



EXPLORING AZEROTH

NORTHREND



ALEX ACKS



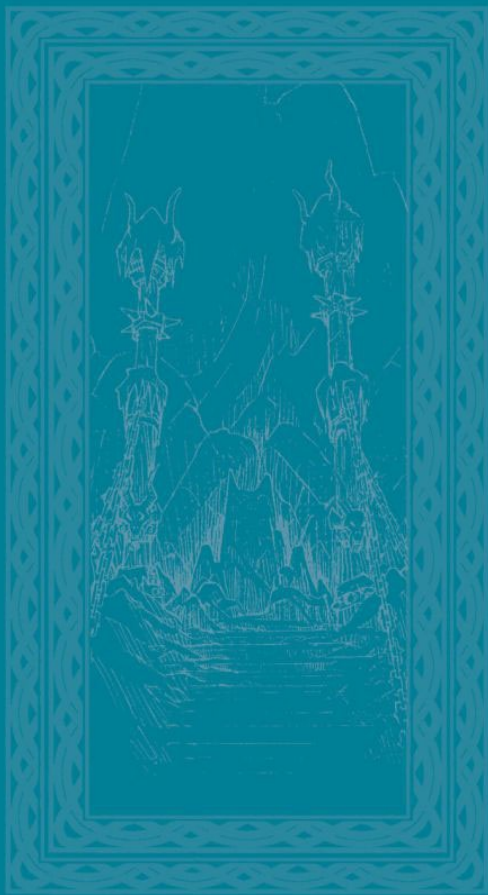
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To Muradin,
Highthane of the Bronzebeard Clan,

It's been too long since we've laid eyes on each other and lifted the drinking horn, which is reason enough for me to write this letter. There is another matter, however. A patrol recently recovered a damaged weapon after a skirmish with some Scourge near Icecrown that bears your runes. Yet the build of this weapon suggests its origins belong to the earthen of Northrend—you never told us you had ancestors who walked among the Frostborn!

We are repairing this relic, for that is what it must be, with the reverence and care it deserves. Will you come and tell us its story?

I'll even refrain from drinking you under the table again.

—King Velog Icebellow

Brann, see this note from Velog;

I've no idea what he's talking about, but sounds like something we should investigate. I've been meaning to make a trip up to Northrend anyway, see the lay of the land as it is now, reaffirm certain diplomatic connections, and so on. Got the itch back in your feet?

WOULDN'T MISS IT, BROTHER!

Magni,

Looks like Brann and I will be making a journey up to Northrend. I'm thinking there's a lot of diplomacy to be done up there, and not just with the Frostborn. Might also be a chance to visit with the keepers and give you a good listen to the state of Azeroth. Besides, if you're there, you'll keep Brann from running me ragged. I know you're busy being the speaker for an entire world, but it's been a dog's age since we three did something together, aye?

A wise idea, Muradin.
Of course I'll join you.

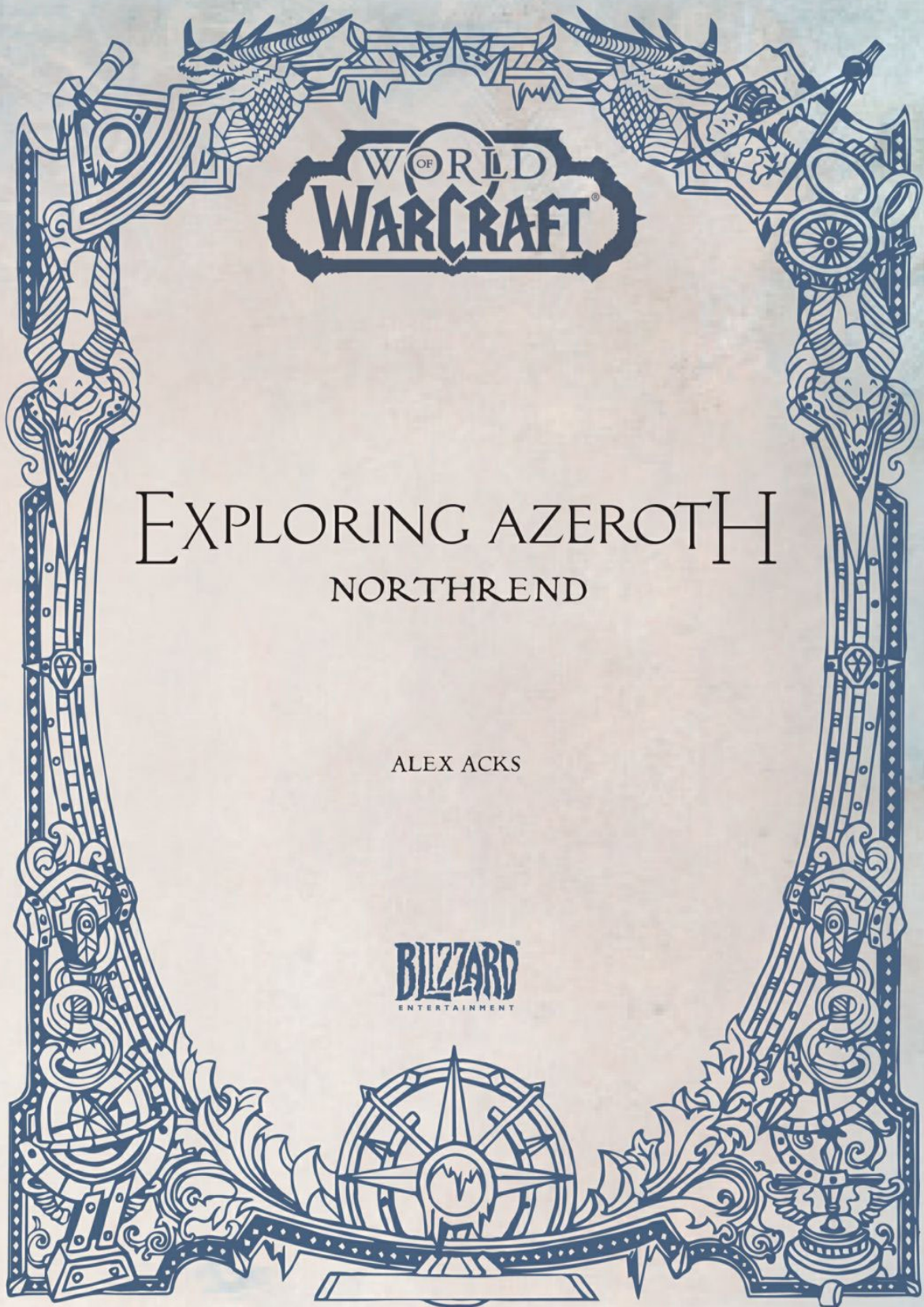




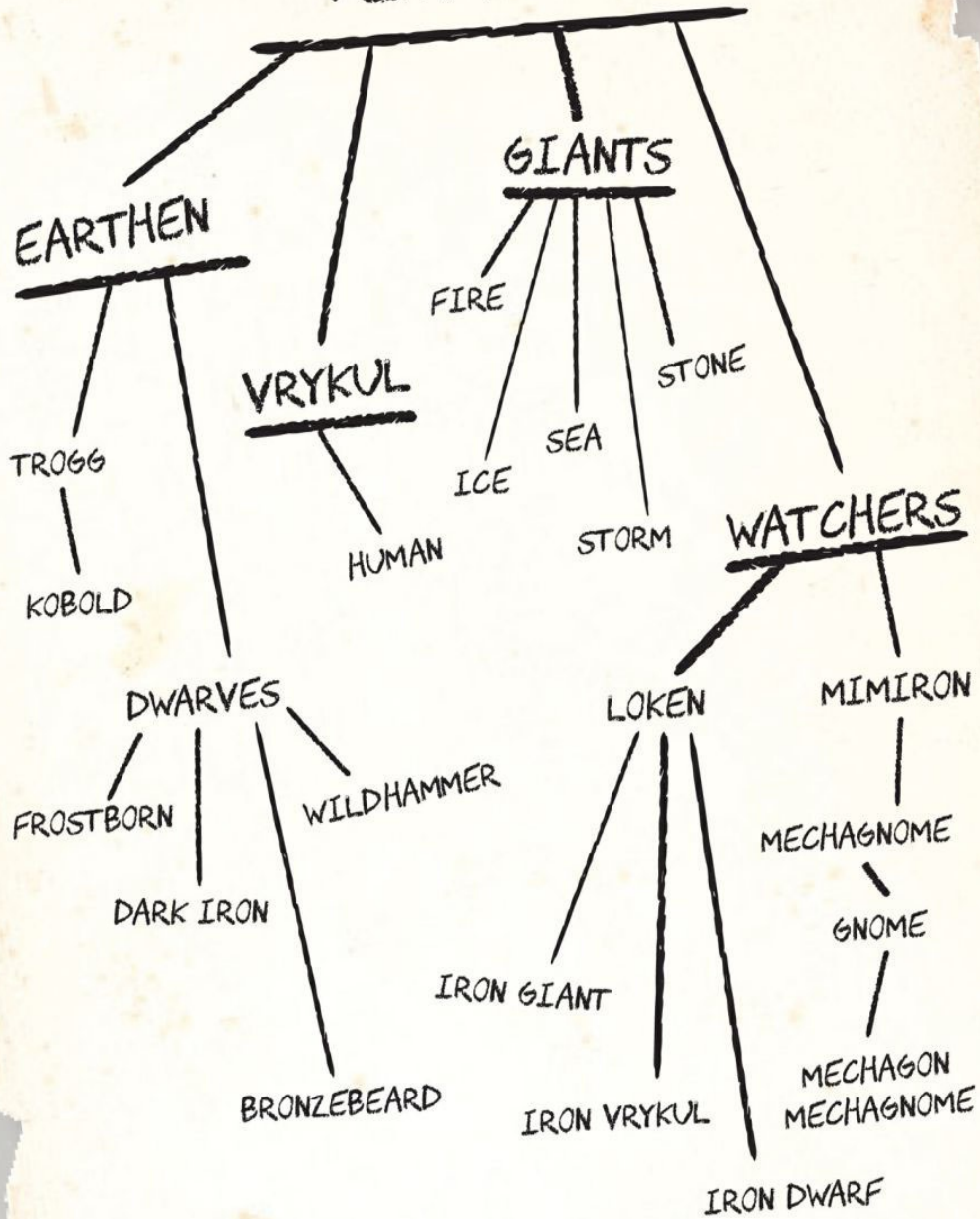
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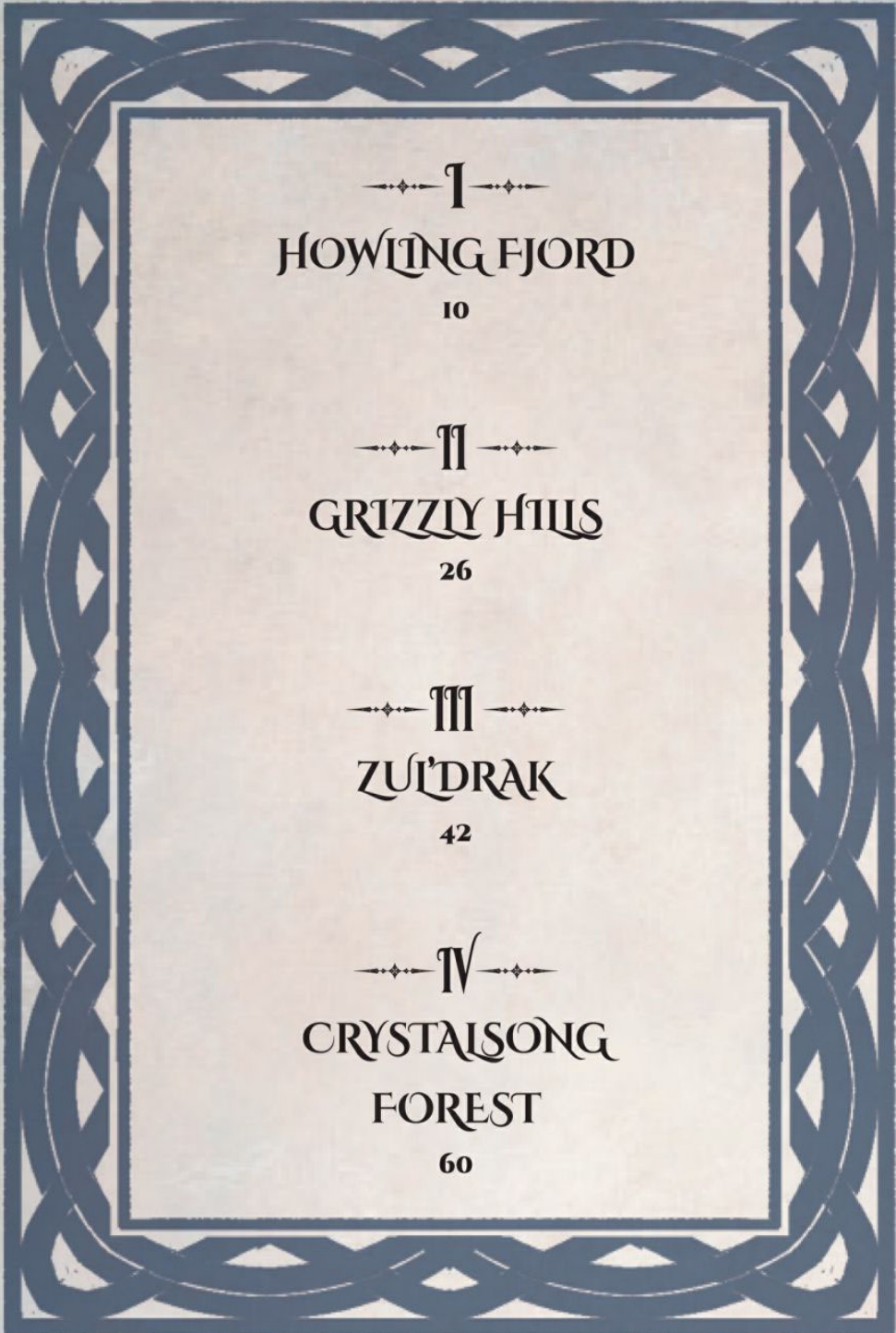


TITANS





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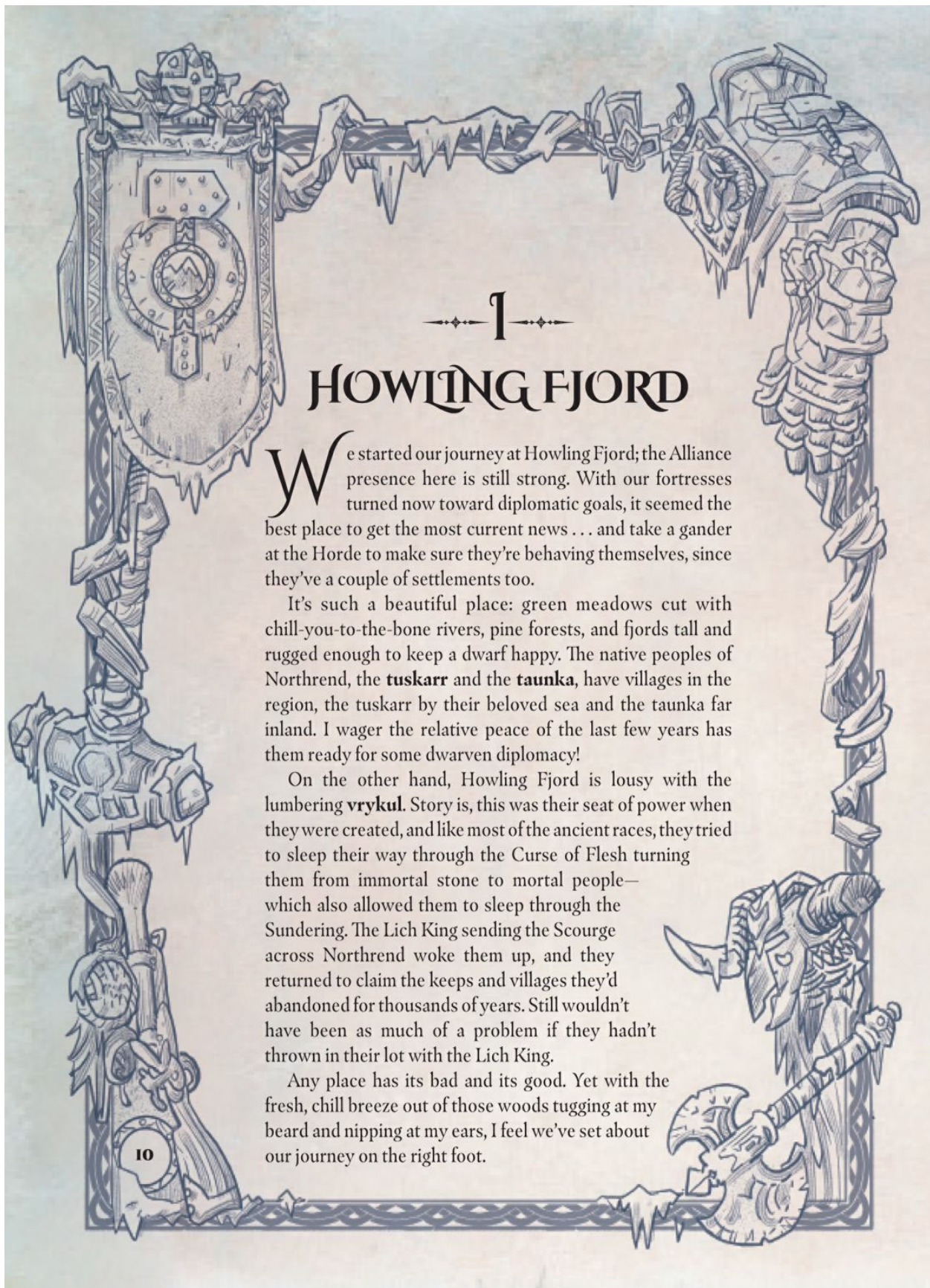
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HOWLING FJORD

We started our journey at Howling Fjord; the Alliance presence here is still strong. With our fortresses turned now toward diplomatic goals, it seemed the best place to get the most current news . . . and take a gander at the Horde to make sure they're behaving themselves, since they've a couple of settlements too.

It's such a beautiful place: green meadows cut with chill-you-to-the-bone rivers, pine forests, and fjords tall and rugged enough to keep a dwarf happy. The native peoples of Northrend, the **tuskarr** and the **taunka**, have villages in the region, the tuskarr by their beloved sea and the taunka far inland. I wager the relative peace of the last few years has them ready for some dwarven diplomacy!

On the other hand, Howling Fjord is lousy with the lumbering **vrykul**. Story is, this was their seat of power when they were created, and like most of the ancient races, they tried to sleep their way through the Curse of Flesh turning them from immortal stone to mortal people—which also allowed them to sleep through the Sundering. The Lich King sending the Scourge across Northrend woke them up, and they returned to claim the keeps and villages they'd abandoned for thousands of years. Still wouldn't have been as much of a problem if they hadn't thrown in their lot with the Lich King.

Any place has its bad and its good. Yet with the fresh, chill breeze out of those woods tugging at my beard and nipping at my ears, I feel we've set about our journey on the right foot.



SCALAWAG POINT

A wretched port of riffraff and rascality to be sure, though Scalawag Point pales in comparison to Booty Bay, even if the Northsea Freebooters are making up for being fewer in number by being worse criminals and murderers. They were previously led by “Mad” Jonah Sterling, who was so paranoid that he left the relative comfort of the makeshift port to live in a cave with his pet bear. It was his idea to attack both the Alliance and the Horde expeditions—and raid the nearby tuskarr villages and fleets, taking prisoners as captives. That’s a bad enough fate for anyone, but none of the tuskarr survived their captivity long enough to be rescued due to the brutality they suffered.

With both Alliance and Horde breathing down the necks of the freebooters, another pirate called Annie Bonn arranged to have Sterling killed and took over the operation. They’re still a criminal cartel under her, but by all reports they’ve downgraded from monstrous to merely annoying.



KAMAGUA

We took a day to feast and share stories with the elders of Kamagua, the largest tuskarr village in Howling Fjord—no doubt my favorite kind of diplomacy. As fisherfolk and traders, the tuskarr have traveled widely and share their information just as freely.

The round-backed buildings of Kamagua, which look like monstrous fish, have lower levels dug into the frozen, rocky earth, which makes them easier to keep warm. It's home to a dock that is built for a turtle boat—which is not a boat at all, but a great sea turtle named *Green Island*, with a roomy wooden deck and a cargo hold built upon his shell. The great sea turtle swims between Kamagua and Moa'ki Harbor in Dragonblight. The tuskarr steer him by dangling carrots in front of his face!

We noticed quite a few tuskarr fishing boats and canoes heading east. Brann, always the friendly sort, asked where they were going—they said they'd learned of some far-off lands with welcoming ports, ones their ancestors had traveled to long ago.

After most of the beer had been poured, we took the opportunity to ask around about this ancestor of ours Icebellow mentioned in his letter. Even gave them a few names of uncles and great-uncles who had itchy feet, but none seemed to ring a bell. The tuskarr told us we'd best check at Moa'ki Harbor, since that's now their biggest settlement and where the storytellers congregate.

SOUNDS LIKE A JOB FOR
THE EXPLORERS' LEAGUE!



ARMOR ASIDE: CRYPTSTALKER ARMOR

Hunters are relentless in their pursuit of prey, whether they're after beasts with more cunning than wit, dangerous monsters, or monstrous people—the deadliest quarry of all. But beyond their skills as survivalists, they're students of what they hunt, observing abilities and tactics and using that knowledge to make themselves more dangerous and unpredictable foes. The Cryptstalker Armor represents just that skill, taking the armor from the body of a Scourge crypt fiend itself.





WESTGUARD KEEP

We made Westguard Keep our first place to check in with the local Alliance commander. He had hearteningly little to report: the vrykul are keeping to themselves, and the tuskarr have been supplying the keep with all the fresh fish they could want. During the war, Westguard was the doorway to Northrend by air; there's a dock for airships and flying machines—though most of those have been lost now. They loaned some of them to the Explorers' League, according to Brann. For a while, the captured goblin zeppelin *Lady Lug* was used for bombing runs here. But when the Horde had its civil war, partisans for Garrosh Hellscream attacked Westguard to take the zeppelin back.

To the keep's north, **Whisper Gulch** is an eerie place, even now. From above, it's naught but a narrow crack in the land, overgrown with tilting trees. Go in and you find a chasm crisscrossed with wooden bridges, a good number of them broken and hanging limp—and I wouldn't trust my weight to the others. Mine entrances dot the canyon walls. If you stand still too long, the wind that whistles through the gulch brings sibilant whispers to your ear.

We dwarves are attracted to mines, so it's not a surprise some of us came here. But the ones who stayed to explore were driven mad by the ore they found here—saronite, the crystallized black blood of Yogg-Saron and the source of all that whispering—and the sound of their raving echoes ceaselessly. Brann recognized some of the gibbering madmen as former members of the Explorers' League, which upset him deeply.

I've seen this kind of madness before, in those who have worked—or been forced to work—in saronite mines. Magni thinks this might still be Yogg-Saron at work, but why now? Yogg-Saron has been defeated, but the madness continues. Don't know if that gives me hope of helping the poor bastards or not.

We then came upon the **Ancient Lift**, a gondola lift that runs down from the high cliffs of the fjord and across the water to the snowy Isle of Spears. It's a fun sort of ride, if you have a head for heights; the lift cars are wooden dragon boats that run the long distance on a rope, swaying in the cold wind that blows the choppy waters. It's a machine that looks to be of vrykul design, but the tuskarr aren't shy about using it to get up to the cliffs when they want to go hunting.

The dark influence of the Old Gods lingers like a blight in places where they once held power.

WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO RESCUE THEM WITHOUT LOSING MORE PEOPLE.

GJALERHORN

The Gjalerhorn is a treacherous mountain bordering Grizzly Hills, craggy and snow-covered. At its south foot sits the Rivenwood, a dank forest infested with giant spiders that leave web-wrapped adventurers and soldiers hanging about as snacks. If you make it past Rivenwood and onto the slopes of the mountain, there's the vrykul fortress Gjalerbron. It's still half-filled with slumbering vrykul, slowly being coaxed back to waking life by the vrykul necrolords. If it takes a *necrolord* to wake you, maybe you should be left to sleep! The air around Gjalerbron should be crisp and cold, but it stinks of acrid, foul magic and the death stench of the frost wyrms that patrol overhead.

If you make it to the peak, there's a wrecked flying machine up there, surrounded by the skeletons of gnomes and their last meal of fish and ale. Best not to try flying over it unless you're sure of yourself.

The only half-friendly place near Gjalerhorn is **Camp Winterhoof**, which sits on the edge of the mountain's eastern slope. The camp has bright totem poles and rounded houses—good for shedding snow—built around hot springs that bubble up from the mountain. And I say “only half-friendly” because it's a taunka village; we came to their gates to make an offer of friendship, and while they weren't hostile, they didn't appear overly motivated to invite us in either.

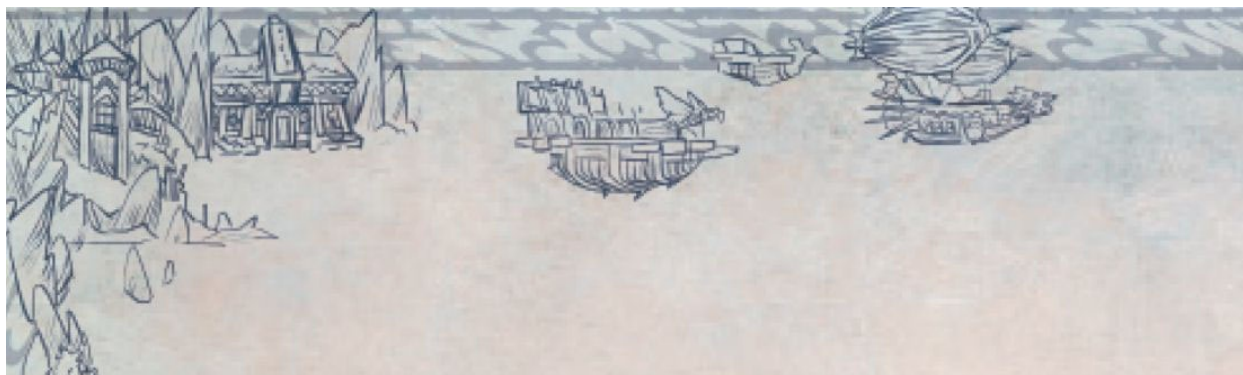


The taunka are a stubborn and tenacious people—you have to be, to live in Northrend. They've thrown their lot in with the Horde, because they've got kinship with the tauren and because the Horde got to them first. I hope the taunka and the Alliance can find common ground now, but they're still a wary bunch, and Chieftain Ashtotem doesn't seem particularly interested in making friends beyond the Horde. I haven't had many dealings with the taunka under the Alliance banner, but every taunka I ever met while I was with the Frostborn had a great heart—and an even greater capacity to drink me under the table.

SKORN

The home of the **Winterskorn** clan of vrykul sits atop a large hill with a commanding view of the surrounding countryside—though the Winterskorn prefer throwing frostbolts from their watchtowers rather than manning harpoon guns like the Dragonflayers. The Winterskorn were awakened by the Scourge at the behest of the Lich King himself, which tells you everything you might want to know about their character. They were enough of a pain that Westguard Keep partially destroyed the village by bombarding the towers. They've mostly rebuilt now, by the looks of it.





VALGARDE

The first the home of the lucky few who survived Arthas's betrayal, Valgarde started as a small settlement with a decent anchorage in Daggercap Bay and has grown a bit from there. I'm glad those who made it found a way to make something good out of a beginning so dark and bloody. It became our eastern way into Northrend and got built up during the Valiance Expedition. It's also but a hop across the river from Wyrmskull Village and Utgarde Keep, though the vrykul were still slumbering at the time it was built, making passage easier.

The Alliance icebreaker *Northspear* runs from Menethil Harbor in the Wetlands to here, regular as gnomish clockwork. Vice Admiral Keller had command of Valgarde when the expedition started; it was a sleepy little nothing of a town when he first arrived. A month later, the vrykul were awake, setting their worgs on his soldiers and blasting the half-built walls with fire from their proto-drakes.

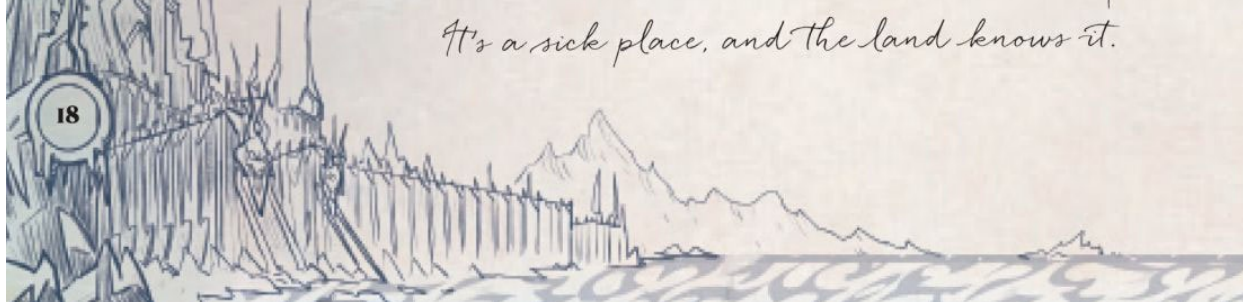
We stopped by the inn at Valgarde for a few pints, first to catch up on the news. What we learned is fair heartening: nowadays the vrykul mostly keep to themselves, and the focus of the remaining soldiers can be exploration and diplomacy. But as close as they are to Wyrmskull Village, the walls of Valgarde still see regular attacks. Toward the end of that long evening in good company, I thought to ask if anyone had heard stories of any other Bronzebeards traveling through Northrend, since this is the oldest Alliance settlement. No information on the family question, sadly.

Far too near to Valgarde for my peace of mind sits **New Agamand**; it's nominally a Horde base, but it's run by the Forsaken and built in their distinctive style—dark, gothic, and spindly. I'd make a joke about the Forsaken being allergic to bright colors, but I'm not in the mood.

Here, they tested their "New Plague" and it turned the land around the town dead and brown in the otherwise verdant landscape.

Not far from here are the ruins of the vrykul village of Halgrind, now another patch of blighted land. The Forsaken used Halgrind as a testing ground, too. I've no love for the vrykul, but it's a bad death for anyone.

It's a sick place, and the land knows it.





BAELGUN'S EXCAVATION SITE & IVALD'S RUIN

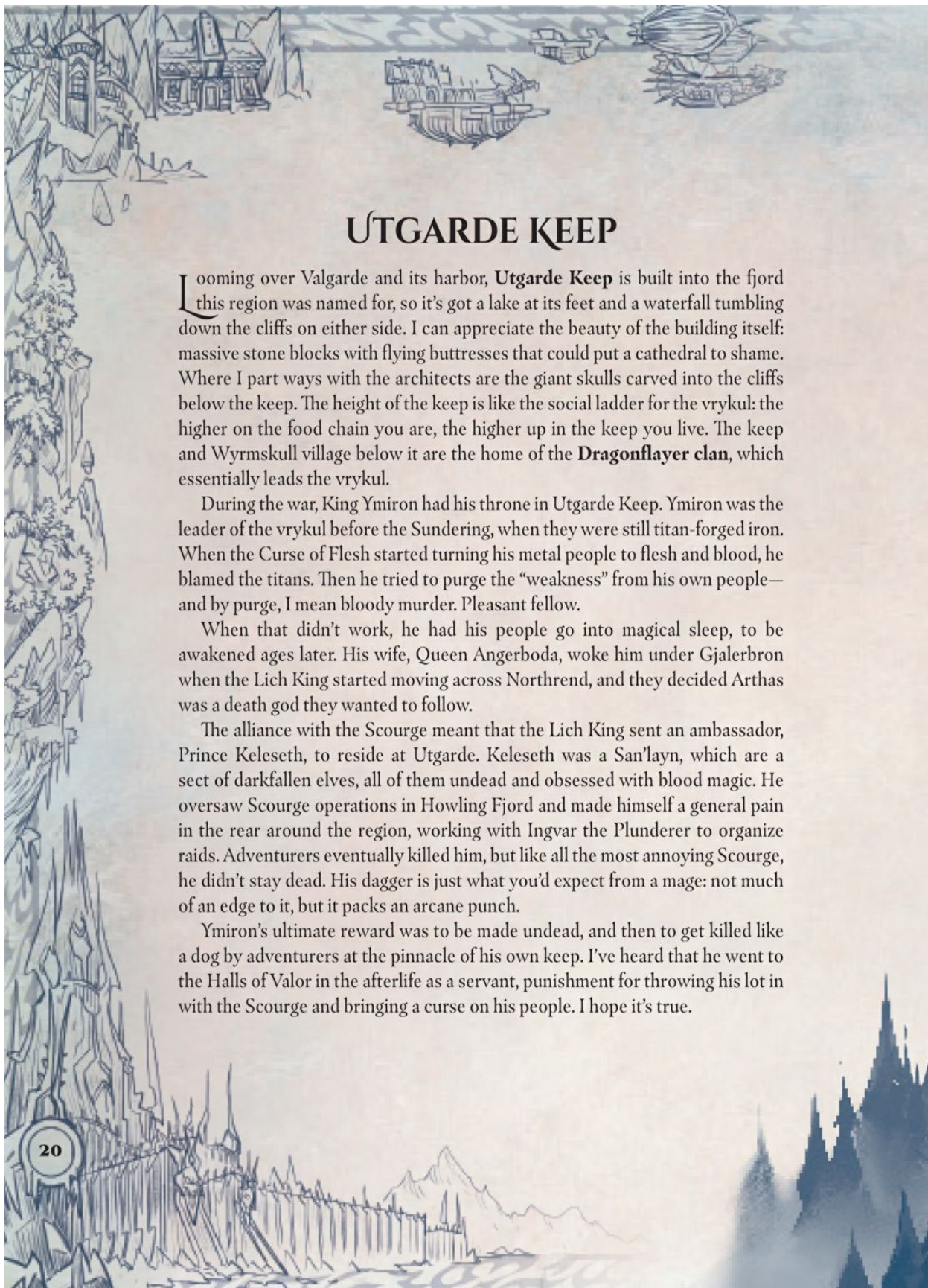
Baelgun's Excavation Site along the south cliff is a massive undertaking, overseen by the Explorers' League; they've uncovered a huge, almost intact—though somewhat cracked—statue, taller than one of Stormwind Keep's towers, coming out of the cliff wall. A bit to the northeast there's **Ivald's Ruin**, which is nothing more than an equally massive hand sticking up out of the rocky soil, holding something—a torch, maybe—aloft. The iron dwarves have taken over both sites to prevent further excavation, and Brann just about came unglued over it.

Hard to say more about these artifacts when you're getting attacked by iron dwarves, but it smells like the work of titans to me.

There's another site, far northwest, north of Westguard Keep, that's got a similar statue slowly emerging from the ground. **Steel Gate**, it's called. The statue there is in surprisingly good condition, considering it's got a river flowing over it.

A finely trained nose you have there, brother. I can't help but agree.

UNGLUED? THESE MIGHT BE IMPORTANT!



UTGARDE KEEP

Looming over Valgarde and its harbor, **Utgarde Keep** is built into the fjord this region was named for, so it's got a lake at its feet and a waterfall tumbling down the cliffs on either side. I can appreciate the beauty of the building itself: massive stone blocks with flying buttresses that could put a cathedral to shame. Where I part ways with the architects are the giant skulls carved into the cliffs below the keep. The height of the keep is like the social ladder for the vrykul: the higher on the food chain you are, the higher up in the keep you live. The keep and Wymskull village below it are the home of the **Dragonflayer clan**, which essentially leads the vrykul.

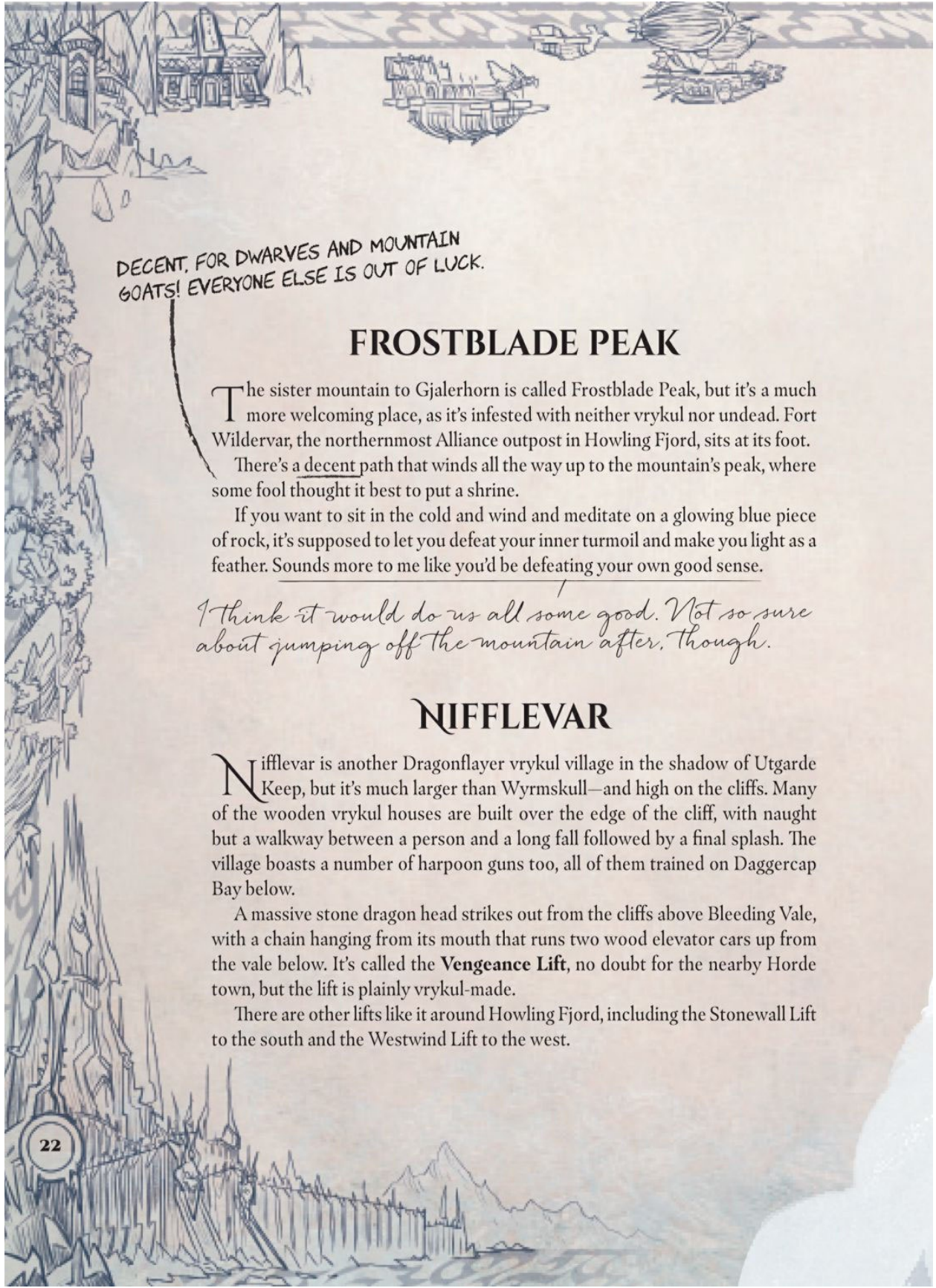
During the war, King Ymiron had his throne in Utgarde Keep. Ymiron was the leader of the vrykul before the Sundering, when they were still titan-forged iron. When the Curse of Flesh started turning his metal people to flesh and blood, he blamed the titans. Then he tried to purge the “weakness” from his own people—and by purge, I mean bloody murder. Pleasant fellow.

When that didn't work, he had his people go into magical sleep, to be awakened ages later. His wife, Queen Angerboda, woke him under Gjalerbron when the Lich King started moving across Northrend, and they decided Arthas was a death god they wanted to follow.

The alliance with the Scourge meant that the Lich King sent an ambassador, Prince Keleseth, to reside at Utgarde. Keleseth was a San'layn, which are a sect of darkfallen elves, all of them undead and obsessed with blood magic. He oversaw Scourge operations in Howling Fjord and made himself a general pain in the rear around the region, working with Ingvar the Plunderer to organize raids. Adventurers eventually killed him, but like all the most annoying Scourge, he didn't stay dead. His dagger is just what you'd expect from a mage: not much of an edge to it, but it packs an arcane punch.

Ymiron's ultimate reward was to be made undead, and then to get killed like a dog by adventurers at the pinnacle of his own keep. I've heard that he went to the Halls of Valor in the afterlife as a servant, punishment for throwing his lot in with the Scourge and bringing a curse on his people. I hope it's true.





DECENT. FOR DWARVES AND MOUNTAIN
GOATS! EVERYONE ELSE IS OUT OF LUCK.

FROSTBLADE PEAK

The sister mountain to Gjalerhorn is called Frostblade Peak, but it's a much more welcoming place, as it's infested with neither vrykul nor undead. Fort Wildervar, the northernmost Alliance outpost in Howling Fjord, sits at its foot.

There's a decent path that winds all the way up to the mountain's peak, where some fool thought it best to put a shrine.

If you want to sit in the cold and wind and meditate on a glowing blue piece of rock, it's supposed to let you defeat your inner turmoil and make you light as a feather. Sounds more to me like you'd be defeating your own good sense.

I think it would do us all some good. Not so sure about jumping off the mountain after, though.

NIFFLEVAR

Nifflevar is another Dragonflayer vrykul village in the shadow of Utgarde Keep, but it's much larger than Wyrmskull—and high on the cliffs. Many of the wooden vrykul houses are built over the edge of the cliff, with naught but a walkway between a person and a long fall followed by a final splash. The village boasts a number of harpoon guns too, all of them trained on Daggerecap Bay below.

A massive stone dragon head strikes out from the cliffs above Bleeding Vale, with a chain hanging from its mouth that runs two wood elevator cars up from the vale below. It's called the **Vengeance Lift**, no doubt for the nearby Horde town, but the lift is plainly vrykul-made.

There are other lifts like it around Howling Fjord, including the Stonewall Lift to the south and the Westwind Lift to the west.



VENGEANCE LANDING

Vengeance Landing is the Horde port in Howling Fjord, a place entirely built and run by the Forsaken Hand of Vengeance under the direction of Sylvanas. They've got their own docks, taking in ships from Tirisfal Glades. The whole town looks sickly, even from a distance, a yellow pall hanging over the vale around it.

I have some opinions that would scorch paper if I wrote them down, about what Sylvanas did before the Lich King's fall—and what she's done after—with the breadth of her power and cunning. But standing on Northrend's soil, I see her vengeful obsession for what it is. She was one person among so many that Arthas first destroyed and then cruelly used as a weapon against everything she once loved, and she's neither the first nor the last to have had it guide her choices.

Revenge is an endless path that cuts your feet with every step.







II GRIZZLY HILLS

With its low, green foothills laced with pine trees, craggy mountains, and picturesque rivers, Grizzly Hills may be my favorite place in all of Northrend, outside of Storm Peaks.

The **furbolgs**, whose ancestral home this is, tell this story of Grizzly Hills: Thousands of years ago, this region was home to twin grizzly bear cubs named Ursoc and Ursol. While they each had more curiosity than sense, they stuck with each other through thick and thin, no matter how great the danger. Keeper Freya made them into Wild Gods for their dedication to each other. Ursoc grew to be a great warrior and a fierce protector; the keeper gave him a set of titansteel claws to wield, and those became a legend in their own right—the Claws of Ursoc. Ursol learned the ways of magic and manipulated its ebb and flow like water. They fought and fell side by side during the War of the Ancients, defending Azeroth to the end.

The three of us knew the story from a druid, unsurprisingly. But when we got to talking about it, naturally we had to apply it to ourselves. Magni's obviously the Ursol type, as he's about all things magic and shamanism. Brann and Magni said I'm the Ursoc of the group, being such a warrior. And then we're all out of bears, so nay for Brann. Tough luck for being the youngest.

He's not big enough to be a grizzly bear anyway. Definitely a "grizzly squirrel."

HAVEN'T HEARD THE TWO OF YOU
LAUGH LIKE THAT IN A LONG TIME.



VOLDRUNE

The vrykul built their one village in Grizzly Hills on the highest ground they could find. Voldrune belongs to the Dragonflayer clan, though they've been fair quiet in recent days . . . perhaps because they've got the Horde breathing down their necks from **Conquest Hold**. Brann said it's quiet enough for a quick dig around for vrykul artifacts, though we didn't let him do that. I'd rather stay well away from the murderous lot of them and enjoy the forest!

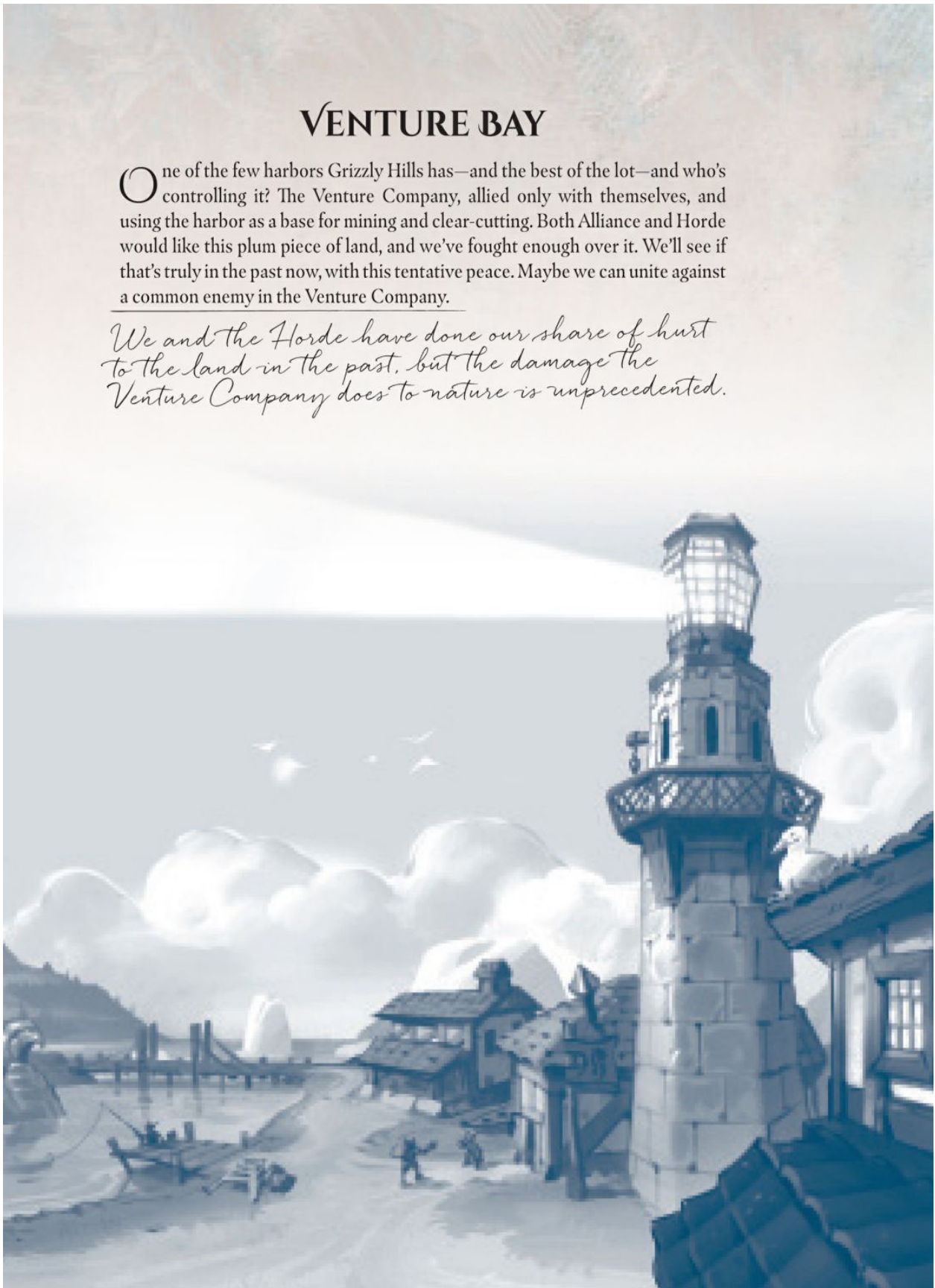
Conquest Hold, the Horde stronghold in Grizzly Hills, sticks out of the landscape like a porcupine on a featherbed. The fortress walls are built around a deep fighting pit. I heard that during the war it was run by an orc named **Krenna**, who was aggressive and ill-tempered even for the Horde. Bad enough that rumor has it she ended up challenged in her own pit and was killed by her sister!

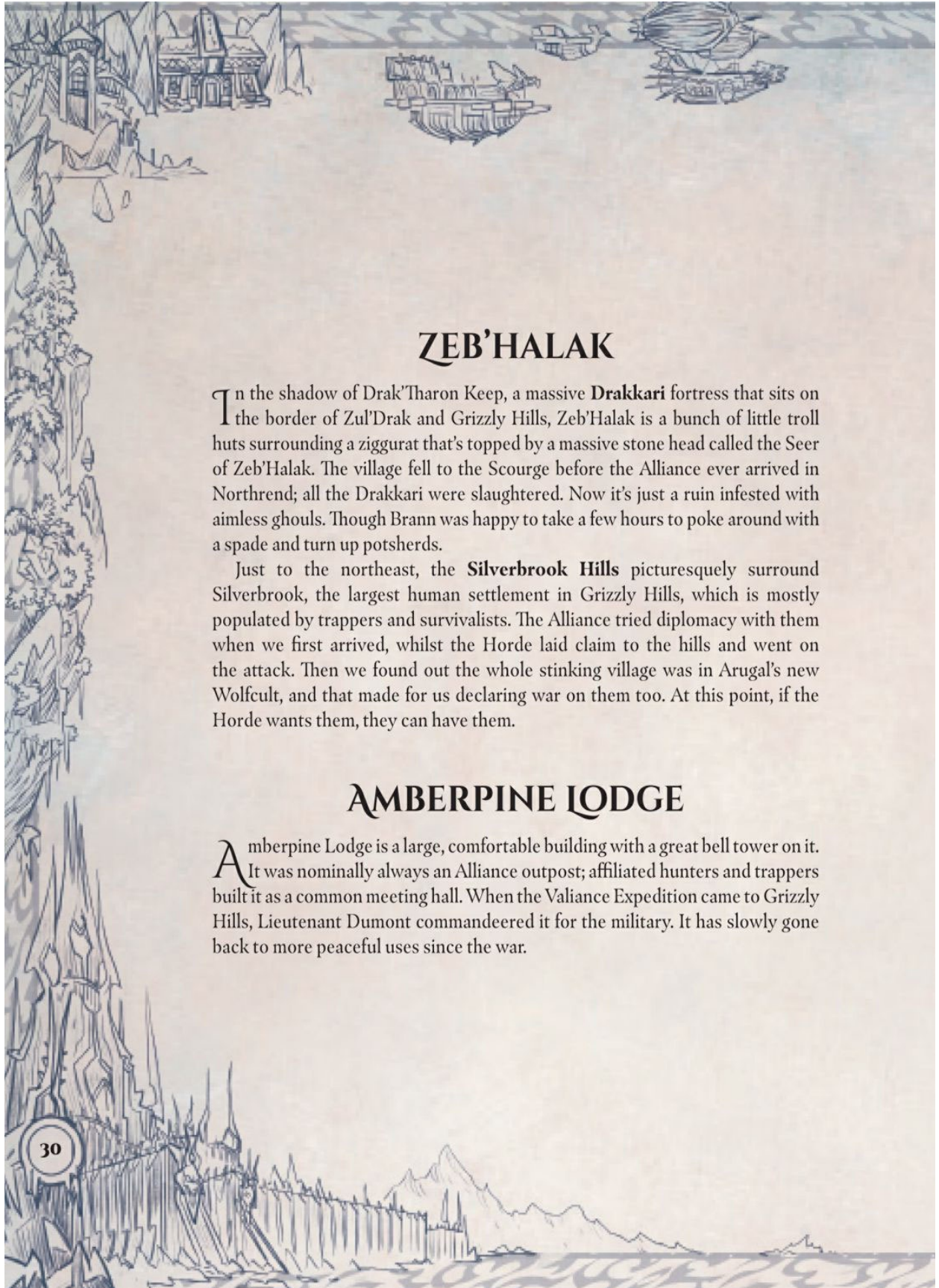


VENTURE BAY

One of the few harbors Grizzly Hills has—and the best of the lot—and who's controlling it? The Venture Company, allied only with themselves, and using the harbor as a base for mining and clear-cutting. Both Alliance and Horde would like this plum piece of land, and we've fought enough over it. We'll see if that's truly in the past now, with this tentative peace. Maybe we can unite against a common enemy in the Venture Company.

We and the Horde have done our share of hurt to the land in the past, but the damage the Venture Company does to nature is unprecedented.





ZEB'HALAK

In the shadow of Drak'Tharon Keep, a massive **Drakkari** fortress that sits on the border of Zul'Drak and Grizzly Hills, Zeb'Halak is a bunch of little troll huts surrounding a ziggurat that's topped by a massive stone head called the Seer of Zeb'Halak. The village fell to the Scourge before the Alliance ever arrived in Northrend; all the Drakkari were slaughtered. Now it's just a ruin infested with aimless ghouls. Though Brann was happy to take a few hours to poke around with a spade and turn up potsherds.

Just to the northeast, the **Silverbrook Hills** picturesquely surround Silverbrook, the largest human settlement in Grizzly Hills, which is mostly populated by trappers and survivalists. The Alliance tried diplomacy with them when we first arrived, whilst the Horde laid claim to the hills and went on the attack. Then we found out the whole stinking village was in Arugal's new Wolfcult, and that made for us declaring war on them too. At this point, if the Horde wants them, they can have them.

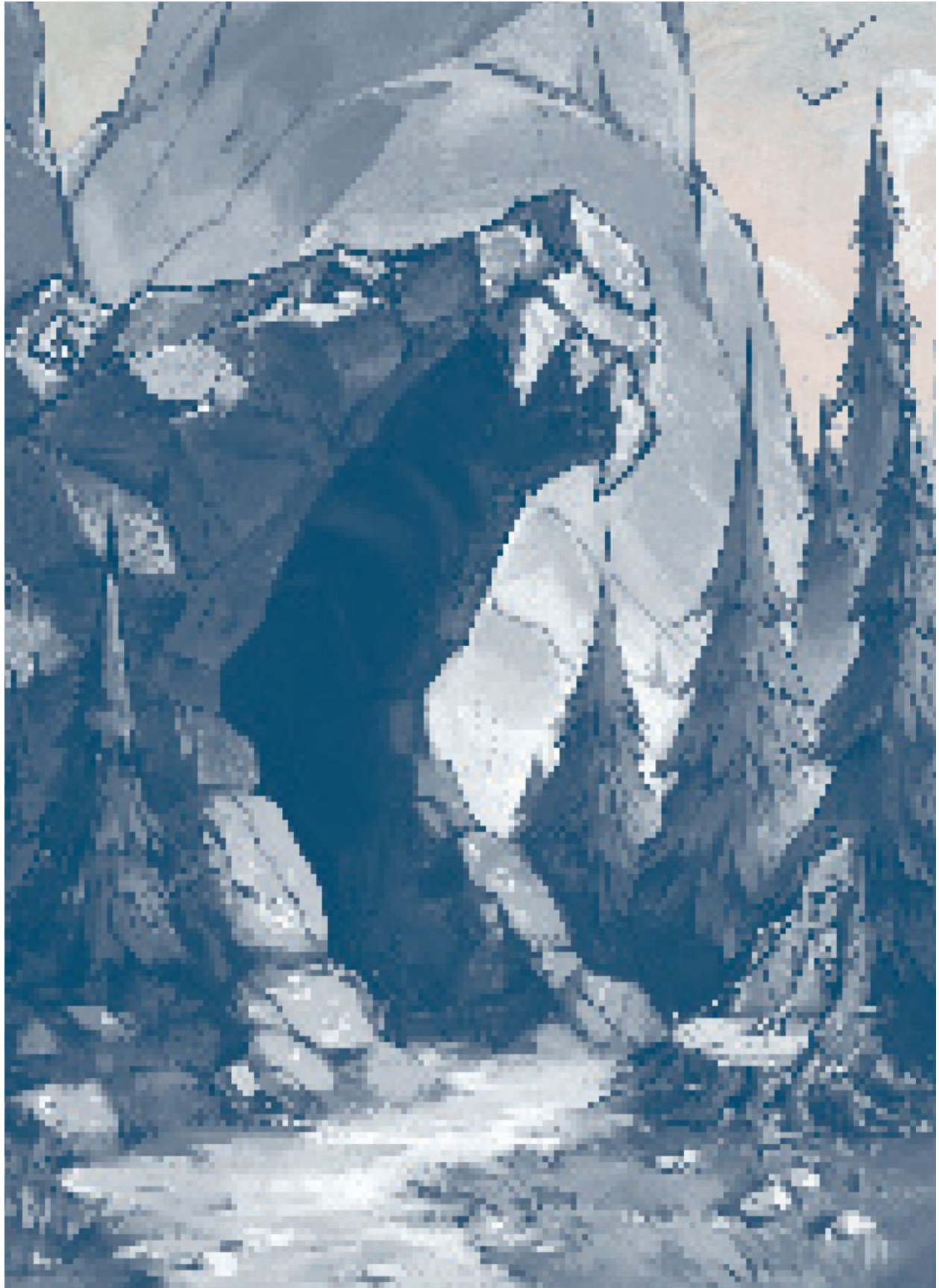
AMBERPINE LODGE

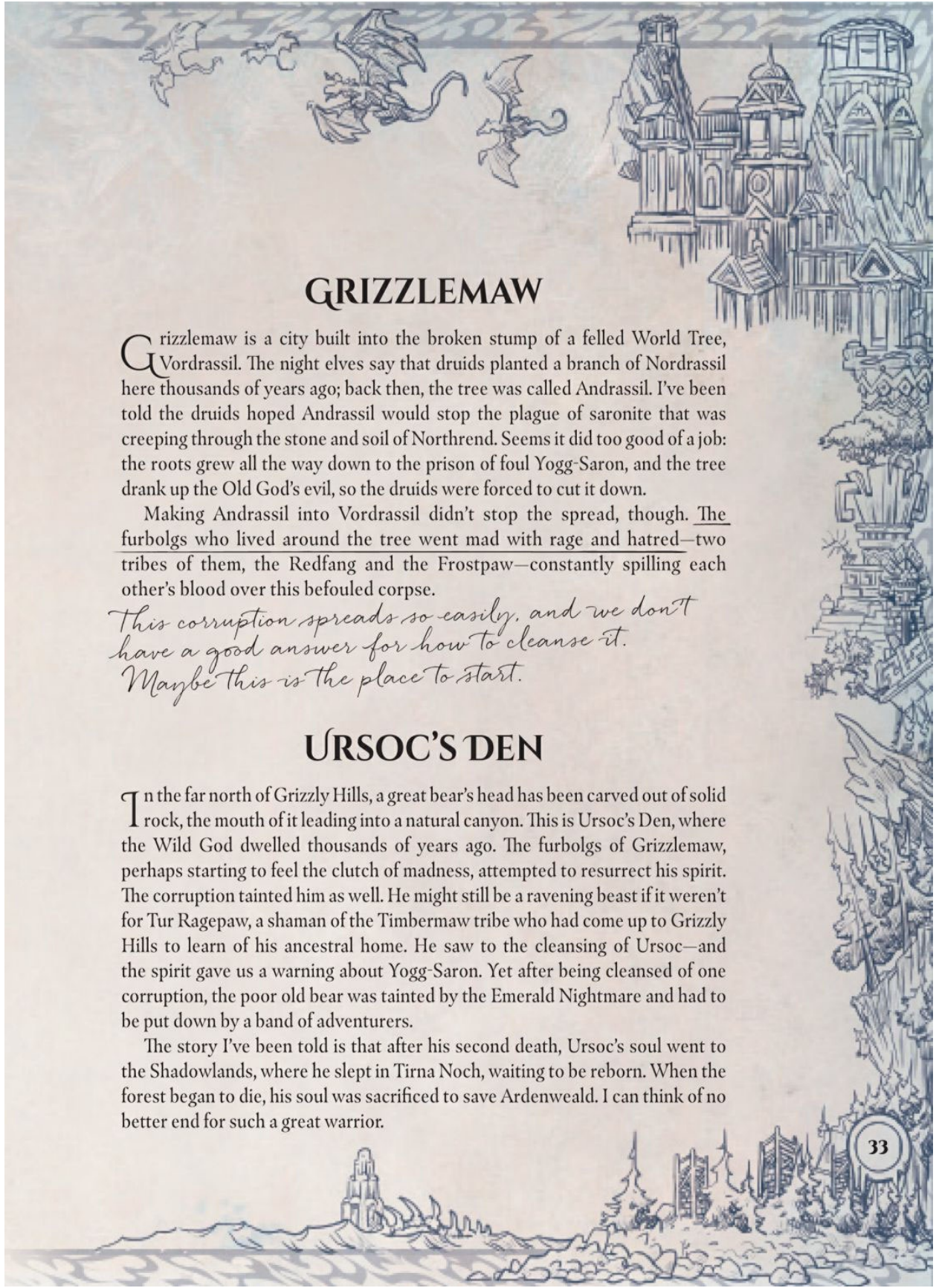
Amberpine Lodge is a large, comfortable building with a great bell tower on it. It was nominally always an Alliance outpost; affiliated hunters and trappers built it as a common meeting hall. When the Valiance Expedition came to Grizzly Hills, Lieutenant Dumont commandeered it for the military. It has slowly gone back to more peaceful uses since the war.



ARMOR ASIDE: BONESCYTHE ARMOR

Rogues are best known for being sneaky and very sharp in the slit-your-throat kind of way. What they want from their armor is for it to be quiet, to have plenty of places to keep knives, and yet still be tough enough to turn aside a blade. And I've never known a rogue who wasn't secretly a bit of a clotheshorse either. The Bonescythe Armor seems to fit the bill—and helps with the backstabbing, besides.





GRIZZLEMAW

Grizzlemaw is a city built into the broken stump of a felled World Tree, Vordrassil. The night elves say that druids planted a branch of Nordrassil here thousands of years ago; back then, the tree was called Andrassil. I've been told the druids hoped Andrassil would stop the plague of saronite that was creeping through the stone and soil of Northrend. Seems it did too good of a job: the roots grew all the way down to the prison of foul Yogg-Saron, and the tree drank up the Old God's evil, so the druids were forced to cut it down.

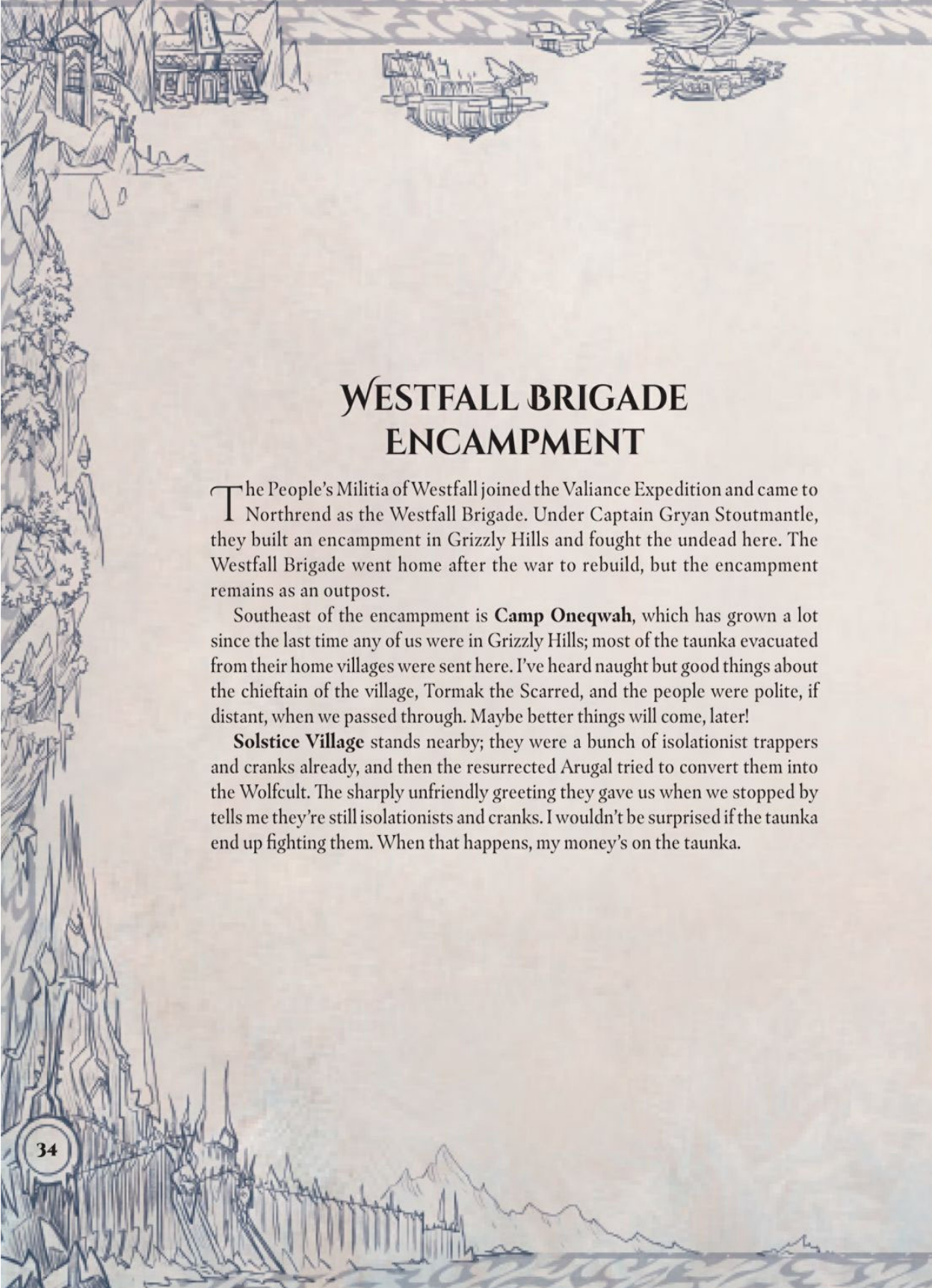
Making Andrassil into Vordrassil didn't stop the spread, though. The furbolgs who lived around the tree went mad with rage and hatred—two tribes of them, the Redfang and the Frostpaw—constantly spilling each other's blood over this befouled corpse.

This corruption spreads so easily, and we don't have a good answer for how to cleanse it. Maybe this is the place to start.

URSOC'S DEN

In the far north of Grizzly Hills, a great bear's head has been carved out of solid rock, the mouth of it leading into a natural canyon. This is Ursoc's Den, where the Wild God dwelled thousands of years ago. The furbolgs of Grizzlemaw, perhaps starting to feel the clutch of madness, attempted to resurrect his spirit. The corruption tainted him as well. He might still be a ravaging beast if it weren't for Tur Ragepaw, a shaman of the Timbermaw tribe who had come up to Grizzly Hills to learn of his ancestral home. He saw to the cleansing of Ursoc—and the spirit gave us a warning about Yogg-Saron. Yet after being cleansed of one corruption, the poor old bear was tainted by the Emerald Nightmare and had to be put down by a band of adventurers.

The story I've been told is that after his second death, Ursoc's soul went to the Shadowlands, where he slept in Tirna Noch, waiting to be reborn. When the forest began to die, his soul was sacrificed to save Ardenweald. I can think of no better end for such a great warrior.




WESTFALL BRIGADE ENCAMPMENT

The People's Militia of Westfall joined the Valiance Expedition and came to Northrend as the Westfall Brigade. Under Captain Gryan Stoutmantle, they built an encampment in Grizzly Hills and fought the undead here. The Westfall Brigade went home after the war to rebuild, but the encampment remains as an outpost.

Southeast of the encampment is **Camp Oneqwah**, which has grown a lot since the last time any of us were in Grizzly Hills; most of the taunka evacuated from their home villages were sent here. I've heard naught but good things about the chieftain of the village, Tormak the Scarred, and the people were polite, if distant, when we passed through. Maybe better things will come, later!

Solstice Village stands nearby; they were a bunch of isolationist trappers and cranks already, and then the resurrected Arugal tried to convert them into the Wolfcult. The sharply unfriendly greeting they gave us when we stopped by tells me they're still isolationists and cranks. I wouldn't be surprised if the taunka end up fighting them. When that happens, my money's on the taunka.



RAGE FANG SHRINE & HEART'S BLOOD SHRINE

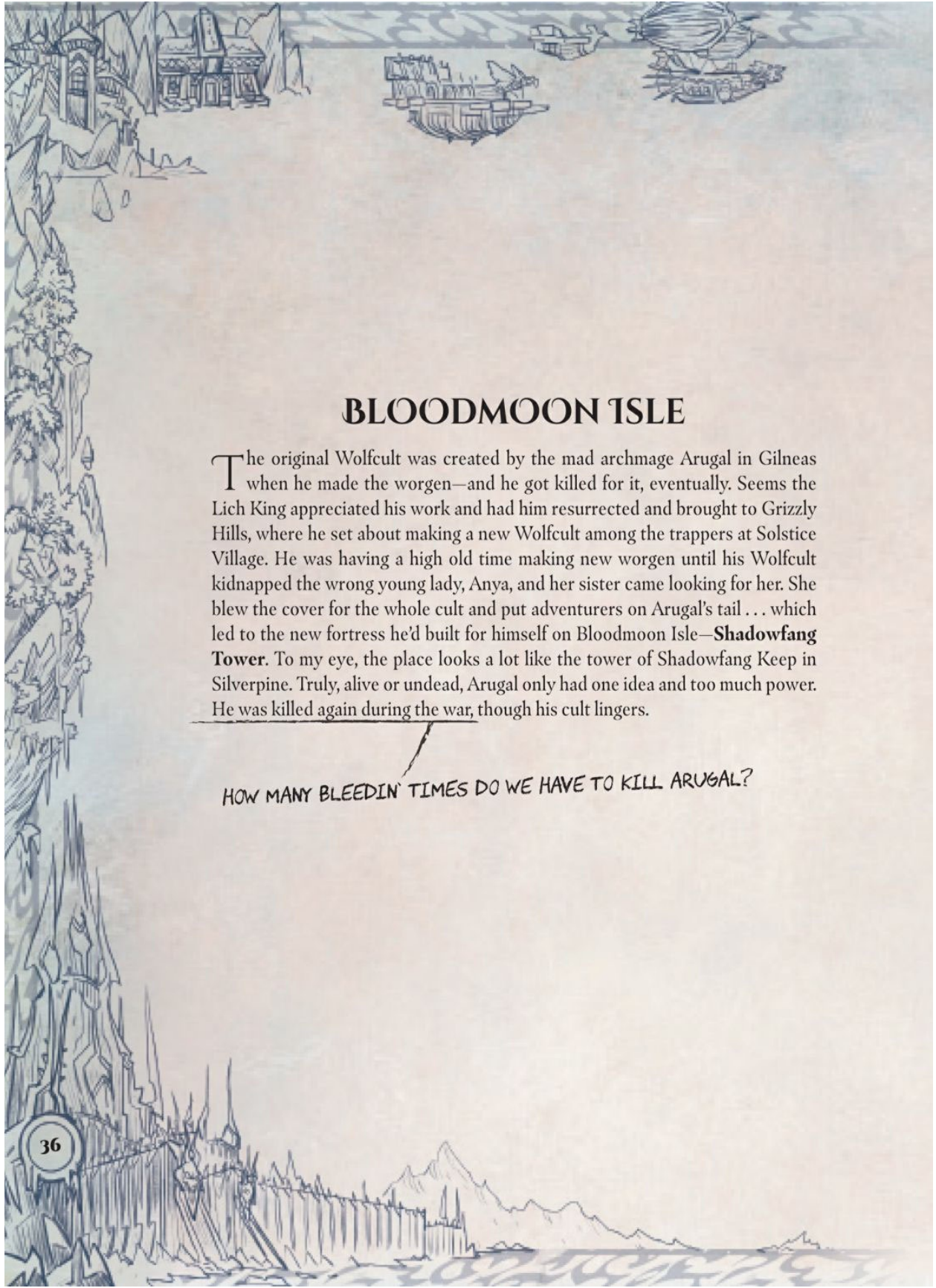
Ursoc had two cubs, a son named Orsonn and a daughter named Kodian. The two of them live in the snowy foothills of the southern mountain range, Orsonn in the Rage Fang Shrine and Kodian in the Heart's Blood Shrine.

We slipped past the Redfang furbolgs at the Heart's Blood Shrine to speak with Kodian, since the bears are friendly even if the furbolgs aren't, and they still hope that someday their people will find peace among themselves and with us. After the more formal business was seen to, I asked after this mysterious ancestor of ours, as the bears are certainly the oldest folks around.

Here's what Kodian told me: "I remember a female of your kind who took shelter in my cave and offered to share her kill with me. She was cold, lost, alone . . . and despairing. She told me that she and her brother had been sailing the Frozen Sea. They'd argued about something—she said only that it was foolish—and because they had been fighting, their ship was not ready for the squall that overtook it. She survived to wash up on the shore of Grizzly Hills and knew only that her brother was lost and she blamed herself."

That's the most concrete thing we've heard so far! In thanks, we took a message from her to Orsonn—because they're prisoners, of a sort. The mad furbolgs won't allow them to leave, and the bears love their people, so they would rather stay put than hurt any of them. But she misses her brother dearly, and he misses her, and duty's a cold comfort.

A feeling we all know well, aye.

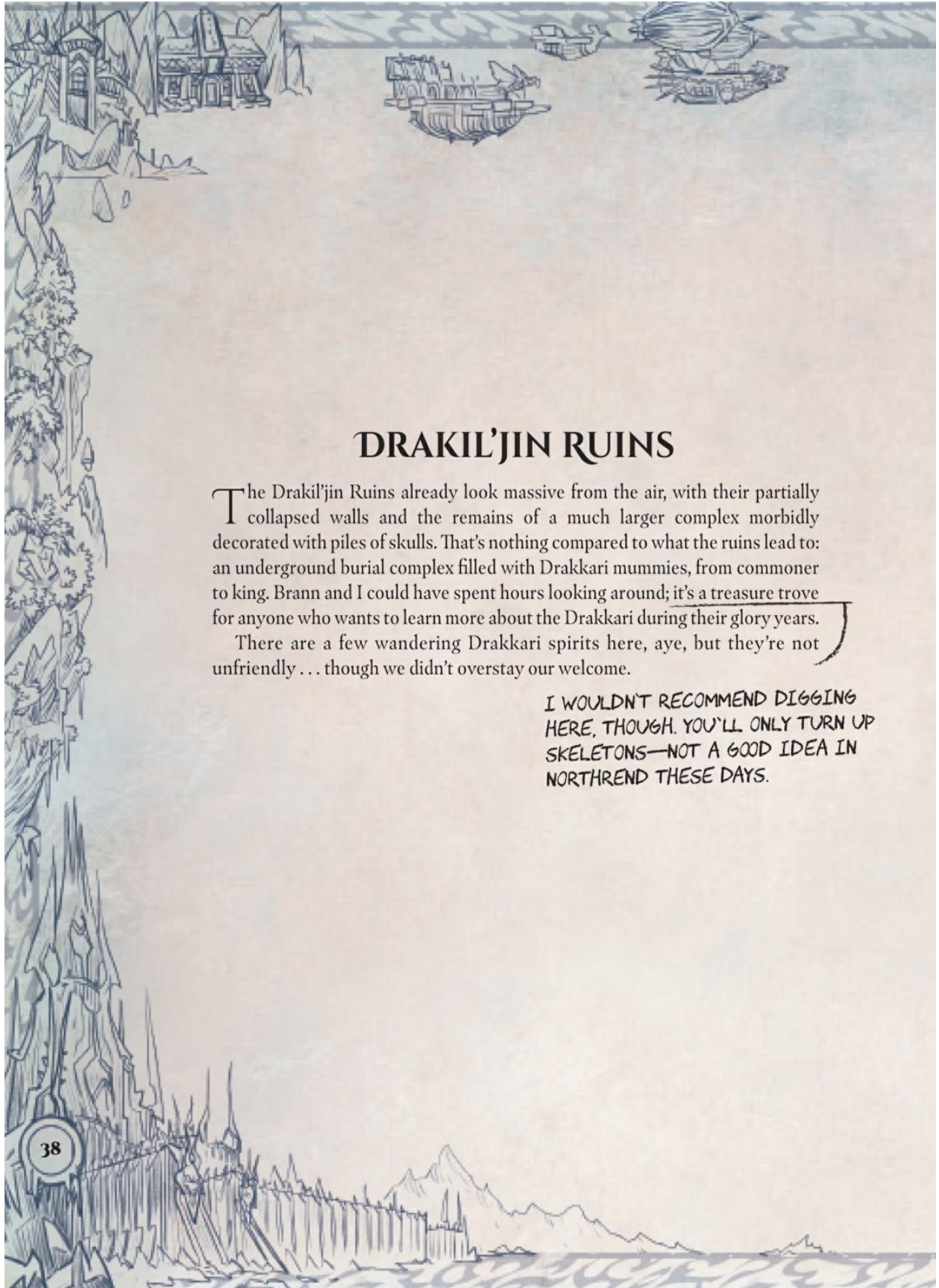


BLOODMOON ISLE

The original Wolfcult was created by the mad archmage Arugal in Gilneas when he made the worgen—and he got killed for it, eventually. Seems the Lich King appreciated his work and had him resurrected and brought to Grizzly Hills, where he set about making a new Wolfcult among the trappers at Solstice Village. He was having a high old time making new worgen until his Wolfcult kidnapped the wrong young lady, Anya, and her sister came looking for her. She blew the cover for the whole cult and put adventurers on Arugal's tail . . . which led to the new fortress he'd built for himself on Bloodmoon Isle—**Shadowfang Tower**. To my eye, the place looks a lot like the tower of Shadowfang Keep in Silverpine. Truly, alive or undead, Arugal only had one idea and too much power. He was killed again during the war, though his cult lingers.

HOW MANY BLEEDIN' TIMES DO WE HAVE TO KILL ARUGAL?





DRAKIL'JIN RUINS

The Drakil'jin Ruins already look massive from the air, with their partially collapsed walls and the remains of a much larger complex morbidly decorated with piles of skulls. That's nothing compared to what the ruins lead to: an underground burial complex filled with Drakkari mummies, from commoner to king. Brann and I could have spent hours looking around; it's a treasure trove for anyone who wants to learn more about the Drakkari during their glory years.

There are a few wandering Drakkari spirits here, aye, but they're not unfriendly . . . though we didn't overstay our welcome.

*I WOULDN'T RECOMMEND DIGGING
HERE, THOUGH. YOU'LL ONLY TURN UP
SKELETONS—NOT A GOOD IDEA IN
NORTHREND THESE DAYS.*



THOR MODAN

Thor Modan was once the capital of the iron dwarves. It's got eerie similarities to Ironforge, including a statue that looks a lot like Modimus Anvilmar in the entrance. The outside doesn't look bad, but the inside is a shambles thanks to the ongoing war between the iron dwarves and the earthen and stone giants.

The iron dwarves are a people created by the mad keeper Loken; he wanted an army to do his bidding and ask no questions. Their iron skins are etched with runes—and they use those runes to practice some powerful magic, including making rune golems. We've also seen iron dwarves travel south into Howling Fjord, to the flat, green plain of **Giants' Run** where the normally gentle stone giants wander, and take control of them. This is why the giants are to this day throwing boulders down on Thor Modan from the surrounding hills. The iron dwarves also foolishly picked fights with both the Alliance and the Horde. Unfortunately, the Explorers' League was in the area, researching the titans, when all hell broke loose. They got stuck in the middle of that battle, and a lot of them didn't make it out.

WE RECOVERED SOME OF THE RESEARCH,
BUT WE LOST THE PEOPLE.

*No one joins the Explorers' League
expecting safety, but . . . I'm sorry, brother.*



DUN ARGOL

With Thor Modan all but destroyed, Dun Argol is now the iron dwarf base. It's built into the north face of a mountain, stone and iron buildings that are small versions of the familiar Northrend titan style, with runes inscribed on nearly every surface.

Some members of the Explorers' League were held captive here for a time: Prospectors Gann, Torgan, and Varana. They were later rescued by adventurers, and Brann tells me they went on to do more solid work for the League.

VARANA KEPT A COOL HEAD AND BROUGHT US BACK THE NEWS THAT THE IRON DWARVES WERE SERVING LOKEN. TOO BAD WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANT AT THE TIME.





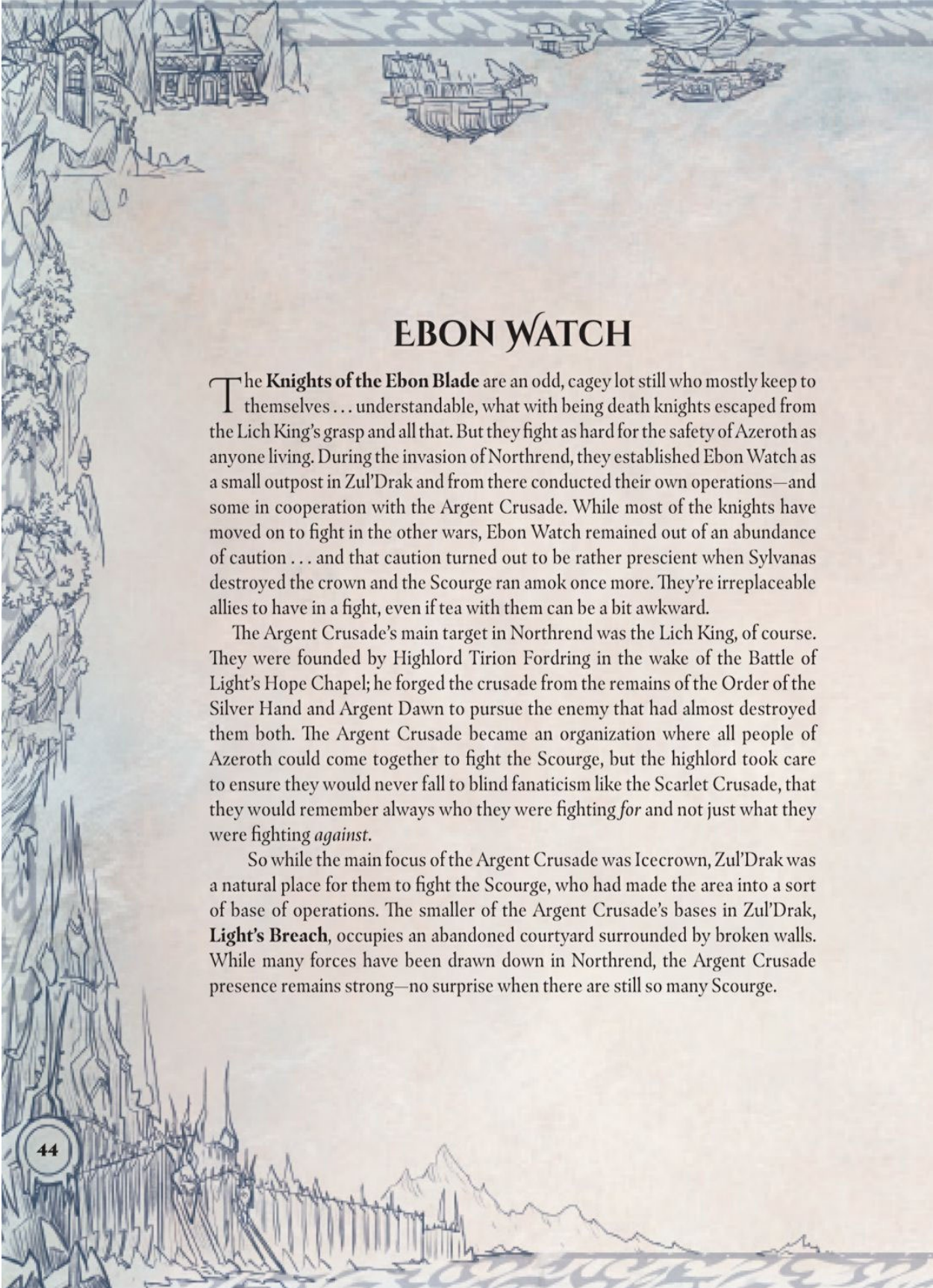
III

ZUL'DRAK

I'm not a dwarf who's easily impressed, but the sheer size of Zul'Drak still leaves me in awe. It's a region roughly the size of Grizzly Hills that is one massive city, plazas and ziggurats, walls and aqueducts stretching as far as the eye can see. Shame it's been overrun by the Scourge and begun to fall to ruin. The Drakkari Empire knew how to build big and bold—and their downfall was equally epic.

With the surviving Drakkari scattered and the undead roaming, we decided this was a place to proceed through with caution and gawp at the sights from a safe distance. We did find a few places for Brann to dig around a bit, since it's no surprise there are Drakkari artifacts aplenty to be found—and the impetus to preserve what we can before the undead utterly destroy such a long history.





EBON WATCH

The **Knights of the Ebon Blade** are an odd, cagey lot still who mostly keep to themselves . . . understandable, what with being death knights escaped from the Lich King's grasp and all that. But they fight as hard for the safety of Azeroth as anyone living. During the invasion of Northrend, they established Ebon Watch as a small outpost in Zul'Drak and from there conducted their own operations—and some in cooperation with the Argent Crusade. While most of the knights have moved on to fight in the other wars, Ebon Watch remained out of an abundance of caution . . . and that caution turned out to be rather prescient when Sylvanas destroyed the crown and the Scourge ran amok once more. They're irreplaceable allies to have in a fight, even if tea with them can be a bit awkward.

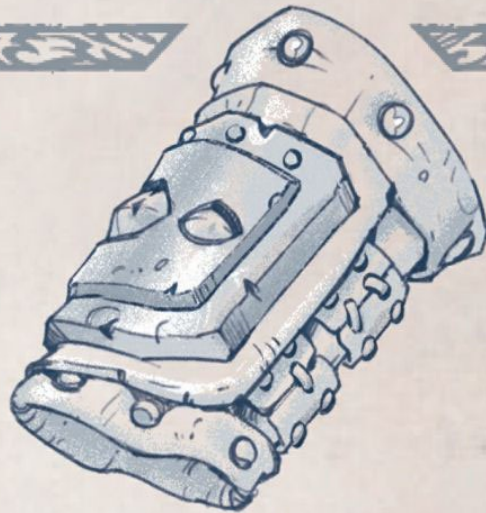
The Argent Crusade's main target in Northrend was the Lich King, of course. They were founded by Highlord Tirion Fordring in the wake of the Battle of Light's Hope Chapel; he forged the crusade from the remains of the Order of the Silver Hand and Argent Dawn to pursue the enemy that had almost destroyed them both. The Argent Crusade became an organization where all people of Azeroth could come together to fight the Scourge, but the highlord took care to ensure they would never fall to blind fanaticism like the Scarlet Crusade, that they would remember always who they were fighting *for* and not just what they were fighting *against*.

So while the main focus of the Argent Crusade was Icecrown, Zul'Drak was a natural place for them to fight the Scourge, who had made the area into a sort of base of operations. The smaller of the Argent Crusade's bases in Zul'Drak, **Light's Breach**, occupies an abandoned courtyard surrounded by broken walls. While many forces have been drawn down in Northrend, the Argent Crusade presence remains strong—no surprise when there are still so many Scourge.

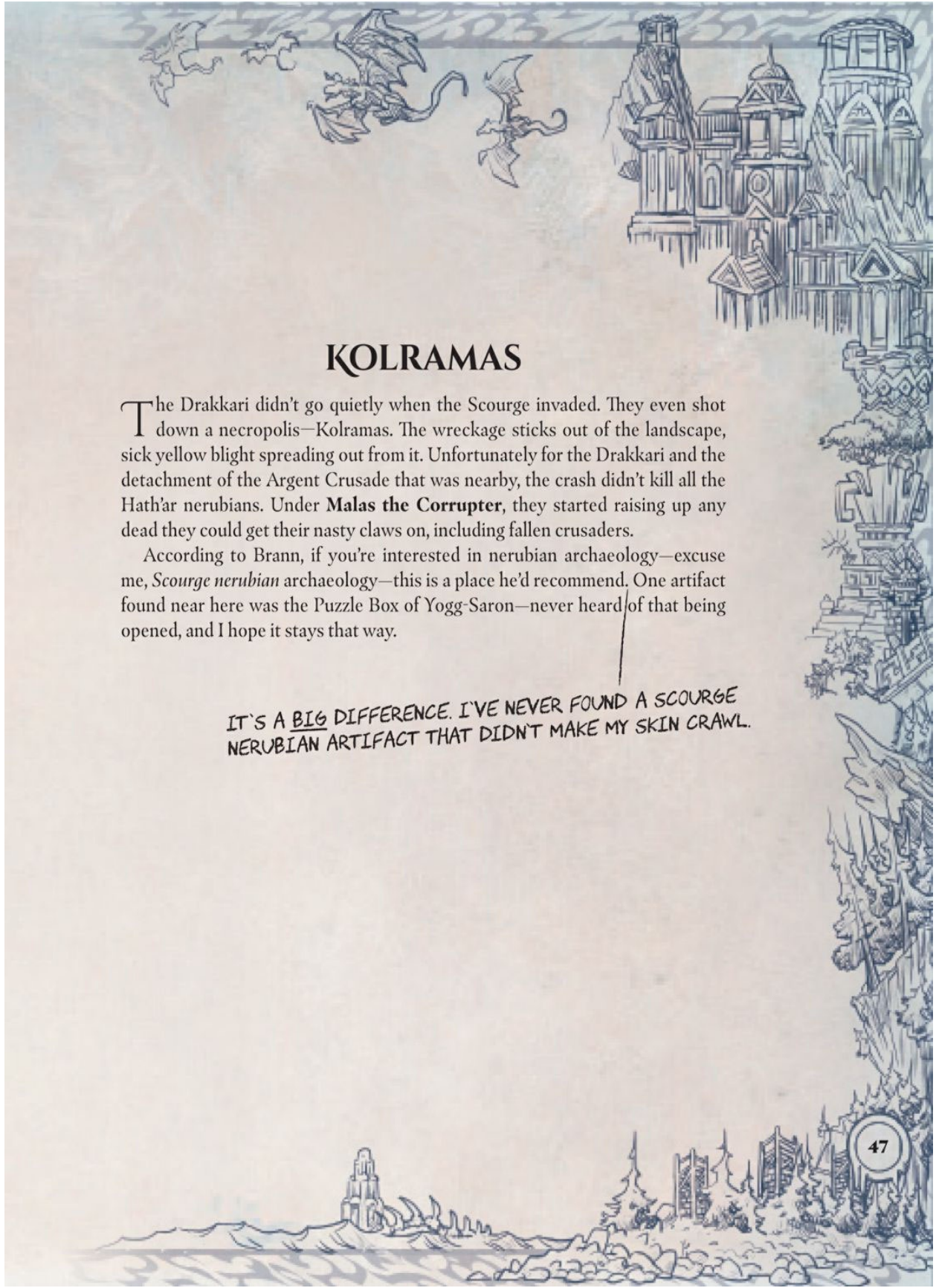


ARMOR ASIDE: LIMB REGENERATION BRACERS

These mail bracers once belonged to the Prophet Tharon'ja, who certainly doesn't need them any longer, being that he was first transformed into an undead skeletal serpent who had no hands, and then he was killed again . . . though rumor has it he was reanimated once more by the Mawsworn. Bet he still doesn't have any hands, though.





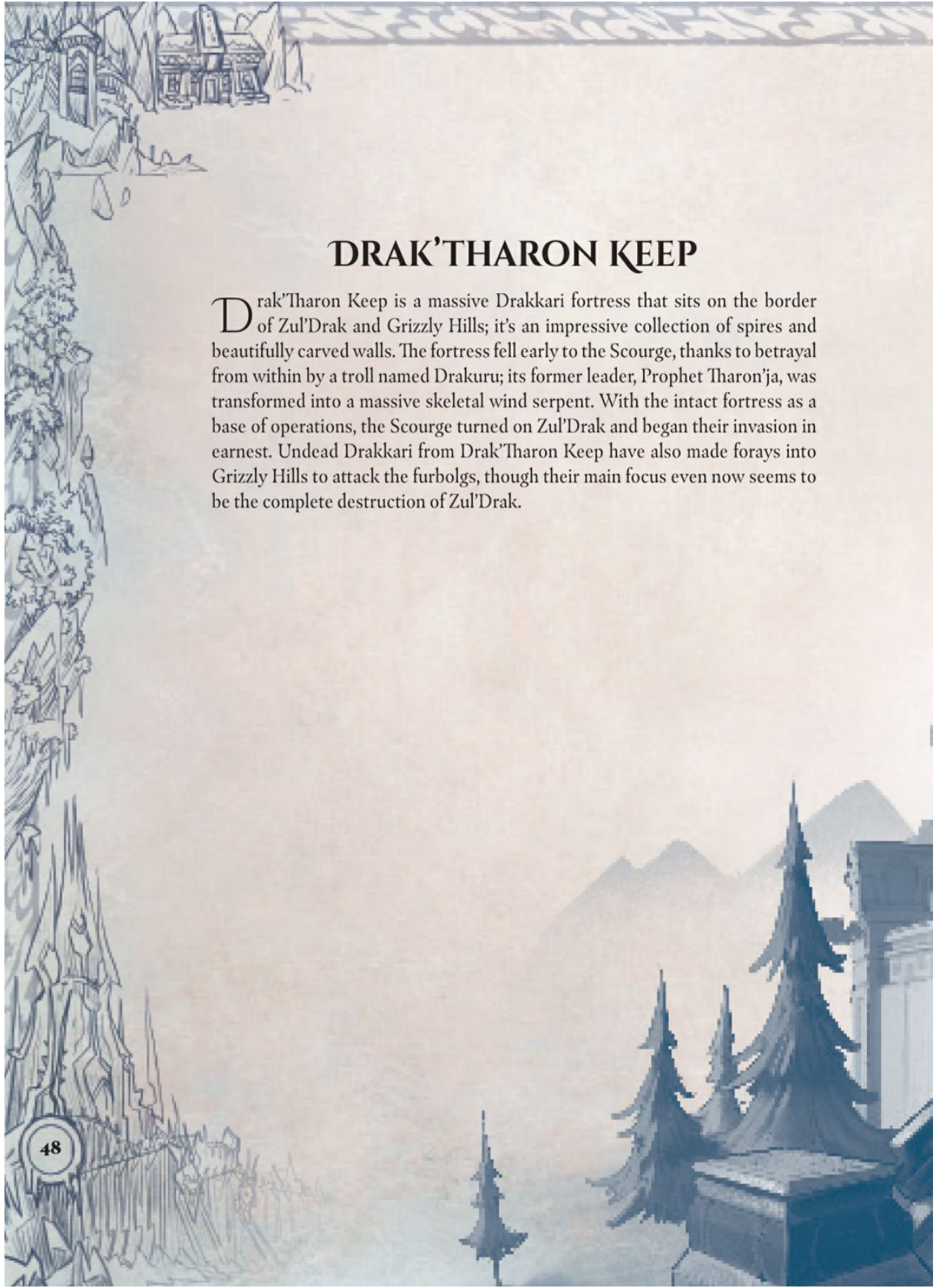


KOLRAMAS

The Drakkari didn't go quietly when the Scourge invaded. They even shot down a necropolis—Kolramas. The wreckage sticks out of the landscape, sick yellow blight spreading out from it. Unfortunately for the Drakkari and the detachment of the Argent Crusade that was nearby, the crash didn't kill all the Hath'ar nerubians. Under **Malas the Corrupter**, they started raising up any dead they could get their nasty claws on, including fallen crusaders.

According to Brann, if you're interested in nerubian archaeology—excuse me, *Scourge nerubian* archaeology—this is a place he'd recommend. One artifact found near here was the Puzzle Box of Yogg-Saron—never heard of that being opened, and I hope it stays that way.

IT'S A BIG DIFFERENCE. I'VE NEVER FOUND A SCOURGE NERUBIAN ARTIFACT THAT DIDN'T MAKE MY SKIN CRAWL.



DRAK'THARON KEEP

Drak'Tharon Keep is a massive Drakkari fortress that sits on the border of Zul'Drak and Grizzly Hills; it's an impressive collection of spires and beautifully carved walls. The fortress fell early to the Scourge, thanks to betrayal from within by a troll named Drakuru; its former leader, Prophet Tharon'ja, was transformed into a massive skeletal wind serpent. With the intact fortress as a base of operations, the Scourge turned on Zul'Drak and began their invasion in earnest. Undead Drakkari from Drak'Tharon Keep have also made forays into Grizzly Hills to attack the furbolgs, though their main focus even now seems to be the complete destruction of Zul'Drak.





VOLTARUS

After the troll Drakuru betrayed his own people to the Lich King, he was given control over the necropolis Voltarus, which hovers above blighted pools of plague in the northwest of Zul'Drak. The area is charmingly known as the Reliquary of Pain now. Drakuru had a plan to infuse captured troll chieftains with blight and transform them into misshapen weapons for the Scourge. He was stopped by the Knights of the Ebon Blade, and when he appealed to the Lich King for help, what he got in return was a betrayal that ended in his death. Poetic, almost.

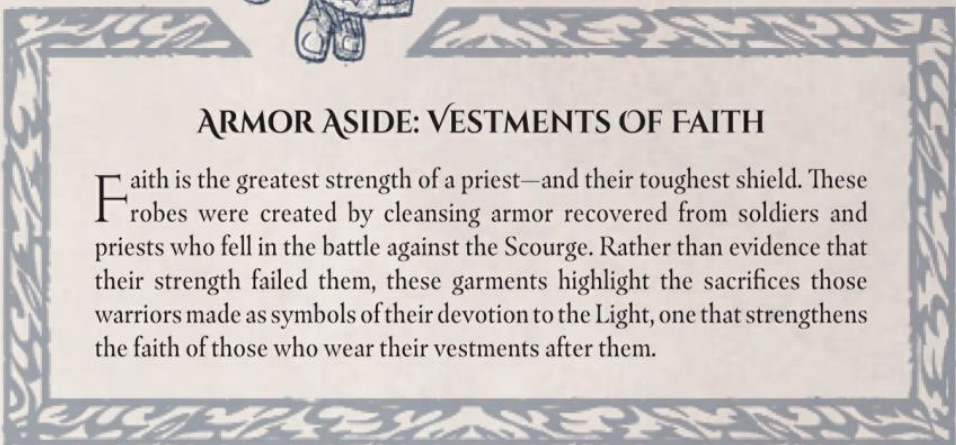
To the west, not far from Ebon Watch, is another blighted area called the Reliquary of Agony. The necropolis that flies over it is named **Zeramas**—we know that much. It's a mysterious place, completely empty of all life or *unlife*, even though the area beneath it is teeming with ghouls and abominations. You'd think a necropolis would be less creepy without its occupants, but I can't help but wonder: What makes the population of an entire necropolis disappear and leave no trace?

AND WHATEVER IT IS, IS IT FRIENDLY?



ARMOR ASIDE: VESTMENTS OF FAITH

Faith is the greatest strength of a priest—and their toughest shield. These robes were created by cleansing armor recovered from soldiers and priests who fell in the battle against the Scourge. Rather than evidence that their strength failed them, these garments highlight the sacrifices those warriors made as symbols of their devotion to the Light, one that strengthens the faith of those who wear their vestments after them.





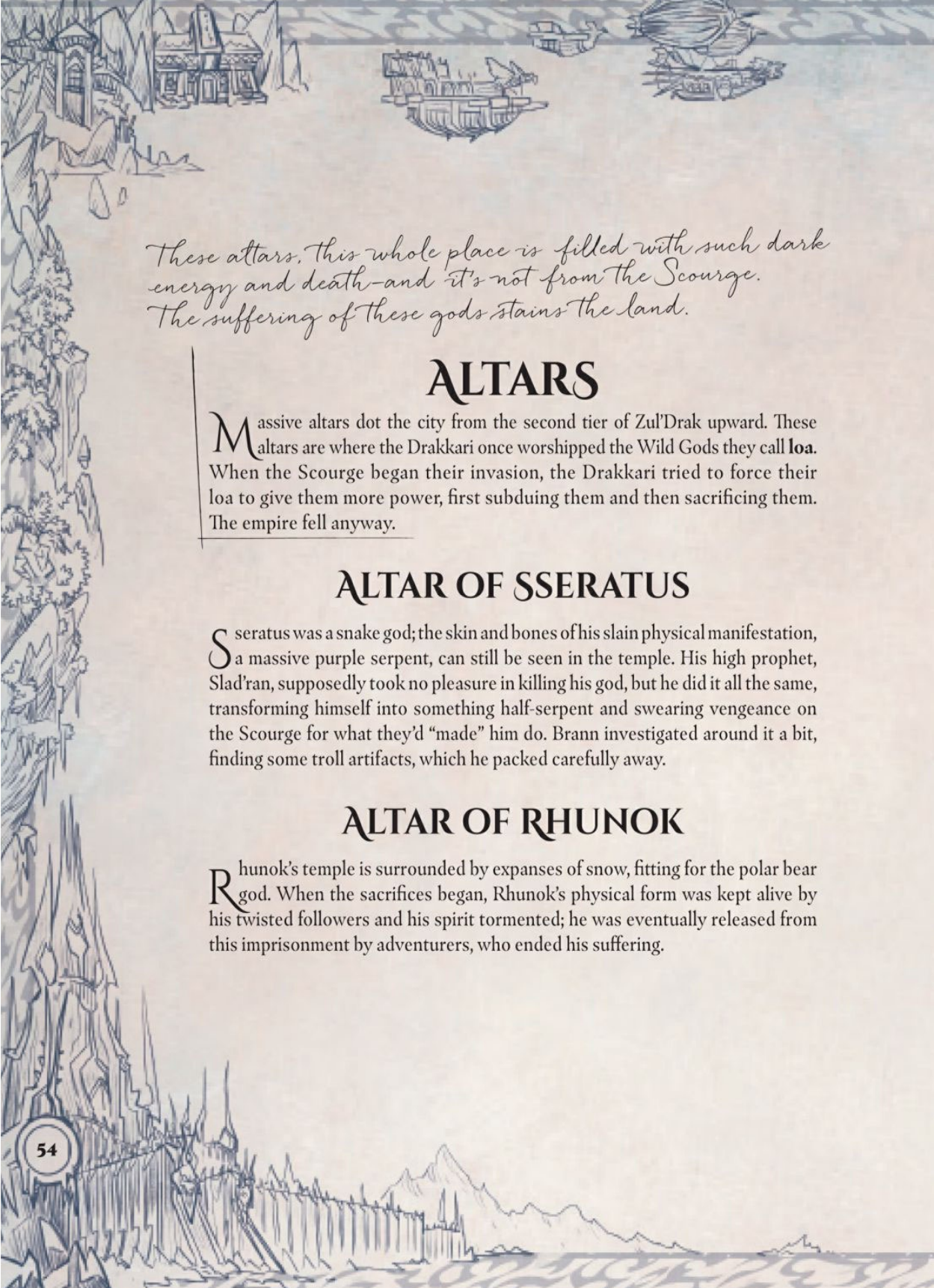


ARGENT STAND

The base for the Argent Crusade, built in a Drakkari structure that might have been some sort of open-air market, this heavily fortified area still hosts quite the population of crusaders fighting the Scourge. Initially, the Argent Stand was chosen as a defensive position to keep the Scourge from taking the second tier of Zul'Drak. That effort failed, but the crusade hasn't given up. It's a safe enough place that we were actually able to get a good night of sleep there, though surrounded by the sounds of battle as the Scourge threw themselves against the fortifications.

AMPHITHEATRE OF ANGUISH

Before we start feeling too bad for the Drakkari for being destroyed by the Scourge, the Amphitheatre of Anguish is there as a reminder that they weren't exactly all sunshine and kittens in their heyday. Even surrounded by Scourge as it is, a goblin named Gurgthok has set up shop there and is running to-the-death gladiatorial games. Gurgthok's blood sport isn't much different from the Drakkari's original purpose for the place, by the looks of it: a pit built for death as a sport is the same no matter how fancy the stonework around it.



These altars, this whole place is filled with such dark energy and death—and it's not from the Scourge. The suffering of these gods stains the land.

ALTARS

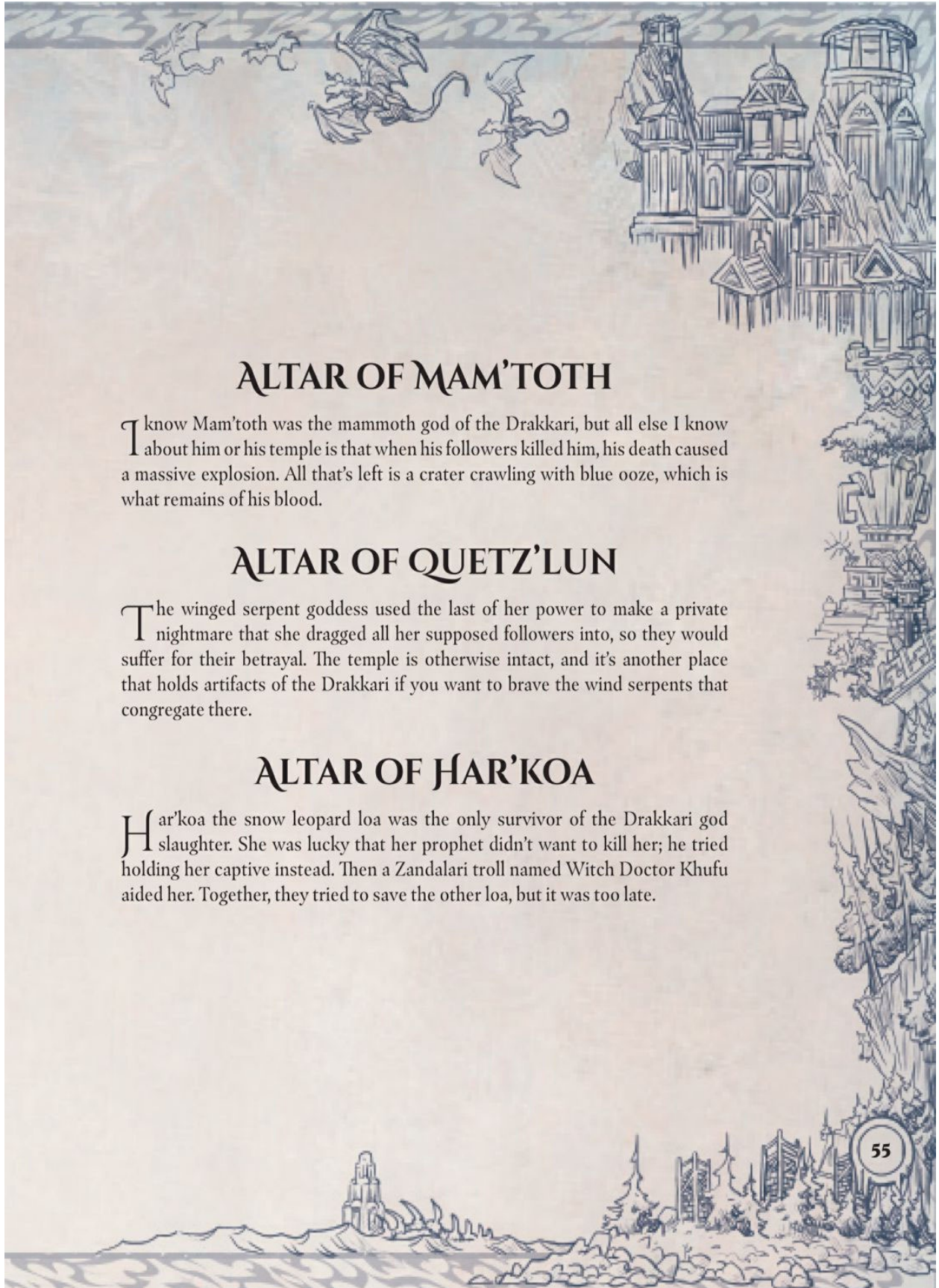
Massive altars dot the city from the second tier of Zul'Drak upward. These altars are where the Drakkari once worshipped the Wild Gods they call **loa**. When the Scourge began their invasion, the Drakkari tried to force their loa to give them more power, first subduing them and then sacrificing them. The empire fell anyway.

ALTAR OF SSERATUS

Seratus was a snake god; the skin and bones of his slain physical manifestation, a massive purple serpent, can still be seen in the temple. His high prophet, Slad'ran, supposedly took no pleasure in killing his god, but he did it all the same, transforming himself into something half-serpent and swearing vengeance on the Scourge for what they'd "made" him do. Brann investigated around it a bit, finding some troll artifacts, which he packed carefully away.

ALTAR OF RHUNOK

Rhunok's temple is surrounded by expanses of snow, fitting for the polar bear god. When the sacrifices began, Rhunok's physical form was kept alive by his twisted followers and his spirit tormented; he was eventually released from this imprisonment by adventurers, who ended his suffering.



ALTAR OF MAM'TOTH

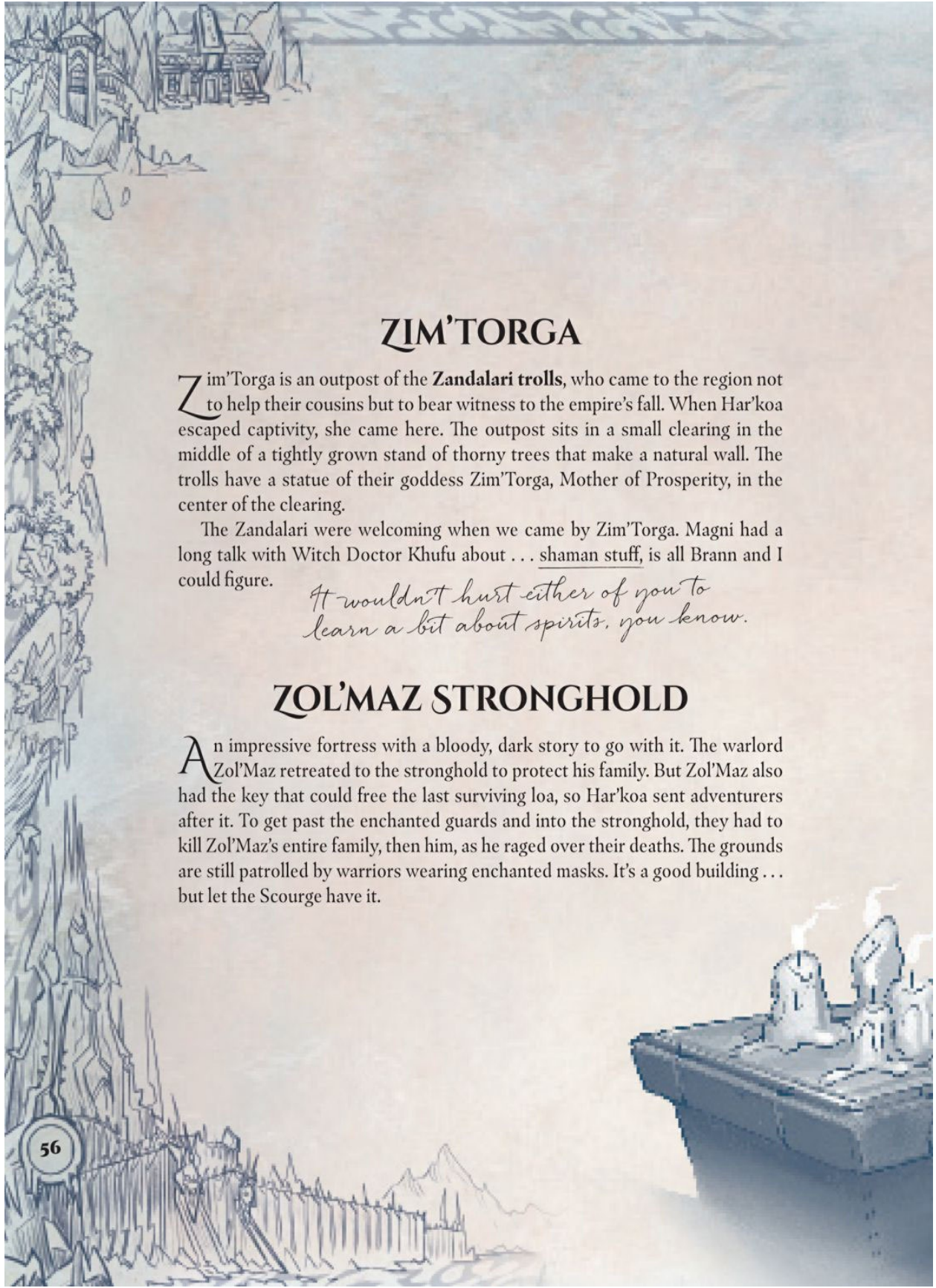
I know Mam'toth was the mammoth god of the Drakkari, but all else I know about him or his temple is that when his followers killed him, his death caused a massive explosion. All that's left is a crater crawling with blue ooze, which is what remains of his blood.

ALTAR OF QUETZ'LUN

The winged serpent goddess used the last of her power to make a private nightmare that she dragged all her supposed followers into, so they would suffer for their betrayal. The temple is otherwise intact, and it's another place that holds artifacts of the Drakkari if you want to brave the wind serpents that congregate there.

ALTAR OF HAR'KOA

Har'koa the snow leopard loa was the only survivor of the Drakkari god slaughter. She was lucky that her prophet didn't want to kill her; he tried holding her captive instead. Then a Zandalari troll named Witch Doctor Khufu aided her. Together, they tried to save the other loa, but it was too late.



ZIM'TORGA

Zim'Torga is an outpost of the **Zandalari trolls**, who came to the region not to help their cousins but to bear witness to the empire's fall. When Har'koa escaped captivity, she came here. The outpost sits in a small clearing in the middle of a tightly grown stand of thorny trees that make a natural wall. The trolls have a statue of their goddess Zim'Torga, Mother of Prosperity, in the center of the clearing.

The Zandalari were welcoming when we came by Zim'Torga. Magni had a long talk with Witch Doctor Khufu about . . . shaman stuff, is all Brann and I could figure.

It wouldn't hurt either of you to learn a bit about spirits, you know.

ZOL'MAZ STRONGHOLD

An impressive fortress with a bloody, dark story to go with it. The warlord Zol'Maz retreated to the stronghold to protect his family. But Zol'Maz also had the key that could free the last surviving loa, so Har'koa sent adventurers after it. To get past the enchanted guards and into the stronghold, they had to kill Zol'Maz's entire family, then him, as he raged over their deaths. The grounds are still patrolled by warriors wearing enchanted masks. It's a good building . . . but let the Scourge have it.





GUNDRAK

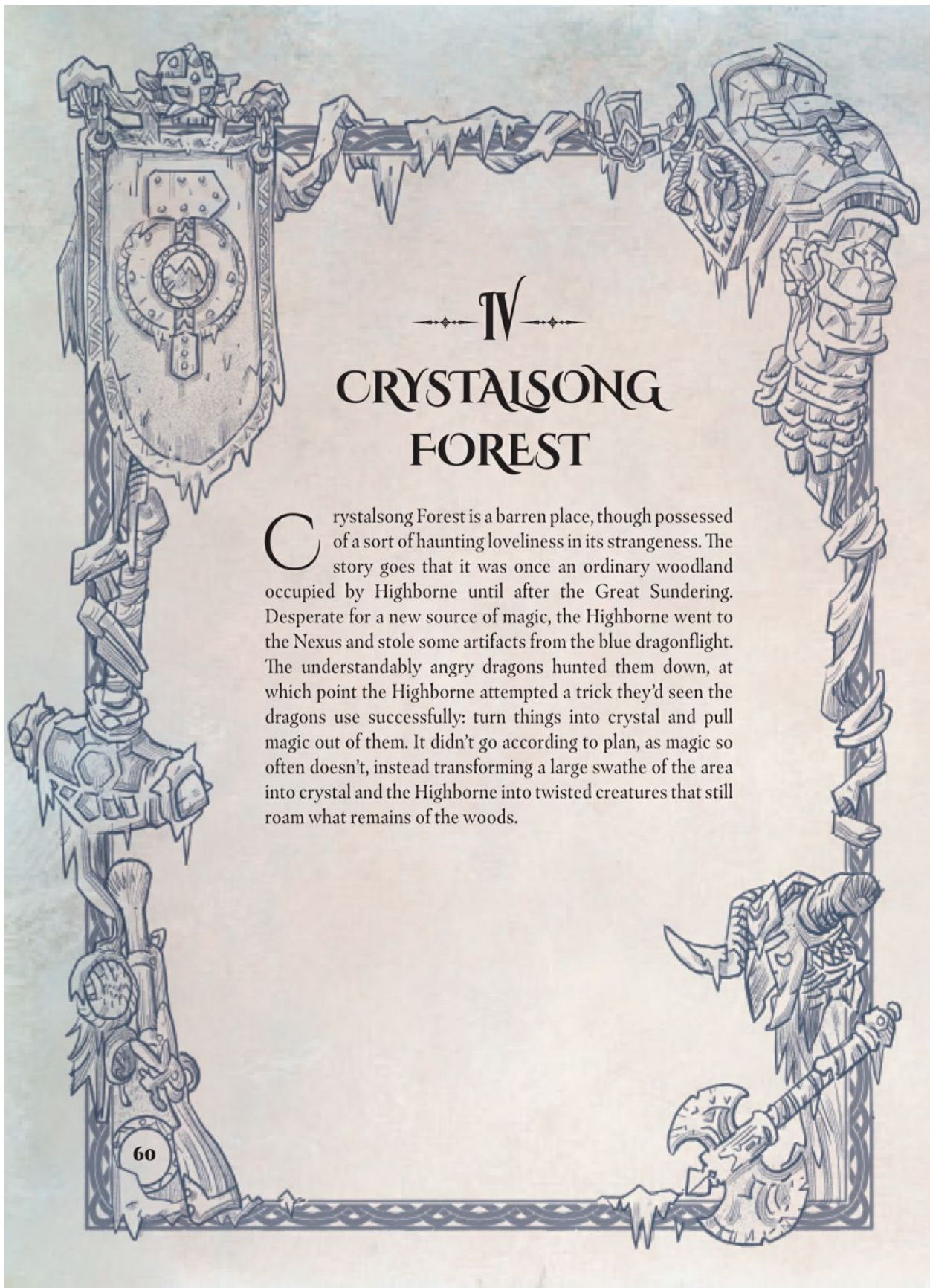
Of the sprawling metropolis that was Zul'Drak, Gundrak is its once-beating heart, now fallen to ruin. Even now, the scale of its buildings, its towering spires, is something I'm not ashamed to say fills me with awe. The great mosaic circle before the steps of Gundrak is where the twisted Drakkari prophets held the last of their loa: Akali, the rhino. Before he could be freed, his prophet drank his blood and usurped his power. The prophets of Akali, Sseratus, and Mam'toth held Gundrak for a time, but they were felled by adventurers. There's no one left here now but the dead and the undead.



HEMORRHAGING CIRCLE

Gal'darah is the name of the high prophet who killed Akali and drank his blood. The "circle" is actually a ring that represents all the loa whose blood flowed from those foul murders. When we spoke to Witch Doctor Khufu in Zim'Torga, he told us: "The power they gained from killing the natural gods of the land is transitory. What was gained in the short run will be lost to them for all eternity."





IV

CRYSTALSONG FOREST

Crystalsong Forest is a barren place, though possessed of a sort of haunting loveliness in its strangeness. The story goes that it was once an ordinary woodland occupied by Highborne until after the Great Sundering. Desperate for a new source of magic, the Highborne went to the Nexus and stole some artifacts from the blue dragonflight. The understandably angry dragons hunted them down, at which point the Highborne attempted a trick they'd seen the dragons use successfully: turn things into crystal and pull magic out of them. It didn't go according to plan, as magic so often doesn't, instead transforming a large swathe of the area into crystal and the Highborne into twisted creatures that still roam what remains of the woods.





VIOLET HOLD

You'd think if the Kirin Tor were going to move their whole city, they wouldn't want to bring their prison along . . . though what else could they do with the Violet Hold? The problem is, when you bring a lot of powerful prisoners where there are a lot of other powerful bad people about, there are bound to be attempted prison breaks. Far as I know, no one actually escaped the magically shielded cells, at least.

Perhaps the greatest threat to Dalaran outside of Malygos was Cyanigosa and her **Staff of Trickery**. Cyanigosa was a zealous follower of Malygos and commander of his invading forces. She broke into the Violet Hold and got close to releasing the prisoners, then fought to the death when she was caught. She was a cunning one besides; she snuck into the prison disguised as an elf mage. I'd be more impressed with her loyalty to Malygos if he'd been less of a murderous extremist.

BY ARCHAEOLOGY WE'D CLASSIFY THEM AS NIGHT ELF RUINS, BUT THE DIFFERENCE ISN'T SO SIGNIFICANT FOR THAT TIME PERIOD.

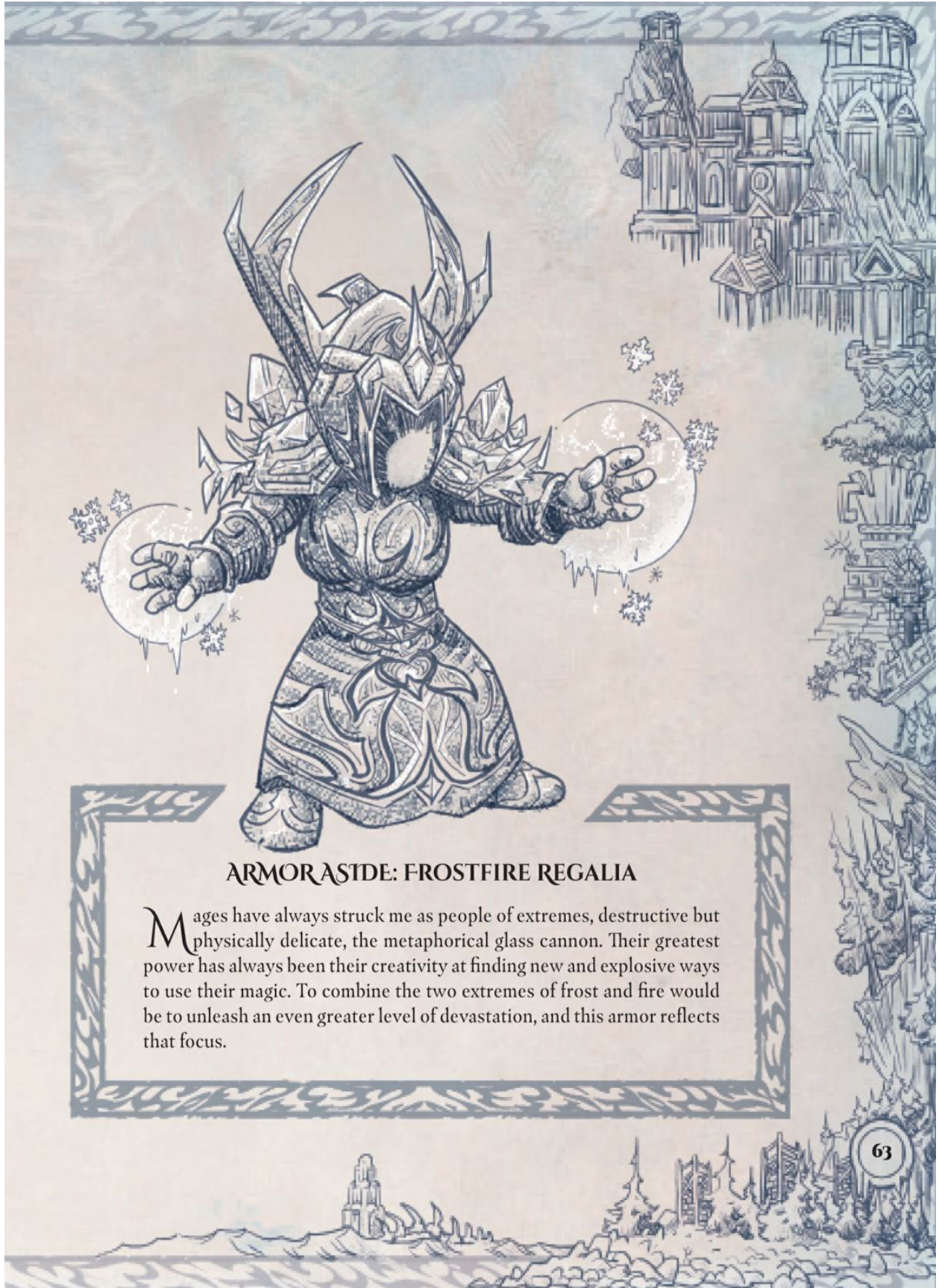


VIOLET STAND

The Violet Stand was once a small **Kirin Tor** outpost; the mages had a magical shield dome to protect themselves from the blue dragonkin during the war. Now there are only the old ruins of tall towers still draped with vines and still-smoldering craters left by the blue dragonkin—don't rightly know if they're Highborne or night elf ruins at this point.

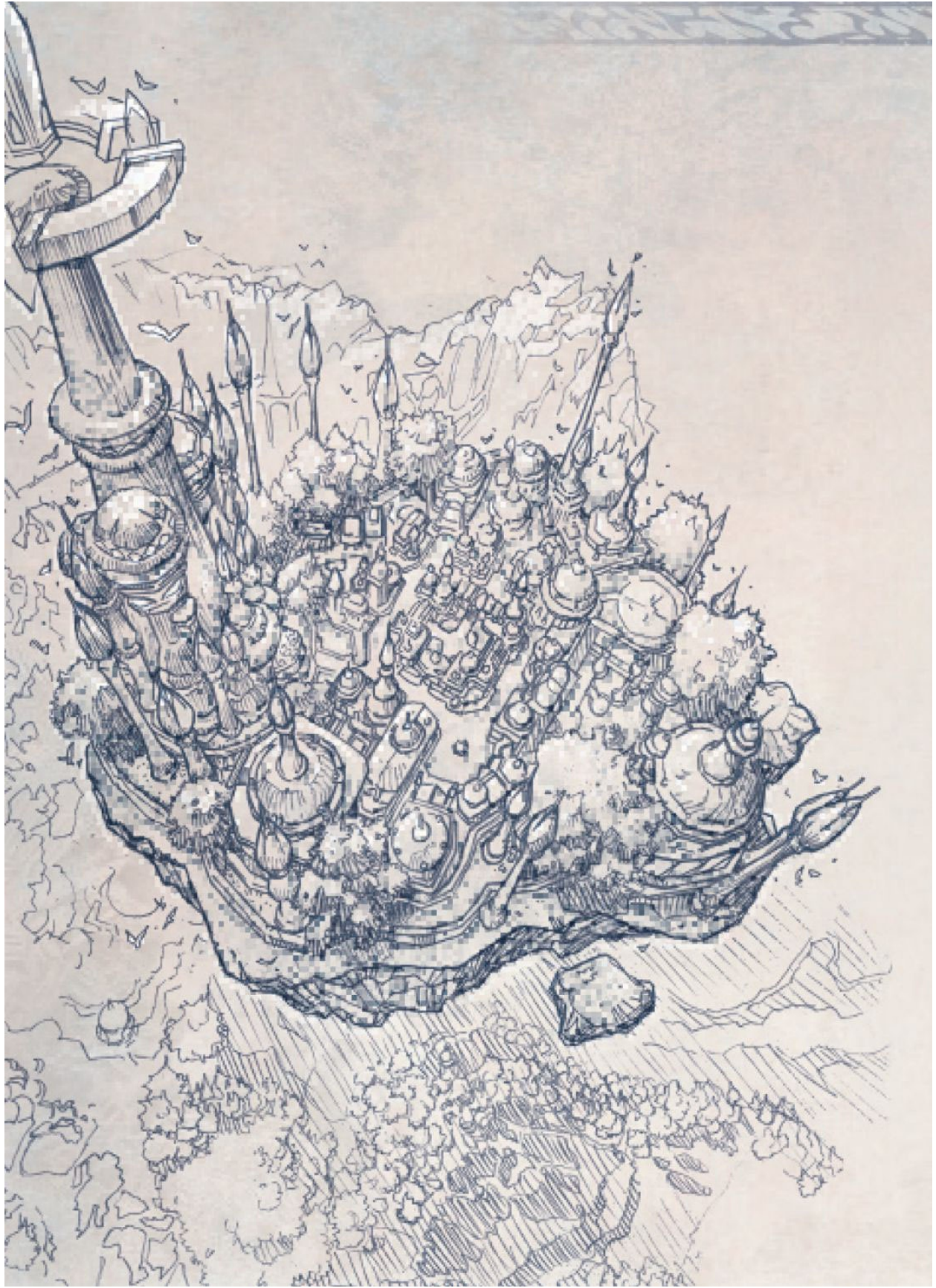
Right next to the Violet Stand is the Great Tree, which size-wise looks more like just an okay tree to me. (Magni didn't find that joke very funny, but Brann laughed.) A druid told me that the Great Tree is another of the World Tree Nordrassil's branches. It's smaller than Vordrassil, but it also isn't corrupted. It's a bit of an odd duck as such trees go, since it doesn't have a portal to go with it, but it's got runes all over its bark.

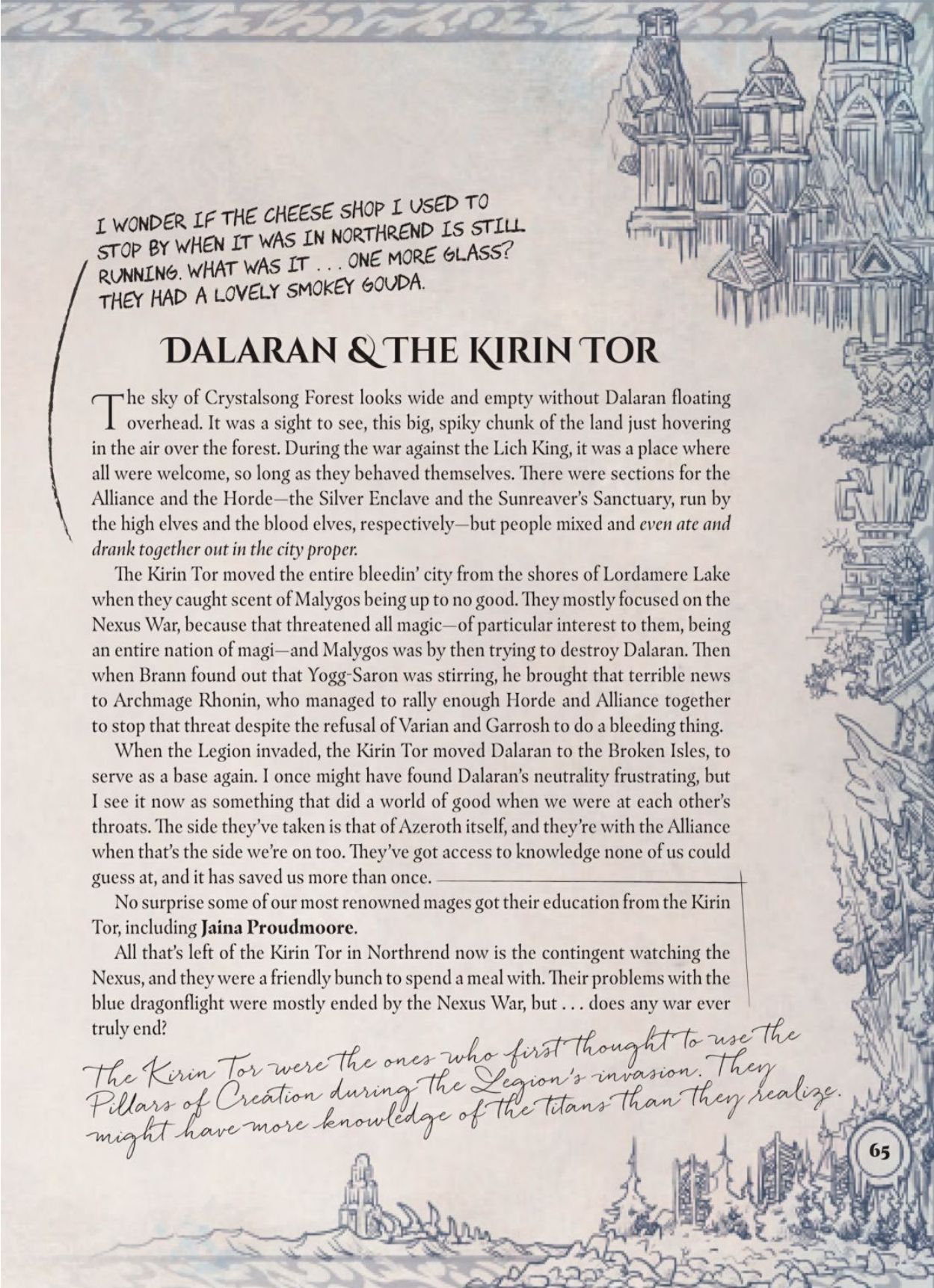
A river runs across the border between Crystalsong and Icecrown, though it's long been cut off by the Ironwall Dam, an ugly construction of saronite that's choked with ice and patrolled still by Scourge. All that makes it through is a little stream called the **Decrepit Flow**, which merges with the Twilight Rivulet until the waters reach the Mirror of Twilight, a small lake surrounded by some beautifully preserved arches. Not that I'd trust water that came out of Icecrown, anyway.



ARMORASIDE: FROSTFIRE REGALIA

Mages have always struck me as people of extremes, destructive but physically delicate, the metaphorical glass cannon. Their greatest power has always been their creativity at finding new and explosive ways to use their magic. To combine the two extremes of frost and fire would be to unleash an even greater level of devastation, and this armor reflects that focus.





I WONDER IF THE CHEESE SHOP I USED TO STOP BY WHEN IT WAS IN NORTHREND IS STILL RUNNING. WHAT WAS IT . . . ONE MORE GLASS? THEY HAD A LOVELY SMOKEY GOUDA.

DALARAN & THE KIRIN TOR

The sky of Crystalsong Forest looks wide and empty without Dalaran floating overhead. It was a sight to see, this big, spiky chunk of the land just hovering in the air over the forest. During the war against the Lich King, it was a place where all were welcome, so long as they behaved themselves. There were sections for the Alliance and the Horde—the Silver Enclave and the Sunreaver’s Sanctuary, run by the high elves and the blood elves, respectively—but people mixed and *even ate and drank together out in the city proper*.

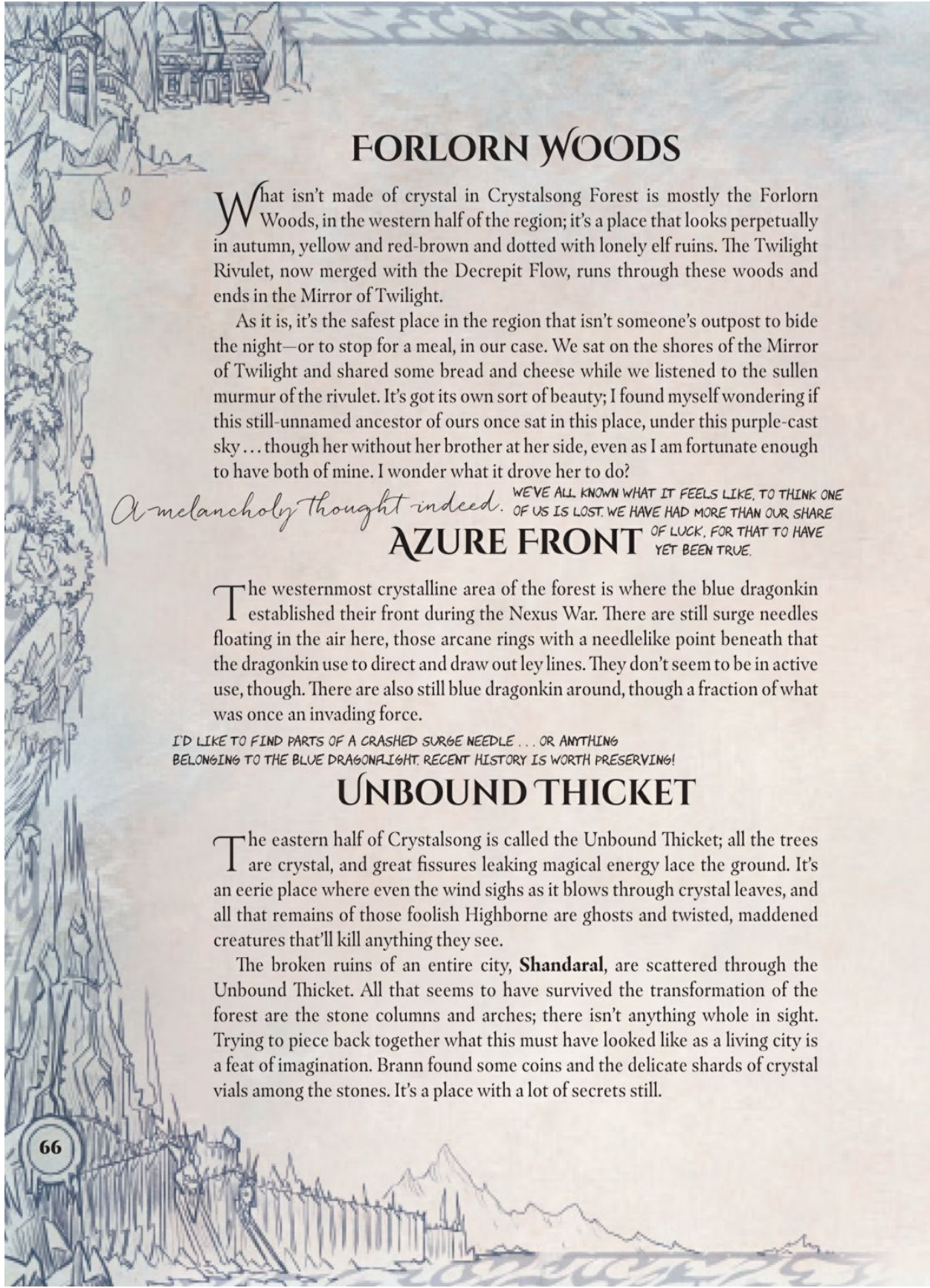
The Kirin Tor moved the entire bleedin’ city from the shores of Lordamere Lake when they caught scent of Malygos being up to no good. They mostly focused on the Nexus War, because that threatened all magic—of particular interest to them, being an entire nation of magi—and Malygos was by then trying to destroy Dalaran. Then when Brann found out that Yogg-Saron was stirring, he brought that terrible news to Archmage Rhonin, who managed to rally enough Horde and Alliance together to stop that threat despite the refusal of Varian and Garrosh to do a bleeding thing.

When the Legion invaded, the Kirin Tor moved Dalaran to the Broken Isles, to serve as a base again. I once might have found Dalaran’s neutrality frustrating, but I see it now as something that did a world of good when we were at each other’s throats. The side they’ve taken is that of Azeroth itself, and they’re with the Alliance when that’s the side we’re on too. They’ve got access to knowledge none of us could guess at, and it has saved us more than once.

No surprise some of our most renowned mages got their education from the Kirin Tor, including **Jaina Proudmoore**.

All that’s left of the Kirin Tor in Northrend now is the contingent watching the Nexus, and they were a friendly bunch to spend a meal with. Their problems with the blue dragonflight were mostly ended by the Nexus War, but . . . does any war ever truly end?

The Kirin Tor were the ones who first thought to use the Pillars of Creation during the Legion’s invasion. They might have more knowledge of the titans than they realize.



FORLORN WOODS

What isn't made of crystal in Crystalsong Forest is mostly the Forlorn Woods, in the western half of the region; it's a place that looks perpetually in autumn, yellow and red-brown and dotted with lonely elf ruins. The Twilight Rivulet, now merged with the Decrepit Flow, runs through these woods and ends in the Mirror of Twilight.

As it is, it's the safest place in the region that isn't someone's outpost to bide the night—or to stop for a meal, in our case. We sat on the shores of the Mirror of Twilight and shared some bread and cheese while we listened to the sullen murmur of the rivulet. It's got its own sort of beauty; I found myself wondering if this still-unnamed ancestor of ours once sat in this place, under this purple-cast sky... though her without her brother at her side, even as I am fortunate enough to have both of mine. I wonder what it drove her to do?

A melancholy thought indeed. WE'VE ALL KNOWN WHAT IT FEELS LIKE, TO THINK ONE OF US IS LOST. WE HAVE HAD MORE THAN OUR SHARE OF LUCK, FOR THAT TO HAVE YET BEEN TRUE.

AZURE FRONT

The westernmost crystalline area of the forest is where the blue dragonkin established their front during the Nexus War. There are still surge needles floating in the air here, those arcane rings with a needlelike point beneath that the dragonkin use to direct and draw out ley lines. They don't seem to be in active use, though. There are also still blue dragonkin around, though a fraction of what was once an invading force.

I'D LIKE TO FIND PARTS OF A CRASHED SURGE NEEDLE... OR ANYTHING BELONGING TO THE BLUE DRAGONFLIGHT. RECENT HISTORY IS WORTH PRESERVING!

UNBOUND THICKET

The eastern half of Crystalsong is called the Unbound Thicket; all the trees are crystal, and great fissures leaking magical energy lace the ground. It's an eerie place where even the wind sighs as it blows through crystal leaves, and all that remains of those foolish Highborne are ghosts and twisted, maddened creatures that'll kill anything they see.

The broken ruins of an entire city, **Shandaral**, are scattered through the Unbound Thicket. All that seems to have survived the transformation of the forest are the stone columns and arches; there isn't anything whole in sight. Trying to piece back together what this must have looked like as a living city is a feat of imagination. Brann found some coins and the delicate shards of crystal vials among the stones. It's a place with a lot of secrets still.





SUNREAVES' COMMAND

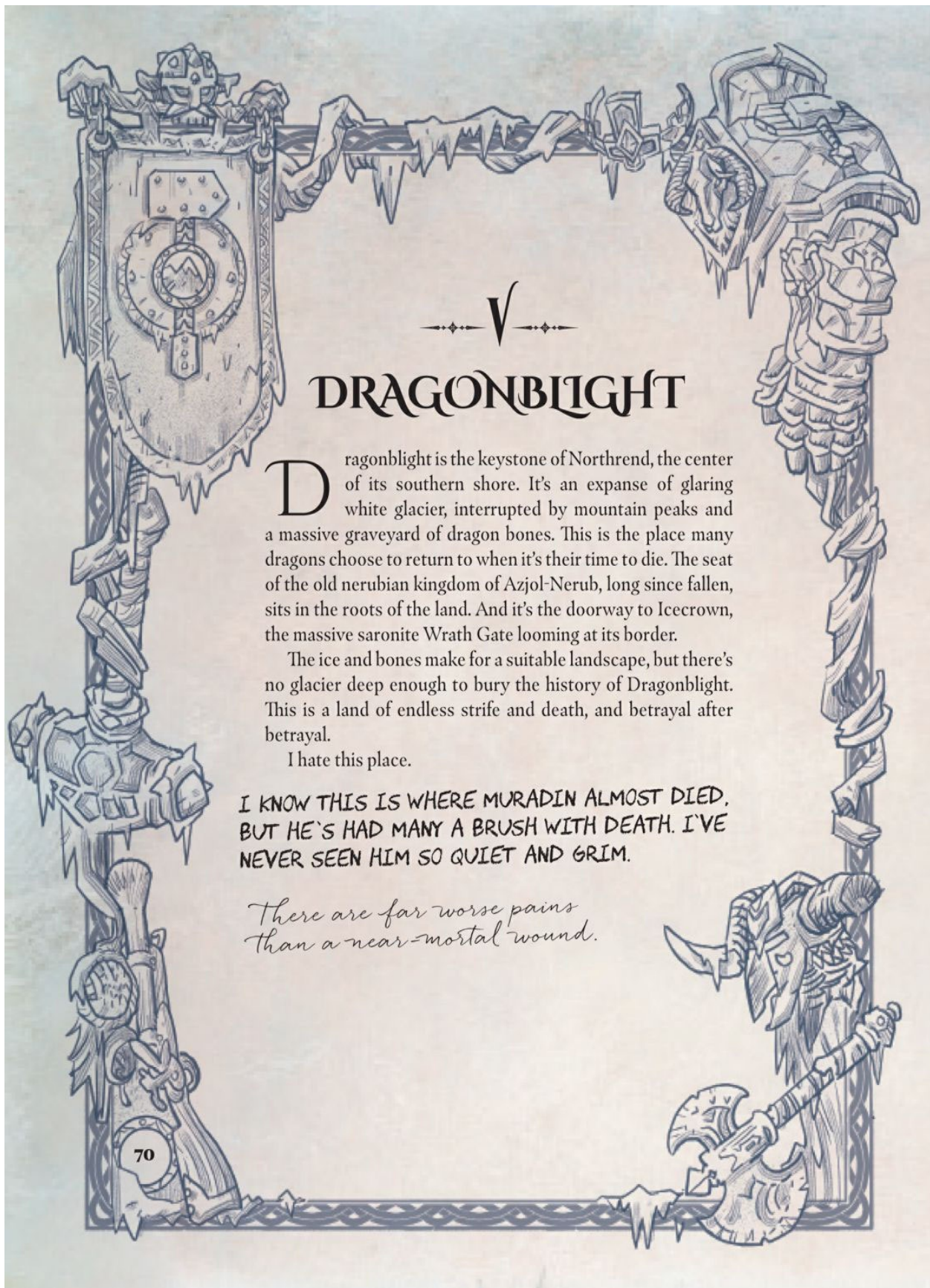
The Sunreavers are a group of blood elf mages with close ties to Dalaran, though they aligned themselves with the Horde. They came to Northrend with the Horde to fight the Lich King, but they had a mission of their own—they wanted to regain their place as part of the Kirin Tor, since most of them lived and studied in Dalaran before the Third War. Their good work fighting the Lich King earned them that return, until a traitor in the Sunreaver ranks aided Garrosh Hellscream's invasion of Theramore . . . and the massacre of its people. Their membership in the Kirin Tor didn't survive the series of sabotages and betrayals that followed . . . though I hear they've once again proved themselves against the Burning Legion. Most of the Sunreavers remained with Dalaran as it moved, but Sunreaver's Command is still their outpost in Northrend.

Even as the Sunreavers tried to convince the Kirin Tor to let them in during the war against the Lich King, Vereesa Windrunner started the Silver Covenant to keep them out. The Silver Covenant also wasn't happy having the Horde in Dalaran—with Garrosh Hellscream leading the charge in Northrend, who would be?—and so they aligned themselves with the Alliance.

They helped expel the Sunreavers when Jaina Proudmoore became head of the Kirin Tor, and I imagine were less happy to see them come back, though that's mage politics and not my concern. They did support the Alliance during the Fourth War, when we took the battle to Orgrimmar itself.

Windrunner's Overlook is the Silver Covenant's outpost in Crystalsong, straight across the valley from the Sunreavers. Those blood elves might be back in the Kirin Tor, but the Covenant are still watching them like hawks.





DRAGONBLIGHT

Dragonblight is the keystone of Northrend, the center of its southern shore. It's an expanse of glaring white glacier, interrupted by mountain peaks and a massive graveyard of dragon bones. This is the place many dragons choose to return to when it's their time to die. The seat of the old nerubian kingdom of Azjol-Nerub, long since fallen, sits in the roots of the land. And it's the doorway to Icecrown, the massive saronite Wrath Gate looming at its border.

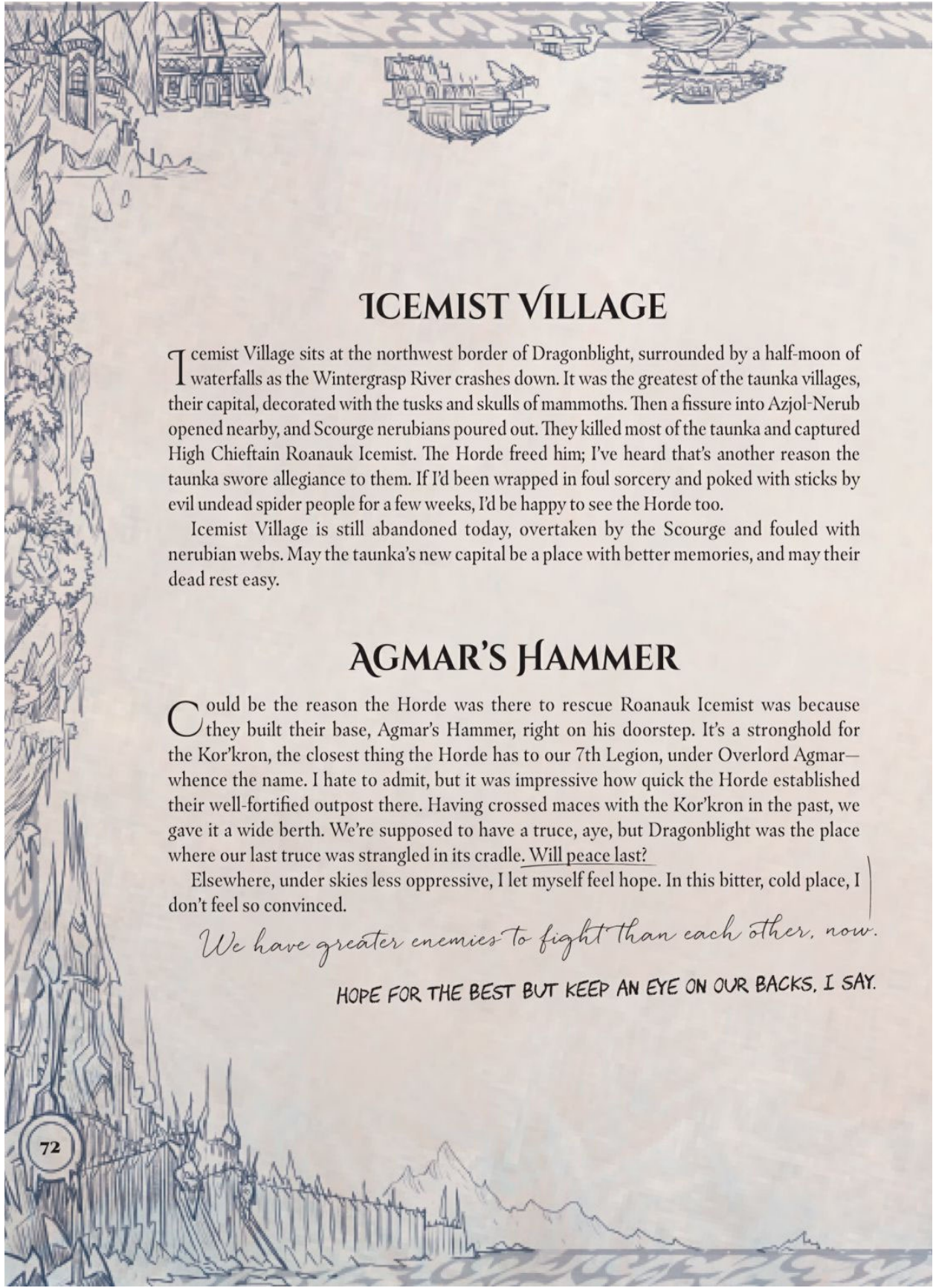
The ice and bones make for a suitable landscape, but there's no glacier deep enough to bury the history of Dragonblight. This is a land of endless strife and death, and betrayal after betrayal.

I hate this place.

I KNOW THIS IS WHERE MURADIN ALMOST DIED. BUT HE'S HAD MANY A BRUSH WITH DEATH. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM SO QUIET AND GRIM.

There are far worse pains than a near-mortal wound.





ICEMIST VILLAGE

Icemist Village sits at the northwest border of Dragonblight, surrounded by a half-moon of waterfalls as the Wintergrasp River crashes down. It was the greatest of the taunka villages, their capital, decorated with the tusks and skulls of mammoths. Then a fissure into Azjol-Nerub opened nearby, and Scourge nerubians poured out. They killed most of the taunka and captured High Chieftain Roanauk Icemist. The Horde freed him; I've heard that's another reason the taunka swore allegiance to them. If I'd been wrapped in foul sorcery and poked with sticks by evil undead spider people for a few weeks, I'd be happy to see the Horde too.

Icemist Village is still abandoned today, overtaken by the Scourge and fouled with nerubian webs. May the taunka's new capital be a place with better memories, and may their dead rest easy.

AGMAR'S HAMMER

Could be the reason the Horde was there to rescue Roanauk Icemist was because they built their base, Agmar's Hammer, right on his doorstep. It's a stronghold for the Kor'kron, the closest thing the Horde has to our 7th Legion, under Overlord Agmar—whence the name. I hate to admit, but it was impressive how quick the Horde established their well-fortified outpost there. Having crossed maces with the Kor'kron in the past, we gave it a wide berth. We're supposed to have a truce, aye, but Dragonblight was the place where our last truce was strangled in its cradle. Will peace last?

Elsewhere, under skies less oppressive, I let myself feel hope. In this bitter, cold place, I don't feel so convinced.

We have greater enemies to fight than each other, now.

HOPE FOR THE BEST BUT KEEP AN EYE ON OUR BACKS, I SAY.



MOA'KI HARBOR

Moa'ki Harbor is the single largest remaining settlement the tuskarr have since they lost Kaskala, which was their capital, to the kvaldir. The sea turtle *Green Island* stops here, as does *Walker of Waves*, who travels the route to Unu'pe. The sky over the harbor is always fluttering with the tuskarrs' brightly colored kites, even during troubled times. It's a lively place for trade and friendly conversation—and it's bursting with storytellers, just like the villagers in Kamagua told us.

After enjoying the tuskarrs' hospitality and some very fresh fish, we asked Elder Ko'nani if any of the resident storytellers might have a tale about a dwarf from our family passing through, and I related to him the story Kodian had already told us. He consulted with a tuskarr even older than him, and they said yes! Such a dwarf, lost and filled with a burning rage, had indeed passed through Moa'ki Harbor almost five hundred years ago! She'd made an impression on them with her tales of fighting wolvar and furbolgs and even facing off with a dragon. She was someone who fought like she didn't care if she lived or died—as if she labored under a great grief that she hid with rage and would not name. The tuskarr told her to seek out the titans in Sholazar Basin, thinking her one of the earthen. The elder tuskarr even recalled her name: **Mina Stormsmith**. Magni, who has the best head of the three of us for remembering the whole of the family tree, recognized the name and says she married into the Bronzebeard clan.

That's one part of the mystery answered. The next: What is this weapon Icebellow was talking about that now appears to have belonged to this Mina, and how did she—and the weapon—end up among the Frostborn?







AZJOL-NERUB

The Pit of Narjun sits just south of Agmar's Hammer and Icemist Village, a gaping hole in the land that leads into the nerubian kingdom, Azjol-Nerub. This is only one of the multiple entrances into that massive network of caves and tunnels; the kingdom extends under half of Northrend.

The fall of Azjol-Nerub is a sad tale. The underground kingdom was a center of knowledge, art, and learning. The Lich King saw the nerubians as a threat and struck them down with the Scourge in the War of the Spider. Yet the nerubians came close to winning . . . except you can't win a war of attrition against the undead. They were slaughtered, their kingdom destroyed, and most of them resurrected to unlife under the Lich King.

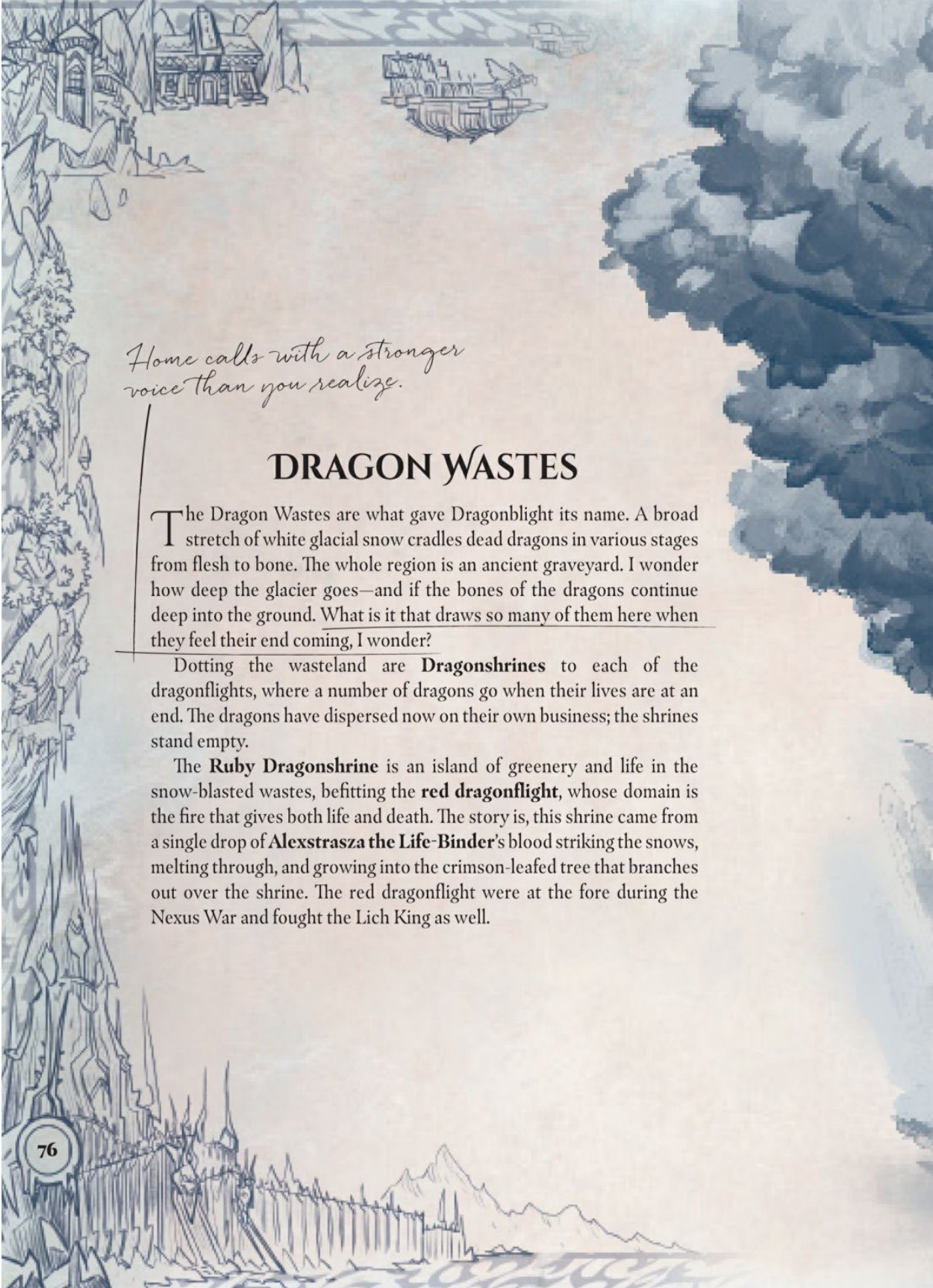
The last king of Azjol-Nerub was **Anub'arak**. The few nerubians who survived scorn him as a traitor and lay the destruction of their kingdom at his feet. From what I know of the history, his betrayal was that of any poor bastard who's been raised from his grave under the Lich King. Cold comfort to those of his own people he slaughtered. When he was finally killed in his ruined palace by adventurers, they brought his broken husk to the living nerubians as proof of his death.

As with all Scourge, Anub'arak didn't stay dead for long. He was brought back by the Lich King to serve again—maybe the Lich King had a certain fondness for the great, horrible beetle as the one who'd originally escorted him to Icecrown—this time attacking the Argent Tournament.

Though most of the kingdom is full-on ruins now, I've heard some of its buildings still stand, the art within disintegrating because the Scourge don't care to maintain it. The architecture of the nerubians is so distinctive, elegant and angular. I'd like to see it before it's utterly gone. I'd also like to see if I can find my old friend Baelgun's remains. I heard he followed Arthas into those depths and there lost his life, trapped and alone.

Or you could not. Everything down there has too many legs.

THE SURVIVING, LIVING NERUBIANS I'VE MET ARE FEW IN NUMBER, BUT THEY'VE ALL BEEN OF A GOOD SORT.



*Home calls with a stronger
voice than you realize.*

DRAGON WASTES

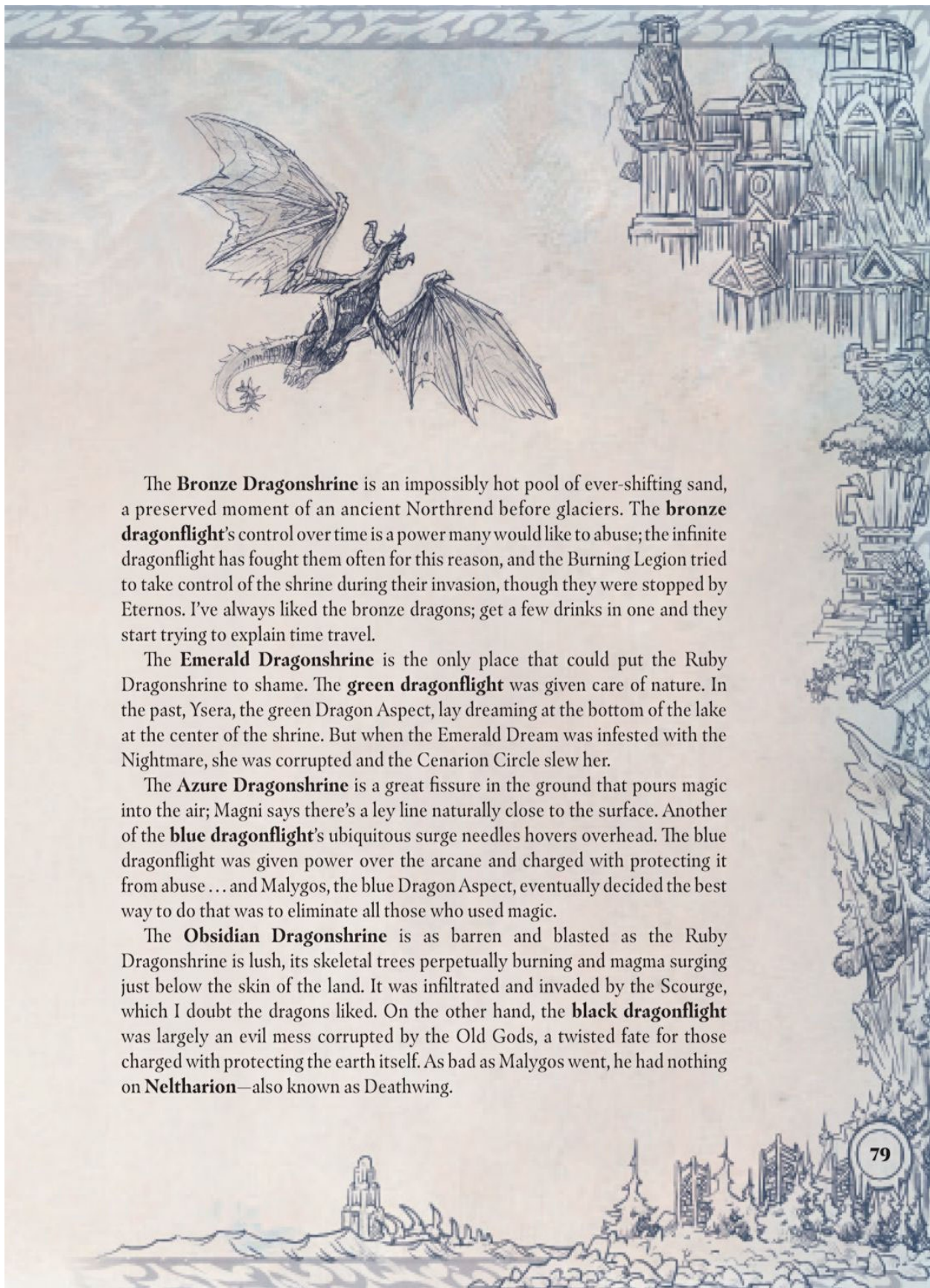
The Dragon Wastes are what gave Dragonblight its name. A broad stretch of white glacial snow cradles dead dragons in various stages from flesh to bone. The whole region is an ancient graveyard. I wonder how deep the glacier goes—and if the bones of the dragons continue deep into the ground. What is it that draws so many of them here when they feel their end coming, I wonder?

Dotting the wasteland are **Dragonshrines** to each of the dragonflights, where a number of dragons go when their lives are at an end. The dragons have dispersed now on their own business; the shrines stand empty.

The **Ruby Dragonshrine** is an island of greenery and life in the snow-blasted wastes, befitting the **red dragonflight**, whose domain is the fire that gives both life and death. The story is, this shrine came from a single drop of **Alexstrasza the Life-Binder's** blood striking the snows, melting through, and growing into the crimson-leafed tree that branches out over the shrine. The red dragonflight were at the fore during the Nexus War and fought the Lich King as well.







The **Bronze Dragonshrine** is an impossibly hot pool of ever-shifting sand, a preserved moment of an ancient Northrend before glaciers. The **bronze dragonflight's** control over time is a power many would like to abuse; the infinite dragonflight has fought them often for this reason, and the Burning Legion tried to take control of the shrine during their invasion, though they were stopped by Eternos. I've always liked the bronze dragons; get a few drinks in one and they start trying to explain time travel.

The **Emerald Dragonshrine** is the only place that could put the Ruby Dragonshrine to shame. The **green dragonflight** was given care of nature. In the past, Ysera, the green Dragon Aspect, lay dreaming at the bottom of the lake at the center of the shrine. But when the Emerald Dream was infested with the Nightmare, she was corrupted and the Cenarion Circle slew her.

The **Azure Dragonshrine** is a great fissure in the ground that pours magic into the air; Magni says there's a ley line naturally close to the surface. Another of the **blue dragonflight's** ubiquitous surge needles hovers overhead. The blue dragonflight was given power over the arcane and charged with protecting it from abuse... and Malygos, the blue Dragon Aspect, eventually decided the best way to do that was to eliminate all those who used magic.

The **Obsidian Dragonshrine** is as barren and blasted as the Ruby Dragonshrine is lush, its skeletal trees perpetually burning and magma surging just below the skin of the land. It was infiltrated and invaded by the Scourge, which I doubt the dragons liked. On the other hand, the **black dragonflight** was largely an evil mess corrupted by the Old Gods, a twisted fate for those charged with protecting the earth itself. As bad as Malygos went, he had nothing on **Neltharion**—also known as Deathwing.

WYRMREST TEMPLE

Wormrest Temple towers above the Dragon Wastes, tier after tier of white columns and golden domes in the style of the titans. It's an ancient structure, built before the Great Sundering so the newly created dragonflights would have a place to meet and watch over the world. Here, Alexstrasza created the Wormrest Accord to battle the blue dragonflight in the Nexus War. We'll be heading next to the Borean Tundra and Coldarra within it, which was ground zero for the greatest of those battles.

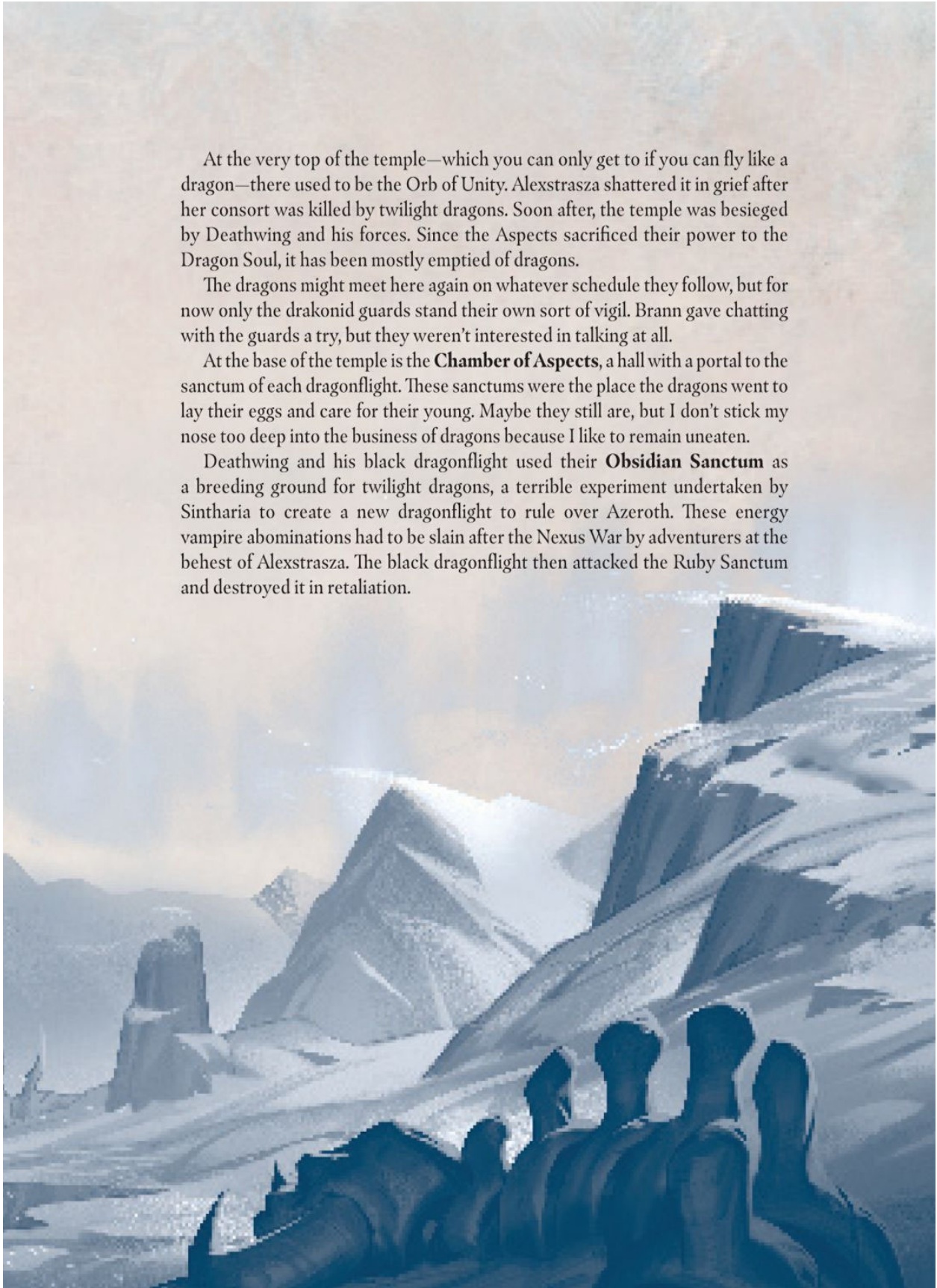


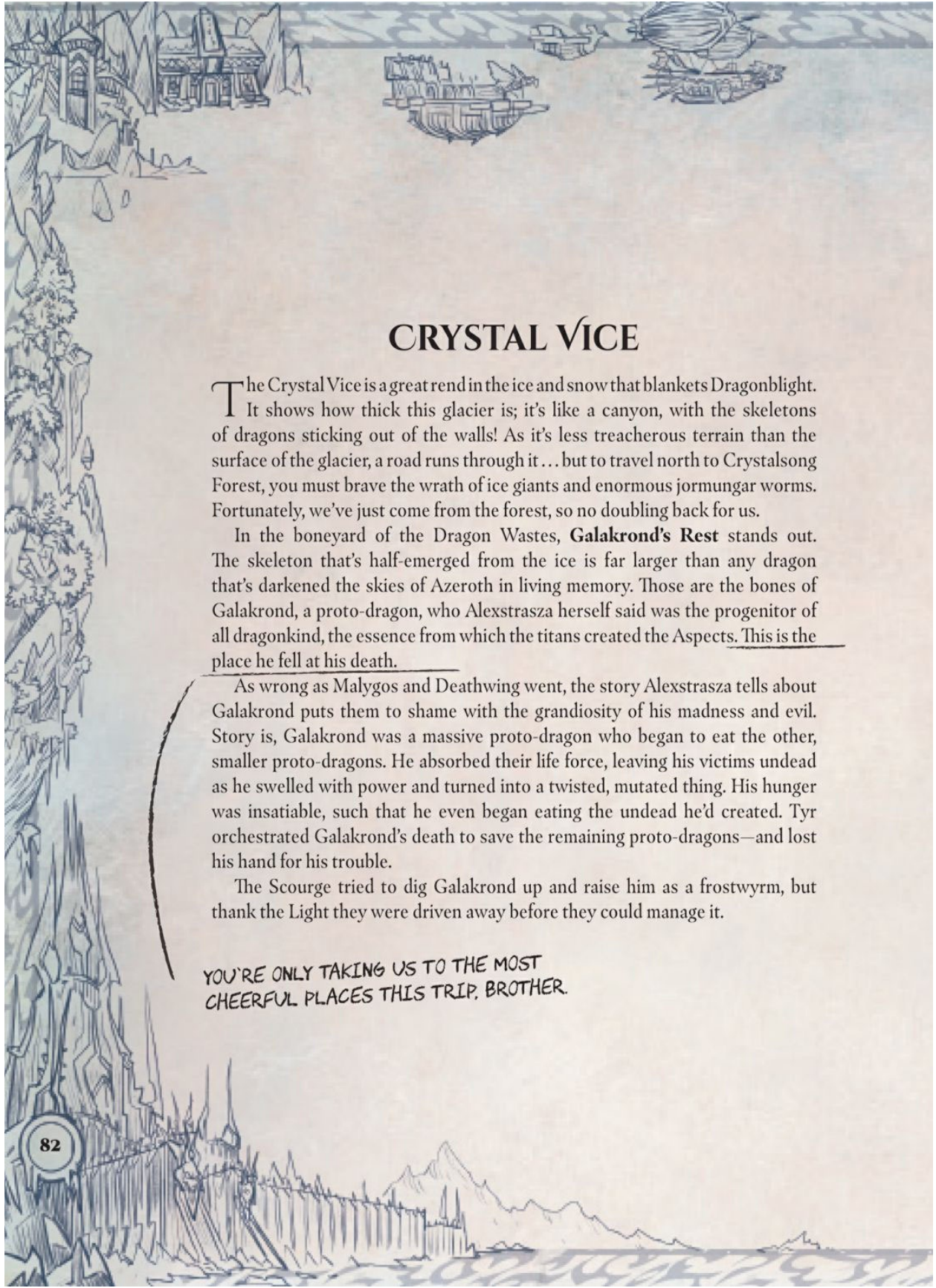
At the very top of the temple—which you can only get to if you can fly like a dragon—there used to be the Orb of Unity. Alexstrasza shattered it in grief after her consort was killed by twilight dragons. Soon after, the temple was besieged by Deathwing and his forces. Since the Aspects sacrificed their power to the Dragon Soul, it has been mostly emptied of dragons.

The dragons might meet here again on whatever schedule they follow, but for now only the drakonid guards stand their own sort of vigil. Brann gave chatting with the guards a try, but they weren't interested in talking at all.

At the base of the temple is the **Chamber of Aspects**, a hall with a portal to the sanctum of each dragonflight. These sanctums were the place the dragons went to lay their eggs and care for their young. Maybe they still are, but I don't stick my nose too deep into the business of dragons because I like to remain uneaten.

Deathwing and his black dragonflight used their **Obsidian Sanctum** as a breeding ground for twilight dragons, a terrible experiment undertaken by Sintharia to create a new dragonflight to rule over Azeroth. These energy vampire abominations had to be slain after the Nexus War by adventurers at the behest of Alexstrasza. The black dragonflight then attacked the Ruby Sanctum and destroyed it in retaliation.





CRYSTAL VICE

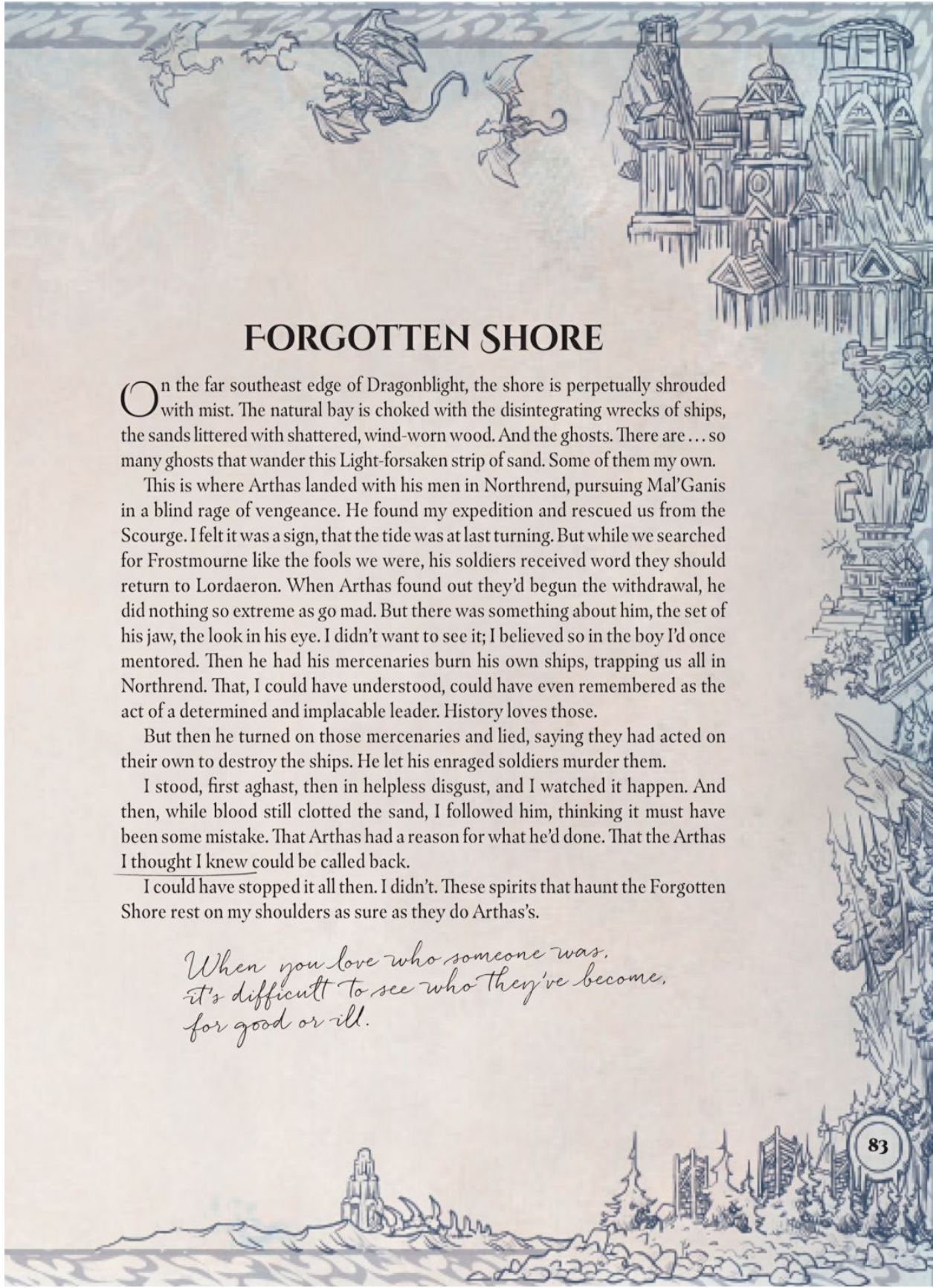
The Crystal Vice is a great rend in the ice and snow that blankets Dragonblight. It shows how thick this glacier is; it's like a canyon, with the skeletons of dragons sticking out of the walls! As it's less treacherous terrain than the surface of the glacier, a road runs through it... but to travel north to Crystalsong Forest, you must brave the wrath of ice giants and enormous jormungar worms. Fortunately, we've just come from the forest, so no doubling back for us.

In the boneyard of the Dragon Wastes, **Galakrond's Rest** stands out. The skeleton that's half-emerged from the ice is far larger than any dragon that's darkened the skies of Azeroth in living memory. Those are the bones of Galakrond, a proto-dragon, who Alexstrasza herself said was the progenitor of all dragonkind, the essence from which the titans created the Aspects. This is the place he fell at his death.

As wrong as Malygos and Deathwing went, the story Alexstrasza tells about Galakrond puts them to shame with the grandiosity of his madness and evil. Story is, Galakrond was a massive proto-dragon who began to eat the other, smaller proto-dragons. He absorbed their life force, leaving his victims undead as he swelled with power and turned into a twisted, mutated thing. His hunger was insatiable, such that he even began eating the undead he'd created. Tyr orchestrated Galakrond's death to save the remaining proto-dragons—and lost his hand for his trouble.

The Scourge tried to dig Galakrond up and raise him as a frostwyrn, but thank the Light they were driven away before they could manage it.

YOU'RE ONLY TAKING US TO THE MOST
CHEERFUL PLACES THIS TRIP, BROTHER.



FORGOTTEN SHORE

On the far southeast edge of Dragonblight, the shore is perpetually shrouded with mist. The natural bay is choked with the disintegrating wrecks of ships, the sands littered with shattered, wind-worn wood. And the ghosts. There are . . . so many ghosts that wander this Light-forsaken strip of sand. Some of them my own.

This is where Arthas landed with his men in Northrend, pursuing Mal'Ganis in a blind rage of vengeance. He found my expedition and rescued us from the Scourge. I felt it was a sign, that the tide was at last turning. But while we searched for Frostmourne like the fools we were, his soldiers received word they should return to Lordaeron. When Arthas found out they'd begun the withdrawal, he did nothing so extreme as go mad. But there was something about him, the set of his jaw, the look in his eye. I didn't want to see it; I believed so in the boy I'd once mentored. Then he had his mercenaries burn his own ships, trapping us all in Northrend. That, I could have understood, could have even remembered as the act of a determined and implacable leader. History loves those.

But then he turned on those mercenaries and lied, saying they had acted on their own to destroy the ships. He let his enraged soldiers murder them.

I stood, first aghast, then in helpless disgust, and I watched it happen. And then, while blood still clotted the sand, I followed him, thinking it must have been some mistake. That Arthas had a reason for what he'd done. That the Arthas I thought I knew could be called back.

I could have stopped it all then. I didn't. These spirits that haunt the Forgotten Shore rest on my shoulders as sure as they do Arthas's.

*When you love who someone was,
it's difficult to see who they've become,
for good or ill.*



NEW HEARTHGLEN

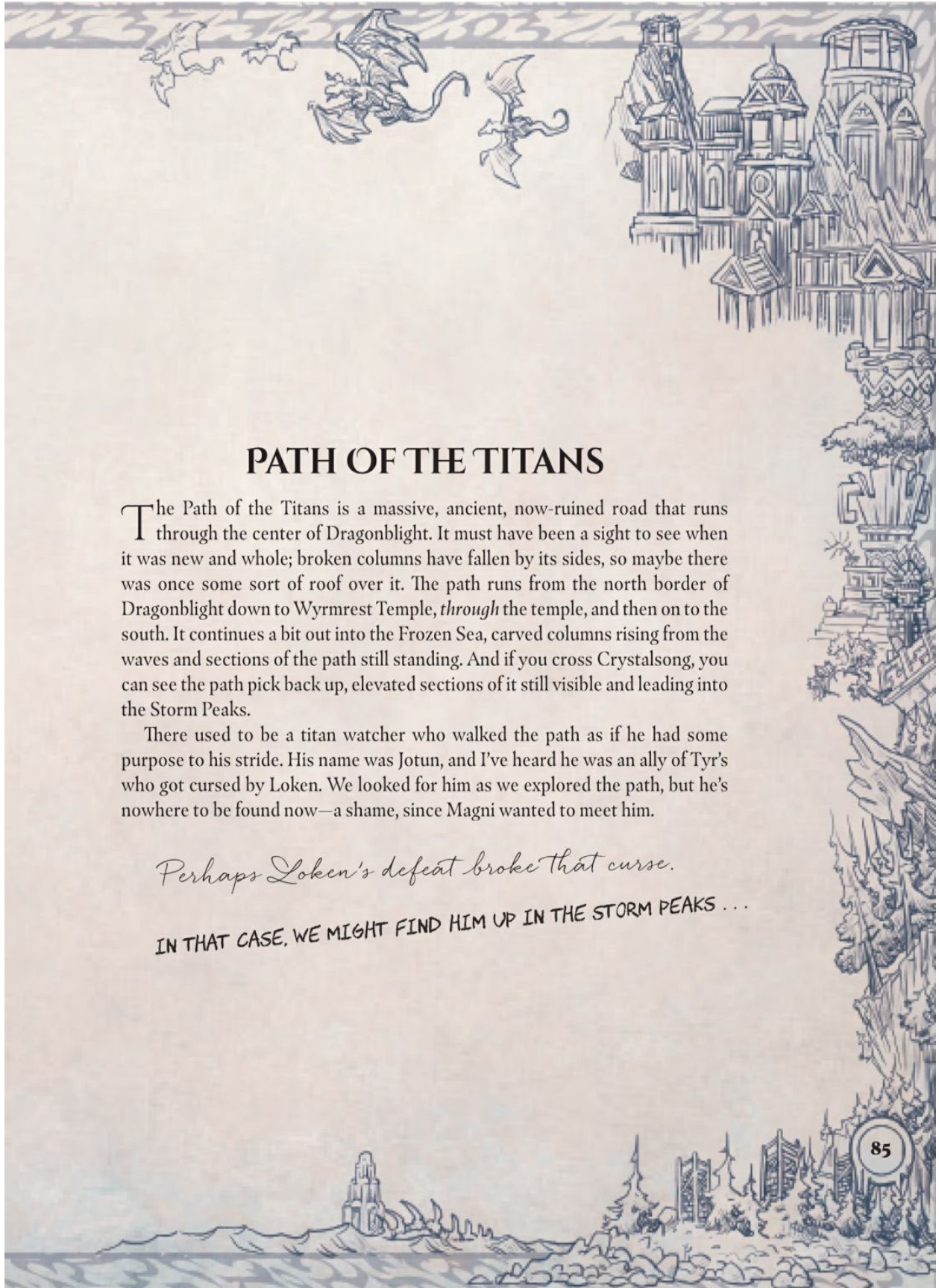
The Scarlet Crusade was already a pack of murderous fanatics in the Eastern Kingdoms, but after Tirion Fordring kicked them out of Hearthglen and made it a center for the Argent Crusade, they came to Northrend and transformed into something far worse under the leadership of High General Brigitte Abbendis and Admiral Borean Westwind.

New Hearthglen is quite the fortress, with reinforced walls, a keep, and several churches, culminating in a massive white stone cathedral. They renamed themselves the **Scarlet Onslaught** and might have simply been a loose cannon in the north, but it turns out Admiral Westwind was replaced by dreadlord Mal'Ganis. If they'd already been wandering off the path of the Light, he kicked them full out into the dark.

During the war, they were largely destroyed, their leadership wiped out between the Horde and the Alliance. But there are still enough of them around to continue their twisted crusade against anyone they think an enemy.

With both the Scourge and the Onslaught leaderless, I wonder if they could be convinced to refocus on a new enemy.

SOME PEOPLE, YOU JUST CAN'T TALK SENSE TO.



PATH OF THE TITANS

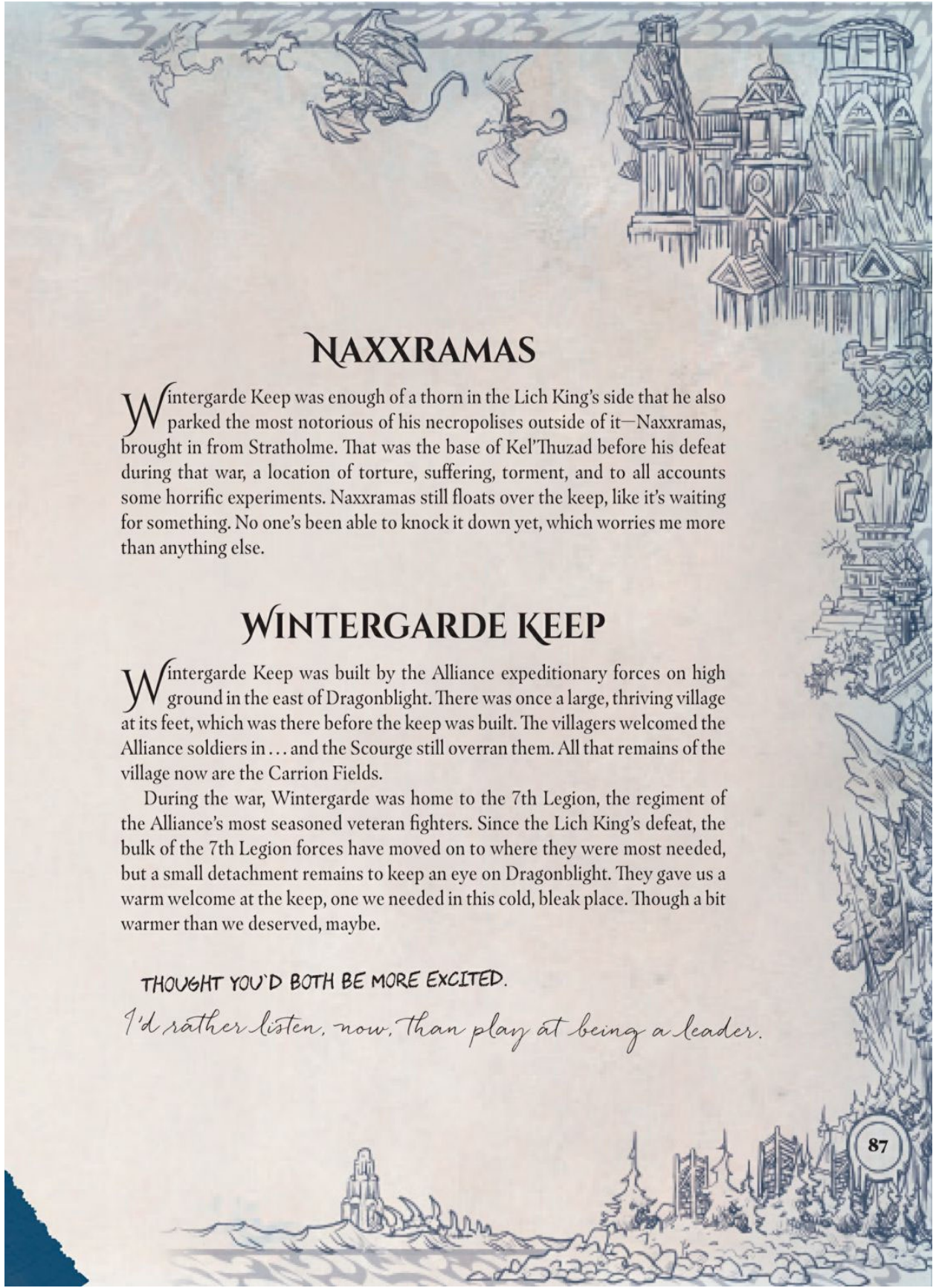
The Path of the Titans is a massive, ancient, now-ruined road that runs through the center of Dragonblight. It must have been a sight to see when it was new and whole; broken columns have fallen by its sides, so maybe there was once some sort of roof over it. The path runs from the north border of Dragonblight down to Wyrmmrest Temple, *through* the temple, and then on to the south. It continues a bit out into the Frozen Sea, carved columns rising from the waves and sections of the path still standing. And if you cross Crystalsong, you can see the path pick back up, elevated sections of it still visible and leading into the Storm Peaks.

There used to be a titan watcher who walked the path as if he had some purpose to his stride. His name was Jotun, and I've heard he was an ally of Tyr's who got cursed by Loken. We looked for him as we explored the path, but he's nowhere to be found now—a shame, since Magni wanted to meet him.

Perhaps Loken's defeat broke that curse.

IN THAT CASE, WE MIGHT FIND HIM UP IN THE STORM PEAKS . . .





NAXXRAMAS

Wintergarde Keep was enough of a thorn in the Lich King's side that he also parked the most notorious of his necropolises outside of it—Naxxramas, brought in from Stratholme. That was the base of Kel'Thuzad before his defeat during that war, a location of torture, suffering, torment, and to all accounts some horrific experiments. Naxxramas still floats over the keep, like it's waiting for something. No one's been able to knock it down yet, which worries me more than anything else.

WINTERGARDE KEEP

Wintergarde Keep was built by the Alliance expeditionary forces on high ground in the east of Dragonblight. There was once a large, thriving village at its feet, which was there before the keep was built. The villagers welcomed the Alliance soldiers in . . . and the Scourge still overran them. All that remains of the village now are the Carrion Fields.

During the war, Wintergarde was home to the 7th Legion, the regiment of the Alliance's most seasoned veteran fighters. Since the Lich King's defeat, the bulk of the 7th Legion forces have moved on to where they were most needed, but a small detachment remains to keep an eye on Dragonblight. They gave us a warm welcome at the keep, one we needed in this cold, bleak place. Though a bit warmer than we deserved, maybe.

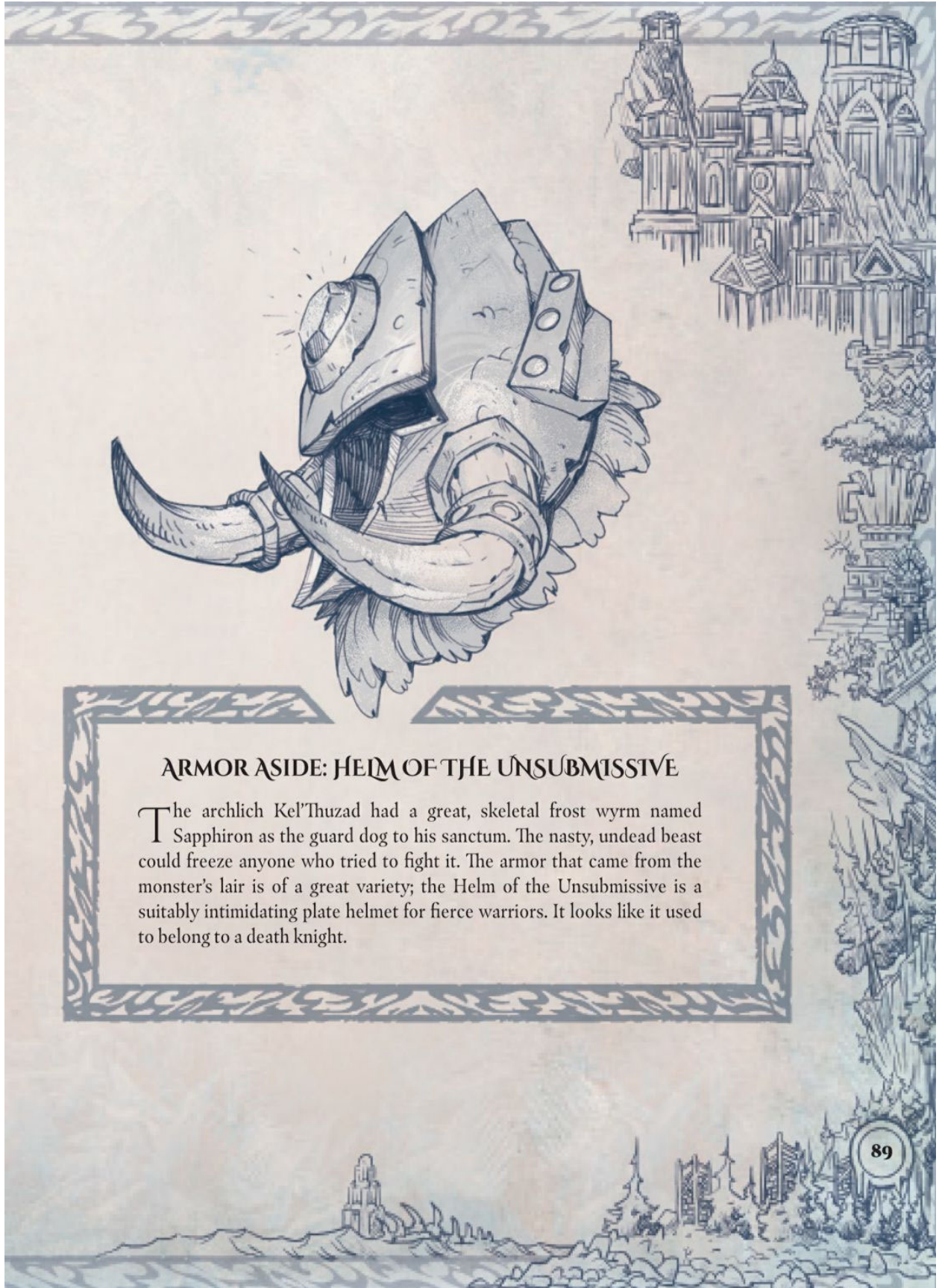
THOUGHT YOU'D BOTH BE MORE EXCITED.

I'd rather listen, now, than play at being a leader.

ARMOR ASIDE: DREAMWALKER RAIMENT

Druids have as many faces to them as nature itself: destruction, animal fury, transformation, healing. Everything about them is rooted in cycles and transience, and the Emerald Dream of what the world would have been with nature unfettered guides them in ways I cannot guess. Only the Cenarion Circle could have made such armor as the Dreamwalker Raiment, which calls on the healing power of the dream itself.





ARMOR ASIDE: HELM OF THE UNSUBMISSIVE

The archlich Kel'Thuzad had a great, skeletal frost wyrm named Sapphiron as the guard dog to his sanctum. The nasty, undead beast could freeze anyone who tried to fight it. The armor that came from the monster's lair is of a great variety; the Helm of the Unsubmissive is a suitably intimidating plate helmet for fierce warriors. It looks like it used to belong to a death knight.





FROSTMOURNE CAVERN

A shattered, half-finished Scarlet Onslaught fortification stands watch over the entrance to Frostmourne Cavern. Neither Brann nor Magni seems to think it's a good idea for me to be here, given all that my mind has taken in since arriving in Dragonblight; Brann even suggested I take a late breakfast at Wintergarde, the nerve of him.

The ice-rimmed cavern that extends back into the mountains is full of saronite; I recognize that now, though I'd no idea what it meant at the time. Here, Arthas and I found an altar, with Frostmourne hovering over it, encased in ice. The altar's inscription remains as a warning unheeded: "Whomsoever takes up this blade shall wield power eternal. Just as the blade rends flesh, so must power scar the spirit."

I knew it had to be cursed. I warned Arthas as much and tried to reason with him. Even after the Forgotten Shore, I wanted to believe that he couldn't turn his back on the men who'd followed him so loyally.

I'll never forget his answer: "Damn the men!"

I realized too late that the Arthas I had known was gone—if I'd ever truly known him at all. I tried to stop him . . . I think. I hope that I did. My memories are hazy, just the crack of ice shattering, a sharp, red pain in my head, and then . . . the next clear thing I can recall is being among the Frostborn.

But we all know what Arthas went on to do.

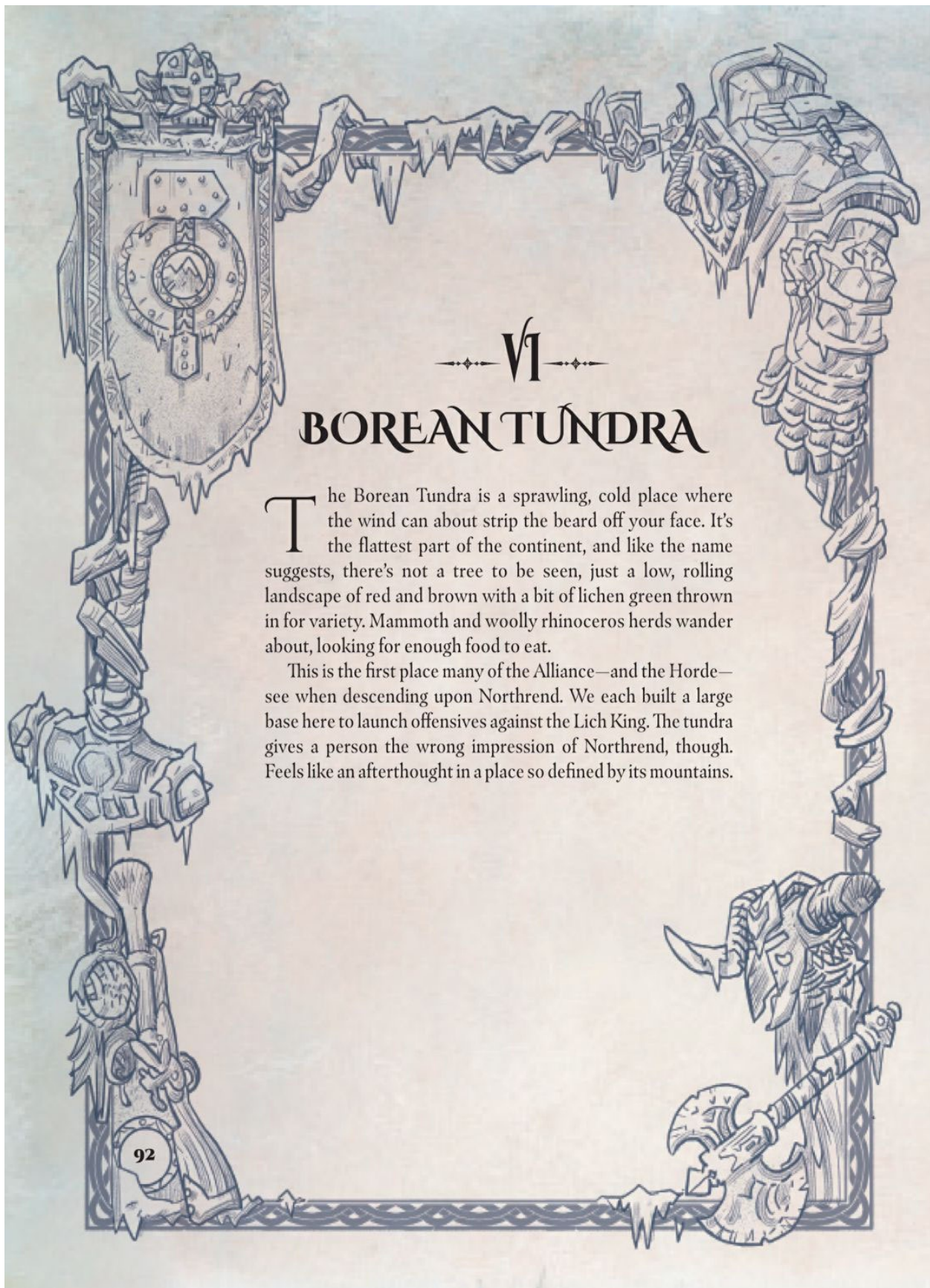
Seeing the best in someone . . . I still believe it's a strength, not a weakness. Things might have turned out differently, had I been a more cynical dwarf. But it's easy for those who expect hurt and betrayal to find reason to hurt and betray others. Even after everything, that isn't who I choose to be.

Arthas's hammer rested here for a time, but I heard it was collected by the Ashen Verdict and reforged into Shadowmourne, to make a weapon that could stand against Frostmourne. The weapons I wielded that day are still frozen in the ice. Brann made to break them out, and I told him not to . . . in quite a sharper tone than I should have. But they should stay here, along with everything I've carried with me from those days.

Let this remain a grave undisturbed.

Being born is easy. Being reborn . . . isn't.

BUT YOU DIDN'T DIE HERE.



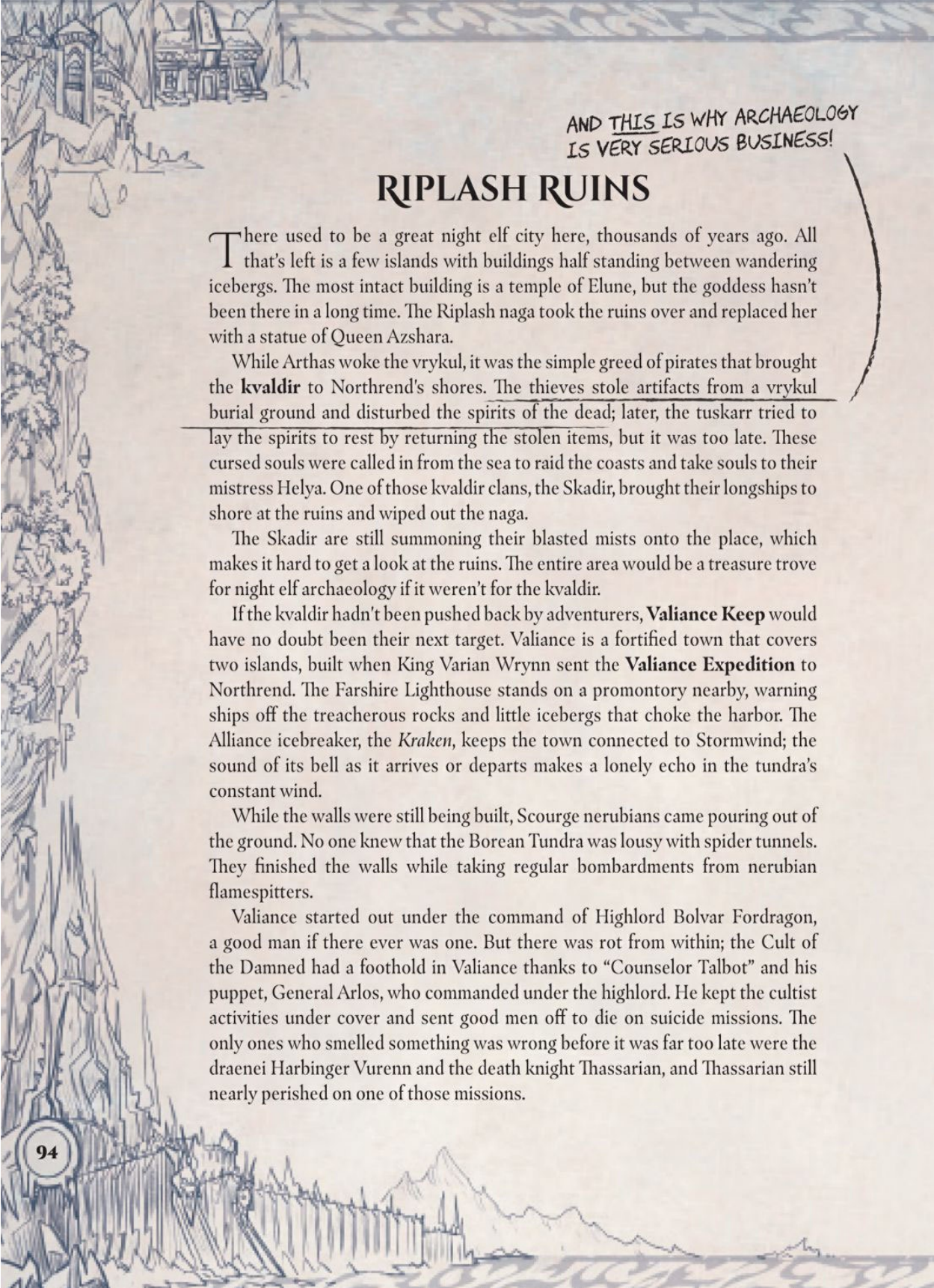
VI

BOREAN TUNDRA

The Borean Tundra is a sprawling, cold place where the wind can about strip the beard off your face. It's the flattest part of the continent, and like the name suggests, there's not a tree to be seen, just a low, rolling landscape of red and brown with a bit of lichen green thrown in for variety. Mammoth and woolly rhinoceros herds wander about, looking for enough food to eat.

This is the first place many of the Alliance—and the Horde—see when descending upon Northrend. We each built a large base here to launch offensives against the Lich King. The tundra gives a person the wrong impression of Northrend, though. Feels like an afterthought in a place so defined by its mountains.





AND THIS IS WHY ARCHAEOLOGY
IS VERY SERIOUS BUSINESS!

RIPLASH RUINS

There used to be a great night elf city here, thousands of years ago. All that's left is a few islands with buildings half standing between wandering icebergs. The most intact building is a temple of Elune, but the goddess hasn't been there in a long time. The Riplash naga took the ruins over and replaced her with a statue of Queen Azshara.

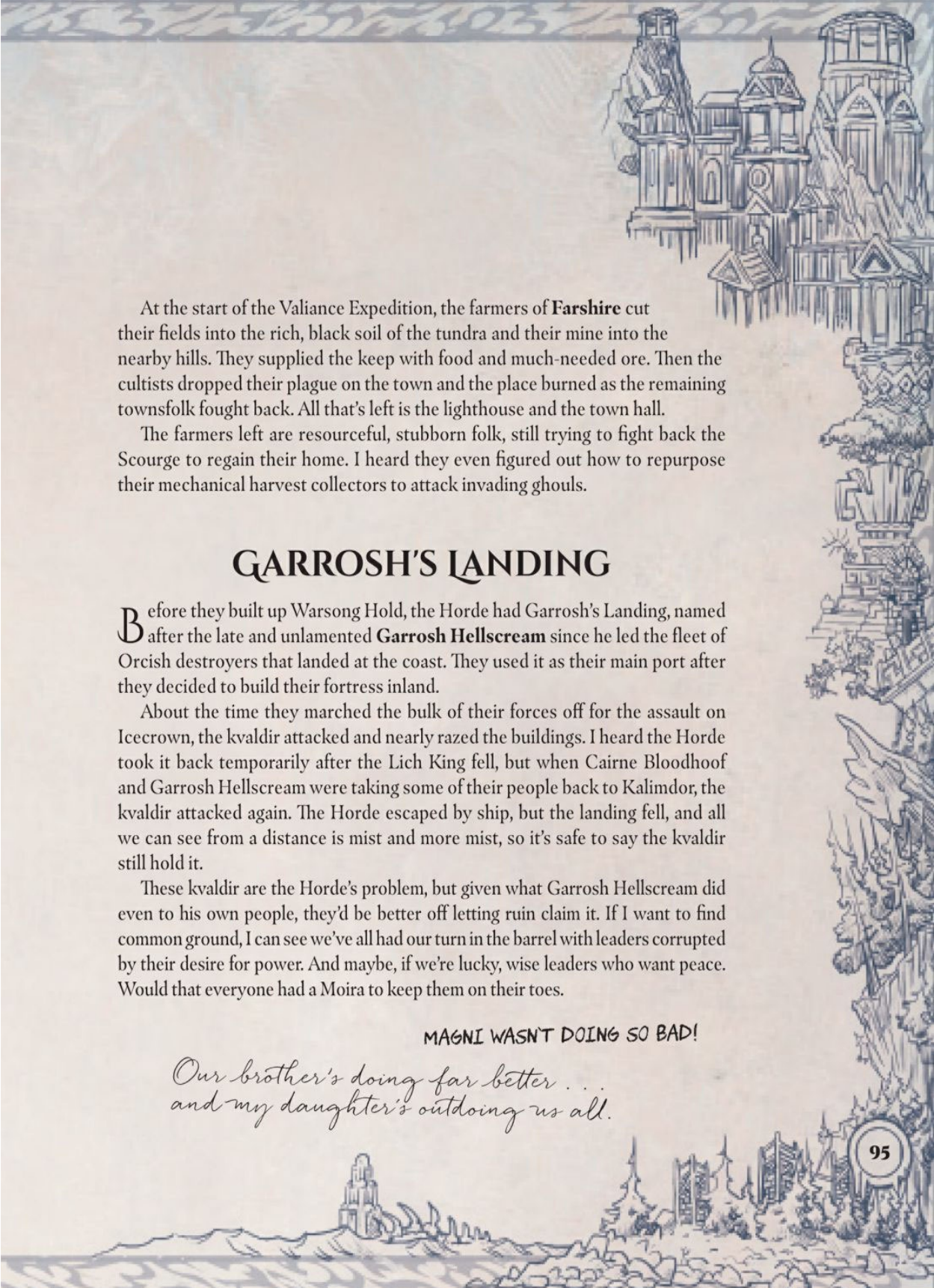
While Arthas woke the vrykul, it was the simple greed of pirates that brought the **kvaldir** to Northrend's shores. The thieves stole artifacts from a vrykul burial ground and disturbed the spirits of the dead; later, the tuskarr tried to lay the spirits to rest by returning the stolen items, but it was too late. These cursed souls were called in from the sea to raid the coasts and take souls to their mistress Helya. One of those kvaldir clans, the Skadir, brought their longships to shore at the ruins and wiped out the naga.

The Skadir are still summoning their blasted mists onto the place, which makes it hard to get a look at the ruins. The entire area would be a treasure trove for night elf archaeology if it weren't for the kvaldir.

If the kvaldir hadn't been pushed back by adventurers, **Valiance Keep** would have no doubt been their next target. Valiance is a fortified town that covers two islands, built when King Varian Wrynn sent the **Valiance Expedition** to Northrend. The Farshire Lighthouse stands on a promontory nearby, warning ships off the treacherous rocks and little icebergs that choke the harbor. The Alliance icebreaker, the *Kraken*, keeps the town connected to Stormwind; the sound of its bell as it arrives or departs makes a lonely echo in the tundra's constant wind.

While the walls were still being built, Scourge nerubians came pouring out of the ground. No one knew that the Borean Tundra was lousy with spider tunnels. They finished the walls while taking regular bombardments from nerubian flamespitters.

Valiance started out under the command of Highlord Bolvar Fordragon, a good man if there ever was one. But there was rot from within; the Cult of the Damned had a foothold in Valiance thanks to "Counselor Talbot" and his puppet, General Arlos, who commanded under the highlord. He kept the cultist activities under cover and sent good men off to die on suicide missions. The only ones who smelled something was wrong before it was far too late were the draenei Harbinger Vurenn and the death knight Thassarian, and Thassarian still nearly perished on one of those missions.



At the start of the Valiance Expedition, the farmers of **Farshire** cut their fields into the rich, black soil of the tundra and their mine into the nearby hills. They supplied the keep with food and much-needed ore. Then the cultists dropped their plague on the town and the place burned as the remaining townsfolk fought back. All that's left is the lighthouse and the town hall.

The farmers left are resourceful, stubborn folk, still trying to fight back the Scourge to regain their home. I heard they even figured out how to repurpose their mechanical harvest collectors to attack invading ghouls.

GARROSH'S LANDING

Before they built up Warsong Hold, the Horde had Garrosh's Landing, named after the late and unlamented **Garrosh Hellscream** since he led the fleet of Orcish destroyers that landed at the coast. They used it as their main port after they decided to build their fortress inland.

About the time they marched the bulk of their forces off for the assault on Icecrown, the kvaldir attacked and nearly razed the buildings. I heard the Horde took it back temporarily after the Lich King fell, but when Cairne Bloodhoof and Garrosh Hellscream were taking some of their people back to Kalimdor, the kvaldir attacked again. The Horde escaped by ship, but the landing fell, and all we can see from a distance is mist and more mist, so it's safe to say the kvaldir still hold it.

These kvaldir are the Horde's problem, but given what Garrosh Hellscream did even to his own people, they'd be better off letting ruin claim it. If I want to find common ground, I can see we've all had our turn in the barrel with leaders corrupted by their desire for power. And maybe, if we're lucky, wise leaders who want peace. Would that everyone had a Moira to keep them on their toes.

MAGNI WASN'T DOING SO BAD!

*Our brother's doing far better . . .
and my daughter's outdoing us all.*



WARSONG HOLD

Warsong Hold is a great, spiky fortress that the Horde built for the Warsong Offensive. Garrosh Hellscream sent an army of peons to cut a quarry down into the tundra to make the walls and towers; that's the Mightstone Quarry now. I'll admit the Horde's got a talent for building up tall, ugly buildings in a hurry; their construction is solid, even if their aesthetics are a shambles. I heard while they were building, they broke through into the nerubian tunnels and had their people snatched up by the Nerub'ar—Scourge nerubians. The fortress looks to still be holding, but it's half-covered in webs like a thing of nightmares.

I heard they used to hold Alliance deserters they caught running off from Valiance Keep in the pigsty here, too. *Serves 'em right if they did.*

I don't know who originally built the mage tower at the **Amber Ledge**, but the Kirin Tor made a little camp at its foot, which they used as a staging area when Malygos really lost his marbles and started his war against the magi. There's a ruined bridge that runs from the tower to Coldarra, but it was broken long ago. I'd wager it was Malygos who destroyed it, probably blew it up with some bit of magic to keep the magi from prying into his plans. If so, it's the worst move he could have made; I've never met a mage who didn't have twice the curiosity of a cat and less than half one's self-preservative instincts.

During the Nexus War, the red dragon Surristrasz was stationed at Amber Ledge. He's still there, keeping the younger red dragons that work with the Kirin Tor in line.

Just below Amber Ledge, **Beryl Point** was once dotted with arcane prisons that floated above glowing blue stone circles. Dragonkin from the blue dragonflight and their human sorcerer accomplices captured mages during the Nexus War and stuffed them in those little boxes to imprison them—all that's left now are broken remnants of those prisons, mercifully. They even snatched up one of the Kirin Tor, Archmage Evamor, and locked her away. Lucky for her she got rescued.

EVERY TIME I THINK ABOUT THOSE BOXES ... BRRR.



ARMOR ASIDE: THE EARTHSHATTERER

The shaman came late to the Alliance, but our people found their connection to the elements just fine. (Us dwarves had a leg up because we're so close to the earth, I bet. Just ask the Wildhammers.) Shaman become deadly warriors, unstoppable spellcasters, and quick-witted healers by working respectfully with the elements. The shaman show their allegiance to the elements with the decorative symbols on this Earthshatterer armor, and it gives them the power to protect the allies even further.





COLDARRA

The Borean Tundra is already a place of inhospitable cold, but the brittle air of Coldarra is far beyond that. The island rises high above the Frozen Sea, presenting high, craggy cliffs in all directions and no way in without flying. It's always covered in snow, maybe because of a trick of ocean currents. This is the ancestral home of Malygos the Spell-Weaver and his blue dragonflight.

Prior to the Nexus War, rifts that seeped magical energy opened up in the island's face and beneath the water around it, a sign of Malygos's plotting that set off little quakes up and down the coast.

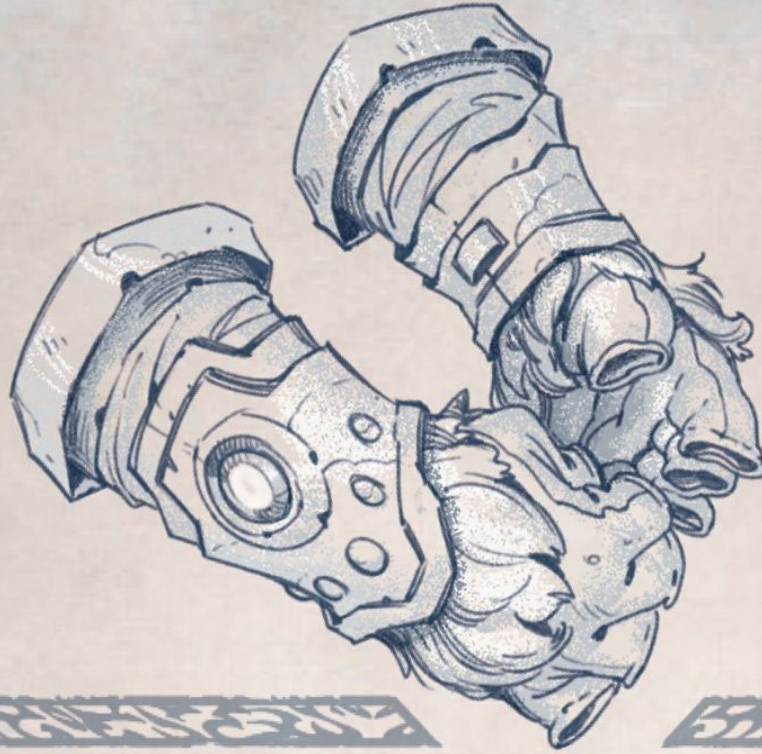
Malygos started out as the guardian of arcane magic when the titans created the dragons. He lost most of his dragonflight during the War of the Ancients, killed by Deathwing and the Demon Soul. The story goes that after their loss, he hid out in Coldarra for thousands of years, slowly going mad. When Deathwing was defeated in the second war, the red dragons say he seemed to be coming back to himself . . . but then he decided that all the mortal spellcasters around Azeroth were using too much arcane magic, and he risked bringing the Burning Legion back. The red dragons have said he wasn't wrong—don't know if I agree, but I'm no mage—but he decided to fix this problem his way, by imprisoning and destroying all mortal mages and realigning the flow of magic to point toward Coldarra. And that, a lot of us had a problem with.

NEXUS

The Nexus is where Malygos gathered all that arcane energy during the Nexus War. Even before that, it was a fortress, but not one any of us mortal two-leggers could have imagined. Ice caverns comprise its base, and then rings of floating land stack upward in a great column over the island, rotating about a massive beam of pure arcane energy. That beam shot into the Twisting Nether and opened rips in reality itself. That brought the Kirin Tor together with the red dragonflight to stop Malygos, with help from the Alliance and the Horde alike. Everyone had an interest in not allowing the world to be torn apart. Imagine that.

The Nexus War was a short but brutal conflict. At the end, Malygos was defeated by the Aspect of the red dragonflight, Alexstrasza, with a lot of help on the ground. After Malygos's death, the Nexus stayed standing, though the blue dragonflight was scattered. It was attacked by the twilight dragonflight during the Cataclysm—hard for any dragon not to covet that much arcane energy, perhaps.

Not just dragons.



ARMOR ASIDE: GLOVES OF GLISTENING RUNES

These gloves are in some ways a memorial to **Keristrasza**, a red dragon who was imprisoned by Malygos when she refused to bow to him. After she was released from the arcane prison he locked her in, she continued the fight against him in the Nexus War and lured Saragosa, Malygos's consort, to her death. In vengeance, Malygos forced Keristrasza to be his new consort. He tormented her and branded her body with runes—like those on these gloves—until she went madder than him. The only escape for her after that was death.



GEYSER FIELDS

A hydrothermal system underlies the area around the airstrip, which causes the geyser fields to the southeast. The fields are crawling with undead nerubians, tunneling beneath them . . . which may answer why the geyser fields are relatively dry, if the nerubian tunnels are draining water away as well as interfering with the oil drilling. Systems of hot spring pools surround the geyser fields on all sides. There's Steam Springs to the west, which are still occupied by hostile robots, the Scalding Pools to the east, and the Festering Pools to the north, which the undead still control.

The Fizzcrank Pumping Station, an oil platform the gnomes built to make fuel for their flying machines, sits in the geyser fields. There are enough natural oil seeps around that you see oil-soaked wildlife too. The whole place stinks of sulfur—and far worse, up north where the undead are—and the pools are crusted with all sorts of interesting mineralizations that turn the landscape a pale white or bright yellow.

KASKALA

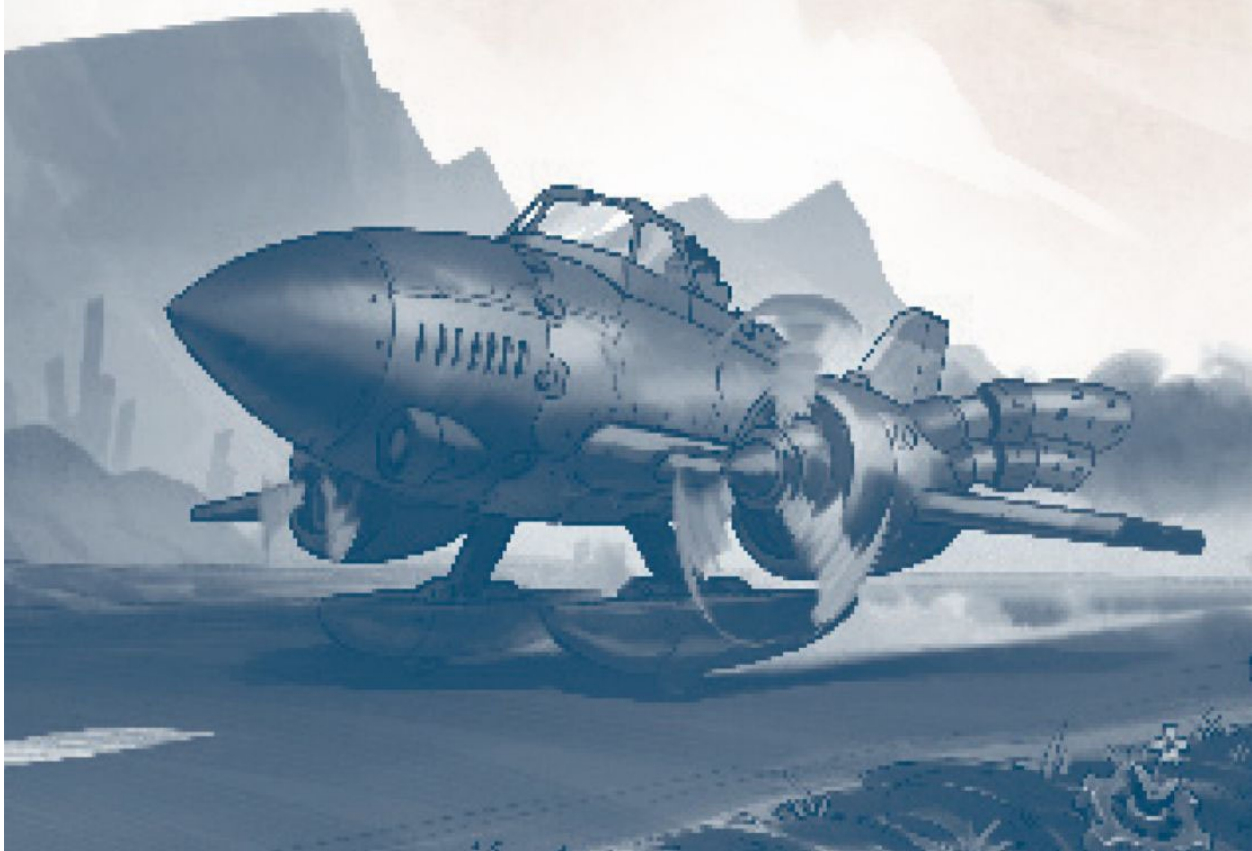
Kaskala, the former tuskarr capital, used to be the biggest of their ports, until the kvaldir longships came sailing out of the mists and the slaughter began. The survivors fled east to Unu'pe, where many of them still are.

Kaskala is home to many of the carved stone statues that house the spirits of long-gone tuskarr elders, and that alone makes the invasion of the kvaldir more difficult for them to bear. The tuskarr say they'll take Kaskala back; they're not a vengeful people, but they believe in retribution against those who have killed their kin. They're also a very patient people. Maybe that comes from their spirits finding home in stone—stone endures.

There are stone elders all around the Borean Tundra, ranging in size from shorter than Brann to taller than a house. A lot of those statues are by the coast—Brann says to mark their fishing routes—but I've seen some big ones inland too.

FIZZCRANK AIRSTRIP

Fizzcrank Airstrip rings with the sounds of hammer on anvil morning through night, though half the time you can barely hear them over the gnomish flying machines taking off. The airstrip overlooks the geyser fields and its pools of stinking, boiling water. **Fizzcrank Fullthrottle** himself designed and oversaw the building of the airstrip when the Alliance forces under General Arlos arrived. The gnome engineers thought it was an ideal location to launch recon flights—and it was also near the crashed necropolis Talramas, so they could scrounge interesting mechanical parts from it.



Turns out some of the parts weren't from the necropolis. One day while a crew was siphoning oil off the pump station in the geyser fields, they found a bunch of strange mechanical parts stuck in their pipelines. Since no gnome can turn down a puzzle, they figured out that all those parts belonged together, and they rebuilt them into a robot that looked like a giant gnome. It turned on, called itself Gearmaster Mechazod, and informed all the gnomes that they were flawed beings, mechagnomes who had been tainted by the Curse of Flesh. Lucky for them, Mechazod was going to turn them right back into mechagnomes—and some of the gnomes, he did. Fizzcrank lost several people to being turned into angry little robots before Mechazod got stopped.

The airstrip stayed active even after the Lich King was defeated due to its strategic location. During the Fourth War, the Ironbound attacked it and they had to call in help from New Tinkertown. A G.E.A.R. detachment got to Northrend in the nick of time.

WHAT A WAY TO FIND OUT THE ORIGINS OF YOUR PEOPLE!





TAUNKA'LE VILLAGE

Right at the edge of Steam Springs there was a village called Taunka'le. The taunka used the steam from the hot springs to help prepare hides for leatherworking. It's long been overrun with Scourge from En'kilah. I heard tales of Chieftain Wintergale, who had to convince his own people to evacuate east to Icemist Village in the face of the Scourge; he stayed behind to defend the village. Taunka'le is a ruin now, a village that almost looks tauren crawling with leaderless Scourge. I'm surprised the taunka haven't taken it back, the way the tuskarr are working to pry their villages from the kvaldir. But mayhap it's different when it's undead getting their stink all over everything.

It may be the spirits telling them to go.

WHEN I WAS LAST IN ONEQWAH, THEY SAID TAUNKA'LE WAS A PLACE OF TOO MANY BAD MEMORIES. THEY WON'T COME BACK.



PAL'EA

Last I saw Pal'ea, it was in ruins, completely overrun with more kvaldir and choked with their foul mists. The tuskarr houses looked like the skeletons of beached whales. I don't know how the tuskarr retook Pal'ea, but take it back they did, and they're still building, making it bigger than before! The tuskarr lookouts were a wee bit nervous seeing us come up, but as soon as they realized we were too short to be kvaldir, most of that wariness dissipated and we shared a fine meal together. It may well be Pal'ea will always bear the scar of having been destroyed and rebuilt. Nothing's ever quite the same the second time around.

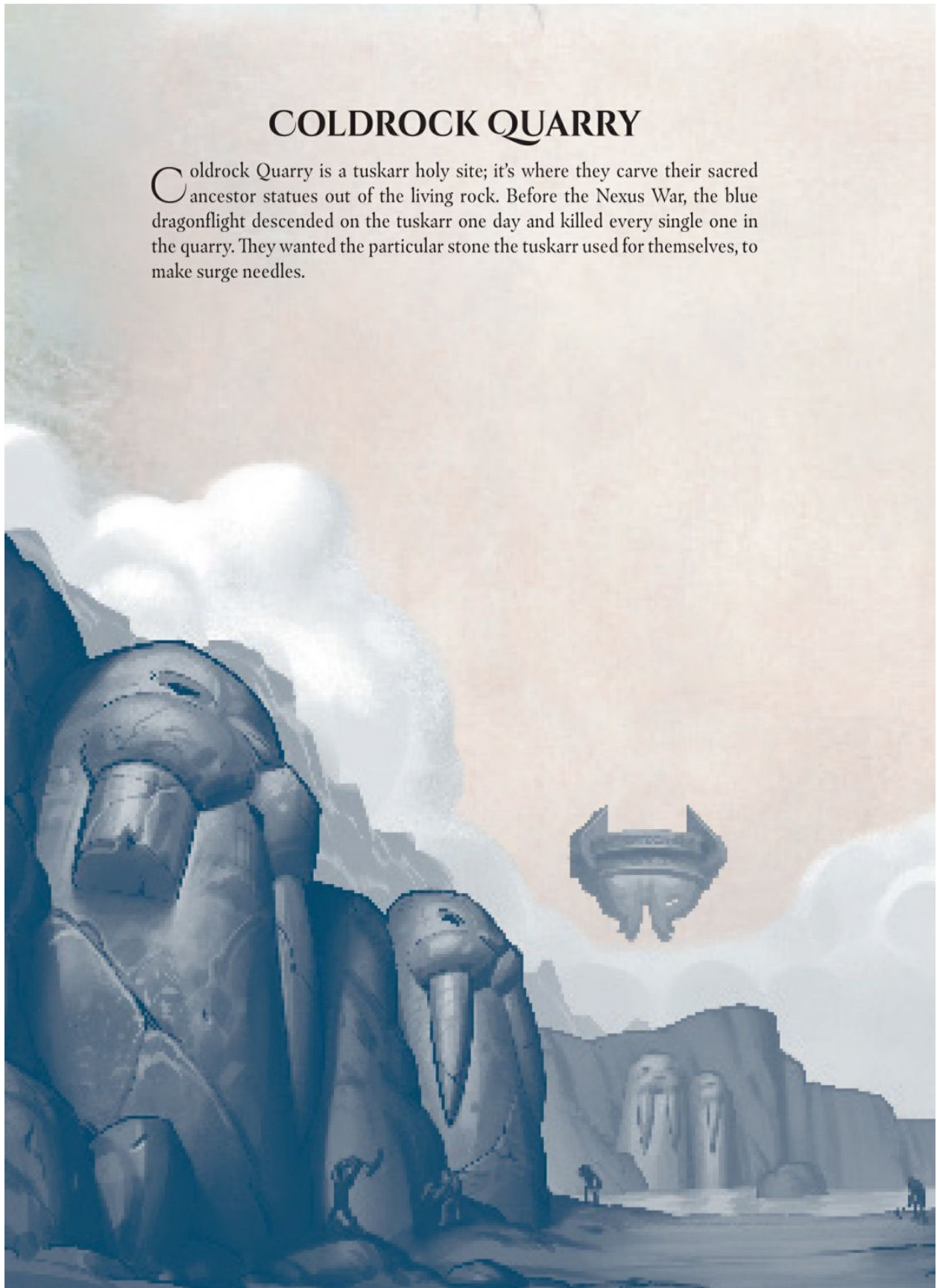
Pal'ea's watched over by the biggest stone elder I've seen in any tuskarr village. Maybe that's what helped them regain their home.

FROZEN SEA

The water to the south of Northrend and all the way down to the Maelstrom is the Frozen Sea, though that's really but a part of the Great Sea. It's a place to see icebergs from the size of houses to the size of islands floating along, and the strong, biting winds make for choppy waters at the best of times. The tuskarr are the masters of sailing these waters and fishing them. They hunt whales and fish for schools of deep sea monsterbellies, moonglow cuttlefish, and rockfin groupers. I've seen them sail through ice floes that none of our captains would go near without an icebreaker, singing songs to the icebergs as they haul their catch.

COLDROCK QUARRY

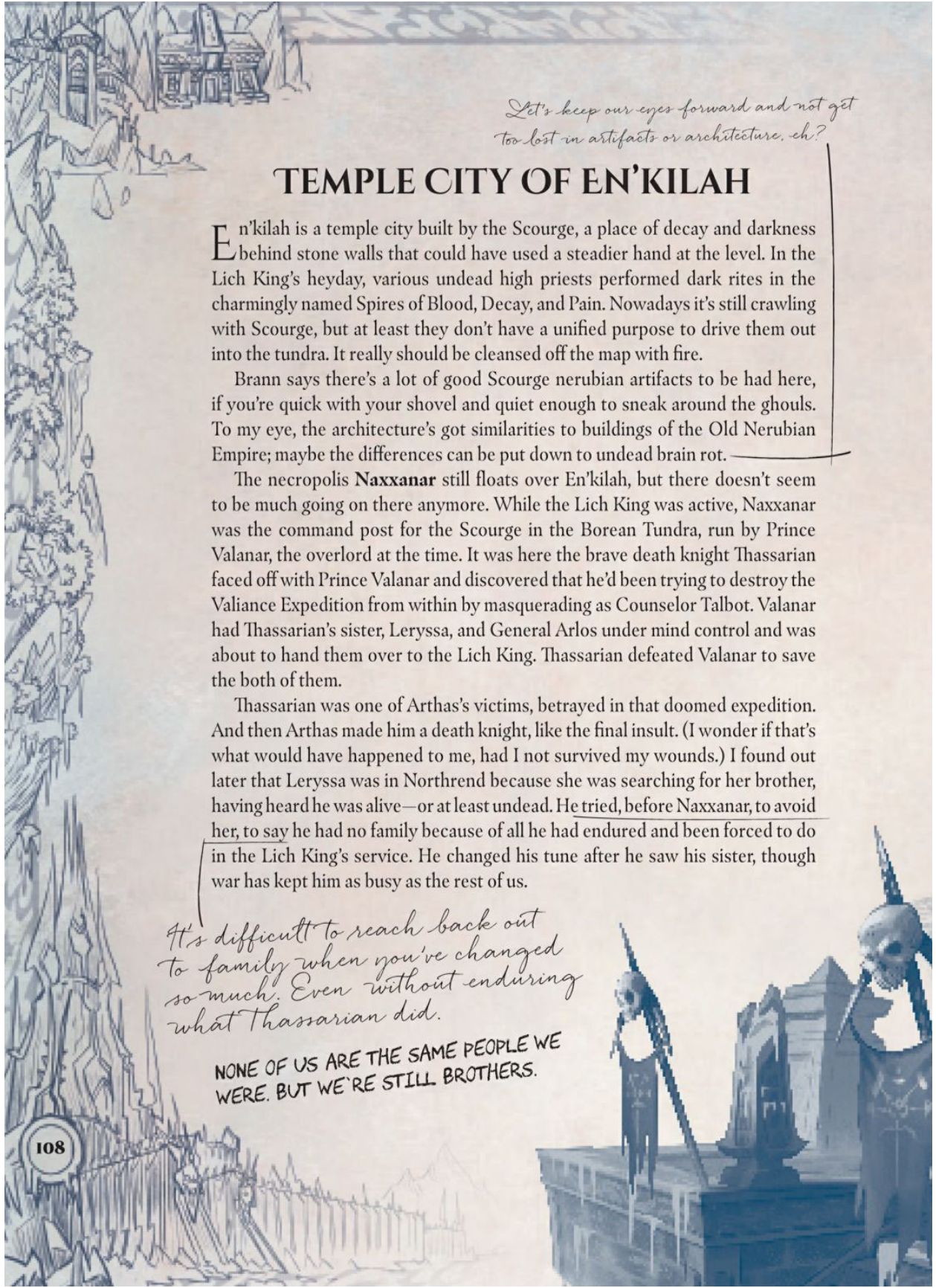
Coldrock Quarry is a tuskarr holy site; it's where they carve their sacred ancestor statues out of the living rock. Before the Nexus War, the blue dragonflight descended on the tuskarr one day and killed every single one in the quarry. They wanted the particular stone the tuskarr used for themselves, to make surge needles.



As we passed through, we saw new, brightly colored kites floating in the breeze over the quarry. A crew of tuskarr were there, and we stopped to talk with them. They're reclaiming their quarry, a process that'll be a long one, from what they said. The spirits of their slain shaman still wander among the rocks and must be laid to rest, and the wreckage of fallen surge needles befoils the ground. But their spirits were high, and they sang to their elders as they worked. They let us join in a piece to clear some of the ground, and Magni spoke a great deal with one of their shaman. We were all fair tired at the end of the day, but it felt like one of the best we'd spent in Northrend yet.

I hope the tuskarr will be able to do the same in Kaskala, soon.





Let's keep our eyes forward and not get too lost in artifacts or architecture, eh?

TEMPLE CITY OF EN'KILAH

En'kilah is a temple city built by the Scourge, a place of decay and darkness behind stone walls that could have used a steadier hand at the level. In the Lich King's heyday, various undead high priests performed dark rites in the charmingly named Spires of Blood, Decay, and Pain. Nowadays it's still crawling with Scourge, but at least they don't have a unified purpose to drive them out into the tundra. It really should be cleansed off the map with fire.

Brann says there's a lot of good Scourge nerubian artifacts to be had here, if you're quick with your shovel and quiet enough to sneak around the ghouls. To my eye, the architecture's got similarities to buildings of the Old Nerubian Empire; maybe the differences can be put down to undead brain rot.

The necropolis **Naxxanar** still floats over En'kilah, but there doesn't seem to be much going on there anymore. While the Lich King was active, Naxxanar was the command post for the Scourge in the Borean Tundra, run by Prince Valanar, the overlord at the time. It was here the brave death knight Thassarian faced off with Prince Valanar and discovered that he'd been trying to destroy the Valiance Expedition from within by masquerading as Counselor Talbot. Valanar had Thassarian's sister, Leryssa, and General Arlos under mind control and was about to hand them over to the Lich King. Thassarian defeated Valanar to save the both of them.

Thassarian was one of Arthas's victims, betrayed in that doomed expedition. And then Arthas made him a death knight, like the final insult. (I wonder if that's what would have happened to me, had I not survived my wounds.) I found out later that Leryssa was in Northrend because she was searching for her brother, having heard he was alive—or at least undead. He tried, before Naxxanar, to avoid her, to say he had no family because of all he had endured and been forced to do in the Lich King's service. He changed his tune after he saw his sister, though war has kept him as busy as the rest of us.

It's difficult to reach back out to family when you've changed so much. Even without enduring what Thassarian did.

NONE OF US ARE THE SAME PEOPLE WE WERE. BUT WE'RE STILL BROTHERS.





—◆— VII —◆—

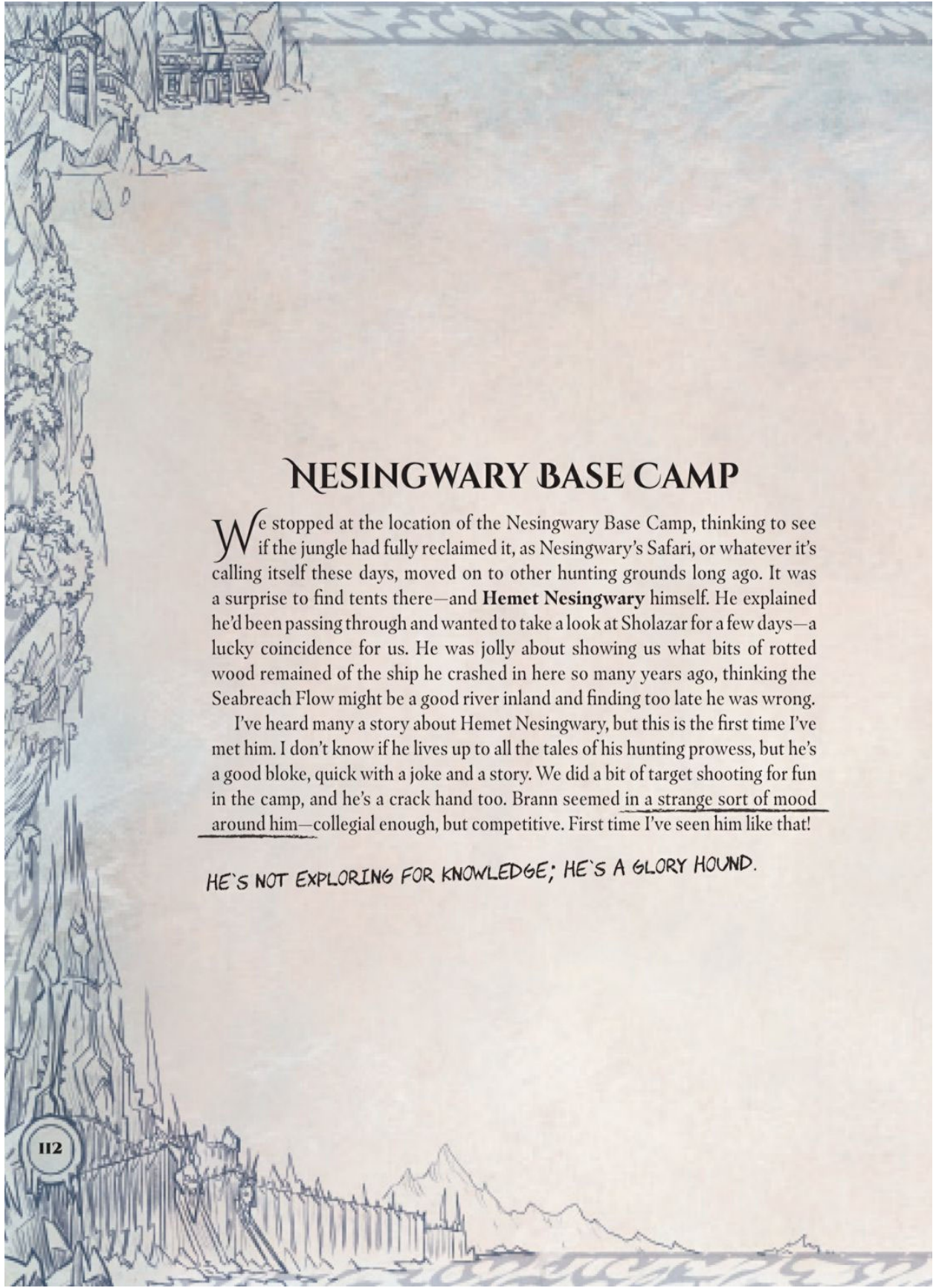
SHOLAZAR BASIN

After the bitter cold of the rest of Northrend, Sholazar Basin is like stepping onto an entirely different plane. It's tropical, hot, and beard-curlingly humid. This is all the doing of the keepers and the magical artifacts they left to protect the basin from both ill weather and foul creatures like the Scourge. It is a terrifying amount of power for a few beings to wield when you think of it—it took the whole of Kirin Tor to “magic” Dalaran, and that’s not even a fraction of the size of Sholazar. And to what purpose? A benign love of the life they’ve created, perhaps, but I’ve seen how corrupting power can be. It’s a beautiful place, but it makes me itch in a way that’s got nothing to do with the humidity.

IT'S A FASCINATING PLACE—THE WHOLE HISTORY OF SHOLAZAR IS THAT OF A CRADLE OF LIFE, WITH AT LEAST SOME OF THE TITAN KEEPERS TAKING AN INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL. BUT I AGREE . . . I'VE ALSO SEEN SOME OF THE KEEPERS BE FAR LESS THAN BENIGN, AND WE'RE THE ONES TO GET CAUGHT UNDERFOOT.

We owe our existence to that power!



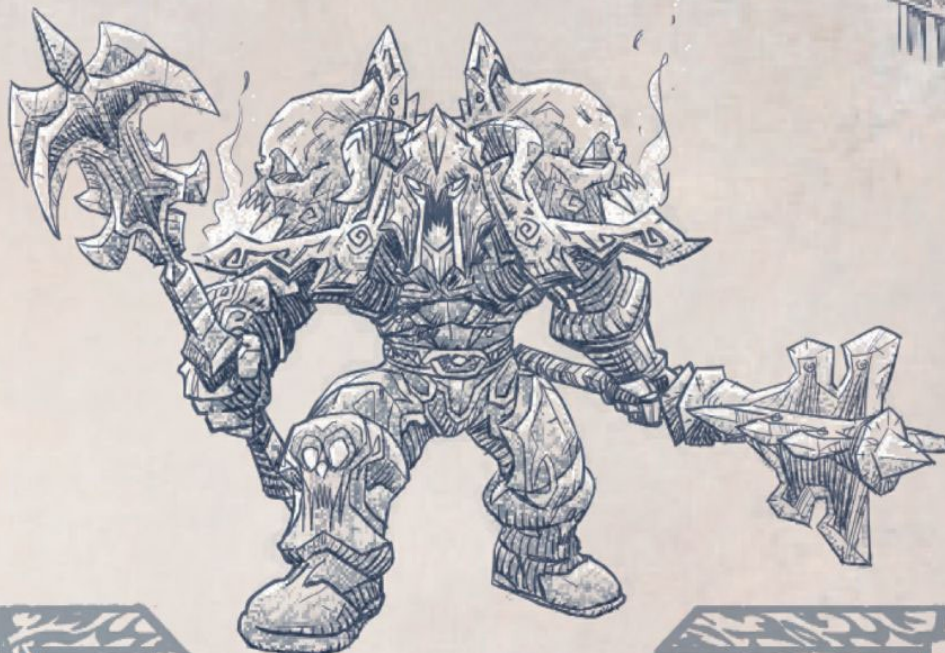


NESINGWARY BASE CAMP

We stopped at the location of the Nesingwary Base Camp, thinking to see if the jungle had fully reclaimed it, as Nesingwary's Safari, or whatever it's calling itself these days, moved on to other hunting grounds long ago. It was a surprise to find tents there—and **Hemet Nesingwary** himself. He explained he'd been passing through and wanted to take a look at Sholazar for a few days—a lucky coincidence for us. He was jolly about showing us what bits of rotted wood remained of the ship he crashed in here so many years ago, thinking the Seabreach Flow might be a good river inland and finding too late he was wrong.

I've heard many a story about Hemet Nesingwary, but this is the first time I've met him. I don't know if he lives up to all the tales of his hunting prowess, but he's a good bloke, quick with a joke and a story. We did a bit of target shooting for fun in the camp, and he's a crack hand too. Brann seemed in a strange sort of mood around him—collegial enough, but competitive. First time I've seen him like that!

HE'S NOT EXPLORING FOR KNOWLEDGE; HE'S A GLORY HOUND.



ARMOR ASIDE: DREADNAUGHT'S BATTLEGEAR

A warrior is a living weapon, an embodiment of burning rage that lets us fell a hundred enemies in one battle without feeling wounds or fatigue. This Dreadnaught's Battlegear makes the rage we carry manifest, like a warning to all who would stand against us. It was crafted from scraps taken from the fallen in battle and reformed into the armor of heroes, much like we each remake ourselves, with grit and practice, into juggernauts.


FRENZYHEART HILL

The wolvar of the Frenzyheart Tribe have a village of their typical low, round dwellings atop a hill that's been named after them. The wolvar were happy to see Brann and welcomed him like a long-lost friend—even more remarkable when they joked with him about also being friends with their sworn enemies, the Oracles. I'd no idea my little brother was such a diplomat!

But thanks to Brann already being known to the tribe, they welcomed us to their fire and told us their story over a delicious meal of roast crocolisk. The Frenzyhearts were driven from their lands by the Scourge not long ago and settled in Sholazar. They were rather vague about where those original lands were—and apparently their names for everything in Northrend are different from ours. While these are some of the calmest wolvar I've ever met, that still means every one of them is in more of an aggressive temper than our great-aunt Netty when someone's moved her knitting, so it's no surprise to me they've clashed badly with the Oracles.







SHE WAS CREATED BY KEEPER FREYA AS A FAILSAFE TO WATCH OVER SHOLAZAR BASIN IF FREYA HERSELF COULDN'T—AND THAT CAME TO PASS DUE TO LOKEN'S TREACHERY! THOUGH NOW I WONDER IF THAT MEANS THERE OUGHT TO BE SOMETHING LIKE THE LIFEWARDEN IN UN'GORO AS WELL . . .

LIFEWARDEN

The Avatar of Freya, also called the Lifewarden, stands watch over the blighted lands near the fallen Lifeblood Pillar. Freya's always been associated with life and its protection.

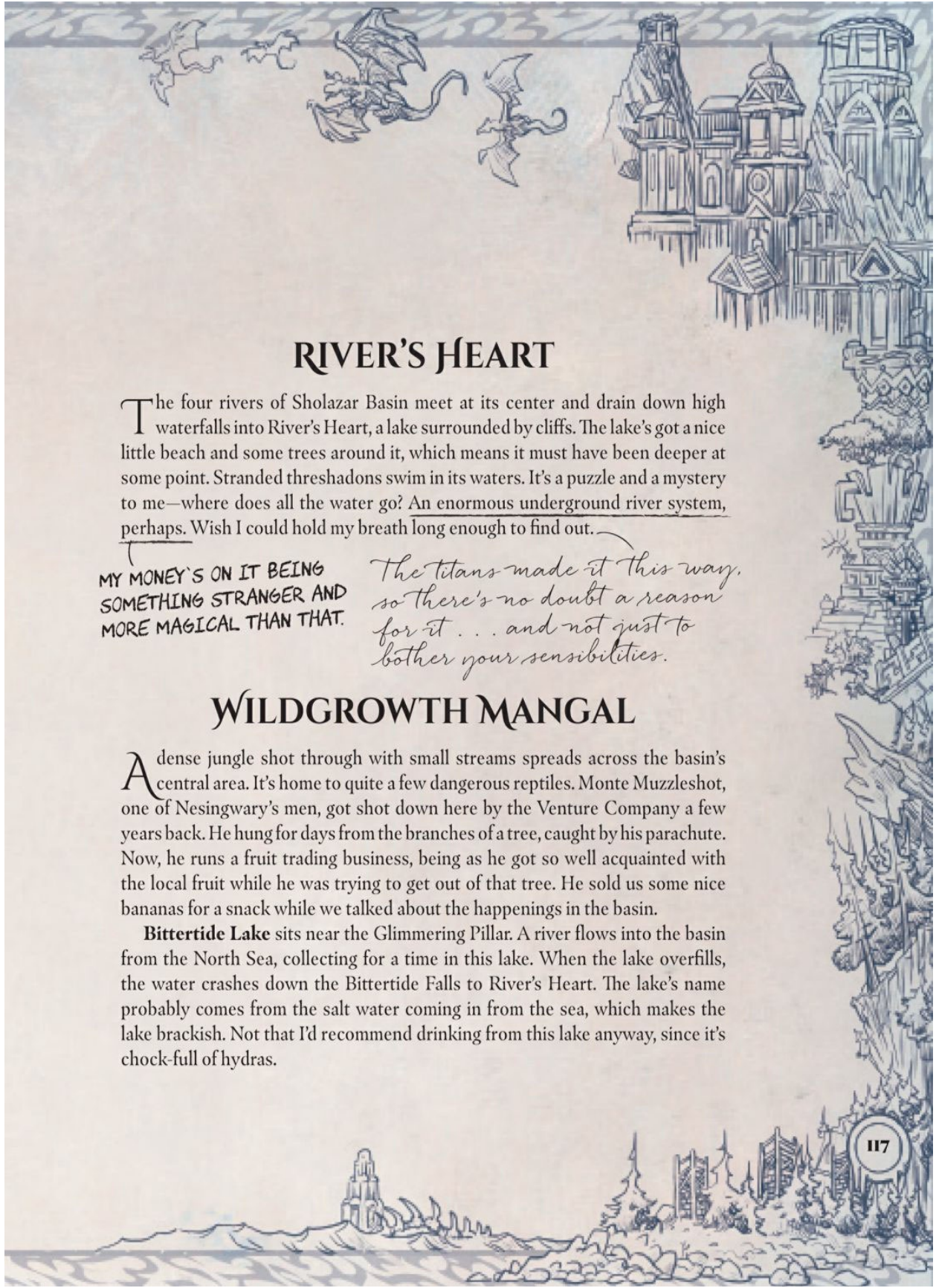
After we asked her how the lands fared—the short answer was *better than they were during the war, and healing slowly*—I thought it worth bringing up our ancestor, Mina Stormsmith, whose name and identity we'd learned more about from the tuskarr at Moa'ki Harbor. The Lifewarden said she remembers all living things that have been under her care.

She had met this Mina, who'd apparently made it here from Dragonblight. The Lifewarden said: "For one of your kind, she was very young, though she carried herself with the determination of a warrior. She wielded an ax that she said was all that remained of her brother; there was an emanation of Light and Life about that weapon, and it meant she did not walk alone.

She stayed with me for a bit, asking for stories of the titans and keepers and helping me with my work. I was . . . sad . . . to see her leave, but she asked me many questions about the Forge of Wills before she left, and I had frustrated her with my lack of answers. She decided her path led next to Ulduar."

An ax? And Icebellow said it had your runes on it, Muradin? That doesn't make sense.

WELL, SHE SURELY HAD THE FAMILY'S CURSE OF CURIOSITY!



RIVER'S HEART

The four rivers of Sholazar Basin meet at its center and drain down high waterfalls into River's Heart, a lake surrounded by cliffs. The lake's got a nice little beach and some trees around it, which means it must have been deeper at some point. Stranded threashadons swim in its waters. It's a puzzle and a mystery to me—where does all the water go? An enormous underground river system, perhaps. Wish I could hold my breath long enough to find out.

MY MONEY'S ON IT BEING SOMETHING STRANGER AND MORE MAGICAL THAN THAT.

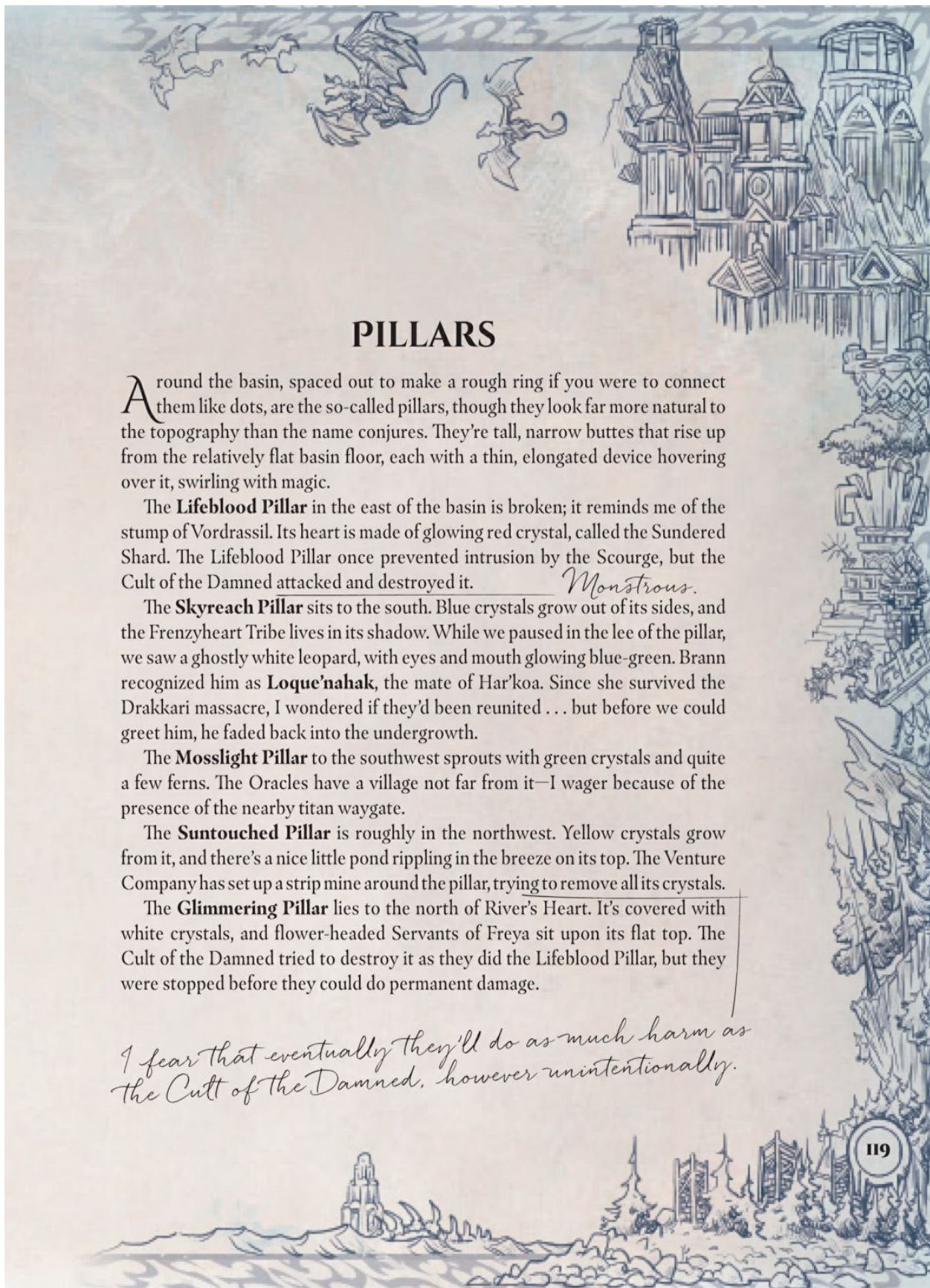
The titans made it this way, so there's no doubt a reason for it . . . and not just to bother your sensibilities.

WILDGROWTH MANGAL

A dense jungle shot through with small streams spreads across the basin's central area. It's home to quite a few dangerous reptiles. Monte Muzzleshot, one of Nesingwary's men, got shot down here by the Venture Company a few years back. He hung for days from the branches of a tree, caught by his parachute. Now, he runs a fruit trading business, being as he got so well acquainted with the local fruit while he was trying to get out of that tree. He sold us some nice bananas for a snack while we talked about the happenings in the basin.

Bittertide Lake sits near the Glimmering Pillar. A river flows into the basin from the North Sea, collecting for a time in this lake. When the lake overfills, the water crashes down the Bittertide Falls to River's Heart. The lake's name probably comes from the salt water coming in from the sea, which makes the lake brackish. Not that I'd recommend drinking from this lake anyway, since it's chock-full of hydras.





PILLARS

Around the basin, spaced out to make a rough ring if you were to connect them like dots, are the so-called pillars, though they look far more natural to the topography than the name conjures. They're tall, narrow buttes that rise up from the relatively flat basin floor, each with a thin, elongated device hovering over it, swirling with magic.

The **Lifeblood Pillar** in the east of the basin is broken; it reminds me of the stump of Vordrassil. Its heart is made of glowing red crystal, called the Sundered Shard. The Lifeblood Pillar once prevented intrusion by the Scourge, but the Cult of the Damned attacked and destroyed it. *Monstrous.*

The **Skyreach Pillar** sits to the south. Blue crystals grow out of its sides, and the Frenzyheart Tribe lives in its shadow. While we paused in the lee of the pillar, we saw a ghostly white leopard, with eyes and mouth glowing blue-green. Brann recognized him as **Loque'nahak**, the mate of Har'koa. Since she survived the Drakkari massacre, I wondered if they'd been reunited . . . but before we could greet him, he faded back into the undergrowth.

The **Mosslight Pillar** to the southwest sprouts with green crystals and quite a few ferns. The Oracles have a village not far from it—I wager because of the presence of the nearby titan waygate.

The **Suntouched Pillar** is roughly in the northwest. Yellow crystals grow from it, and there's a nice little pond rippling in the breeze on its top. The Venture Company has set up a strip mine around the pillar, trying to remove all its crystals.

The **Glimmering Pillar** lies to the north of River's Heart. It's covered with white crystals, and flower-headed Servants of Freya sit upon its flat top. The Cult of the Damned tried to destroy it as they did the Lifeblood Pillar, but they were stopped before they could do permanent damage.

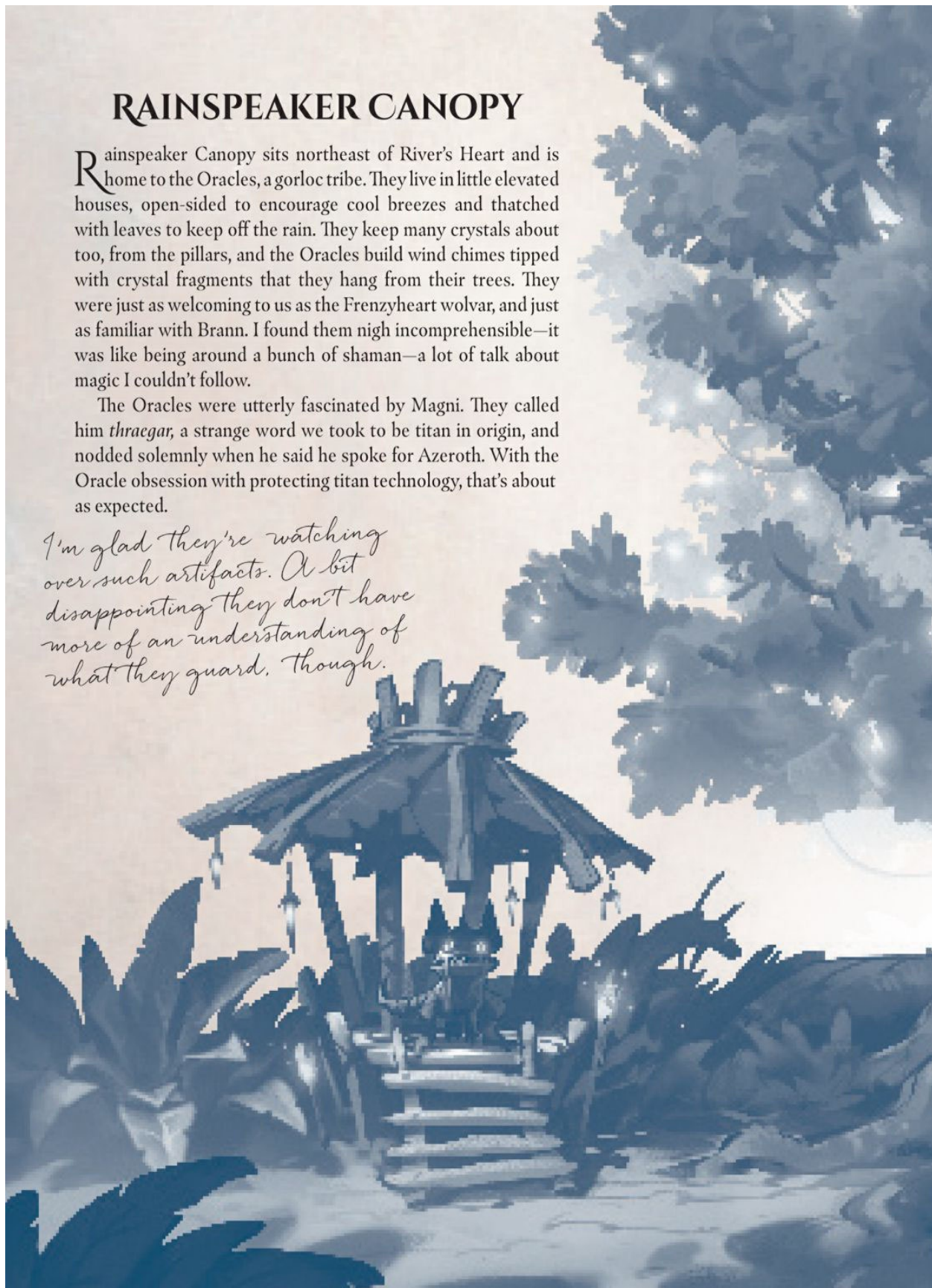
I fear that eventually they'll do as much harm as the Cult of the Damned, however unintentionally.

RAINSPEAKER CANOPY

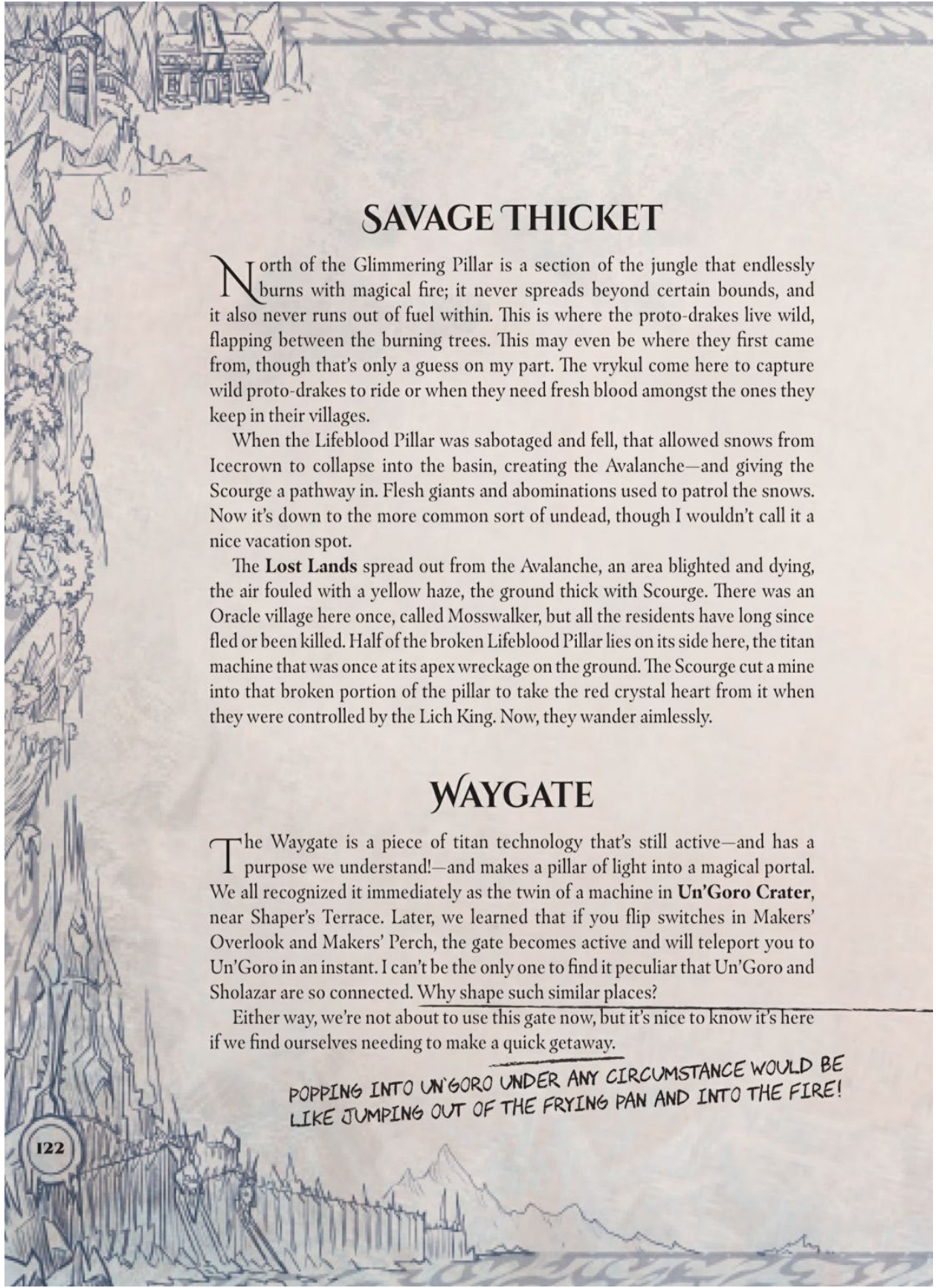
Rainspeaker Canopy sits northeast of River's Heart and is home to the Oracles, a gorloc tribe. They live in little elevated houses, open-sided to encourage cool breezes and thatched with leaves to keep off the rain. They keep many crystals about too, from the pillars, and the Oracles build wind chimes tipped with crystal fragments that they hang from their trees. They were just as welcoming to us as the Frenzyheart wolvar, and just as familiar with Brann. I found them nigh incomprehensible—it was like being around a bunch of shaman—a lot of talk about magic I couldn't follow.

The Oracles were utterly fascinated by Magni. They called him *thraegar*, a strange word we took to be titan in origin, and nodded solemnly when he said he spoke for Azeroth. With the Oracle obsession with protecting titan technology, that's about as expected.

I'm glad they're watching over such artifacts. A bit disappointing they don't have more of an understanding of what they guard, though.







SAVAGE THICKET

North of the Glimmering Pillar is a section of the jungle that endlessly burns with magical fire; it never spreads beyond certain bounds, and it also never runs out of fuel within. This is where the proto-drakes live wild, flapping between the burning trees. This may even be where they first came from, though that's only a guess on my part. The vrykul come here to capture wild proto-drakes to ride or when they need fresh blood amongst the ones they keep in their villages.

When the Lifeblood Pillar was sabotaged and fell, that allowed snows from Icecrown to collapse into the basin, creating the Avalanche—and giving the Scourge a pathway in. Flesh giants and abominations used to patrol the snows. Now it's down to the more common sort of undead, though I wouldn't call it a nice vacation spot.

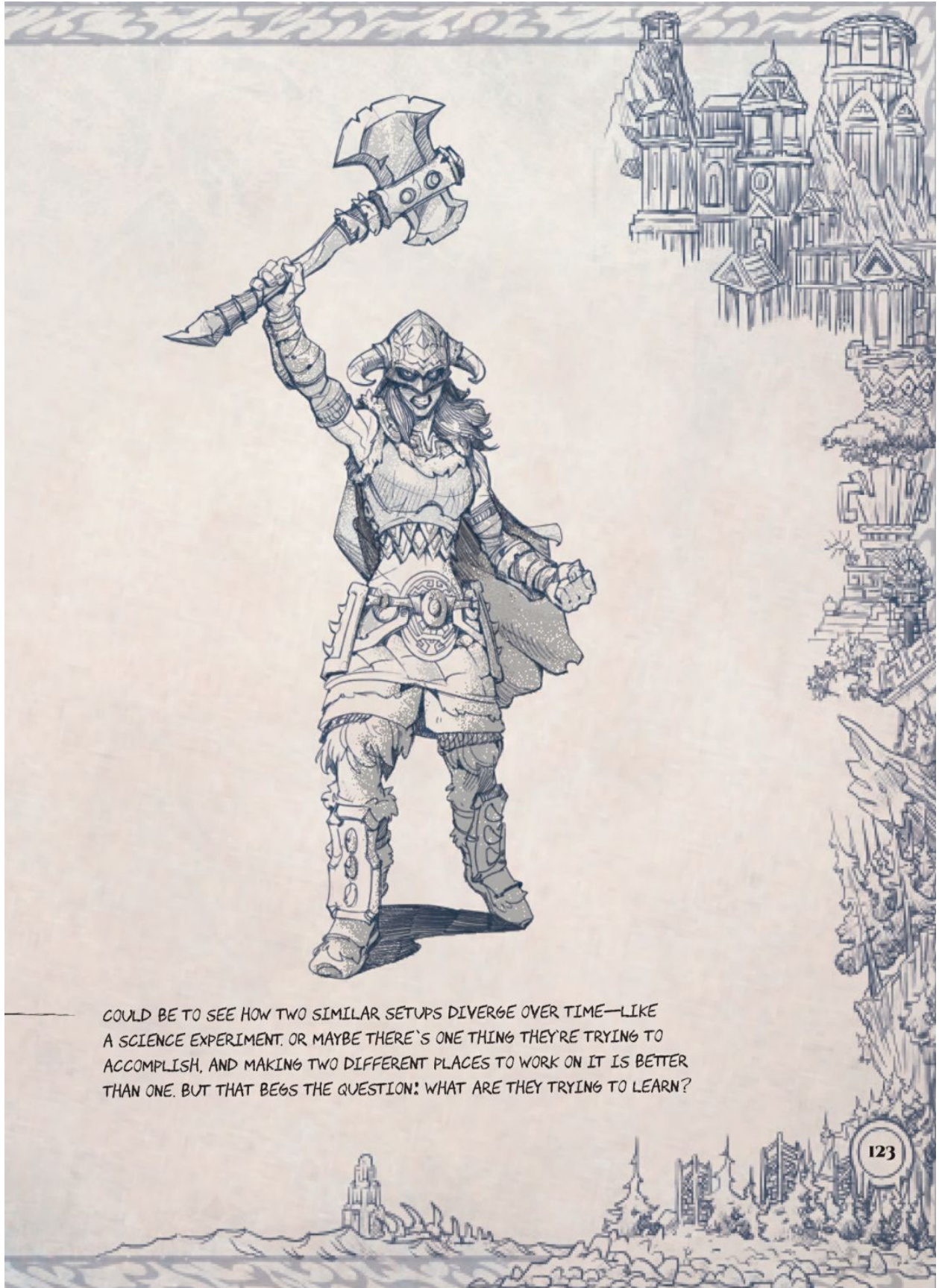
The **Lost Lands** spread out from the Avalanche, an area blighted and dying, the air fouled with a yellow haze, the ground thick with Scourge. There was an Oracle village here once, called Mosswalker, but all the residents have long since fled or been killed. Half of the broken Lifeblood Pillar lies on its side here, the titan machine that was once at its apex wreckage on the ground. The Scourge cut a mine into that broken portion of the pillar to take the red crystal heart from it when they were controlled by the Lich King. Now, they wander aimlessly.

WAYGATE

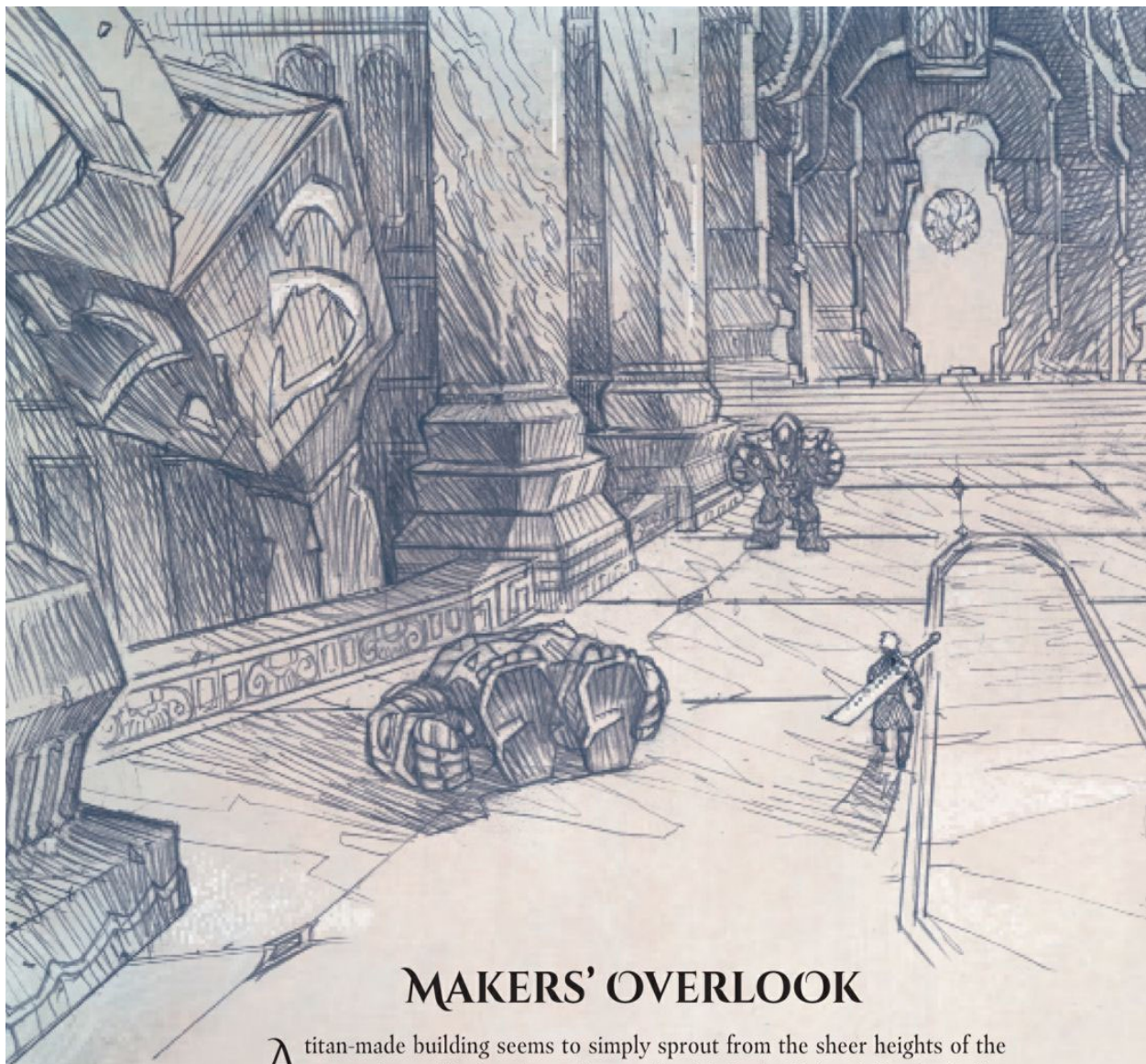
The Waygate is a piece of titan technology that's still active—and has a purpose we understand!—and makes a pillar of light into a magical portal. We all recognized it immediately as the twin of a machine in **Un'Goro Crater**, near Shaper's Terrace. Later, we learned that if you flip switches in Makers' Overlook and Makers' Perch, the gate becomes active and will teleport you to Un'Goro in an instant. I can't be the only one to find it peculiar that Un'Goro and Sholazar are so connected. Why shape such similar places?

Either way, we're not about to use this gate now, but it's nice to know it's here if we find ourselves needing to make a quick getaway.

POPPING INTO UN'GORO UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE WOULD BE LIKE JUMPING OUT OF THE FRYING PAN AND INTO THE FIRE!



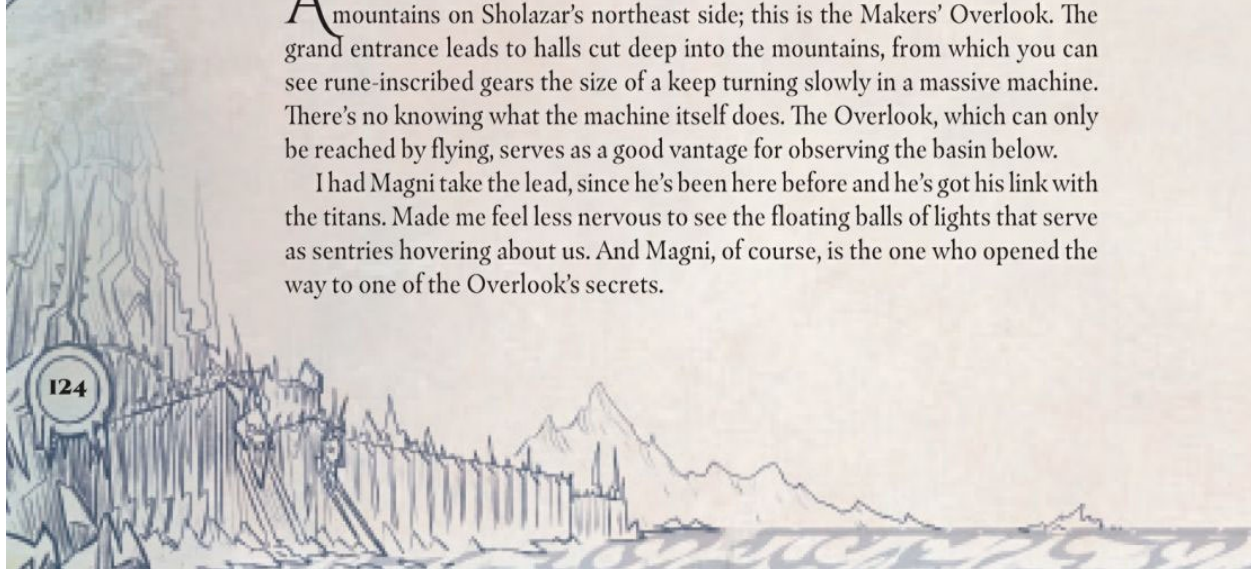
COULD BE TO SEE HOW TWO SIMILAR SETUPS DIVERGE OVER TIME—LIKE A SCIENCE EXPERIMENT. OR MAYBE THERE'S ONE THING THEY'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH, AND MAKING TWO DIFFERENT PLACES TO WORK ON IT IS BETTER THAN ONE. BUT THAT BEGS THE QUESTION: WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO LEARN?

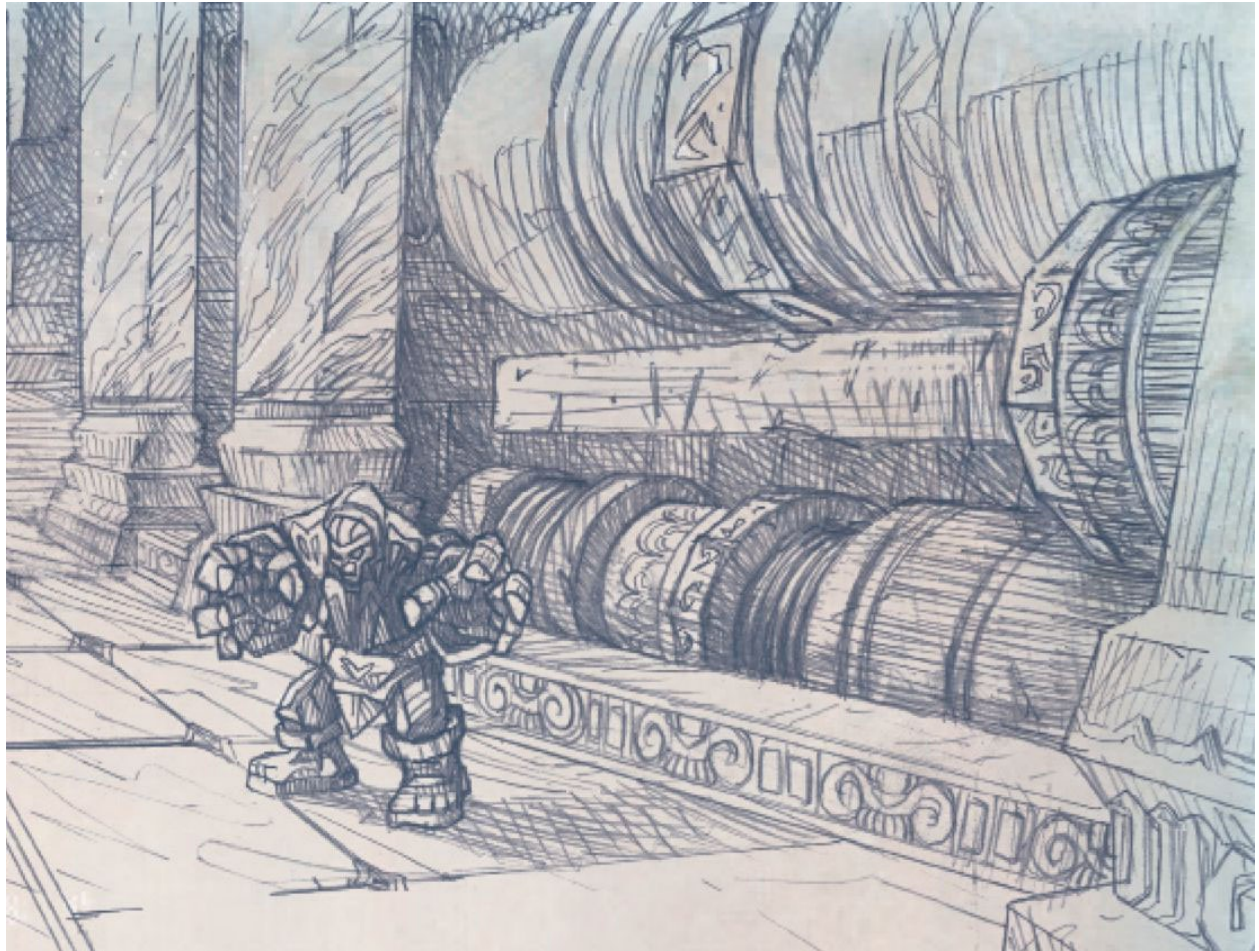


MAKERS' OVERLOOK

A titan-made building seems to simply sprout from the sheer heights of the mountains on Sholazar's northeast side; this is the Makers' Overlook. The grand entrance leads to halls cut deep into the mountains, from which you can see rune-inscribed gears the size of a keep turning slowly in a massive machine. There's no knowing what the machine itself does. The Overlook, which can only be reached by flying, serves as a good vantage for observing the basin below.

I had Magni take the lead, since he's been here before and he's got his link with the titans. Made me feel less nervous to see the floating balls of lights that serve as sentries hovering about us. And Magni, of course, is the one who opened the way to one of the Overlook's secrets.



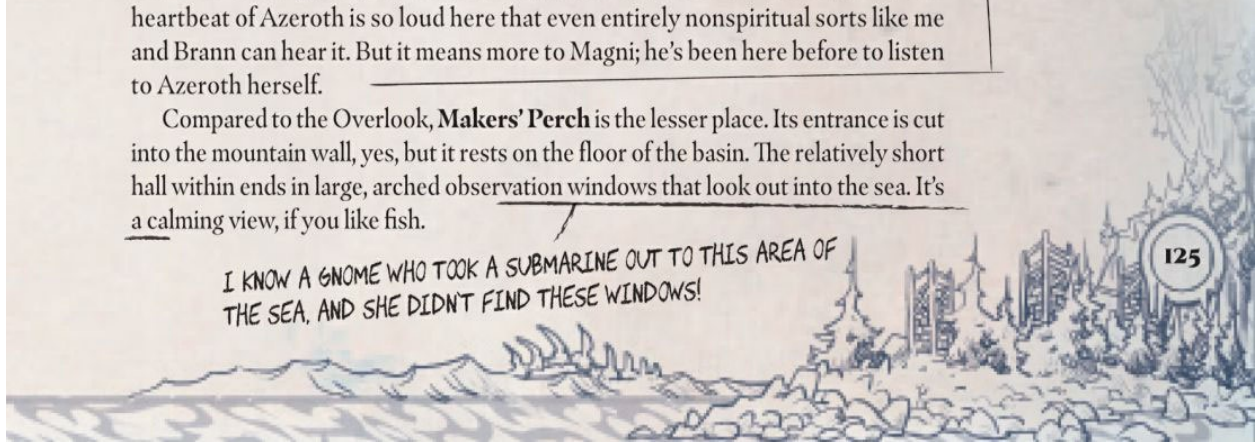


When the Jailer tried to pull her soul into the Shadowlands, Azeroth's screams of agony nearly split my head in two. But since her spirit was restored, it's like she's started to sing a new song, a melody of hope and healing. At long last, it feels as though a new age is dawning for us all.

A hidden teleporter in Makers' Overlook takes you to the **Hall of Communion**, long and ornate and echoing empty. It's of a different kind of stone than the Overlook; I think it might be in a different part of the world entirely. At the end of the hall is a room with what look like the large, carved heads of titans gazing out from its walls: the **Chamber of Observance**. The heartbeat of Azeroth is so loud here that even entirely nonspiritual sorts like me and Brann can hear it. But it means more to Magni; he's been here before to listen to Azeroth herself.

Compared to the Overlook, **Makers' Perch** is the lesser place. Its entrance is cut into the mountain wall, yes, but it rests on the floor of the basin. The relatively short hall within ends in large, arched observation windows that look out into the sea. It's a calming view, if you like fish.

I KNOW A GNOME WHO TOOK A SUBMARINE OUT TO THIS AREA OF THE SEA, AND SHE DIDN'T FIND THESE WINDOWS!



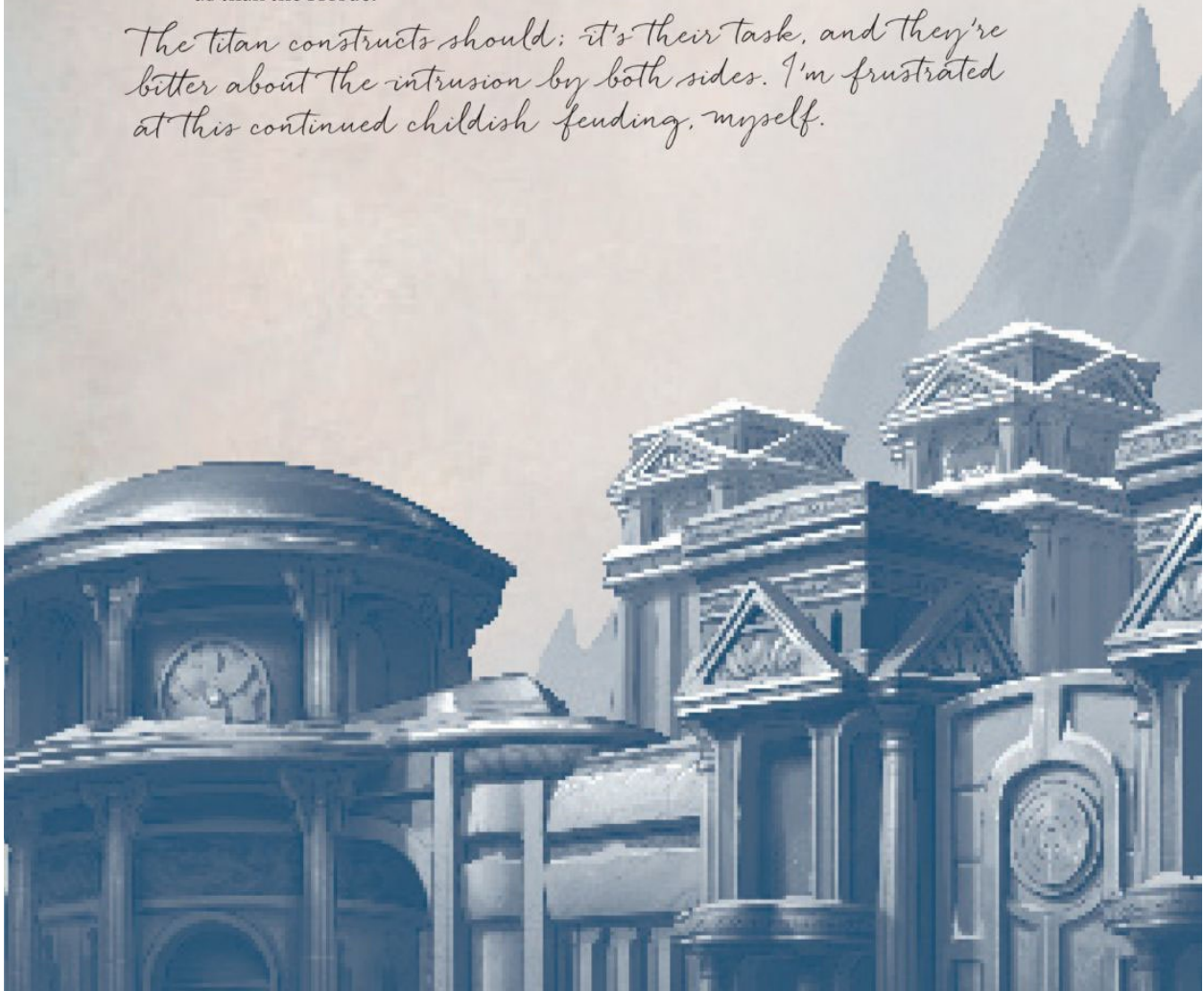
I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THE RELICS DO, WHAT THEIR STORIES ARE. BUT USING THEM? BEST LEFT ALONE UNLESS WE'RE ALREADY AT THE POINT OF WORLD-ENDING DISASTER.

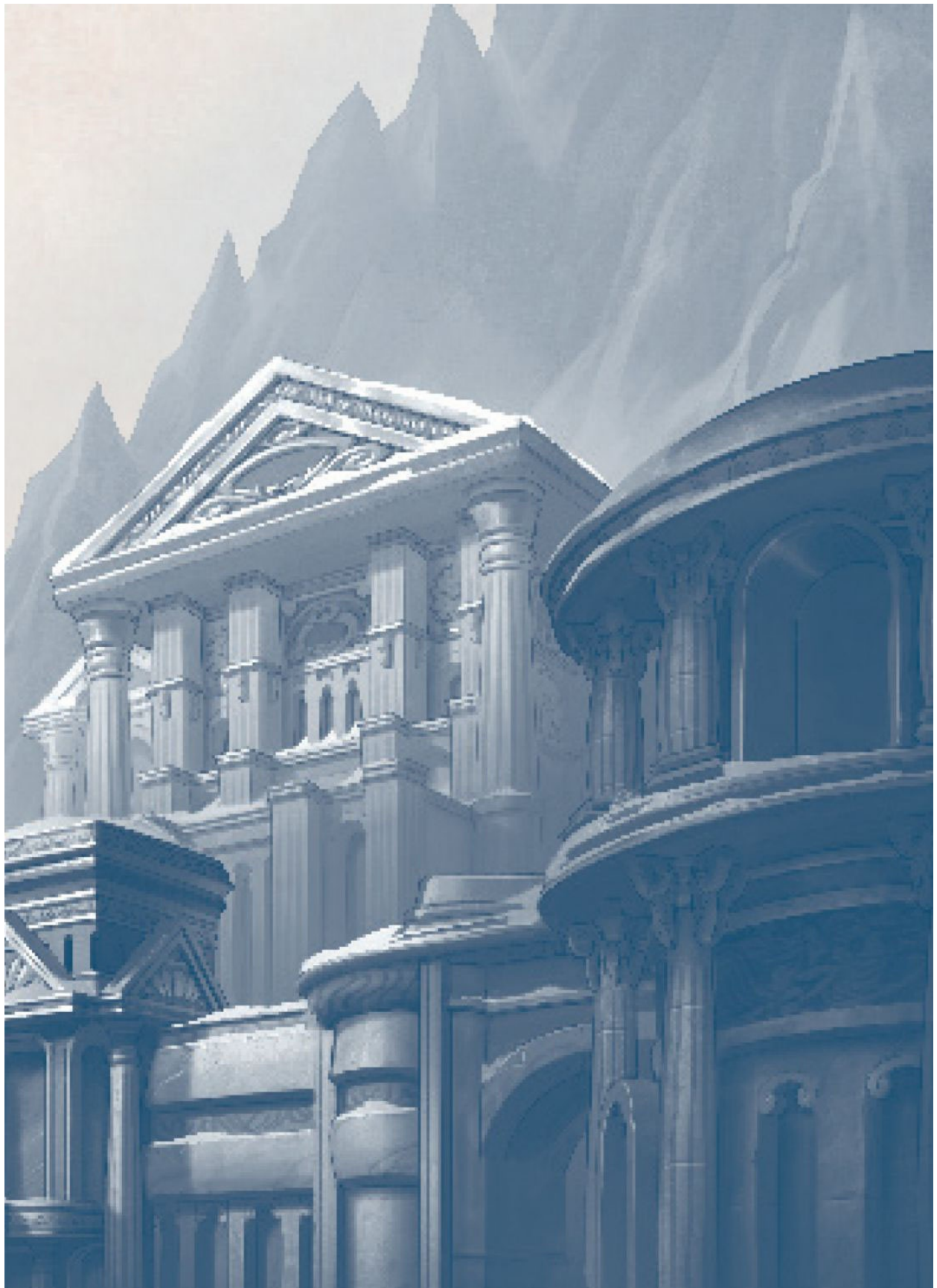
WINTERGRASP

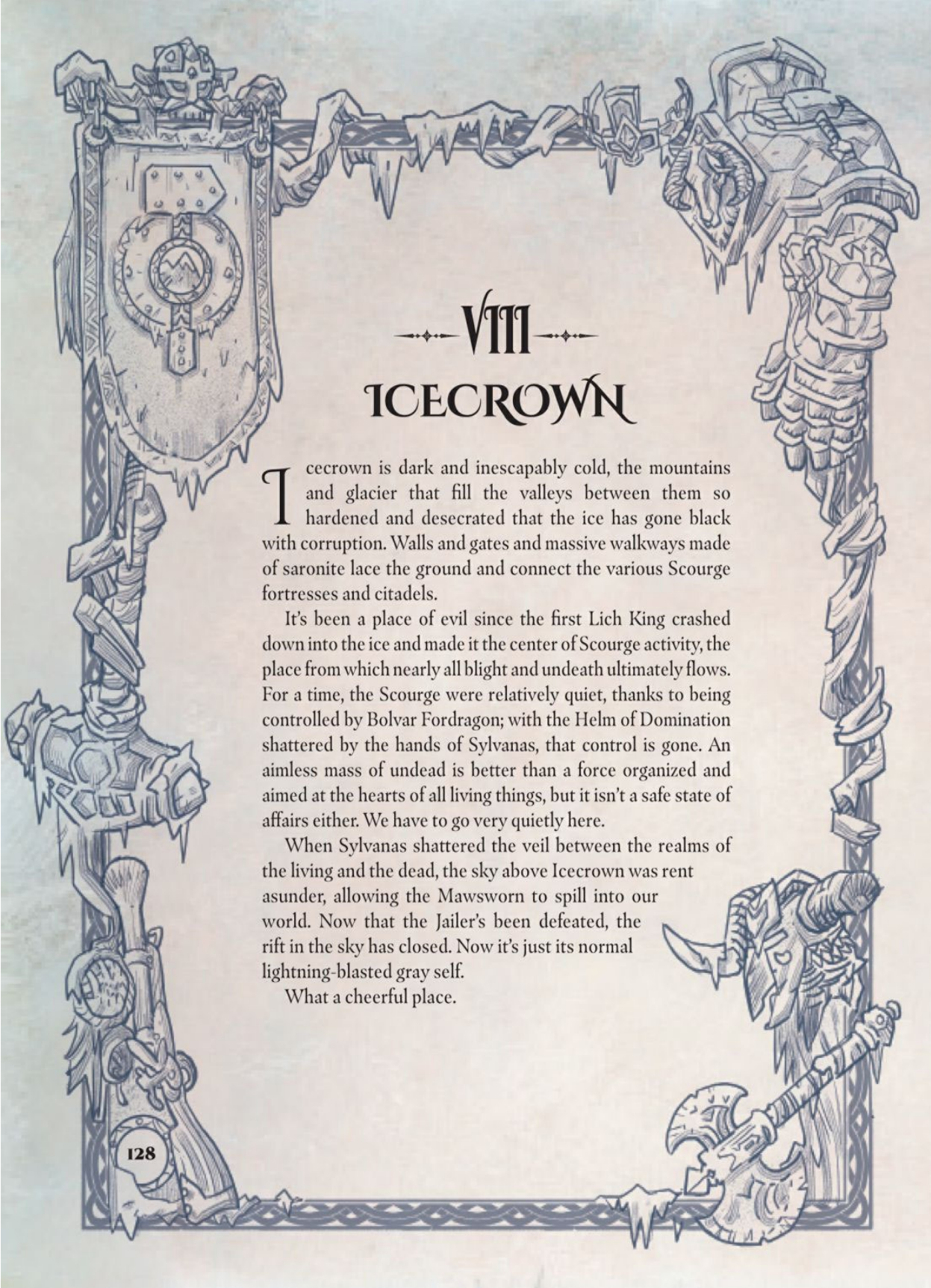
Wintergrasp isn't part of Sholazar proper; it's a titan complex that sits between the basin and Dragonblight. The fortress with its domed watchtowers guards the entrance to the Vault of Archavon, which contains titan relics of untold power, protected by ancient giants. We've been crossing swords with the Horde over who gets to control the vault—and have a crack at the relics within—since the war, and the skirmishes are still going today.

If the titans took such care to lock these relics away from the world, I don't see what good will come of them being brought back out into the light of day—and it certainly isn't helpful for us to keep scrapping over them if we're supposed to be attempting peace. Though if someone has to control this place, better it be us than the Horde.

The titan constructs should; it's their task, and they're bitter about the intrusion by both sides. I'm frustrated at this continued childish feuding, myself.







VIII ICECROWN

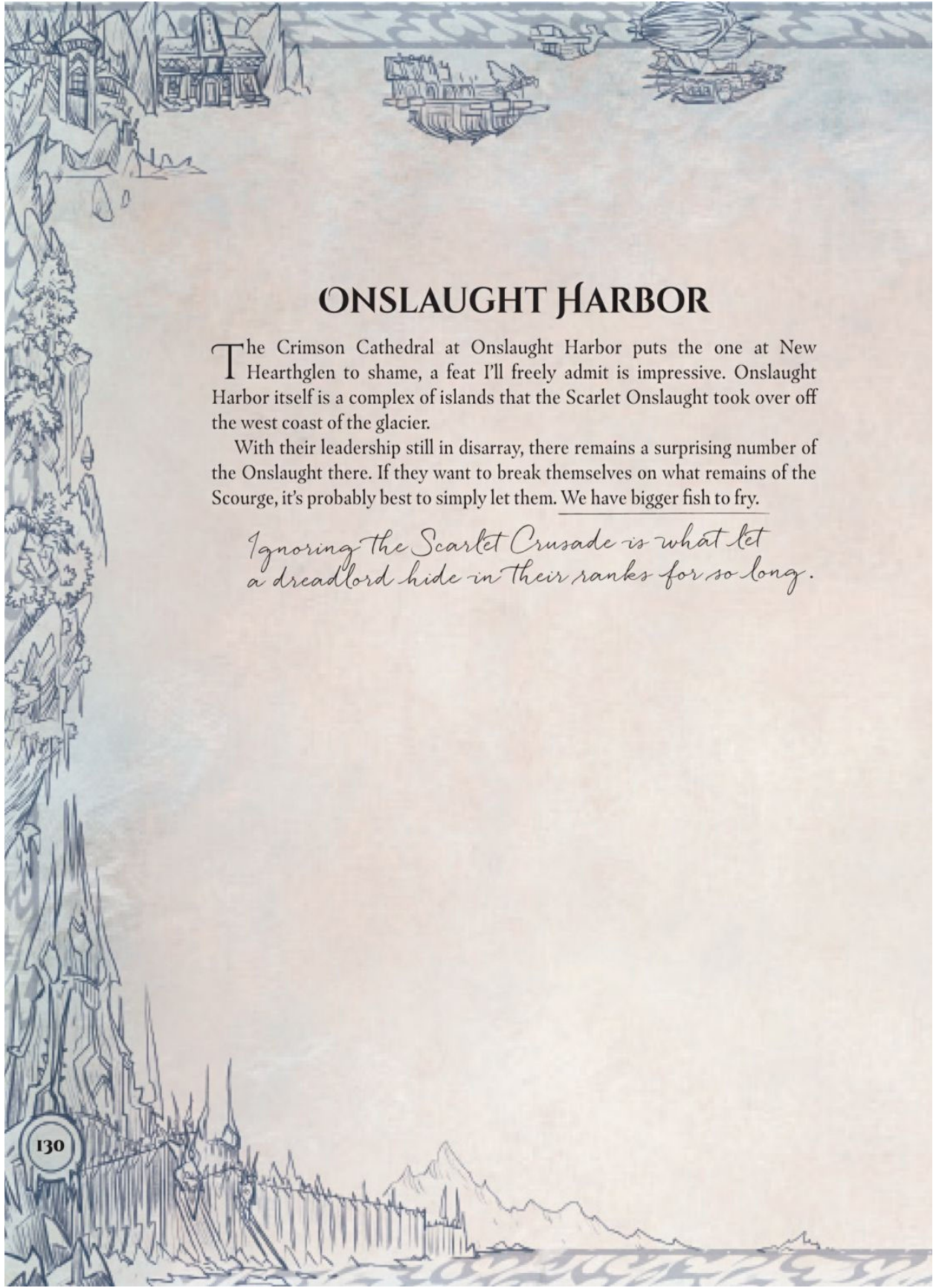
Icecrown is dark and inescapably cold, the mountains and glacier that fill the valleys between them so hardened and desecrated that the ice has gone black with corruption. Walls and gates and massive walkways made of saronite lace the ground and connect the various Scourge fortresses and citadels.

It's been a place of evil since the first Lich King crashed down into the ice and made it the center of Scourge activity, the place from which nearly all blight and undeath ultimately flows. For a time, the Scourge were relatively quiet, thanks to being controlled by Bolvar Fordragon; with the Helm of Domination shattered by the hands of Sylvanas, that control is gone. An aimless mass of undead is better than a force organized and aimed at the hearts of all living things, but it isn't a safe state of affairs either. We have to go very quietly here.

When Sylvanas shattered the veil between the realms of the living and the dead, the sky above Icecrown was rent asunder, allowing the Mawsworn to spill into our world. Now that the Jailer's been defeated, the rift in the sky has closed. Now it's just its normal lightning-blasted gray self.

What a cheerful place.





ONSLAUGHT HARBOR

The Crimson Cathedral at Onslaught Harbor puts the one at New Hearthglen to shame, a feat I'll freely admit is impressive. Onslaught Harbor itself is a complex of islands that the Scarlet Onslaught took over off the west coast of the glacier.

With their leadership still in disarray, there remains a surprising number of the Onslaught there. If they want to break themselves on what remains of the Scourge, it's probably best to simply let them. We have bigger fish to fry.

Ignoring the Scarlet Crusade is what let a dreadlord hide in their ranks for so long.



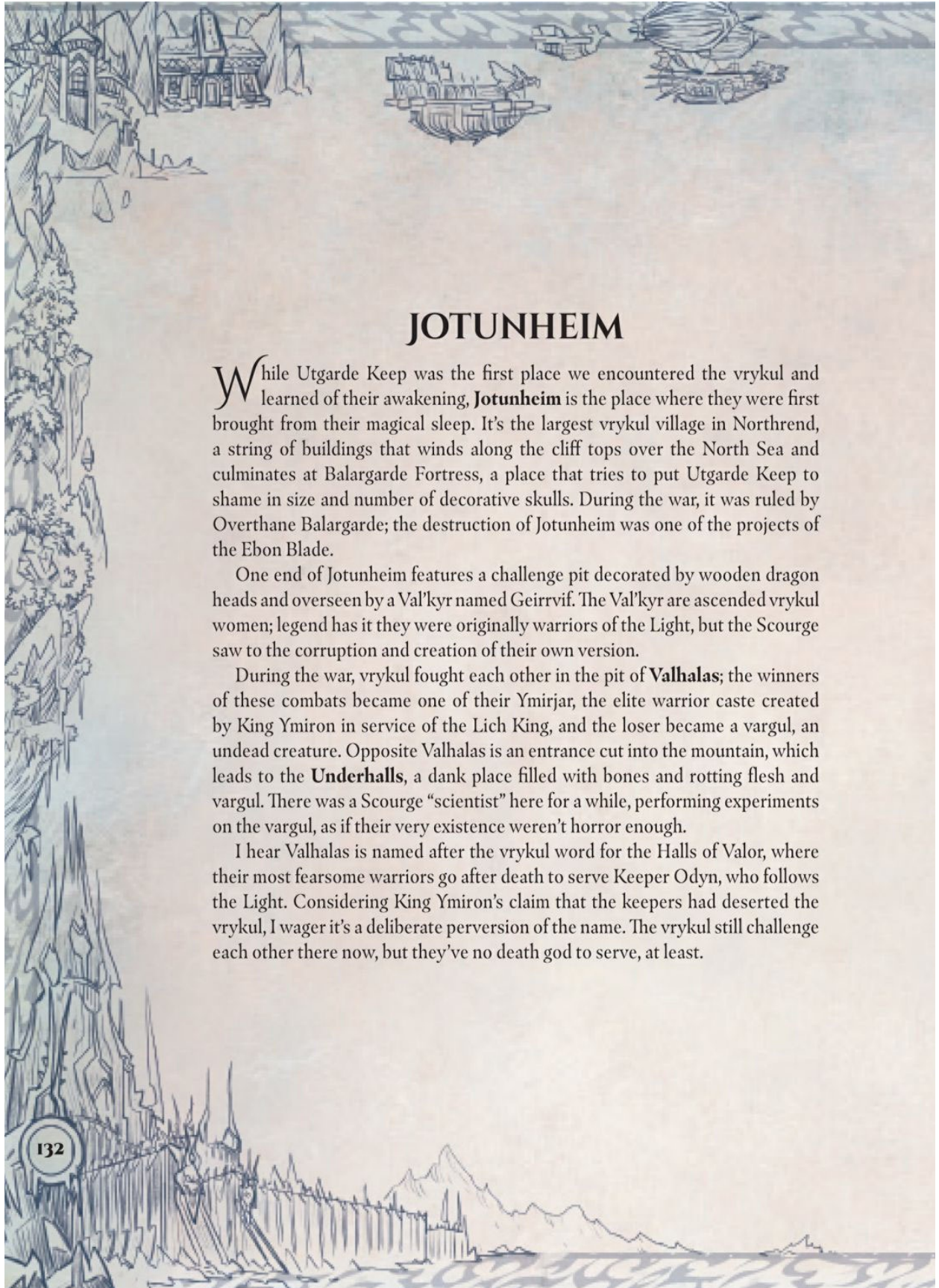
CRIMSON DAWN

North from the Argent Tournament Grounds is Sea Reaver's Run, the strait between Northrend and an island called Hrothgar's Landing. Kvaldir deepcallers bring up krakens to attack any ship that tries to pass through the strait.

There was once a tuskarr village on Hrothgar's Landing, but they've all been slain or driven away by the kvaldir. The Sunreavers and Silver Covenant both sailed their ships in these waters; for the Silver Covenant, it was the *Silver Blade* and the *Wavecrest*. The Sunreavers had the *Crimson Dawn* and the *Firehawk*. The ships fought the kvaldir back from Icecrown's main shore—and had to slay the kraken they kept summoning.

AND WHEN THEY WERENT FIGHTING,
THEY WERE FISHING FOR SHARKS!





JOTUNHEIM

While Utgarde Keep was the first place we encountered the vrykul and learned of their awakening, **Jotunheim** is the place where they were first brought from their magical sleep. It's the largest vrykul village in Northrend, a string of buildings that winds along the cliff tops over the North Sea and culminates at Balargarde Fortress, a place that tries to put Utgarde Keep to shame in size and number of decorative skulls. During the war, it was ruled by Overthane Balargarde; the destruction of Jotunheim was one of the projects of the Ebon Blade.

One end of Jotunheim features a challenge pit decorated by wooden dragon heads and overseen by a Val'kyr named Geirrvif. The Val'kyr are ascended vrykul women; legend has it they were originally warriors of the Light, but the Scourge saw to the corruption and creation of their own version.

During the war, vrykul fought each other in the pit of **Valhalas**; the winners of these combats became one of their Ymirjar, the elite warrior caste created by King Ymiron in service of the Lich King, and the loser became a vargul, an undead creature. Opposite Valhalas is an entrance cut into the mountain, which leads to the **Underhalls**, a dank place filled with bones and rotting flesh and vargul. There was a Scourge "scientist" here for a while, performing experiments on the vargul, as if their very existence weren't horror enough.

I hear Valhalas is named after the vrykul word for the Halls of Valor, where their most fearsome warriors go after death to serve Keeper Odyn, who follows the Light. Considering King Ymiron's claim that the keepers had deserted the vrykul, I wager it's a deliberate perversion of the name. The vrykul still challenge each other there now, but they've no death god to serve, at least.



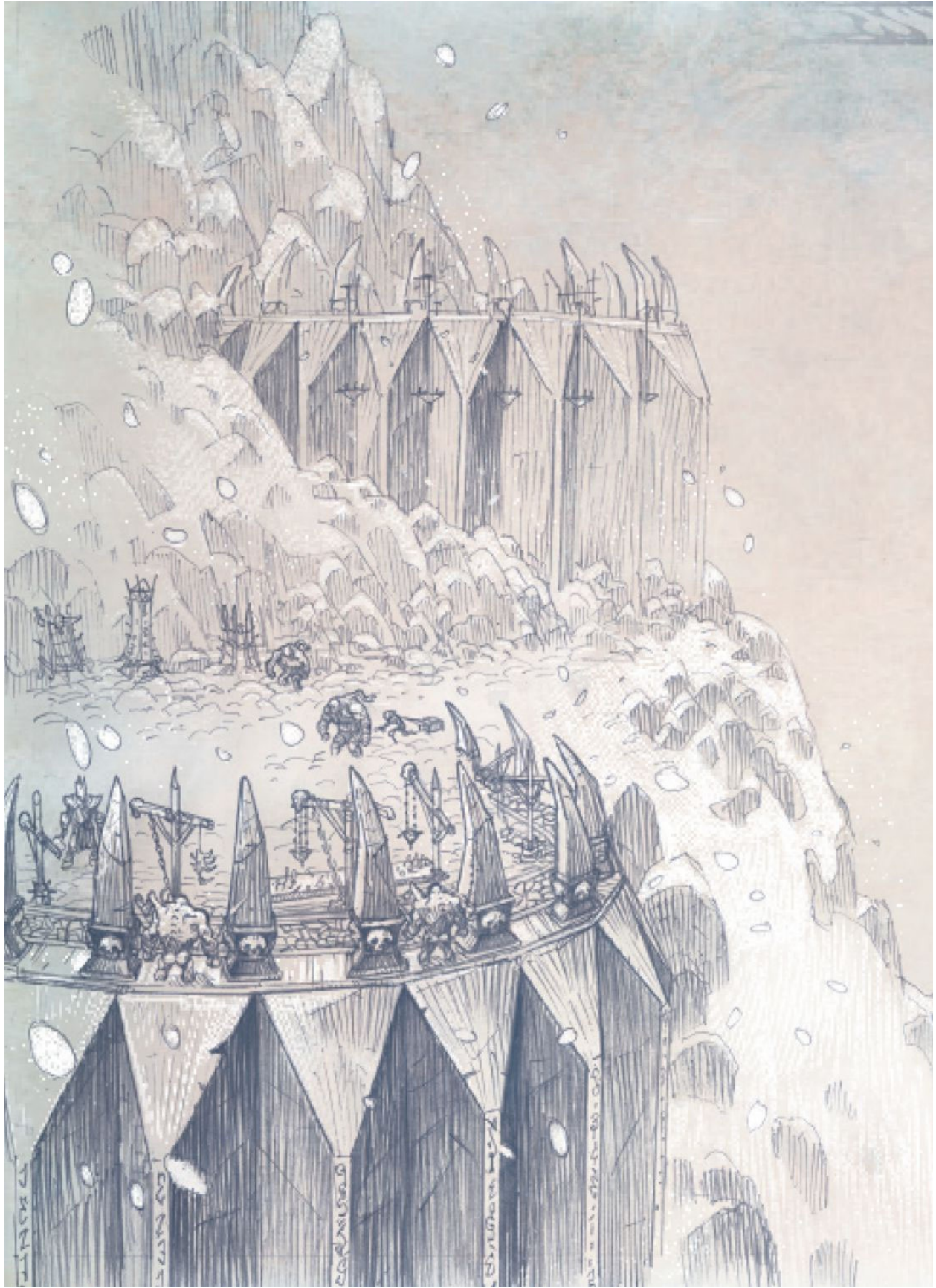
SHADOW VAULT

Overlooking the North Sea, the Shadow Vault is like a part of Icecrown Citadel wandered off and settled to brood over the water, its bladed crown striking out from the mountains. The Shadow Vault was taken from the Scourge by the Knights of the Ebon Blade and used as a base during the war. It provided a strong strategic position for attacking the vrykul of Jotunheim. During the incursion of the Shadowlands, the knights temporarily lost control of their fortress to the Scourge, but Duke Lankral was able to retake it. I'm sure now that the Scourge is no longer under Bolvar's control, it's only a matter of time before a counterattack, since it's such a plum location.

Just to the south and down a lot of elevation is the **Weeping Quarry**, the Scourge's closest source of saronite. I very much doubt they got all they needed for their fortresses and gates out of this place—though it did provide the saronite that made the bones of unfinished Malykriss. It's an open-pit mine that's now half-flooded with water.

ONE OF THE LEAGUE TOLD ME THAT WHEN SHE SWAM DOWN INTO THAT FOUL WATER TO HIDE FROM THE LOOKOUTS, THERE WAS A MASSIVE, LIVING MAW AT THE BOTTOM OF IT. YOGG-SARON'S, MAYBE. NOT VOLUNTEERING TO CHECK IF IT'S STILL THERE.

An orc warrior named Kingslayer Orkus brought an injured frost wyrm named Kasha to this place once, to be healed. She then served as his mount. I think he's dead now, though.





THE FLESHWERKS

High above the avalanche that rumbled down into Sholazar lies the Fleshwerks. Even for a place controlled by the Scourge, it's disgusting. Poison and plague bubble everywhere, and undead fleshripper birds circle. During the war, it was the blasphemous laboratory the Scourge used to construct the massive mountains of flesh we call abominations. Here, they also built flesh giants from parts of the giants of Northrend, enormous brutes that were unliving battering rams. The Fleshwerks remains under Scourge control; the undead still make more monsters of their own, though without driving purpose, it's at a much slower rate. Small mercies.

YMIRHEIM

Ymirheim sits high above most of the buildings of Icecrown, a ramshackle wooden vrykul village that wraps around a high mountain valley. At its center are the richest saronite mines of Icecrown; the village was likely put there to protect them. The vrykul of Ymirheim are no ordinary tall and unpleasant people; they're the Ymirjar who won their battles in Valhalas.

Brann says it's a place to find fascinating vrykul artifacts, if you have the nerve for it, perhaps because it's home to an entirely different caste of the vrykul.

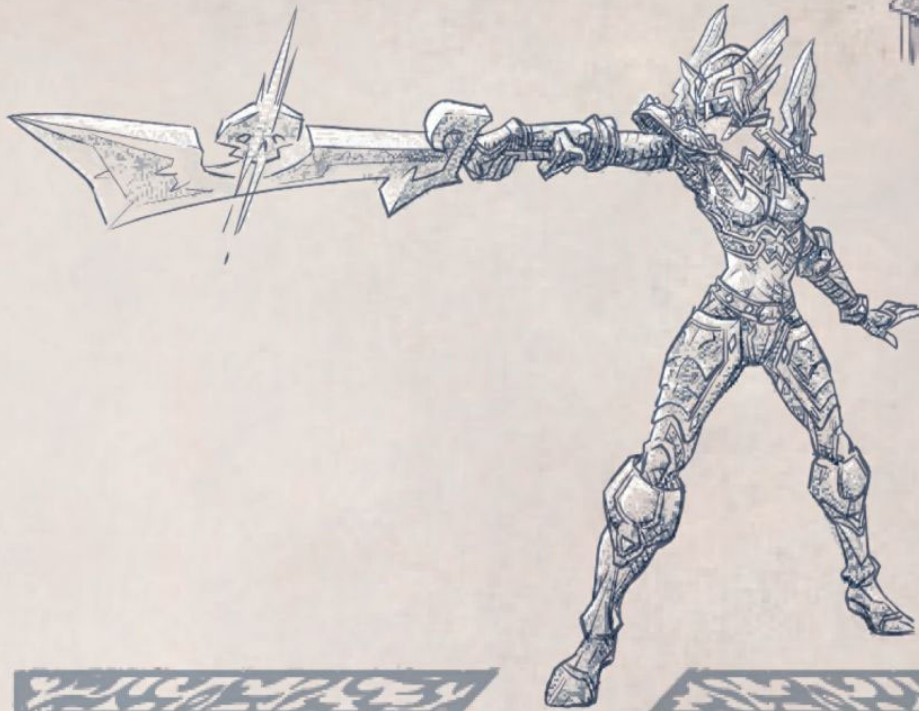
The **Court of Bones** is a bleak expanse that sits between Corp'rethar and Icecrown Citadel. Boneguards patrol the ice. Before Arthas became the Lich King, his fall from grace brought him here, where he fought and defeated Illidan Stormrage so he could enter Icecrown Citadel and take the Frozen Throne.



SINDRAGOSA'S FALL

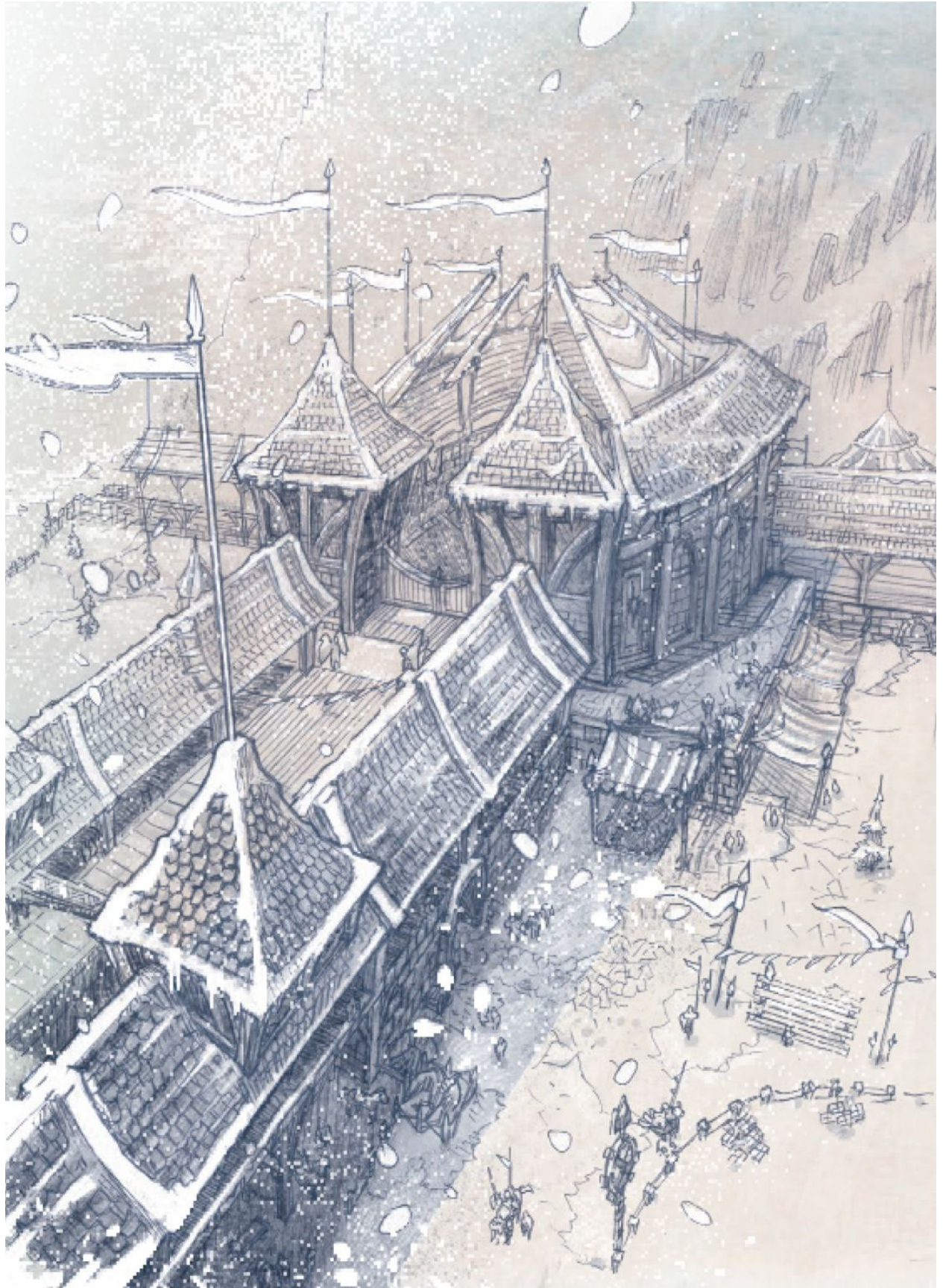
During the War of the Ancients, the blue dragonflight was decimated; many of the dragons, including Malygos's consort Sindragosa, fell to ground that later became covered by the Icecrown Glacier. The Lich King began to raise the dead blue dragons up as frost wyrms in service of the Scourge, starting with Sindragosa herself, but leaving not even the dead dragon whelps alone.

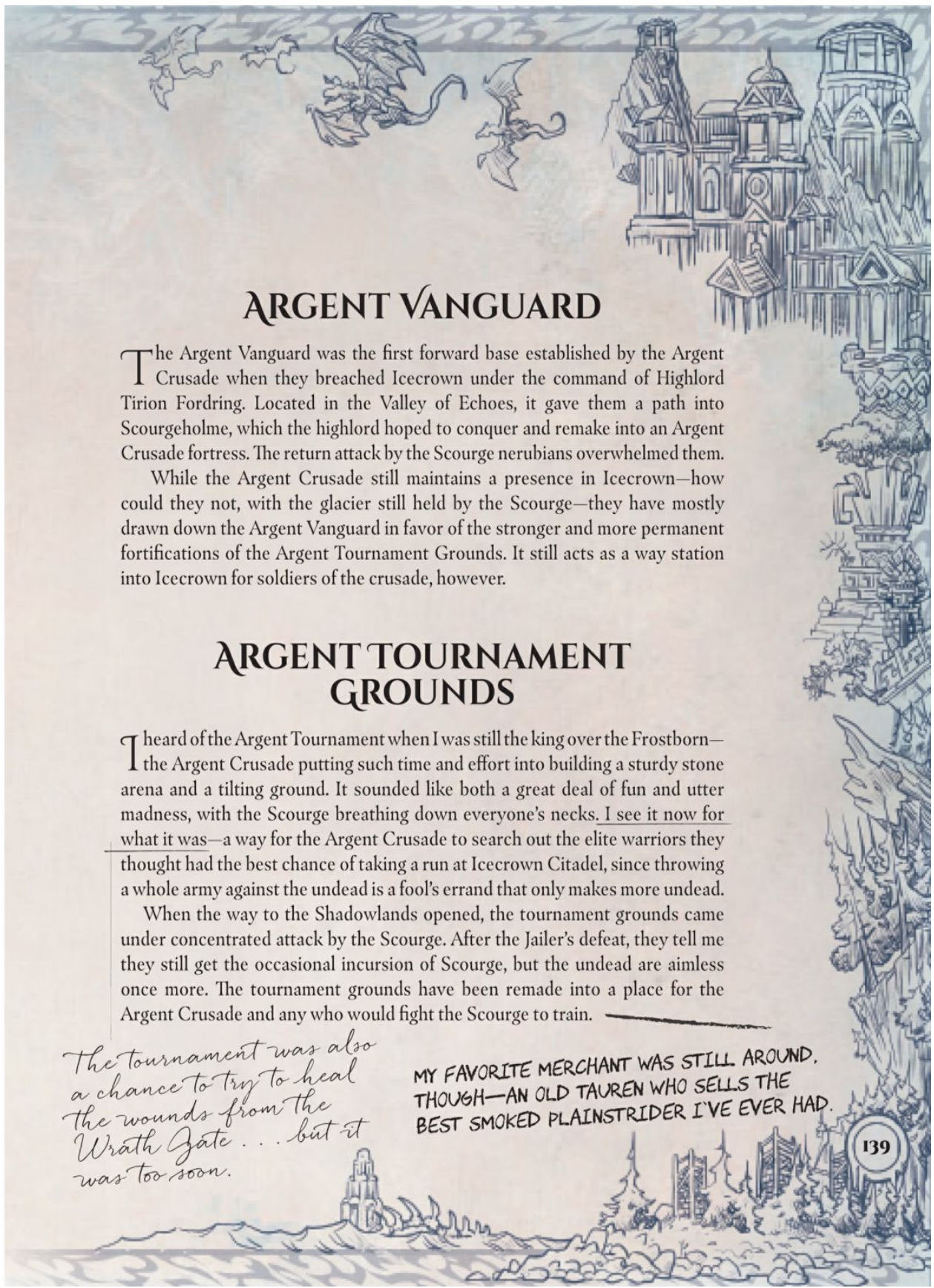
Sindragosa's first death was caused by Deathwing's betrayal. Maybe that made it easier for the Lich King to turn her and twist her in undeath; his final desecration of her was to tear apart the spirits of her whelps in front of her. She defended the Lich King in Icecrown Citadel until the adventurers who went on to slay him destroyed her as well, leaving only her **skull** behind. But rather than leave her to suffer again in some form, the adventurers took her crystalline essence to Wyrmmrest Temple, where she could truly be laid to rest.



ARMOR ASIDE: REDEMPTION ARMOR

The greatest strength of a paladin is their conviction, that determination to strive to be good in all things. I've known paladins who fight with the ferocity of warriors, but their creed calls for them to temper their rage with patience, to make compassion a greater strength than their force of arms. This Redemption Armor is made from what was once desecrated scrap, turned to something that lets a paladin withstand blow after blow while they heal their fellows.





ARGENT VANGUARD

The Argent Vanguard was the first forward base established by the Argent Crusade when they breached Icecrown under the command of Highlord Tirion Fordring. Located in the Valley of Echoes, it gave them a path into Scourgeholme, which the highlord hoped to conquer and remake into an Argent Crusade fortress. The return attack by the Scourge nerubians overwhelmed them.

While the Argent Crusade still maintains a presence in Icecrown—how could they not, with the glacier still held by the Scourge—they have mostly drawn down the Argent Vanguard in favor of the stronger and more permanent fortifications of the Argent Tournament Grounds. It still acts as a way station into Icecrown for soldiers of the crusade, however.

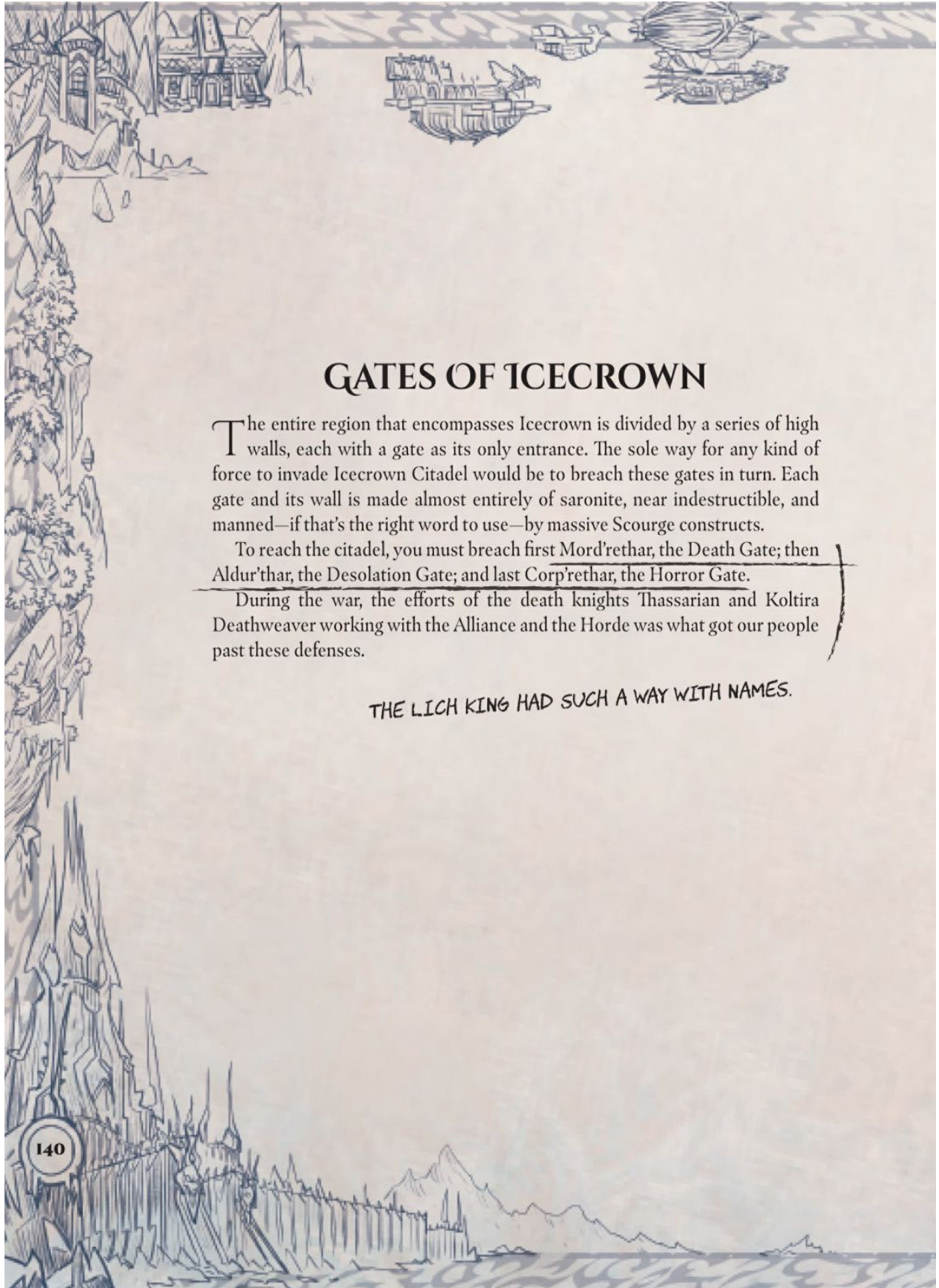
ARGENT TOURNAMENT GROUND

I heard of the Argent Tournament when I was still the king over the Frostborn—the Argent Crusade putting such time and effort into building a sturdy stone arena and a tilting ground. It sounded like both a great deal of fun and utter madness, with the Scourge breathing down everyone's necks. I see it now for what it was—a way for the Argent Crusade to search out the elite warriors they thought had the best chance of taking a run at Icecrown Citadel, since throwing a whole army against the undead is a fool's errand that only makes more undead.

When the way to the Shadowlands opened, the tournament grounds came under concentrated attack by the Scourge. After the Jailer's defeat, they tell me they still get the occasional incursion of Scourge, but the undead are aimless once more. The tournament grounds have been remade into a place for the Argent Crusade and any who would fight the Scourge to train.

The tournament was also a chance to try to heal the wounds from the Wrath Gate . . . but it was too soon.

MY FAVORITE MERCHANT WAS STILL AROUND, THOUGH—AN OLD TAUREN WHO SELLS THE BEST SMOKED PLAINSTRIDER I'VE EVER HAD.



GATES OF ICECROWN

The entire region that encompasses Icecrown is divided by a series of high walls, each with a gate as its only entrance. The sole way for any kind of force to invade Icecrown Citadel would be to breach these gates in turn. Each gate and its wall is made almost entirely of saronite, near indestructible, and manned—if that's the right word to use—by massive Scourge constructs.

To reach the citadel, you must breach first Mord'rethar, the Death Gate; then Aldur'thar, the Desolation Gate; and last Corp'rethar, the Horror Gate.

During the war, the efforts of the death knights Thassarian and Koltira Deathweaver working with the Alliance and the Horde was what got our people past these defenses.

THE LICH KING HAD SUCH A WAY WITH NAMES.



STORMFURY, BLACK BLADE OF THE BETRAYER

One of the weapons the Lich King had on him at his defeat was a dagger of strange make, a mixture of metal and ice: Stormfury, called the Black Blade of the Betrayer. Knowing that Arthas fought Illidan Stormrage, I think it must have belonged to him and was taken as a trophy. A shame Illidan didn't succeed in stopping Arthas in that fight.



MALYKRISS: THE VILE HOLD

Malykriss was the cutting edge of Scourge construction and technology; they were building one of their flying necropolises wholly from saronite. If it had ever been completed, Malykriss would have been indestructible. But with the Scourge interrupted by Bolvar's control and then no control at all, it's still unfinished, floating in the sky above Icecrown's foul saronite smelting works.

ICECROWN CITADEL

Icecrown Citadel rises up from the glacier, a cathedral of blades and claws made entirely of saronite. It's a fortress as big as a city, its halls crawling with the most vile and loyal of the Scourge. The fortress is, itself, layer after protective layer of cursed metal wrapped around the Frozen Throne where the Lich King once sat. The Argent Crusade were the ones who breached the gates of Icecrown Citadel; they sacrificed much, and without question, to see the Lich King fall.

We passed by the citadel only briefly; this much saronite in one place had Magni looking like he might be sick, even if he'd never complain.

FROZEN THRONE

The central spire of Icecrown Citadel holds a vast chamber of ice, and at its center was once a diamond-hard block that imprisoned the first Lich King. Arthas shattered that ice with Frostmourne and made it into a much more literal throne, the place from which he commanded the Scourge as the Lich King. It was here he tortured but could not break Bolvar Fordragon, and here Bolvar sat as well until Sylvanas threw him down.

Now, it waits, empty.







ANGRATHAR THE WRATH GATE

Angrathar the Wrath Gate separates Icecrown Citadel from Dragonblight, a towering wall of knife edges made from saronite. The land around the Wrath Gate is covered with ice now, but I'm told that in the aftermath of the red dragons blasting the area with flame, there were flowers and grass before the snows came. What a strange sight that must have been, among all the horror and destruction.

The battle at the Wrath Gate was to be the first major blow against the Lich King, and the first in which the Alliance and Horde fought side by side instead of against each other. Highlord Bolvar Fordragon led the Alliance Forces; Dranosh Saurfang led the Horde. And for a moment, it looked like it might work. The Scourge fell. Old enemies became new allies.

Then the Wrath Gate opened, and the Lich King himself strode down those steps. He cut down Dranosh Saurfang like he was nothing and tore his soul from his body. Yet before he could fight Highlord Fordragon, something far worse happened. The Forsaken, under Grand Apothecary Putress, bombarded the entire battlefield with their cursed New Plague, killing Scourge, Alliance, and Horde alike. All that stopped its spread was the intervention of the red dragonflight, who cleansed the area with fire. At the time, it was thought that Bolvar died of the plague or in the fire. His fate was far more difficult, and a lesser man could not have withstood it.

Later, we found out Putress had betrayed Sylvanas rather than acting under her orders, though I still can't say for certain whether we know the truth of it. Both Horde and Alliance invaded the Undercity, each with an eye for revenge, and we would have destroyed each other there if not for Lady Jaina Proudmoore. The Wrath Gate broke a tenuous trust that had only just begun to form, and nearly ended the war against the Lich King before it had truly been joined. It's to the credit of the Argent Crusade and the Ebon Blade that they took over the push for the Lich King's head—and kept us all from forgetting entirely who the true enemy was.

After the tales I've now heard of the noble warrior Dranosh Saurfang, I wonder if things might have gone differently, had he lived. Perhaps many conflicts between the Alliance and the Horde could have been avoided. Maybe Cairne Bloodhoof might have lived too.

HE SURE COULDN'T
HAVE DONE WORSE!

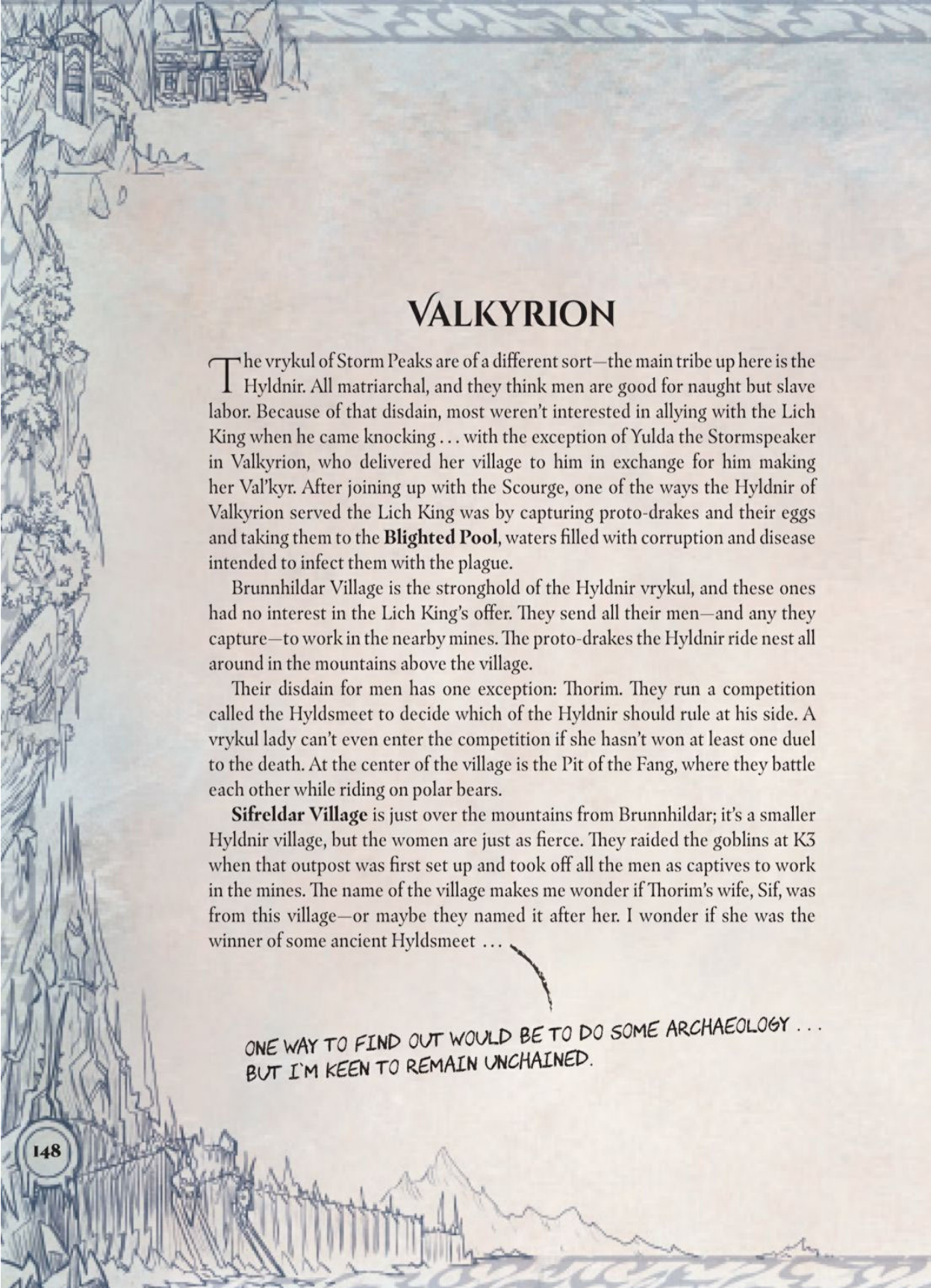


IX STORM PEAKS

I've missed these craggy mountains, and I still know every line of their cirques and arêtes. To most, it's a dangerous place that requires caution—cold enough to freeze your beard off, and with winds so strong they could pluck you right off a mountain. But if you know this place, it's a beauty like no other.

Brann's been going on about everything he's already discovered here. It's a bit like having a tour guide. He's fair excited to take another crack at all the titan sites again, now that they're more likely to be operating correctly and less likely to be filled with people who want to kill him on sight. As home of the titan-forged keepers, nearly every mountain you lay eyes on carries their mark. Magni, too, is eager for a chance to greet the keepers and take a better look at their temples and forges when we're not in a rush. I'm most excited to see my Frostborn family again, but we've agreed to make Frosthold our last stop before heading home.





VALKYRION

The vrykul of Storm Peaks are of a different sort—the main tribe up here is the Hyldnir. All matriarchal, and they think men are good for naught but slave labor. Because of that disdain, most weren't interested in allying with the Lich King when he came knocking . . . with the exception of Yulda the Stormspeaker in Valkyrion, who delivered her village to him in exchange for him making her Val'kyr. After joining up with the Scourge, one of the ways the Hyldnir of Valkyrion served the Lich King was by capturing proto-drakes and their eggs and taking them to the **Blighted Pool**, waters filled with corruption and disease intended to infect them with the plague.

Brunnhildar Village is the stronghold of the Hyldnir vrykul, and these ones had no interest in the Lich King's offer. They send all their men—and any they capture—to work in the nearby mines. The proto-drakes the Hyldnir ride nest all around in the mountains above the village.

Their disdain for men has one exception: Thorim. They run a competition called the Hyldsmeet to decide which of the Hyldnir should rule at his side. A vrykul lady can't even enter the competition if she hasn't won at least one duel to the death. At the center of the village is the Pit of the Fang, where they battle each other while riding on polar bears.

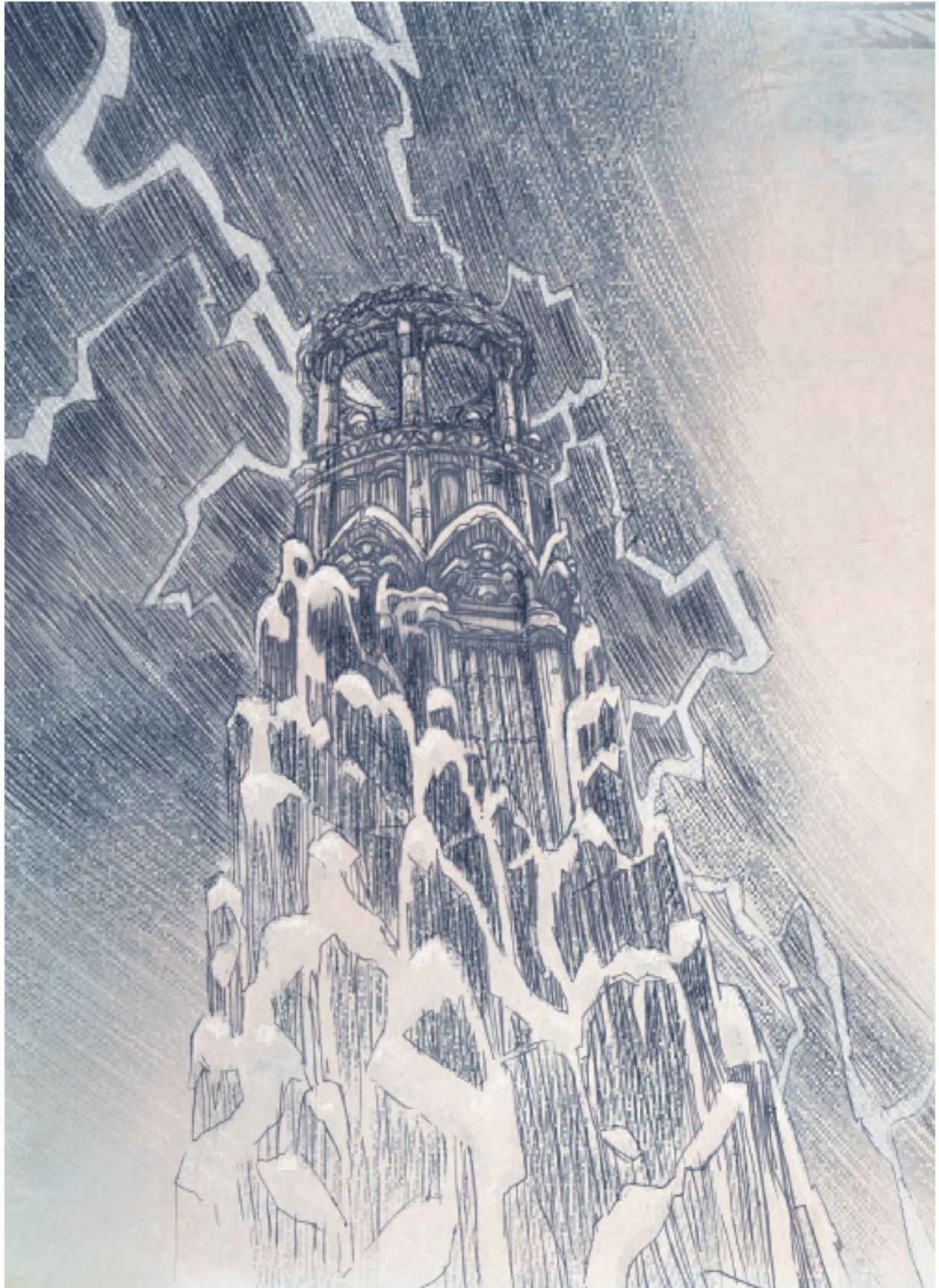
Sifreldar Village is just over the mountains from Brunnhildar; it's a smaller Hyldnir village, but the women are just as fierce. They raided the goblins at K3 when that outpost was first set up and took off all the men as captives to work in the mines. The name of the village makes me wonder if Thorim's wife, Sif, was from this village—or maybe they named it after her. I wonder if she was the winner of some ancient Hyldsmeet . . .

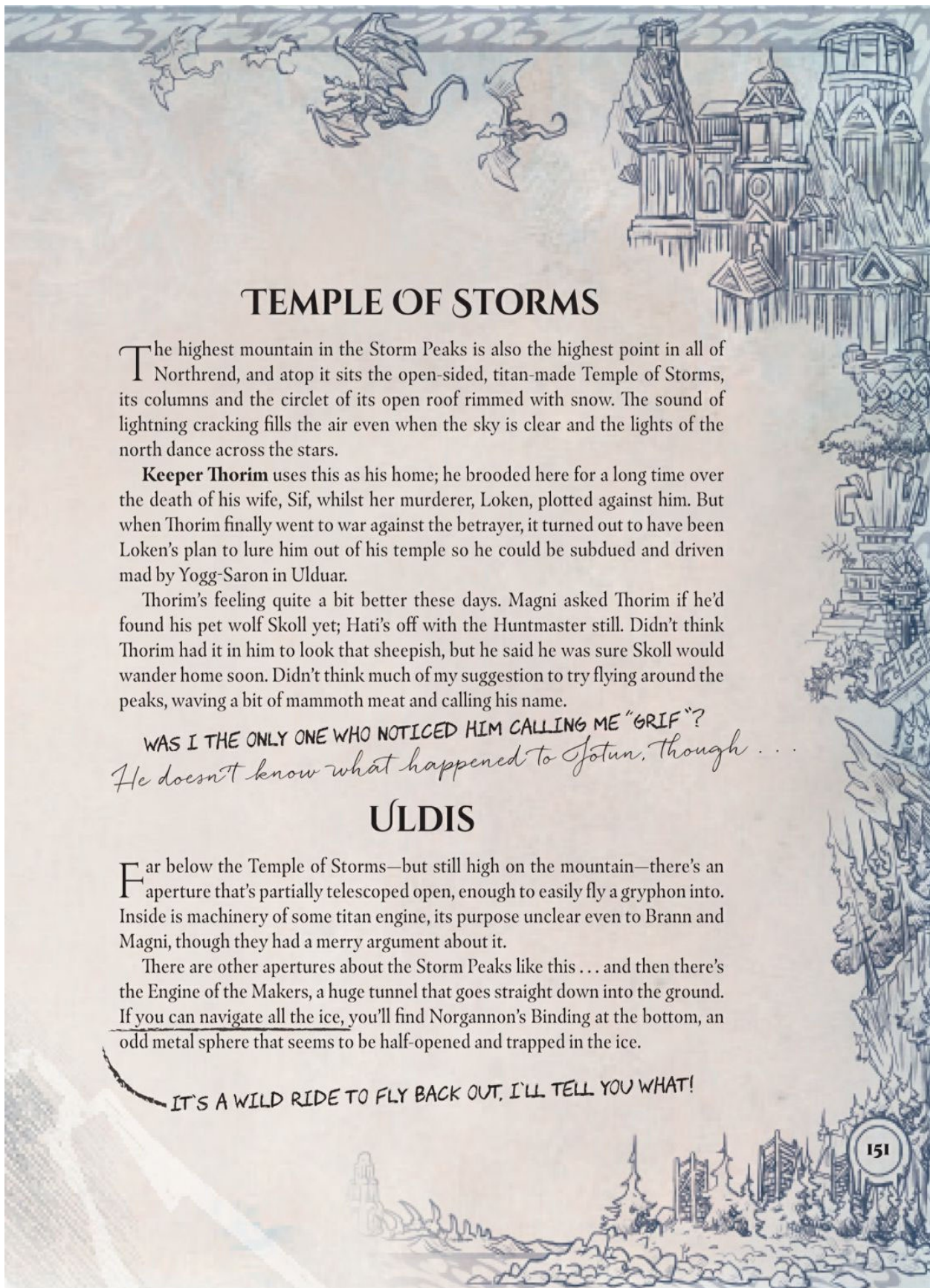
ONE WAY TO FIND OUT WOULD BE TO DO SOME ARCHAEOLOGY . . .
BUT I'M KEEN TO REMAIN UNCHAINED.



ARMOR ASIDE: PLAGUEHEART RAIMENT

I've always known warlocks to be interested in seeking power in the darkest of places—and making bargains most people in their right minds wouldn't make. The Plagueheart Raiment is made of cloth scraps from Naxxramas, fouled with plague and pestilence and left entirely uncleansed, which seems to be the point of it: the source of power that makes the corrupting, painful spells of the warlock who wears it even stronger.





TEMPLE OF STORMS

The highest mountain in the Storm Peaks is also the highest point in all of Northrend, and atop it sits the open-sided, titan-made Temple of Storms, its columns and the circling of its open roof rimmed with snow. The sound of lightning cracking fills the air even when the sky is clear and the lights of the north dance across the stars.

Keeper Thorim uses this as his home; he brooded here for a long time over the death of his wife, Sif, whilst her murderer, Loken, plotted against him. But when Thorim finally went to war against the betrayer, it turned out to have been Loken's plan to lure him out of his temple so he could be subdued and driven mad by Yogg-Saron in Ulduar.

Thorim's feeling quite a bit better these days. Magni asked Thorim if he'd found his pet wolf Skoll yet; Hati's off with the Huntmaster still. Didn't think Thorim had it in him to look that sheepish, but he said he was sure Skoll would wander home soon. Didn't think much of my suggestion to try flying around the peaks, waving a bit of mammoth meat and calling his name.

WAS I THE ONLY ONE WHO NOTICED HIM CALLING ME "GRIF"?
He doesn't know what happened to Jotun, though . . .

ULDIS

Far below the Temple of Storms—but still high on the mountain—there's an aperture that's partially telescoped open, enough to easily fly a gryphon into. Inside is machinery of some titan engine, its purpose unclear even to Brann and Magni, though they had a merry argument about it.

There are other apertures about the Storm Peaks like this . . . and then there's the Engine of the Makers, a huge tunnel that goes straight down into the ground. If you can navigate all the ice, you'll find Norgannon's Binding at the bottom, an odd metal sphere that seems to be half-opened and trapped in the ice.

IT'S A WILD RIDE TO FLY BACK OUT, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT!



FROM WHAT I'VE GLEANED IN ULDUAR SO FAR...
I THINK IT MIGHT BE SAFER FOR AZEROTH TO CONTAIN HIM RATHER
THAN RIP HIM OUT BY THE ROOT. BUT THAT'S ME SPECULATING.

ULDUAR

Ulduar is an entire titan complex preserved perfectly in the snows; we once thought it housed fabled treasures and relics along with its great engines of creation. Now we know it was conceived first and foremost as a prison for the **Old God Yogg-Saron**. (Though why imprison the Old God instead of destroying him? Maybe they didn't have enough power.) At any rate, imprison Yogg-Saron it did, though incompletely; his black blood runs through the whole continent, crystallizing into saronite and corrupting all it touches. His whispers escaped with the saronite, tempting many to madness—including the keeper **Loken**.

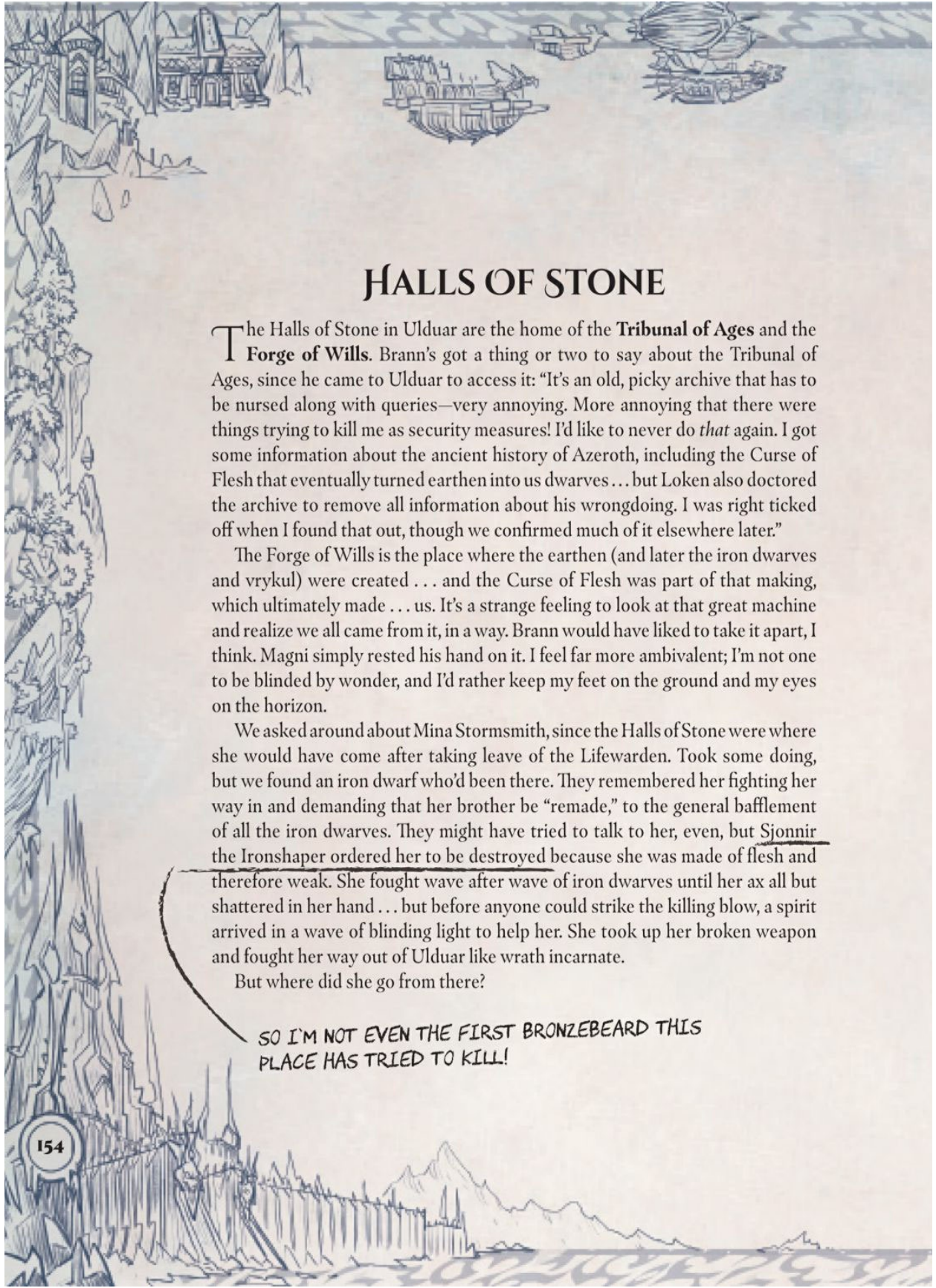
Loken had an affair with Sif and, due to the intervention of Yogg-Saron, accidentally killed her in a fit of paranoia. He cast the blame on the frost giants and then tried to end the war that sparked with armies of earthen he made in the Forge of Wills, within which Yogg-Saron had planted the Curse of Flesh. He murdered Mimiron, corrupted Hodir and Freya, and convinced one of the titan-forged to imprison Odyn. After thousands of years, Yogg-Saron's chains began to weaken, and the prisoner truly took control of the prison. Loken created iron dwarves and iron vrykul in the Forge of Wills; these new creations drove the remaining earthen and mechgnomes from Ulduar, then went out into Northrend to spread destruction.

This came near the same time we were already in Northrend to fight the Lich King, or things would have gone much worse for the world. Alliance and Horde adventurers—with some help from Brann—stopped Loken and defeated Yogg-Saron, though the Old God's whispers are still heard around Northrend and in the halls of Ulduar. The earthen and mechgnomes have returned, with freed iron dwarves welcomed into their ranks. Ulduar was attacked during the Burning Legion's invasion as the demons searched for information about the Pillars of Creation. It's being slowly rebuilt; we took some time to observe the repair efforts.

We've all been to Ulduar many times, but it was a real pleasure to look around with all three of us in the same place for once, when we could share our stories and compare our observations without worrying about angry iron dwarves or the world outside falling to pieces. Not to say we let our guard down—there's still an Old God imprisoned here, even if his influence seems contained, and I'm not looking to have my illusions of safety shattered by a tentacle wrapping around my ankle!

HAH! THEY SAVED MY SKIN IN
THIS PLACE MORE TIMES THAN
I CAN COUNT, WATCHING OVER ME
WHILE I TRIED TO FIGURE OUT
THESE TITAN MACHINES.

WHAT BETTER WAY TO GET AN ARMY
THAT WON'T ASK QUESTIONS THAN TO
MAKE IT FROM SCRATCH YOURSELF?



HALLS OF STONE

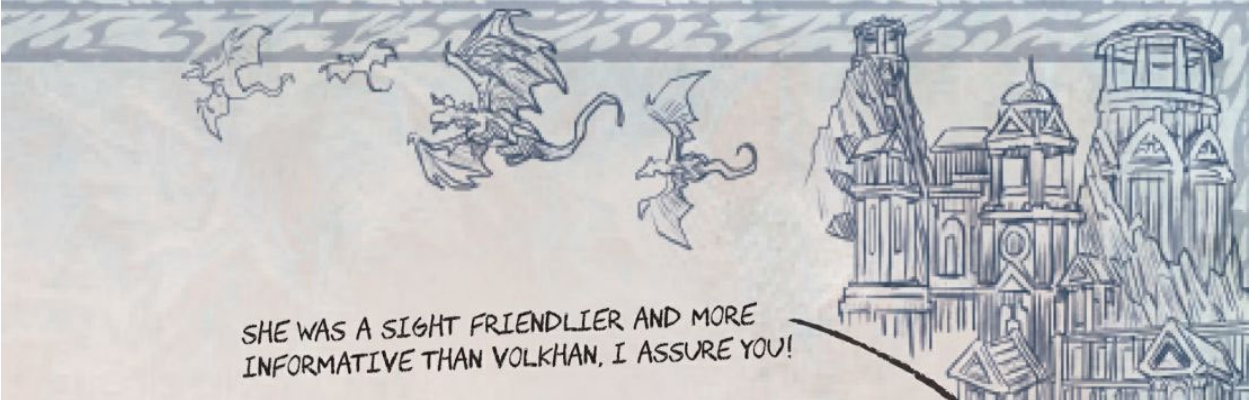
The Halls of Stone in Ulduar are the home of the **Tribunal of Ages** and the **Forge of Wills**. Brann's got a thing or two to say about the Tribunal of Ages, since he came to Ulduar to access it: "It's an old, picky archive that has to be nursed along with queries—very annoying. More annoying that there were things trying to kill me as security measures! I'd like to never do *that* again. I got some information about the ancient history of Azeroth, including the Curse of Flesh that eventually turned earthen into us dwarves . . . but Loken also doctored the archive to remove all information about his wrongdoing. I was right ticked off when I found that out, though we confirmed much of it elsewhere later."

The Forge of Wills is the place where the earthen (and later the iron dwarves and vrykul) were created . . . and the Curse of Flesh was part of that making, which ultimately made . . . us. It's a strange feeling to look at that great machine and realize we all came from it, in a way. Brann would have liked to take it apart, I think. Magni simply rested his hand on it. I feel far more ambivalent; I'm not one to be blinded by wonder, and I'd rather keep my feet on the ground and my eyes on the horizon.

We asked around about Mina Stormsmith, since the Halls of Stone were where she would have come after taking leave of the Lifewarden. Took some doing, but we found an iron dwarf who'd been there. They remembered her fighting her way in and demanding that her brother be "remade," to the general bafflement of all the iron dwarves. They might have tried to talk to her, even, but Sjonnir the Ironshaper ordered her to be destroyed because she was made of flesh and therefore weak. She fought wave after wave of iron dwarves until her ax all but shattered in her hand . . . but before anyone could strike the killing blow, a spirit arrived in a wave of blinding light to help her. She took up her broken weapon and fought her way out of Ulduar like wrath incarnate.

But where did she go from there?

SO I'M NOT EVEN THE FIRST BRONZEBEARD THIS PLACE HAS TRIED TO KILL!



SHE WAS A SIGHT FRIENDLIER AND MORE INFORMATIVE THAN VOLKHAN. I ASSURE YOU!


Apart from the Halls of Stone, the **Halls of Lightning** are where Loken made his final stand, though he didn't know that's what it was when the attack came. The Iron Crucible, overseen by the fire giant Volkhan, is where creatures not affected by the Curse of Flesh were forged for Loken's army. Brann got in a long conversation here with the iron dwarf watching over the Iron Crucible now.

The **Halls of Valor** haven't been part of Ulduar for thousands of years. But long ago, when the dragonflights were being given their power to watch over Azeroth, Odyn thought the vrykul ought to be in charge instead. So Odyn took the Halls of Valor to be the headquarters for his army of vrykul, then got the sorceress Helya to rip them clean off the complex and put them in the heavens. It's now supposedly where the worthy vrykul go when they die and where there are true Val'kyr who are warriors of the Light.

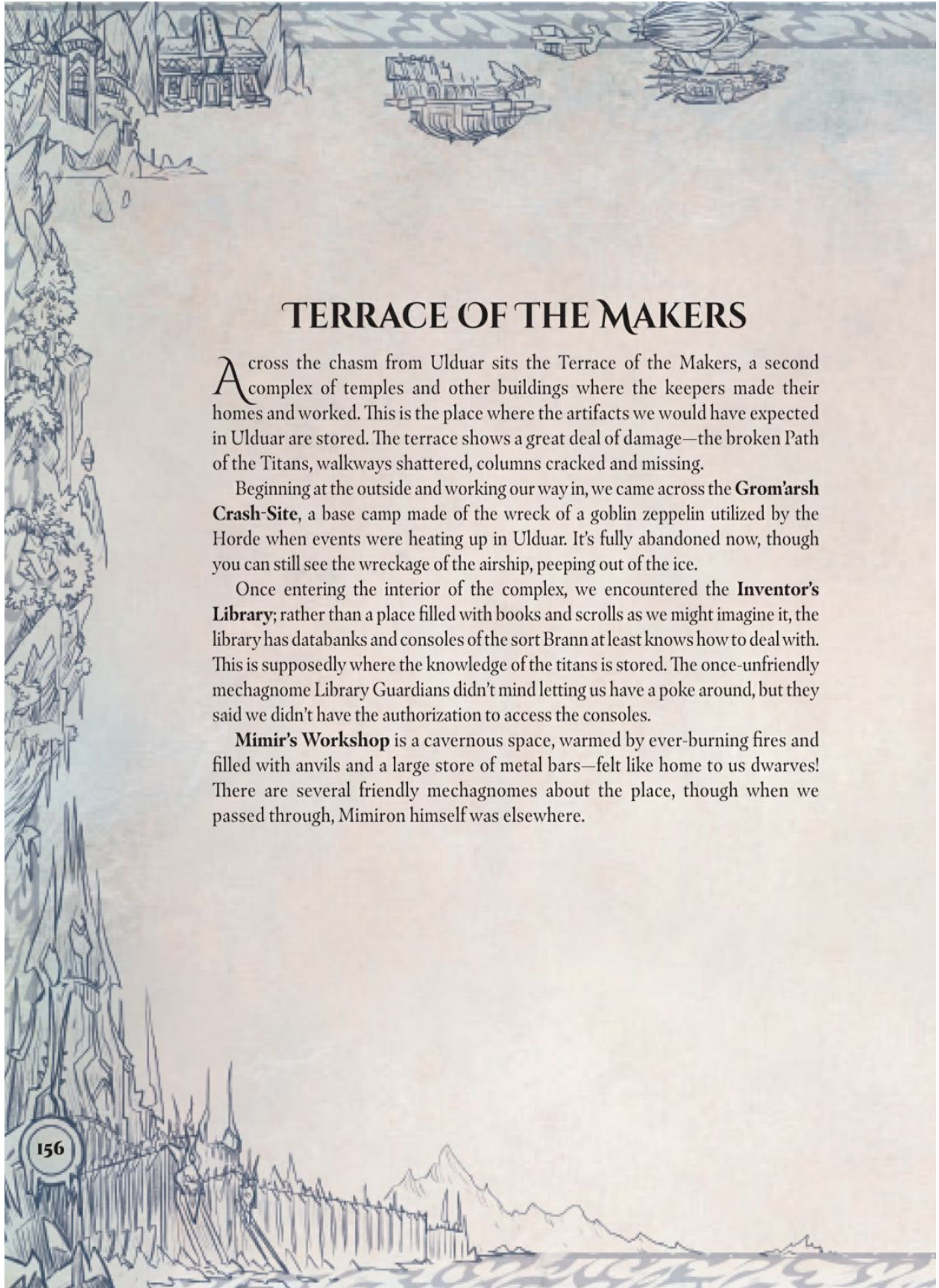
BETWEEN THE DRAGONS AND THE VRYKUL ... I'M GLAD WE ENDED UP WITH THE DRAGONS.

THE FLESHSHAPER

Sjonnir the Ironshaper was Loken's right-hand iron vrykul in Ulduar; he was in charge of the Forge of Wills, and by all accounts eager to use it to make more iron creations for his master. He liked to go on about how weak the earthen were, but we beat him in the end, and his dagger, the Fleshshaper, ended up in the hands of those he thought so fragile.



HE WAS A RIGHT PAIN TOO. CALLING IN IRON DWARVES AND TROGGS WHILE I WAS TRYING TO SHUT THE FORGE DOWN. HE WON'T BE MISSED!



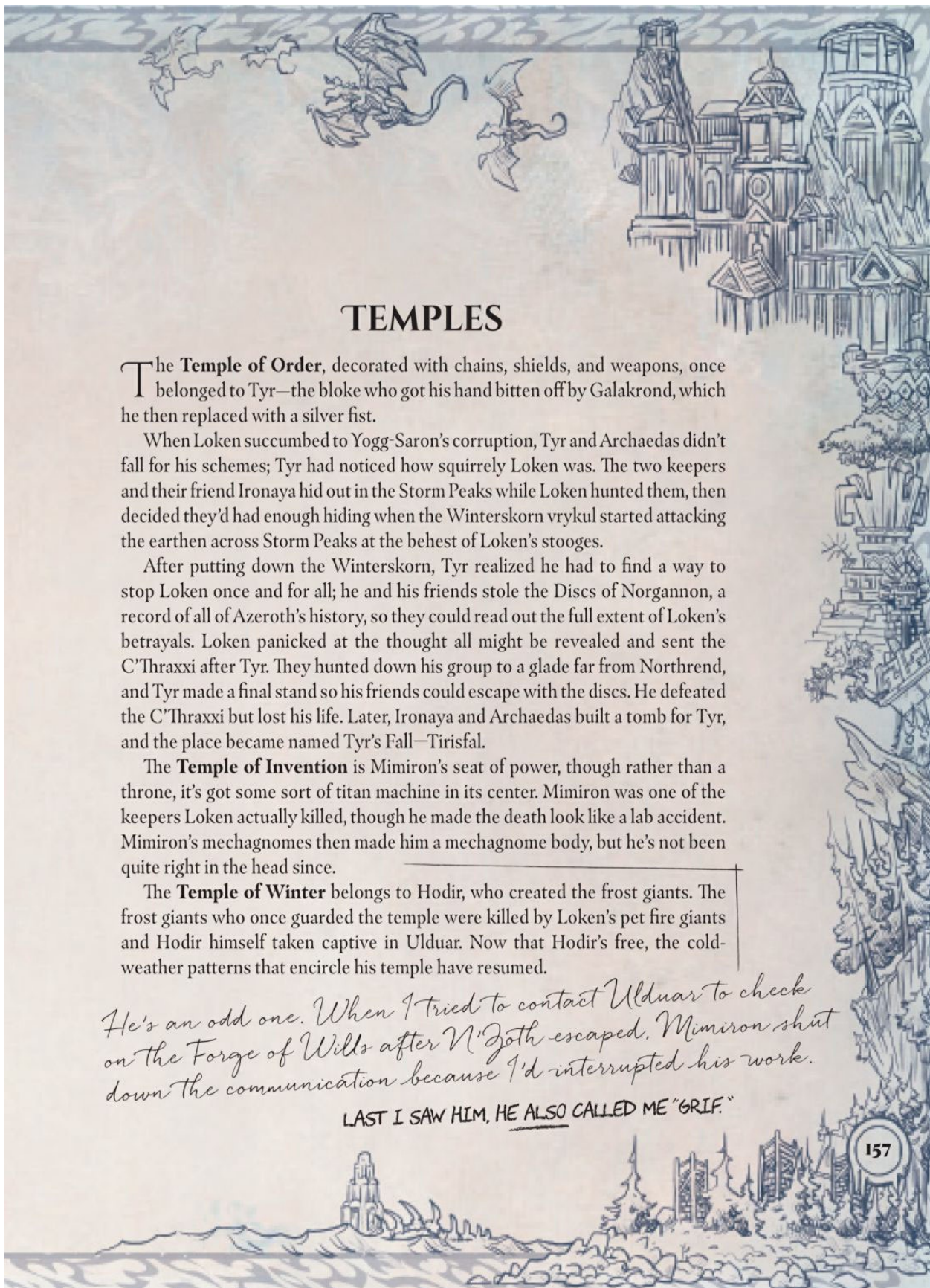
TERRACE OF THE MAKERS

Across the chasm from Ulduar sits the Terrace of the Makers, a second complex of temples and other buildings where the keepers made their homes and worked. This is the place where the artifacts we would have expected in Ulduar are stored. The terrace shows a great deal of damage—the broken Path of the Titans, walkways shattered, columns cracked and missing.

Beginning at the outside and working our way in, we came across the **Grom'arsh Crash-Site**, a base camp made of the wreck of a goblin zepplin utilized by the Horde when events were heating up in Ulduar. It's fully abandoned now, though you can still see the wreckage of the airship, peeping out of the ice.

Once entering the interior of the complex, we encountered the **Inventor's Library**; rather than a place filled with books and scrolls as we might imagine it, the library has databanks and consoles of the sort Brann at least knows how to deal with. This is supposedly where the knowledge of the titans is stored. The once-unfriendly mechagnome Library Guardians didn't mind letting us have a poke around, but they said we didn't have the authorization to access the consoles.

Mimir's Workshop is a cavernous space, warmed by ever-burning fires and filled with anvils and a large store of metal bars—felt like home to us dwarves! There are several friendly mechagnomes about the place, though when we passed through, Mimiron himself was elsewhere.



TEMPLES

The **Temple of Order**, decorated with chains, shields, and weapons, once belonged to Tyr—the bloke who got his hand bitten off by Galakrond, which he then replaced with a silver fist.

When Loken succumbed to Yogg-Saron's corruption, Tyr and Archaedas didn't fall for his schemes; Tyr had noticed how squirrely Loken was. The two keepers and their friend Ironaya hid out in the Storm Peaks while Loken hunted them, then decided they'd had enough hiding when the Winterskorn vrykul started attacking the earthen across Storm Peaks at the behest of Loken's stooges.

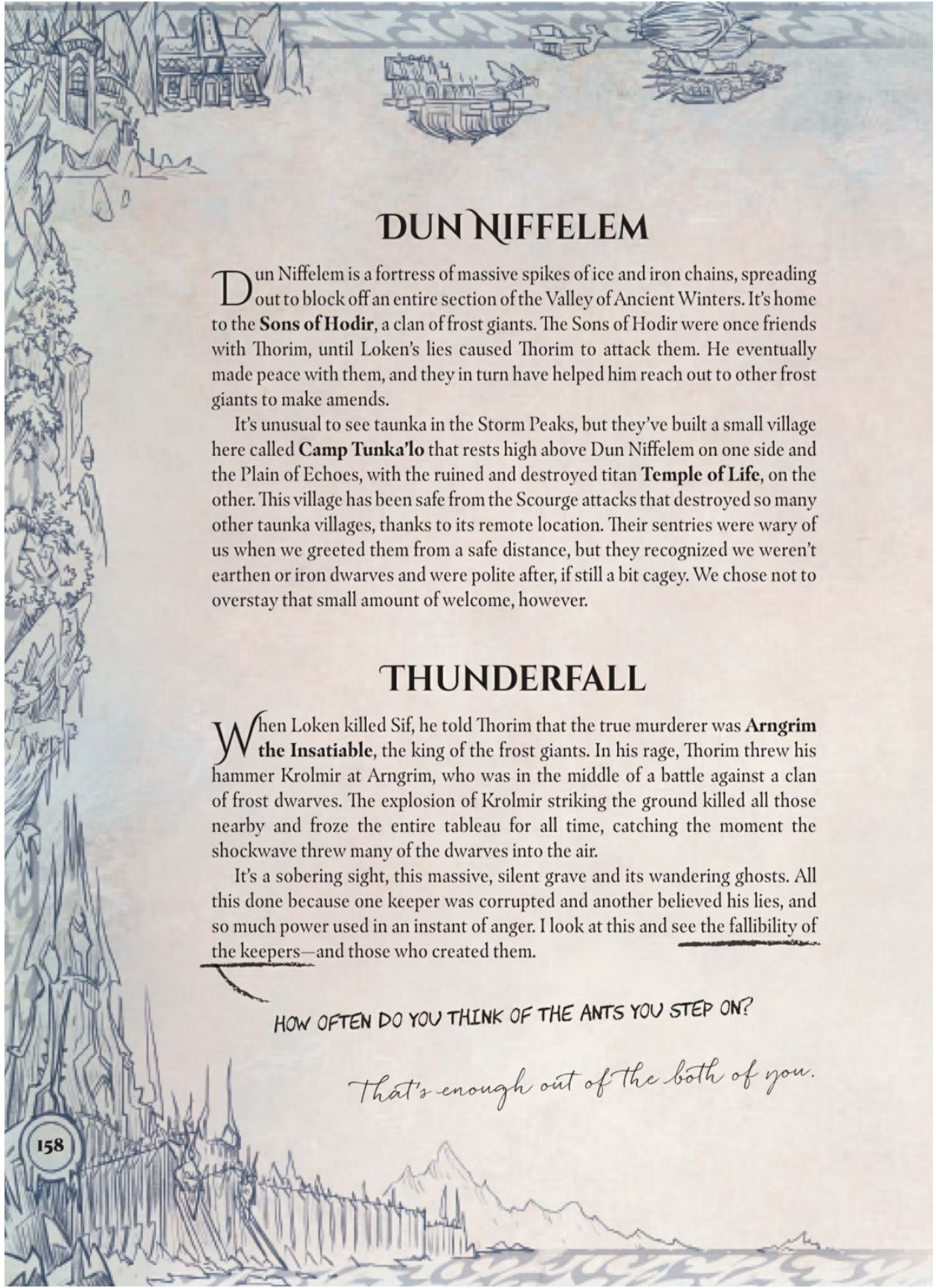
After putting down the Winterskorn, Tyr realized he had to find a way to stop Loken once and for all; he and his friends stole the Discs of Norgannon, a record of all of Azeroth's history, so they could read out the full extent of Loken's betrayals. Loken panicked at the thought all might be revealed and sent the C'Thraxxi after Tyr. They hunted down his group to a glade far from Northrend, and Tyr made a final stand so his friends could escape with the discs. He defeated the C'Thraxxi but lost his life. Later, Ironaya and Archaedas built a tomb for Tyr, and the place became named Tyr's Fall—Tirisfal.

The **Temple of Invention** is Mimiron's seat of power, though rather than a throne, it's got some sort of titan machine in its center. Mimiron was one of the keepers Loken actually killed, though he made the death look like a lab accident. Mimiron's mechagnomes then made him a mechagnome body, but he's not been quite right in the head since.

The **Temple of Winter** belongs to Hodir, who created the frost giants. The frost giants who once guarded the temple were killed by Loken's pet fire giants and Hodir himself taken captive in Ulduar. Now that Hodir's free, the cold-weather patterns that encircle his temple have resumed.

He's an odd one. When I tried to contact Ulduar to check on the Forge of Wills after N'Zoth escaped, Mimiron shut down the communication because I'd interrupted his work.

LAST I SAW HIM, HE ALSO CALLED ME "GRIF."



DUN NIFFELEM

Dun Niffelem is a fortress of massive spikes of ice and iron chains, spreading out to block off an entire section of the Valley of Ancient Winters. It's home to the **Sons of Hodir**, a clan of frost giants. The Sons of Hodir were once friends with Thorim, until Loken's lies caused Thorim to attack them. He eventually made peace with them, and they in turn have helped him reach out to other frost giants to make amends.

It's unusual to see taunka in the Storm Peaks, but they've built a small village here called **Camp Tunka'lo** that rests high above Dun Niffelem on one side and the Plain of Echoes, with the ruined and destroyed titan **Temple of Life**, on the other. This village has been safe from the Scourge attacks that destroyed so many other taunka villages, thanks to its remote location. Their sentries were wary of us when we greeted them from a safe distance, but they recognized we weren't earthen or iron dwarves and were polite after, if still a bit cagey. We chose not to overstay that small amount of welcome, however.

THUNDERFALL

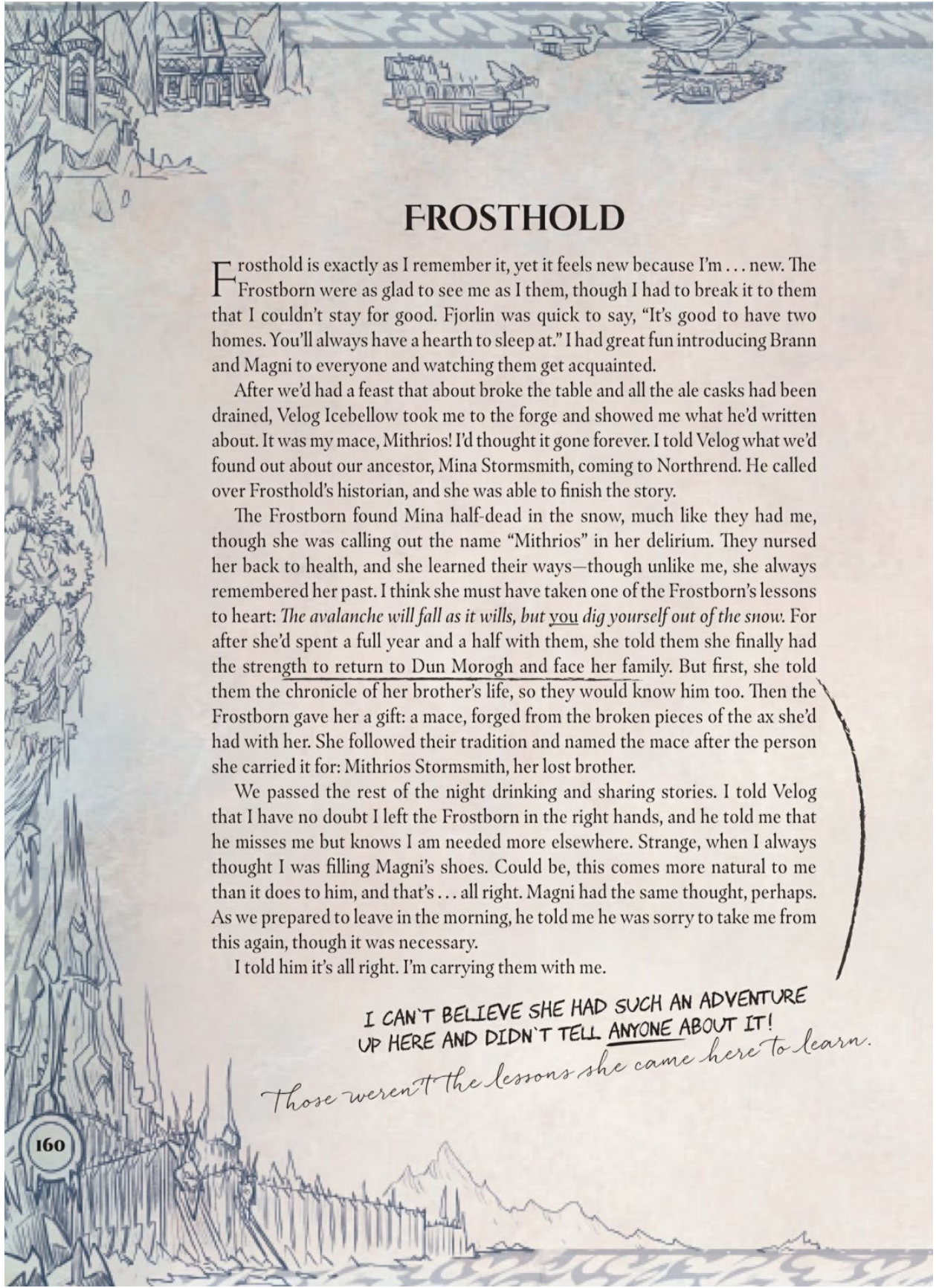
When Loken killed Sif, he told Thorim that the true murderer was **Arnggrim the Insatiable**, the king of the frost giants. In his rage, Thorim threw his hammer Krolmir at Arnggrim, who was in the middle of a battle against a clan of frost dwarves. The explosion of Krolmir striking the ground killed all those nearby and froze the entire tableau for all time, catching the moment the shockwave threw many of the dwarves into the air.

It's a sobering sight, this massive, silent grave and its wandering ghosts. All this done because one keeper was corrupted and another believed his lies, and so much power used in an instant of anger. I look at this and see the fallibility of the keepers—and those who created them.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK OF THE ANTS YOU STEP ON?

That's enough out of the both of you.





FROSTHOLD

Frosthold is exactly as I remember it, yet it feels new because I'm . . . new. The Frostborn were as glad to see me as I them, though I had to break it to them that I couldn't stay for good. Fjorlin was quick to say, "It's good to have two homes. You'll always have a hearth to sleep at." I had great fun introducing Brann and Magni to everyone and watching them get acquainted.

After we'd had a feast that about broke the table and all the ale casks had been drained, Velog Icebellow took me to the forge and showed me what he'd written about. It was my mace, Mithrios! I'd thought it gone forever. I told Velog what we'd found out about our ancestor, Mina Stormsmith, coming to Northrend. He called over Frosthold's historian, and she was able to finish the story.


The Frostborn found Mina half-dead in the snow, much like they had me, though she was calling out the name "Mithrios" in her delirium. They nursed her back to health, and she learned their ways—though unlike me, she always remembered her past. I think she must have taken one of the Frostborn's lessons to heart: *The avalanche will fall as it wills, but you dig yourself out of the snow.* For after she'd spent a full year and a half with them, she told them she finally had the strength to return to Dun Morogh and face her family. But first, she told them the chronicle of her brother's life, so they would know him too. Then the Frostborn gave her a gift: a mace, forged from the broken pieces of the ax she'd had with her. She followed their tradition and named the mace after the person she carried it for: Mithrios Stormsmith, her lost brother.

We passed the rest of the night drinking and sharing stories. I told Velog that I have no doubt I left the Frostborn in the right hands, and he told me that he misses me but knows I am needed more elsewhere. Strange, when I always thought I was filling Magni's shoes. Could be, this comes more natural to me than it does to him, and that's . . . all right. Magni had the same thought, perhaps. As we prepared to leave in the morning, he told me he was sorry to take me from this again, though it was necessary.

I told him it's all right. I'm carrying them with me.

I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE HAD SUCH AN ADVENTURE
UP HERE AND DIDN'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT IT!

Those weren't the lessons she came here to learn.



To King Velog Icebellow
of the Frostborn,

We cannot thank you or the rest of the Frostborn
enough for the hospitality and warmth you showed us
during our visit—or for the story of our ancestor that
you helped us discover.

We invite you—or any Frostborn
who cares to make the journey—to Ironforge. As you
shared your home with us, we're eager to welcome you
to ours, to bring our peoples and our families closer
together. We'd like to show you about Dun Morogh—
we think you'd like New Tinkertown, the Thunderbrew
Distillery, and Ironforge Mountain particularly . . .
and the Deeprun Tram to Stormwind.

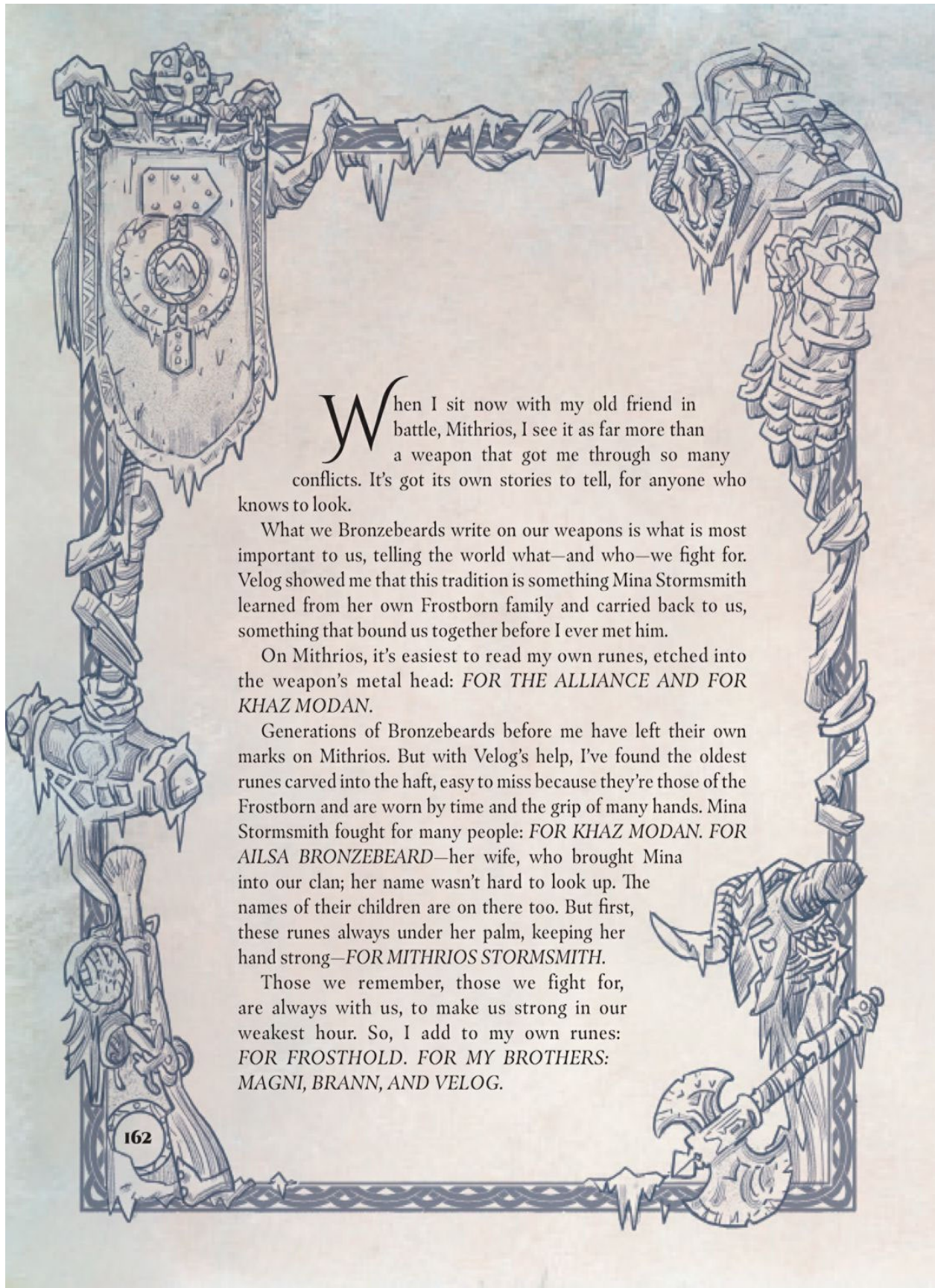
We look forward to seeing you, however many days may
lie between now and then.

With great respect and affection,

Muradin

Magni

BRANN



When I sit now with my old friend in battle, Mithrios, I see it as far more than a weapon that got me through so many conflicts. It's got its own stories to tell, for anyone who knows to look.

What we Bronzebeards write on our weapons is what is most important to us, telling the world what—and who—we fight for. Velog showed me that this tradition is something Mina Stormsmith learned from her own Frostborn family and carried back to us, something that bound us together before I ever met him.

On Mithrios, it's easiest to read my own runes, etched into the weapon's metal head: *FOR THE ALLIANCE AND FOR KHAZ MODAN.*

Generations of Bronzebeards before me have left their own marks on Mithrios. But with Velog's help, I've found the oldest runes carved into the haft, easy to miss because they're those of the Frostborn and are worn by time and the grip of many hands. Mina Stormsmith fought for many people: *FOR KHAZ MODAN. FOR AILSA BRONZEBEARD*—her wife, who brought Mina into our clan; her name wasn't hard to look up. The names of their children are on there too. But first, these runes always under her palm, keeping her hand strong—*FOR MITHRIOS STORMSMITH.*

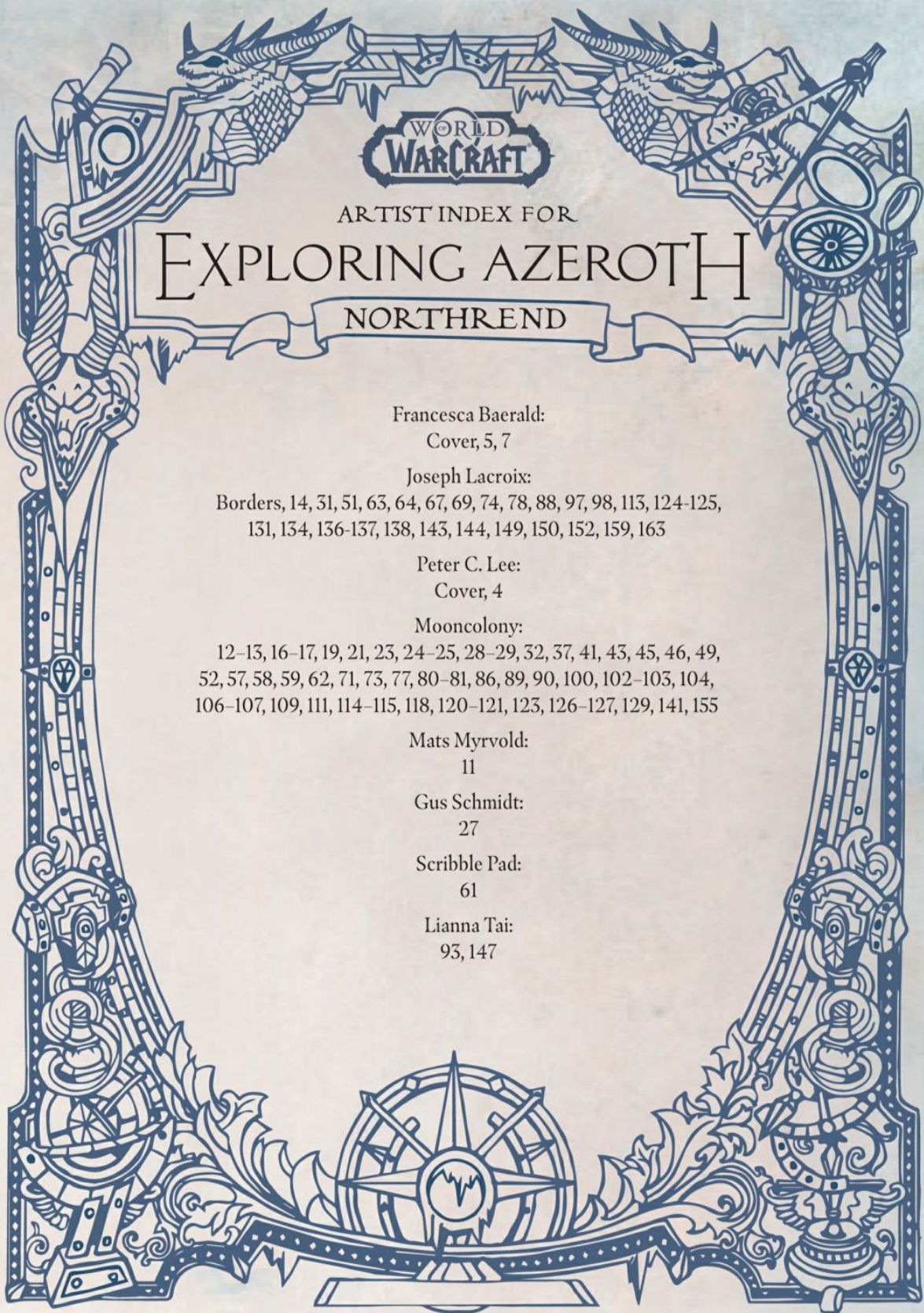
Those we remember, those we fight for, are always with us, to make us strong in our weakest hour. So, I add to my own runes: *FOR FROSTHOLD. FOR MY BROTHERS: MAGNI, BRANN, AND VELOG.*



Beware of
Grizzly
Squirrel

HA HA, VERY FUNNY, MURADIN.

This was Magni's doing!



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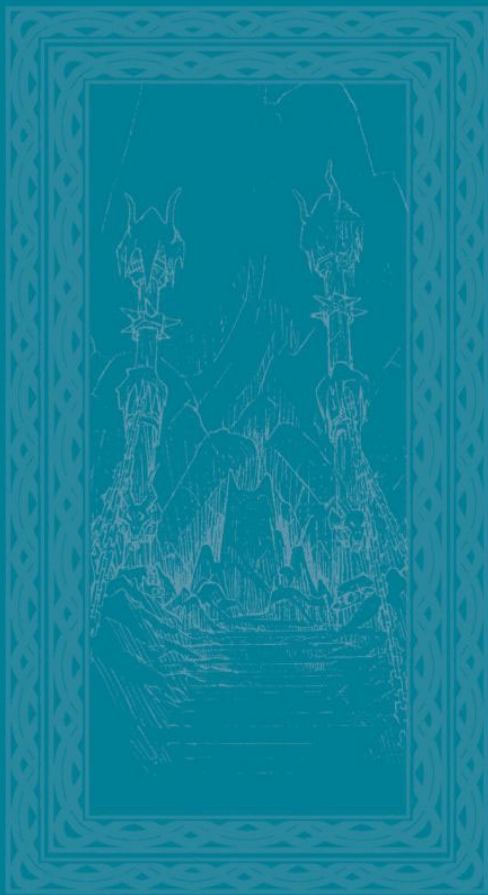
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