little better, its inhabitants butchered in retribution and the leaders of the Defilers slain.

And then...the Alliance had ridden west, relieving the beleaguered town of Southshore and putting Tarren Mill to the torch. The Sepulcher had fallen as well, the dead aboveground decaying to match the ones below. And Brill...Brill had been the last to fall and the easiest to annihilate before the desperate survivors of the Grin managed to turn the Alliance aside at the very gates of the Undercity. Sylvanas herself breathed a sigh of relief when she heard the news, barely saved from the true fury of the Alliance.

Faquarl

"They are at Daybrie Farm," the Hammerfall defender called. The Grin had laid waste to Arathi. Gorfrunch rallied his Grin and led them against the remnants of Imperium still near Hammerfall.

"Alright Grin, move south! We'll make a camp in Wetlands and then we'll party in Brill!" The guards of Hammerfall stared at him, struck dumb by his callous remark.

"What.... what about Hammerfall?"

"Ha! Thrall's orcs mean nothing to us. Enjoy the battle orc. That's what you were bred to do."

The Grin rode south and left the old human prison camp doomed as Imperium swelled in around it.

Yagyu

"Want a drink, Yag?" Felora held out an over-full mug of grog to the orc. With a hearty smile the Sythegar took the refreshing drink from the tauren druid and gulped it down. "Ahhh...this one's fer the Chief! Bottoms-up!" Another giant swig drained the mug as the orc wiped foam from his mouth. Felora winked at him.

Miles away, the countryside of Arathi was ransacked and littered with bodies, Alliance and Horde alike. The river that flowed to the sea was crimson with the blood of the defenders of Stromgarde. Refuge Pointe had become a killing field and human and night elf bodies attracted swarms of flies and hungry

raptors from across the highlands. The battered remnants of Thrall's defenders at Hammerfall now stacked Alliance corpses in places where the walls had been smashed by fire and frost.

All this was the work of the Blacktooth Grin. Now they sat at Brill, drinking and carousing as was their post-battle custom. Plainly not satisfied with smashing Alliance skulls, they now set about pummeling each other in one of their more frenzied parties. As grog, ale, and bourbon flowed like water, the old horde clan stumbled about. Some continued their fights, some shambled about in a drunken stupor, while others simply passed out. The scene might have resembled that of the Arathi countryside; the main difference being here in Brill was the stench of vomit and alcohol rather than the stink of death and rot.

As Yagyu staggered towards the inn to refresh his empty mug, he suddenly felt the blow of a hammer at his back and the ground rushed up to meet his face. Alliance horses ran across his back cutting into his clan-mates and shoving him farther into the ground. Rolling over onto his back he shoved his axe straight into the air and caught the belly of a raging horse. The horse screamed and fell, throwing its rider headfirst into the wall of the inn. Leaping to his feet and shaking the buzz from his head, he heard the familiar shout of the Chieftain. "Fall back to the gates of Undercity!"

Leaping onto Grimfang, Yag sprinted to regroup with the rest of the Grin. As he crested the hill he saw Gorfrunch and the massing Horde forces at the city gates, awaiting the Alliance. A smile crept onto his lips. Soon, the orc knew, he would be drinking again!

Gorfrunch

"FALL IN, MAGGOTS!"

Grunt Gargal shouldered past Razal'blade as the Kargath Expeditionary Force began trudging out of Kargath for their afternoon patrol. Warlord Goretooth sniffed the dusty air as he led his troops south, there'd been no resistance in the area for the last month except for one luckless gnome who'd been snoozing in the shadow of a boulder.

"On guard. I smell smoke in the air."

His warning was too late, however. Around the bend in the pass, a group of orcs armed with axes and bows waited for them, and pebbles rolled down the slopes as enemies revealed themselves in the rocks above. He didn't need to turn around to know he and his troops were surrounded.

"Guess I'm getting rusty, in my old age. But we aren't going down without a fight. On guard, you lot."

"Whoever mentioned a fight, old friend?"

As he got a closer look, he saw that the armed band in front of him was made up not of Blackrock orcs, but orcs, tauren, and trolls. Even a blood elf appeared to be pointing a crossbow at him. Their tabards all grinned down on his sadly outnumbered force with grisly white teeth. The speaker, an orc in black armor with a blood-red sword and shield stepped out from the rest.

"I hear you've abandoned the Horde, Smashblade. We still have some survivors from what you brought upon Hammerfall in our inn. Just turn back, and no blood will be shed here."

Gorfrunch laughed, and stepped up until he was breathing in Goretooth's face.

"I'll tell you why we're here. We need Kargath, and we'll have it whether or not you agree."

"I serve the warchief, traitor. We will not let you through. Do you really want to bring on the anger of the Horde more than you already have?"

"You serve the peacechief. You call that a Horde? You call what he has sitting on eternal guard duty the Horde? You remember the Second War. You remember what the Horde was really like, and you know that what you serve is nothing like it."

Goretooth, enraged, snarled and lunged with his blade, striking the shield Gorfrunch raised to block it.

"He's mine, Grin! Stand back, and take the others if they move."

The Expeditionary Force and Grin raiding party stood by with weapons ready, but were frozen in place, watching the elderly orcs duel, one a faithful servant, the other one who called himself Warchief.

Gorfrunch returned his opponent's lunge with a slash of his own, which Goretooth parried with a dagger that dropped out of his sleeve. He whirled and attacked with both blades, now, Gorfrunch barely covering his side with his shield in time.

"I doubt you even remember what clan you're from, grasshugger. All orcs are orcs, eh?"

Goretooth's snarl became even crueler as his eyes flashed with rage.

"Twilight's Hammer." He feinted with his sword, then stabbed at Gorfrunch's face with the dagger.

"And what did they stand for, eh? Keeping the peace?" Gorfrunch charged forward with his shield, slamming Goretooth in the arm, the spike ripping a gash in his shoulder. He grunted in pain, but responded with a brutal flurry of blows instead of words.

"Exactly." Gorfrunch moved forward again with his shield, and when Goretooth jumped back this time, he caught his sword with his own, sending Goretooth's flying, leaving him with only a dagger and his back to a cliff.

"Orcs don't surrender, Goretooth. We've learned that much, since the camps."

Goretooth grimaced with pain as the shield pressed him against the cliff, and the flat of Gorfrunch's sword pinned his dagger arm beside him. He spat in his captor's face.

"But I'm not asking you to surrender. I'm asking you to fight. Fight the dwarves. Soon we'll be marching from here to Thelsamar, and your pitiful excuse for a base will be used for something other than sending senior officers too bloodthirsty for their own good to rot until they die, not having seen true battle in decades."

Goretooth's eyes widened, and he dropped his dagger. His troops stared, and their own weapons hung limply at their sides.

"...I... I will fight. Warchief."

Warlord Jesslyn nodded to her Bashblackas, who moved in among the Expeditionary Force, disarming those who looked angry at their commanding officer, and congratulated those who grinned.

"We will fight, Warlord. We will fight."

A new banner was hung that afternoon.

Cadrian

"This isn't going to rip the keep apart or anything, is it?" Anarea asked. She looked back out the arrow slit and sent off another arrow at the Grin surrounding Menethil Keep. The grimace on her face indicated she missed.

Cadrian shrugged and continued waiting. He did not understand the mechanics behind a warlock's summoning portal and reluctantly chose to trust the many warlocks who were opening the many portals in the keep. Reinforcements had to come from somewhere and this was as good a place as any.

A muted thud indicated that the Grin had slammed their ram against the keep's gates once more. Sentries rushed to and fro, trying to look busy in the face of the adventurers and irregulars who had usurped the defense of their town. Cadrian would have laughed if the smoke drifting through the arrow slits did not constantly remind him that everything outside the keep was being burned to the ground. Another warrior bearing the black and white tabard of the Obsidian Fists emerged from a black portal that cut through the center of a hallway. Soon enough, the keep would be full of prepared fighters and then it would be time to fight back the Grin once more.

Anarea lurched back from the slit and a crossbow bolt zipped in just in front of her. She spoke as if she hadn't nearly died, "Haven't seen Gorfrunch."

"He's not here, I think." Cadrian answered. "Faquarl leads this."

Anarea fired once more and grinned. She had hit. "Shame you can't see your bestest friend in the entire world."

"Ha, ha."

The portal in front of them sealed and the warlock holding it dropped his arms, exhausted. At the same time, Cadrian could hear barked orders to form up echoing throughout the keep. He stood and picked up his sword. The time had come.

"Think I'll stay in here." Anarea said. "Rather not risk death out there."

"Suit yourself." Cadrian said. He firmly pushed his barbute on and walked down to the vestibule. It was packed with the blue and gold of Menethil Harbor next to the black and white of the Fists and a dozen other tabards. Each one was braced for the moment the doors would open and they would prepare to die.

The men and dwarves bracing the door were knocked back as the Grin's battering ram came against it again. Captain Stoutfist stood at the front of the pack, grimly staring at the buckling door. His men tensed and he nodded at the ones bracing at the door. They slid their hands into the iron rungs that would allow them to fling the great doors would open at a moment.

The Grin slammed the ram into the wood once more, flinging splinters into the assembled.

"Now!" Stoutfist roared and the doors opened, letting the bright sun and the shocked expressions of dozens of Grin into the keep.

Without waiting for the order, the defenders charged forth, bent on vengeance and blood.

Faquarl

Warlord Faquarl met with his warchief out on the hill overlooking the Thandol Span. The Grin had set up camp there a few nights earlier after their battle in Arathi. The warchief and warlord looked down and saw the regiment now under Faquarl's jurisdiction.

"I'm going to meet with Jesslyn. Both Kargath and Menethil will fall tonight. And then the dwarves have nowhere to run." The warchief laughed as he told Faquarl the plan.

"I will not let you down, Warchief. And let's hope Kargath falls as easily as Menethil will. MOUNT UP, GRIN!" Faquarl turned and saluted his warchief once more before mounting his worg and leading the charge into the Wetlands.

The humid swamps masked the troop movement as they rode to Menethil. Faquarl listened to the calmness of the swamp. He grinned, thinking about how it would soon be put to the flame. Leading his men west, they soon approached the white bridge of Menethil. The warlord motioned for all to halt as he approached the main gate, his forces killing any guard who attempted to halt him.

"The Grin have come for your port tonight! Kneel before us and it will be quick! Should you resist, you condemn your families and friends to a far worse fate!" On these words, Faquarl made the motion to charge. The Grin forces ran past him and eagerly engaged the hundreds of guards who piled out of the keep. Fighting was brutal as the heavily armored militia clashed against the blood-crazed Horde.

An hour had passed with little defense. Faquarl forced the trees into his service and they ravaged homes. With the troll priestess Zinda behind him, he slayed guard after guard. He looked to his left and saw the Sythegar Bellmont stab one through the chest.

"Fear the Grin!" The cry sounded as the city seemed to be in ruins. The tides however began to change as Alliance began assembling by the as of yet unbreached keep.

"Fall in! Hold our flank!" Faquarl's words were lost in the uproar as more guards hit them. The Alliance assembled and charged the Grin. Vision blurred by the intense warfare, Faquarl slaughtered as many as he could before being overwhelmed. The Grin fought and slowly dragged the fight to the bridge. That's when all went quiet.

"They hide in their keep! Too afraid to fight without the militia! Lick your wounds, Grin. We have put fear into them." The Grin charged once more into the keep, slaying all occupants for the next half hour before it was flooded by massive reinforcements. Faquarl watched as Grin fell around him. He had led his men into a death trap.

"Fall back! Grab our wounded! We fall back to camp!" The Grin moved back onto the bridge carrying the wounded, half the force either dead or wishing they were. Faquarl helped bring his brothers in arms to safety but made one last threat before doing so.

"We have ravaged your city for two hours and killed hundreds of its denizens. Do not feel this is a victory! The Grin surround you as we speak and soon the full might of the Grin will crash down on your walls! Find your dead and wounded! Drink to a victory if you wish but hear me now...your days are numbered!"

The warlord rode off to meet his forces. He had failed his mission and would face the warchief's wrath. However he had made a mark upon Menethil and the warlord swore that the next time the Grin marched on the port city, he would personally paint the chalk white stone walls red with his fallen enemies.

Once the Grin were back inside the camp they had made in the Wetlands, Faquarl mounted his worg once more and rode south. He risked the perils of Loch Modan and found himself at Kargath by sunrise. To his relief, the Grin colors were waving above. He slowly urged his worg forward looking for his warchief. The small camp had been fortifying, obviously preparing for the second phase of the campaign. The phase which he had now jeopardized.

"Warchief!" Faquarl had spotted him talking to an old gruff dwarf.

"What're you doing here?!? Your orders were to stay in the wetlands after sacking Menethil." The old orc snarled at his warlord's carelessness.

"I have dire news that couldn't wait. We have failed against Menethil. We ravaged the town but the keep was untouched. They were able to counter us." The old warchief nodded at this information. Without speaking he made his way toward the inn, shouldering Faquarl out of the way.

"Jesslyn, get your regiment ready to ride by tonight. We're cleaning up after Jo." Faquarl grimaced and looked at the ground. The warchief walked to the tauren and stared him in the eye. "You ride back to your men and you get them ready to finish what you started. If we can salvage this, then your hide won't be used to make our armor. Have your warlocks summon us into your camp. Pokes will make some contacts. We strike at nightfall."

Faquarl saluted his warchief for this second chance. He forced his worg to travel as if all of Ironforge was chasing him. He arrived as the sun began to set and ran into camp with a new purpose behind him. Stirring his men, they all began to crave battle again. The warlocks opened their dark portals and the other half of the Blacktooth Army marched out. When the warchief came out cheers rang out in the camp.

His presence driving even the wounded to throw their armor back on, they marched to Menethil. The port city having barely recovered from last night's assault sounded the alarms as the Grin rode in. But this time none were spared. The brunt smashed the battered gates of the keep in and proceeded to slash their way to the roof. The rogues patrolled the outside of the keep where very little moved after the night before.

Faquarl led the kill squad. Their job was to slay anything the rogues spotted. This proved difficult in the confined keep, but few escaped his wrath. He blasted two hunters who had made a last stand in the armory, their snake traps causing little damage as they fell. He saw Pokes cutting guards down with a crazed look in his eyes. Finally they pulled up to the roof and set up defensive entrenchments in the exact spot that was used against them the night before.

Breadalbane was sniping defender after defender from his location. Shamans and warlocks were throwing their magics down below. Whatever had been salvaged from the night before was now broken. As the Midnight Reveries started coming south to Menethil's aid, Faquarl called the Grin to fall back. The Reveries had seen Grin handiwork before. They could relate to the now-broken Menethil.

With war cries being sounded from every direction as the Grin rode off, Faquarl doubled back. His lust for revenge had been satiated and the path was now clear. It was clear to him that this war destined to be won by them. If one of the bastions of civilization just folded to the Grin, it spoke ill for the weak cities now standing in their way.

Adeou (MR)

Warlord Adeou rode across the wetlands with the rest of the assault force sent from Headquarters. They had heard the cries of defense from Menethil for hours, but were just now arriving. The acrid stench of smoke mixed with burning flesh tug at his nostrils, and far away Adeou could see the thick columns of it billowing from the harbor. He shook his head in dismay. It was no longer their duty to defend Alliance cities such as this, but he still felt sympathy for the many innocent lives that called the harbor their home.

Standing just inside the city gates, he could see the full carnage the Grin had wreaked. Perched above the garrison roof, like an eagle above its already dead prey, the Grin still lay, completely unchallenged, basking in the glory of the kill. Their black flag hung from the garrison's post.

"Take that dirty rag down, it disgusts me," Adeou spoke to Sir Mithrane, who only nodded solemnly as the rest of the Reveries prepared to charge the keep.

Too much had taken place; the Grin was up to something, and Adeou was now determined to stop it.

Huizopotl

"Sythegar, relief columns are approaching."

Looking up from the carving he was idly etching into the wooden platform on the keep's battlement, Pokes gaped at the scarred orc, pantomiming his facial expressions as the grot struggled to regain his composure under the crazed shaman's gaze.

"...they will arrive by nightfall," the orc finished lamely.

"Joo got anytin' else tah add?"

"No si- err...boss."

As the orc hurried away to rejoin the rampant looting, Pokes paced over to where Warlord Faquarl was looking over maps spread on a makeshift table with Overlord Stokes.

"Joo 'ear bout de Reveries, Jo?"

Faquarl and Stokes both looked up at Pokes and for a moment Faquarl's face twisted in distaste before saying, "My scouts just informed me. We are going over the terrain to decide to best way to engage them."

Looking over the maps for a moment Pokes asked mysteriously, "What 'urts deepah; a blade, oh de broken 'eart?"

Faquarl glanced at Stokes, and the two shared a cautious look before Stokes slowly responded, "Nothing cuts deeper than the loss of something you care for."

Pokes squealed in delight and clapped his hands, crying, "Taz'dingo!"

Faquarl sighed and shadowed his eyes, saying stiffly "Is there anything else, Sythegar? If not, I have important battle plans to oversee, and th-

"Den why we fightin'?"

"What?"

Pokes said very quietly, "We stay an' fight an' we give dem de vent foh all de pain dey take in when dey see what we done. Dey fight like devils, an' strike at us tah strike dey pain. We leave an' make dem rebuild it all cold-like, an' dat pain stay wid dem foh de rest oh dey days. Dey nevah find enough blood, drink, oh time tah 'eal dis cut."

The silence that hung over the three officers lasted for a long few minutes until a sadistic smile split Stoke's face and Faquarl grinned in return.

"You're sick, Pokes - you know that, right?"

When the relief column entered the keep, they found little in the way of resistance. A token force of irregulars, left behind almost in insult to finish the wholesale rape and slaughter of the city.

As the officers picked through the keep looking for any abandoned war journals or left behind clues, a staff sergeant called over to his commanding officer.

"Captain! Got something over here!"

The captain stomped over to the sergeant, his heart in his throat hoping that it was something good but his vigor drained from him along with his will to continue the search when he saw what it was.

Carved into the wooden platform of the keep battlements, the words "you iz late" were etched in crude Common displayed for all to see.

Yagyu

Yagyu crouched at the south end of the roof of Menethil Keep, as the night-elf druid shifted to bear form. The orc's eyes narrowed as he watched the druid heading straight for Yalim, the blood elf priest. The sythegar let the druid close just enough distance until there was a clear path across the blue shingles. With a roar he charged the druid, battering him into daze and proceeded to hack into his back with the crystal-forged axe. The druid roared in pain and turned to face the threat, forgetting about the priest. That was what Yag was waiting for. With reckless abandon, the orc chopped at the elf; first the legs, slowing his movement, then a hard slice into the neck causing massive bleeding. He ignored the raking paws of the enraged bear. He didn't even have time to feel the pain as his wounds were quickly healed by Yalim standing to his right. The sythegar didn't have to look to know that his clanmate was there. Countless hours spent in the arenas told him that Yalim would be there covering his back just as he was now covering his front. The bear was weaker now, his attacks coming at a slower pace. Finally, as if knowing the end was near, he summoned up a last, futile reserve of strength. It was useless. Yag dodged the rearing druid and swung his axe downward as if aiming for the druid's feet. As the druid's own momentum brought him back down, Yagyu reversed direction and timed his upswinging axe to slice into the bear's throat. The druid dropped in a heap at the sythegar's feet.

Yag paid it no mind, instead running to look over the northern edge of the roof. Kneeling down he pulled his spyglass out. As he scanned the entrance to Menethil, down below, he could see one of the Grin kill squads cutting into the Alliance defenses. Just behind them, nearer the bridge, he could see a large group of Alliance gathering. Just then they charged the entrance to the keep. "Here they come!" he bellowed to the clan. Methodically, the kill squad fell back into the keep and back up the stairs to the roof where they would help make a bloody stand. The Chief had planned this to perfection, Warlord Faquarl would give the command, and the Grin would execute the orders with bloody purpose.

Yagyu looked to his right and there was Yalim giving him a twisted smile. Yag raised his axe in silent salute as he awaited the coming attack.

Bellmont

Bellmont overlooked the smoking ruins of Menethil Harbor from the dwarven towers along the hills of the Wetlands.

"Just as Arthas Menethil fell to the temptation of the Scourge, Goretooth and his soldiers succumb to the will of the Warchief of the Old Horde's ideals...how fitting," said Bellmont in near perfect Common, so that the captured Alliance soldiers behind their own prison bars could hear his words.

"Why do you fight us, undead?! Why must you make our lives hell?! Your group not only slaughters soldiers but the civilians too! Why must you continue this madness?!" yelled out the Menethil Elite.

"The better question is why you fight, human. Do you think that you might escape the coming fires? Do you think you can hide from the shadow of the Blacktooth Grin? Your lands will burn until the surface is but glass," hissed Bellmont.

"But why can there be no peace?! Why can there be no rest! Do us mortals not have more important things to worry about!" cried the Menethil Elite.

"There will be peace. When your pathetic little races are driven from Kalimdor, then the true nature of Thrall will be shown. Perhaps even that little flowersniffer can be turned violent if enough pressure is given." said Bellmont, attaching a series of sapper charges to the walls of the dwarven tower.

"I suggest you should take what's left of your life to contemplate killing an experienced assassin before you celebrate just capturing him." hissed Belmont, leaving the tower and letting out a loud whistle.

An undead warhorse soon rode up from out of the mist of the swamps, Belmont mounting it and patting its head. "Good to know they didn't notice you, Bayne."

Bellmont rode off, the dwarven tower exploding from the inside and sending smoke billowing high up into the sky.

"The shadow of the Blacktooth Grin grows closer," said Belmont, a gap-toothed grin forming from under his cowl.

Faquarl

The growl of worgs and kodos filled the air of Hammerfall as the Blacktooth Grin prepared to march. The orders had been given and the troops were itching to spill Alliance blood once again. Gorfrunch looked on the small force with concern. The previous night's attack on Menethil had been costly indeed. Many Grin had fallen and others were wounded. The chieftain had not counted on so few fighters available tonight; but no matter, it would have to do.

"Listen up, you lot!" he bellowed as the troops quickly formed up on their group leaders.

"Tonight we hit Menethil and shower the town with blood! Warlord Faquarl has a promise to keep...we stain the walls of the keep with pinkie blood! Mount up!" The troops cheered as cries of "Fear the Grin!" echoed through the highlands. The mounted warriors charged, heading for the gates of Menethil.

The Wetlands were eerily quiet this night as the Blacktooth Grin approached the gates of the city. There was no large defensive barricade awaiting them. Only the town guards and a few unlucky adventurers. Like a hammerblow, Gorfrunch's group smashed into the outer guard forces, quickly decimating them. The rest of the clan followed, slaughtering any who remained in his wake. Axes whirled and blood splattered the inside of the great room inside the Keep of Menethil as Gorfrunch led his troops up the stairs and onto the roof.

"Hold the roof!" He shouted at the bloodthirsty clan. From this vantage point he knew they could hold this position from only the strongest of defenses. It would take many Alliance fighters to break their hold on the keep. As the hours passed more and more Alliance fighters entered the town but they simply could not breach the Grin's battle line. The stairs leading to the roof were slick with blood and even the usually sure-footed night elves were falling and tripping as they climbed to the rooftop. Even those who eventually reached the roof were immediately cut down by the raging orc and his warriors. Orcish axes hacked at human limbs, tauren clubs smashed night elf skulls, and blood elf blades cut into dwarven flesh. Even the undead Grin forces ate the remains of the Alliance corpses, keeping them fed and keeping the fighting area clear.

Hours passed and soon the Alliance were forced to call on the Midnight Reveries for help. Even then the Grin line held. It wasn't until the Reveries had gathered up every guard, vendor, merchant, and sailor from the town and made a final push that they were able to dislodge the Blacktooth Grin from their perch. Even then, the attack was costly. The Grin knew this was coming and they intended to make them pay dearly. Bodies collided and blood flowed over the roof of the keep as the Grin raged. Finally the Reveries were able to push them off the roof but rather than moving into the rest of town, the Grin forces regrouped and marched out the gates as quickly and violently as they had entered.

The Alliance stared in shocked wonder as the last retreating Horde vanished into the swamps. The Grin forces cheered in triumph and they rode north to celebrate their victory. The Alliance had been bled this night and the Grin were edging ever closer to provoking all-out war between the Horde and Alliance.

Gorfrunch smiled to himself as he thought of Thrall's anger sitting on his throne in Orgrimmar. The peacechief would have no choice. He would have to take notice of the Blacktooth Grin now. The peace he had worked for was quickly being eroded by this bloodthirsty remnant of the Old Horde.

Whispclaw (MR)

Whispclaw melded into the shadows by the base of the stairs leading up to the keeps roof. Above, he could hear the yells and jeers of the Horde, the shots of gunfire from their hunters, and the zap of lightning bolts from their shamans as they sniped the defenders below. He was waiting for reinforcements, not wanting to charge blindly to his death. But even making it to these stairs was tricky; Blacktooth Grin's rogues were stalking the hallways of the keep, making each step treacherous.

Finally, a force had gathered. Thadrius, Medonia, Varchild, Mithrane, Delevi, Adeou, several other Reveries and others that Whispclaw did not know had joined him. He was somewhat proud that even some younger, less experienced Reveries had joined the fight, even though they would surely be the first targeted by the bloodthirsty Grin. With a nod and a growl from Adeou, they charged up the stairs.

The fighting was fierce. Whispclaw summoned his trusty treants to aid the attack, and set them upon the closest shaman, who countered by summoning his own minion, a giant earth elemental. Priests caused fear in the minds of those enemies around them, just to be countered by opposing priests. Warriors pounded across the roof swinging at anything that moved. Mages on both side summoned powerful blizzards and fires, decimating any order and a good portion of the roof everyone was on.

In the chaos, Whispclaw focused on those healing the Grin until he saw such a sight he had to change his focus. A druid - not just any druid, but someone also versed in the moonkin form - was with the Grin, and judging by the motions of his feathery wings, one of their leaders. Furious that such an abomination was allowed by Elune, Whispclaw charged unto the roof, oblivious to everything except this other moonkin.

Before Whispclaw could reach him though, the Grin, as if on a silent signal, fell back. Some ran down the stairs, others leaped from the roof to the ground. By the time most of the Reveries realized what was happening, the Grin were crossing the Menethil Bridge into the Wetlands, guards in pursuit. A brief moment of confusion sat among the gathered warriors, before they took up the chase. The Grin had a large head start by their surprise, and all Whispclaw could catch were a few stragglers, either decoys left behind to stall a chase, or those who were just plain too slow.

Whispclaw, Adeou, and Mithrane gathered on the bridge, looking over the ransacked town. "I bet their going north, maybe to the Pointe," he said, watching other Reveries begin to douse fires and help the wounded. The other two night elves nodded, and Adeou pointed at the gryphon master, who was still standing. In the Highlands though, they only found one or two of the Grin. The main army, including the treacherous moonkin, had eluded them.

The Midnight Reveries guild meeting was just beginning to break up. Many thoughts went through Whispclaw's head, and he excused himself from the others. He walked outside under the night stars, and took a few deep breathes to clear his head. Many things had happened at the meeting, and Whispclaw thought of them as he approached the gryphon master. He mounted one of the great birds, and began flying to the dirty dwarf city of Ironforge.

A crackling sound came from his hearthstone while he was flying. He could barely hear it over the roar of the wind. "Horde...Loch Modan...Black....Grin." That was all Whispclaw needed to hear. He redirected his griffon to Thelsemar, hoping he would not land and find the town in flames. When he did land though, the town looked as peaceful as ever. Confused, Whispclaw asked the nearest guard if there had been any trouble. "Nae, not here, but down south, the guards there were under attack a bit earlier." Whispclaw nodded and rode south.

When he arrived, the dwarf soldiers there were tending to wounded. "Which direction?" Whispclaw asked, and the dwarfs couldn't spare him a word, just a point south, into the Badlands. "Grin?" Whispclaw asked, and spurred his mount further south when the dwarf nodded. He rode into the Badlands, past the Uldaman excavation, looking for any sign of the Blacktooth Grin. He asked the only Alliance outpost he knew of in the Badlands, and they pointed him to Kargath.

Kargath...Whispclaw only knew it as a small outpost, nothing significant. But if the Grin were there, they could easily strike at Thelsemar and even Ironforge. He rode close, then dismounted. "Stay

here," he commanded his cat, then changed into a cat himself, and began to creep towards Kargath, staying in shadows whenever possible. The scent of orcs was in the air the closer he got, and soon mingled with the scents of undead, tauren, and blood elves. Scents that were familiar to Whispclaw. Scents of the Blacktooth Grin.

Whispclaw crouched behind a rock, and shifted into his normal form. He tapped his hearthstone. "Adeou? Adeou, are you listening. I've found a small force of the Grin setting out from Kargath. Meet at my location, and bring reinforcements."

Mandeville

The guild meeting had been closed for nearly an hour, but Mandeville and several other Reveries women had stayed behind at Headquarters for a little celebration. Ahzlyn was to be married in two days, and there was a party being held in her honor. As a result of said celebrating, Mandeville barely heard the hushed words over the hearthstone. It sounded like the newly-Knighted Whispclaw! Knowing he only spoke when something needed saying, she shook her head and focused her eyes, trying to rid the effects of the deviate drinks the girls had been enjoying.

"Meet me at my location, bring reinforcements," was the most of what Mandeville was able to make out, and it was confirmed by Lord Adeou's response. But where was Kargath? She asked over the hearthstone, slurring her speech just enough to notice, and she flushed with embarrassment for allowing herself to cloud her senses in such a heated time.

The priestess ran up the pathway to the gryphon master at Aerie Peak, and shoved some coins into the master's hand. As the gryphon took off for Thelsamar, she pulled back her hood, allowing the bitter wind in her face to bring her back to fighting form. She wasn't sure what good she would bring to the fight, but she would damn well give everything she had.

Yagyu

It was a slow day. In the last week, Yagyu's body had produced more adrenaline than the last three months combined. The attack on Menethil had left him starved rather than sated. He wanted more blood, more battle, more Alliance heads. Restlessly, he paced the main room at Taugrek's Stand before grabbing a few grots and dragging them out to patrol the Grin's new territories. The recent taking of Searing Gorge and the Badlands had left the Blacktooth Grin with a larger region to cleanse of Alliance filth.

Shortly, the small patrol fanned across the Searing Gorge looking for any wandering Alliance foolhardy enough to enter these lands. Finding nothing, they moved north into the Badlands but discovered it the same as before. Yagyu stopped to consult with Belmont about the unfortunate lack of action. As the two sythegars commiserated, they headed into Loch Modan to try to stir up any local natives but none were to be found. Dejectedly, they returned to the Badlands and headed for Kargath. That was when the grot riding point on Yag's patrol shouted, "DRUID!" Spurring Grimfang to close the distance, Yag saw the back of a tall night elf heading north towards Kargath. Quickly the adrenaline rushed back through his veins. Not even waiting for Grimfang to stop, the sythegar leaped off the back of worg and landed, running on the desert ground. Charging violently into the night elf, the orc hacked into him with his war axe. But the elf was no fool - roots reached up out of the ground to stall Yagyu's movement and the druid disappeared into the hills.

Bellowing into the hot afternoon air, Yag sent the patrol out. "Find 'im an' bring me his head!" The patrol quickly fanned out around Kargath searching for the elf. Cresting a nearby crag, Yag pulled his spyglass from its protective case. As he scanned the distance suddenly he saw the elf; only this time, he was not alone. The orcs lips curled into a sneer as he exchanged the spyglass for his axe and readied himself to meet the coming onslaught.

Faquarl

"Imperium in Thorium Point!" Yagyu had passed the message and Faquarl rallied the Grin. The dwarves were proving useful for the tip off. Yagyu fought alone at Thorium Point and was holding Recruiter there. Faquarl was coming in closer with a battalion of Grin behind him. It was time to make up for the Kargath massacre. Faquarl approached Thorium Point and saw fifteen to twenty Alliance, a mix of both Imperium and the Keepers of Stromgarde.

"DO NOT LET RECRUITER SUMMON ANYONE!" Faquarl had learned from his previous battle with the warlock. As Grin trickled into the Point, they made quick work of the Alliance. They then chased Recruiter down until he brought them back to the Point where an ambush was set up. The Grin withstood the trap and before they got overconfident, Faquarl gave the order for them to leave.

He knew Imperium would be assembling in full force. He knew that the Grin did not have the numbers to fight all of Imperium while the warchief was away. His job was to cause enough chaos to make Recruiter waste the effort of calling his men and then finding no one.

There was also the matter of the Keepers, who had gotten away while the Grin fought Imperium. Stokes led about half the battalion to the Keep to punish them for entering Grin lands. Faquarl and Arkonn had stayed behind to pick off any Imperium who might be wandering alone.

The night's patrol was a success in the warlord's eyes.

Jinnis

The night was filled with an eerie silence. Kargath had had many renovations since he'd last been there. Larger barricades, catapult emplacements, even archery towers stood where there had once been a small inn and nothing but rock.

Jinnis looked up and saw a familiar banner, jet black with an ivory grin, missing one tooth, then shook his head softly and sighed. He opened his hand by his sheath, and his dagger floated into it, as soon as it was within his grasp he threw it upward. Slowly, he held out his hand and it returned as quickly as it had gone, he sheathed it again and began walking away.

The Grin banner fell down with grace, rippling on its way down.

Looking back one more time, this time at the inn, he recalled the cold bodies of the Grin regulars, and regret overcame him for a moment. He tongued an empty spot where there had once been a tooth, and began channeling a spell to return to the City of Light. His assignment was done.

Yagyu

The collar of the white formal shirt was starting to rub the back of Yagyu's neck raw. It wasn't the first the blood elven party the sythegar had attended, but it was the first wedding. A strange ceremony, and certainly not enough drinking or fighting for his tastes. Arriving back at his temporary quarters in Kargath, he stripped off the nice white shirt and settled on his armor. The armor and the brawler's harness seemed to be so much more comfortable. Yag was no city dweller and he had felt uncomfortable and out of place the entire time at the wedding. Now, being back in the scorching heat of the Badlands, he felt relaxed once again.

Unhitching Grimfang from the post outside the inn, he swung himself up into the saddle and headed out for his daily patrol. After a few hours of aimlessly roaming the Badlands and seeing no Alliance, Yagyu headed through the pass to the Searing Gorge. No sooner had he descended the hill than he heard screams and the clang of steel from the west. Thorium Point! Quickly he spurred Grimfang on as his hearthstone sent a message to Warlord Faquarl.

Riding up the path to Thorium Point, it looked calm enough. He hitched Grimfang near the flight master and headed towards the dwarf encampment. Suddenly his head was stinging and his eyes couldn't focus. Shaking off the stun, he looked up to see a slim pinkie female moving her hands. Yag's eyes narrowed and he removed his axe from its sheath just as bolt of blackness sped from the woman's hands directly into his head. The force of the blow not only knocked him silly but felt like part of his soul was being ripped away. The orc went into a rage as he swung wildly at his attackers, but unprepared as he was

the shots kept hammering him to the ground. The back of his mind screamed at him to get up. He knew he had to keep fighting until the Faquarl and the rest of the Blacktooth Grin could arrive. Finally he heard it - the flapping wyvern wings and the pounding of kodo drums. The sound gave him renewed strength as first one, then two, then three of his clanmates entered the fray. The battle was full on. Grin were running about hacking at anything that moved as a veritable sea of pink-skins ran about the encampment. He felt a familiar strength return to his body and he knew that Yalim had arrived and he could attack with the wild abandon he so loved. With a shout of "Fear the Grin!" Yagyu charged into the massed Alliance and hacked through the bodies shielding the female warlock. He flew into a frenzy as bits of blood and gore spattered the combatants. All thoughts of the civilized party he had attended were gone. He was back in battle with his clan. Yagyu's laugh mixed with the screams of the dying and wounded. This was the good life.

Gorfrunch

Gorfrunch cursed as a billowing cloud of swirling green energy revealed that one of his rogues had been found in the burning town below. The troll beside him shifted uncomfortably, then spoke, echoing Gorfrunch's thoughts.

"Was prob'ly Dergs, chief. 'E be less experienced 'n Belmont 'n' the warlord."

Gorfrunch nodded at Nokar, then returned to his spyglass. He caught a sign of movement as Belmont and Faquarl crept out of the south end of town and quietly reclaimed their mounts.

"Their response time is better. It seems Thelsamar will not be as easy a fight as we'd predicted." He put away his spyglass, and both he and Nokar called their mounts and rode down Grizzlepaw Ridge to meet the others as more and more Midnight Reveries reinforcements arrived by gryphon, now there to do nothing but comfort the survivors as the last of the raiders disappeared south into the Badlands.

Faquarl

"The Reveries are watching over Thelsamar like hawks! You have seen our test! They came like moths to the flame!" The raiding party was now in a cave in the Badlands. Faquarl had left his regiment to Yagyu and Yalim. The Badlands needed him during these days in the war. The four Grin argued over what they just saw and how best to interpret it.

"At the end of the day, we have the upper hand. If the reports from Orgrimmar are true then tactics won't matter. The Horde is in a frenzy and they want revenge. Everything is falling into place."

"You weren't at the battle in the Badlands. I have a personal score to settle with the Reveries." Faquarl walked out of the cave and began a patrol of the rocky landscape. The world seemed to grow darker as an eclipse took place up above.

Bok'theg

Bok'theg stared in amazement at the level of activity in Orgrimmar. The orc had never seen things so animated, nor security so tight. He grabbed a passing tauren to find out what had happened. In a panic, the tauren told him of the attack by a massive Alliance raid on Thrall's chamber. Corpses were everywhere, and the Horde were in disarray. No one seemed quite sure of what had really happened. All that seemed clear was that the city gates were locked and no one was allowed in or out. "Who was there to defend the warchief?" he asked. The tauren answered, "There were many guilds in town who came to his aid. I don't know all of them. I only know who *wasn't* there....the Blacktooth Grin clan." The tauren spit the words like venom. It wasn't the first time Bok'theg had heard the clan mentioned with such rancor but it was the first time he detected actual hate in the voice of a Horde member.

He stood for a moment in thought as he released the tauren, who ran off to continue whatever mission it was he was on. If the Grin's absence was noticed by even this passing cow, then surely the

Horde who flocked to the banner of the "peacechief" knew it. That meant that the Grin's war on the Eastern Kingdoms was not going unnoticed nor unopposed. Bok'theg smiled. Yes, it was a good that he had decided to seek work with this clan. No doubt they would be in need of mercenaries who could act with plausible deniability. He would surely find all the silver and blood to satisfy him.

Grinning to himself, he headed to the inn to sit out the remaining hours until the gates would be reopened.

Cadrian (MR)

Cadrian nudged a Forsaken with his boot. The body did not move, but just for good measure, he pushed his sword down on its neck. The blade slid through easily and the Forsaken's head was cleanly detached from its body.

"Thoroughly dead, paladin?" A man, wearing the tabard of the Keepers of Stromgarde, asked. Cadrian nodded and helped the man lift the corpse into a wheelbarrow. Cadrian tossed the head in as well and the man trundled it down to one of the bonfires burning around the keep.

The fighting had lasted hours, but even the Horde had to give into sheer numbers. The Keepers' call for help had not gone unanswered and much of the Alliance's irregular forces had arrived to defend Stromgarde. The Horde forces had been handily repulsed, the last remnants captured or killed in the desperate defense of the hill they had trapped themselves on.

Cadrian assisted with delivering a few more bodies to the bonfires, or tenderly carrying some of the Alliance dead to a graveyard for proper burial. Even outnumbered and cornered, the Horde had inflicted casualties from their simple ferocity. Cadrian had failed at another attempted resurrection, the night elf's spirit having finally relented and departed to the afterlife, when Anarea rode up, her clothing and blades stained with blood.

"Didn't expect to see you here." Cadrian said mildly. The two had parted ways after the battle of Menethil Harbor, Cadrian setting off in pursuit of the Blacktooth Grin and Anarea vanishing off somewhere.

"Keepers hired me to help the defense," Anarea said breathlessly. "Just finishing chasing the Horde survivors into Silverpine." She dismounted from the horse the Keepers had probably loaned her and handed the reins to a priestess. "What are you doing here?"

"I came here to help the Keepers. Unpaid." Cadrian said, adding the last in tone of scolding. Anarea shrugged.

"Should've asked for money."

Cadrian shook his head and walked deeper into the Keep. "The Alliance holds Stromgarde. Its defense after this day falls back to the Keepers."

Anarea grinned. "You're fighting back. Maybe you can win after all."

Silvann

Silvann was reviewing some reports in his office of the Range Guard Order, when a young ranger came in, bearing news of war.

"Sir, the Blacktooth Grin is currently attacking several towns and posts in the Eastern Kingdoms. From what our scouts reported, they could certainly use our help."

"Hmm, then I guess it's time to join them in their offensive..." said Silvann sternly, trying to conceal his own bloodlust. "... with or without the help from the Horde leaders."

Then, Silvann wrote a letter to the warchief of the Blacktooth Grin, ensuring him that Suncrown was ready to fight alongside the Grin, wherever the place. When the ranger was leaving the office, Silvann gave further instructions to him. "Please, inform Captain Renault of all this, if he's not aware yet. I am already heading to the dwarven lands."

With a nod, the young ranger walked out of the office, while Silvann prepared to leave Silvermoon, calling out Muad, his ever loyal Teldrassil owl.

Yalim

An unmistakable sensation filled Yalim as he hurriedly finished purchasing his supplies in the Scryer's Inn. After handing a fistful of silver to the innkeeper he finally let himself be pulled into the void.

Yalim nodded to the warlocks who stood around him as he emerged in the foothills of Grizzlepaw Ridge. The Grin's warchief and a variety of warlords and sythegars stood near one of the taller sections of the cliff, glancing at a map.

"Chief, Faquarl," Yalim said as he stood at attention and saluted the men in front of him. The Grin had managed to assemble a decent force for this assault. More than was needed, most likely, but better safe than sorry.

"Yalim. You're late again," Faquarl said as he peered down upon the elf. He seemed to be taking attendance seriously this time. Mistakes had to be avoided this close to the dwarven homelands.

"Aye, but I'd figured you to expect it from me." Yalim grinned slightly.

"Just make sure that the rest of the Grin are ready to move. We're marching soon."

Yalim nodded and left them to their business. Yalim stood among his brethren saying prayers for the upcoming battle. After preparations had been made Yalim released himself to the shadows and sat down to wait.

Distant battle cries and the clanging of axes on shields filled the air around the small settlement of Thelsamar. The sparse dwarven regiment moved restlessly from one end of town to the other, unsure of where the unseen Horde would strike.

A pair of orcs leapt from the roof of the inn, cleaving through the lightly armored dwarves in the center of town. Soon the stone street was slick with blood as steel repeatedly met flesh. A small group of shadowed figures stood watch from the inn roof, using the elements to stop those who attempted to flee.

The blacksmith's shop had been turned into a mass grave. The last of the dwarven bodies were being thrown down the steps and set ablaze and small number of Grin were still making patrols of the town in order to make sure they'd missed none in the assault. The main force sat near what was left of the flight master and his beasts and since few defenders had shown to put up a fight, the Grin were growing restless fighting amongst themselves.

"Awright Grin, the cowards at Ironforge seem not to care about this poor excuse for a town. We march on Dun Morogh!" Gorfrunch slung his axe over his shoulder and rounded up the rest of the assault force.

Shouts of 'Fear the Grin!' could be heard they mounted and moved south towards Kharanos.

The first pass of Kharanos had gone well and Yalim stood among his allies watching the buildings burn in the snow. "A beautiful sight indeed, Yag", Yalim grinned at Yagy while rummaging through his packs. Just as he spoke, Yalim caught movement out of the corner of his eye and yelled a warning to the group still in town.

"North! We have company!"

The Grin forces quickly charged over the snow bank and were met head-on by a group of Ironforge's finest. Yalim recognized a few of the tabards; Midnight Reveries and Much Too Much, both guilds to be respected on the battlefield. Their surprise attack was enough to throw the Grin off and members of the strike force started to fall. Noticing that the situation was grim, the warchief ordered his men to the west. They'd regroup and attempt to fight on more even terms.

Unfortunately the Alliance took every measure they could to ensure that the Grin wouldn't be able to return at full strength. Small parties of defenders swept the frozen lake, killing any stragglers they found.

The war horn was finally sounded, and the Grin returned to the east. The majority of their forces managed to gather at the nearby quarry while a small assault force snuck their way into Ironforge itself. Their mission was simple: eliminate any source of rations in the city.

Meanwhile, Gorfrunch had led what was left of his forces back to the South Gate outpost. Here they prepared an ambush for the pursuing Alliance soldiers. They executed their orders as planned, but the tunnel acted more to hinder the Grin rather than help them. Left no other option, the Grin retreated to Thelsamar for a drink at their illustrious inn before returning to their homelands.

Renault

The small office was cramped, more so than its usual deft, neat touch. Outside the window shone rays of golden afternoon light from the sun high above Silvermoon. A solitary ray caught on a ruby pendant hanging before the window, showering upon the office a kaleidoscope of crimson hues. Its occupant paid little heed to the light-show, choosing to brood over the maps spread over the desk.

Groaning quietly under his breath, Renault shook his head, a finger tracing along the shores of Khaz Modan's prime lake. His free hand snatched up a quill from the inkpot holding down one corner of the map, scratching an X over the mountain pass leading to the Badlands. A companion X joined at the path leading to Dun Algaz. "Now," he said quietly, the tip of his tongue wetting his lips, "where will you show..." A knock on the office door jarred his thoughts, interrupting the still calm.

"Come," he stated with a hint of gruffness, his eyes not leaving the map.

The door opened, the figure quickly shutting it behind him, a furred parchment in his hands. "Forgive me, Captain. I did not mean to intrude, yet..."

"*Anaria shola*, lieutenant. You've done the deed, best that you finish what you set out to do." Grimacing, Renault lifted his head to look upon the visitor, a frown set on his face. "That means to speak, yes? I trust not all culture from our forefathers has been bred out of the Prince's *wonderful, paradisiacal* libertine army."

"I, err... yes. Of course, Captain," the younger Sin'dorei answered, his face flush with the questioning. "Scouts are reporting a buildup of...Alliance -" he let out, the word coming almost as a sneer, "- forces. Gathering around Thelsamar. Some scattered reports of reinforcements around Dun Algaz. The Dragonmaw are giving some trouble, but..."

"Thelsamar?" came the question from Renault, quick as light. His lips curled at the thinly-veiled insult the lieutenant spoke, yet said nothing of it. "Were the scouts gallivanting around Angor when they should have been watching the pass?"

"Sir, I..."

"No. Best shut your mouth. Reinforce the sentry positions here..." he stated, marking the quill to reinforce the X at the Badlands pass, a second mark at Dun Algaz. "...and here. I want to know if so much as a gadfly gets into or out of the Loch through those passes. Our eyes-and-ears can earn their keep for once."

The young Sin'dorei gave a bow of his head, his lips still curled into a flat sneer. "Of... course. *Captain*."

Shaking his head, Renault threw the quill down onto the map, reaching for the cloak resting on the back of his chair. "Carry those orders to the sentries, tell them to double rotations if they need until more can be assigned to cover the additional shifts. Go down to the stables, have *Dovi'anya* ready. I'll be riding at the dawn." Frowning, he glanced at the ruby pendant in the window, then turned to the door. "Someone has to keep an eye on our erstwhile allies, and I don't trust the sentries' table manners."

Merely nodding, the lieutenant turned to leave, the door held open for Renault. The captain followed the younger elf into the hallway, sparing a glance for the door opposite his own. "One matter at a time," he muttered to himself. "That bastard will pay... after matters are finished at the lake."

Faugarl

Faugarl and Eddard were the two Grin that went into Ironforge. It was unsanctioned by the warchief but the two warlords couldn't resist. They had made it onto the doorstep of the dwarven kingdom! It was time to destroy what they could.

The two had snuck past all of the guards and were deciding what to kill. The warchief had told them about four different food vendors that had to go. The two decided it was best to start there. They scoured Ironforge eventually finding the fruit vendor. They put her to the blade and quickly began sneaking again.

The next kill was the pie vendor, the little gnome had no place to run. He was quickly exterminated without a problem. The Ironforge guard was up in arms by this time. As a result from this sneaking became harder. The meat vendor was a messy kill. He patrolled the war district and called many guards when he saw them. Miraculously, both Eddard and Faugarl survived the influx of guards.

Their last target was the bread vendor. This one was in the middle of the commons, the most populated area yet. They managed to kill the vendor but had to escape into the ditch at the gates. They had been spotted and Eddard was wounded. A warrior had spotted Faugarl and gave him a hell of a time. However, the druid escaped his clutches and waited in a nearby building for his ally.

Once regrouped they set out to kill the high explorer. He was the toughest target out of all of them. He called many guards during the fight but in the end, the Grin had succeeded with no casualty. Eddard had found a safe building to rest in and Faugarl made one more patrol around. His path ended up in front of the King of the Gnomes.

After the hour of probing the Ironforge defenses, the druid had surmised that they were still not prepared for the Grin. A small strike team could easily kill this gnome and then they would know that the Grin was out for blood. It would be the perfect start to their siege. The gnome was marked for death.

Arkonn stepped out of the portal, taking a moment to allow his eyes to adjust to the darkness. Most of the small Grin force, nine in all, had already arrived and were preparing to move out. The tunnel of the Deeprun Tram was silent, aside from the faint drip of water. Suddenly the Tram roared by, plastering his hair across his face. Arkonn sighed and pushed it away.

"Grin!! Listen up!" roared Gorfrunch. "There's no point in milling around! If they spot us, this mission is over before it begins!" Felora seemed to melt away from the shadows, the druid becoming noticeable as she reverted to her natural form.

"All clear ahead, Warchief," she said.

Gorfrunch nodded, and looked at each of his assembled warriors. "You all know how important this mission is to the next step of the war, I want no foul ups. Am I understood?" The Grin nodded as one. "Very well, Move out!" The journey through the tram tunnel was uneventful. Arkonn made sure all his senses were fully aware, searching for any sign of movement. Finally they reached the ramp that led to Ironforge. Faugarl assumed his moonkin form and took a few steps forward, before turning to face the rest of the team.

"You all stay here until I've cleared the civilians, when the military shows up, that's when you move in." Jo turned his back to them and moved forward, and rounded the corner. Screams filled the air, mixed the sound of thunder and roars. "Grin! Now!"

Arkonn rushed around the corner, notching an arrow as he went. He steadied his aim and let the arrow fly, smiling as it found a home between a dwarf's eyes. The battle ended nearly as soon as it had begun, and Ark found himself looking at High Tinker Gelbin Mekkatorque. The gnome stood and looked around, hoping for exit, but suddenly Gorfrunch roared and charged the gnome. The other Grin fell into their places and began to attack. The gnome fought hard against the nine of them. He had employed several gnomish devices, ranging from a shrink ray to a flamethrower. The warchief fought through it all, he and the gnome dead locked. Some rushed to defend the gnomish king, but they fell. Arkonn whipped arrows around and let them fly at a rate even he had a difficulty believing. Adrenaline coursed through his body, and soon the gnome king stumbled forward, and finally fell to his knees. The gnome raised his head in time to see Gorfrunch bring down his axe. Arkonn looked away. Gorfrunch shouldered his axe, chest

heaving and blood splattered. He raised his head and roared the Grin war cry, and Arkonn found himself joining in.

"FEAR THE GRIN!!!"

Yagyu

The sythegar sat on the back of the black worg, who paced steadily back and forth in front of the gathered Horde. There were trolls, orcs, undead, and blood elves all massed in Kargath. They were all there because they had heard of the Grin's campaign against the dwarves of Ironforge and they had come to lend their blades and bows to the cause of war. The outpouring of Horde had been so enormous it had caught the Grin's leadership by surprise; Gorfrunch had had to divide his warlords among the multiple raiding parties to ensure that orders were carried out. Finally the two of the groups moved out to begin the assault on Ironforge. Yagyu's group had the mission to block reinforcements from entering the hall of the dwarven king. It was a difficult assignment, no doubt, but one that was sure to throw the orc right where he wanted to be - in the thick of battle. The tension mounted as the sun climbed into the sky high over the Badlands.

Minutes ticked by to become hours, as Yag waited for Breadalbane to give the order to advance. But the word wasn't coming. Something twinged in the back of Yagyu's mind. What was it? He hadn't had this feeling for a long time...so long that he had almost forgotten it. He couldn't quite place it but he felt something was off. He checked his hearthstone; it seemed that he heard the sound of skirmishing through broken reports. He couldn't be sure but it sounded as if the fight had already begun. But that was impossible. They hadn't received an order from the warchief to move yet. Anxiously he paced around the gathered troops and tried to rally them with war cries. The younger ones were steadfast but he could see the tension in their eyes. The sythegar could see the waiting was beginning to take its toll on their spirits.

What could be the problem, he wondered? Could the Alliance have been forewarned of the attack? Could one of the raiding parties have been spotted headed through Loch Modan? Could a roving party of Alliance have engaged the advance forces? Yag had a bad feeling in his bones, but it mattered little. The clan was heading to its final battle with the dwarves and he would be there on the front lines chopping at their stubby little legs.

Suddenly, he saw it. The twisting hole of blackness that appeared in front of the massed troops. "MOVE IT! GO WHELPS! GO!" he bellowed at the Horde as they obediently filed into the portal. Yag jumped through the portal and found himself standing amongst a group of bloody Grin, who were obviously in a fight for their lives outside the hall of Bronzebeard. Leaping over the railing, Yagyu charged a nearby elf priest and cut his incantations short with a single stroke of his axe. A druid and a warrior ran at him but sidestepping the attack, he severed the warriors hamstring and spun drop a heavy blow across the druids back. More and more Grin were funneling in now and the Alliance defenders were dropping like flies. That was when he heard the shout.

Around the corner came a mass of dwarven guards followed by more Alliance forces. In front was Bronzebeard himself. Led by their king, the dwarves poured into the Grin ranks. A rage mingled with fear was in their eyes as they looked on the massed Horde troops so close to their king. The Grin clumped together, hacking and slashing at anything that moved. The floor was slick with blood and warriors slipped and fell with the exertion of their efforts. Slowly though, the tide began to turn against the Grin. The Alliance forces were increasing. No sooner had they cut down a pinkie, then he was replaced by two elves and three dwarfs. As Horde fell around him, Yag could feel the futility of his situation. Gathering his strength, he stared down a dwarven paladin. With a cry of "FEAR THE GRIN!" he charged headlong into the ever growing mass of Alliance forces. Victory or defeat, the sythegar would go out standing up.