

Chapter I: Mythos

The Titans and the Shaping of the Universe

No one knows exactly how the universe began. Some theorize that a catastrophic cosmic explosion sent the infinite worlds spinning out into the vastness of the Great Dark - worlds that would one day bear life forms of wondrous and terrible diversity. Others believe that the universe was created as a whole by a single all-powerful entity. Though the exact origins of the chaotic universe remain uncertain, it is clear that a race of powerful beings arose to bring stability to the various worlds and ensure a safe future for the beings that would follow in their footsteps.

The Titans, colossal, metallic-skinned gods from the far reaches of the cosmos, explored the newborn universe and set to work on the worlds they encountered. They shaped the worlds by raising mighty mountains and dredging out vast seas. They breathed skies and raging atmospheres into being. It was all part of their unfathomable, far-sighted plan to create order out of chaos. They even empowered primitive races to tend to their works and maintain the integrity of their respective worlds.

Ruled by an elite sect known as the Pantheon, the Titans brought order to a hundred million worlds scattered throughout the Great Dark Beyond during the first ages of creation. The benevolent Pantheon, which sought to safeguard these structured worlds, was ever vigilant against the threat of attack from the vile extra-dimensional entities of the Twisting Nether. The Nether, an ethereal dimension of chaotic magics that connected the myriad worlds of the universe, was home to an infinite number of malefic, demonic beings who sought only to destroy life and devour the energies of the living universe. Unable to conceive of evil or wickedness in any form, the Titans struggled to find a way to end the demons' constant threat.

Sargeris and the Betrayal

Over time, demonic entities made their way into the Titans' worlds from the Twisting Nether, and the Pantheon elected its greatest warrior, Sargeris, to act as its first line of defense. A noble giant of molten bronze, Sargeris carried out his duties for countless millennia, seeking out and destroying these demons wherever he could find them. Over the eons, Sargeris encountered two powerful demonic races, both of which were bent on gaining power and dominance over the physical universe.

The eredar, an insidious race of devilish sorcerers, used their warlock magics to invade and enslave a number of worlds. The indigenous races of those worlds were mutated by the eredar's malevolent powers and turned into demons themselves. Though Sargeris' nearly limitless powers were more than enough to defeat the vile eredar, he was greatly troubled by the creatures' corruption and all-consuming evil. Incapable of fathoming such depravity, the great Titan began to slip into a brooding depression. Despite his growing unease, Sargeris rid the universe of the warlocks by trapping them within a corner of the Twisting Nether.

While his confusion and misery deepened, Sargeris was forced to contend with another group intent on disrupting the Titans' order: the Nathrezim. This dark race of vampiric demons (also known as dreadlords) conquered a number of populated worlds by possessing their inhabitants and turning them to the shadow. The nefarious, scheming dreadlords turned whole nations against one another by manipulating them into unthinking hatred and mistrust. Sargeris defeated the Nathrezim easily, but their corruption affected him deeply.

As doubt and despair overwhelmed Sargeris' senses, he lost all faith not only in his mission, but also in the Titans' vision of an ordered universe. Eventually he came to believe that the concept of order itself was folly, and that chaos and depravity were the only absolutes within the dark, lonely universe. His fellow Titans tried to persuade him of his error and calm his raging emotions, but he disregarded their more optimistic beliefs as self-serving delusions. Storming from their ranks forever, Sargeris set out to find his own place in the universe. Although the Pantheon was sorrowful at his departure, the Titans could never have predicted just how far their lost brother would go.

By the time Sargeris' madness had consumed the last vestiges of his valiant spirit, he believed that the Titans themselves were responsible for creation's failure. Deciding, at last, to undo their works throughout the universe, he resolved to form an unstoppable army that would set the physical universe aflame.

Even Sarger's titanic form became distorted from the corruption that plagued his once-noble heart. His eyes, hair, and beard erupted in fire, and his metallic bronze skin split open to reveal an endless furnace of blistering hate.

In his fury, Sarger shattered the prisons of the Eredar and the Nathrezim and set the loathsome demons free. These cunning creatures bowed before the dark Titan's vast rage and offered to serve him in whatever malicious ways they could. From the ranks of the powerful Eredar, Sarger picked two champions to command his demonic army of destruction. Kil'jaeden the Deceiver was chosen to seek out the darkest races in the universe and recruit them into Sarger's ranks. The second champion, Archimonde the Defiler, was chosen to lead Sarger's vast armies into battle against any who might resist the Titan's will.

Kil'jaeden's first move was to enslave the vampiric dreadlords under his terrible power. The dreadlords served as his personal agents throughout the universe, and they took pleasure in locating primitive races for their master to corrupt and bring into the fold. First amongst the dreadlords was Tichondrius the Darkener. Tichondrius served Kil'jaeden as the perfect soldier and agreed to bring Sarger's burning will to all the dark corners of the universe.

The mighty Archimonde also empowered agents of his own. Calling upon the malefic pit lords and their barbarous leader, Mannoroth the Destructor, Archimonde hoped to establish a fighting elite that would scour creation of all life.

Once Sarger saw that his armies were amassed and ready to follow his every command, he launched his raging forces into the vastness of the Great Dark. He referred to his growing army as the Burning Legion. To this date, it is still unclear how many worlds they consumed and burned on their unholy Burning Crusade across the universe.

The Old Gods and the Ordering of Azeroth

Unaware of Sarger's mission to undo their countless works, the Titans continued to move from world to world, shaping and ordering each planet as they saw fit. Along their journey they happened upon a small world that its inhabitants would later name Azeroth. As the Titans made their way across the primordial landscape, they encountered a number of hostile elemental beings. These elementals, who worshipped a race of unfathomably evil beings known only as the Old Gods, vowed to drive the Titans back and keep their world inviolate from the invaders' metallic touch.

The Pantheon, disturbed by the Old Gods' penchant for evil, waged war upon the elementals and their dark masters. The Old Gods' armies were led by the most powerful elemental lieutenants: Ragnaros the Firelord, Therazane the Stonemother, Al'Akir the Windlord, and Neptulon the Tidehunter. Their chaotic forces raged across the face of the world and clashed with the colossal Titans. Though the elementals were powerful beyond mortal comprehension, their combined forces could not stop the mighty Titans. One by one, the elemental lords fell, and their forces dispersed.

The Pantheon shattered the Old Gods' citadels and chained the four evil gods far beneath the surface of the world. Without the Old Gods' power to keep their raging spirits bound to the physical world, the elementals were banished to an abyssal plane, where they would contend with one another for all eternity. With the elementals' departure, nature calmed, and the world settled into a peaceful harmony. The Titans saw that the threat was contained and set to work.

The Titans empowered a number of races to help them fashion the world. To help them carve out the fathomless caverns beneath the earth, the Titans created the dwarf-like earthen from magical, living stone. To help them dredge out the seas and lift the land from the sea floor, the Titans created the immense but gentle sea giants. For many ages the Titans moved and shaped the earth, until at last there remained one perfect continent. At the continent's center, the Titans crafted a lake of scintillating energies. The lake, which they named the Well of Eternity, was to be the fount of life for the world. Its potent energies would nurture the bones of the world and empower life to take root in the land's rich soil. Over time, plants, trees, monsters, and creatures of every kind began to thrive on the primordial continent. As twilight fell on the final day of their labors, the Titans named the continent Kalimdor: "land of eternal starlight".

Charge of the Dragonflights

Satisfied that the small world had been ordered and that their work was done, the Titans prepared to leave Azeroth. However, before they departed, they charged the greatest species of the world with the task of watching over Kalimdor, lest any force should threaten its perfect tranquility. In that age, there were many dragonflights. Yet there were five flights that held dominion over their brethren. It was these five flights that the Titans chose to shepherd the budding world. The greatest members of the Pantheon imbued a portion of their power upon each of the flights' leaders. These majestic dragons (as listed below) became known as the Great Aspects, or the Dragon Aspects.

Aman'Thul, the Highfather of the Pantheon, bestowed a portion of his cosmic power upon the massive bronze dragon, Nozdormu. The Highfather empowered Nozdormu to guard time itself and police the ever-spinning pathways of fate and destiny. The stoic, honorable Nozdormu became known as the Timeless One.

Eonar, the Titan patron of all life, gave a portion of her power to the red leviathan, Alexstrasza. Ever after, Alexstrasza would be known as the Life-Binder, and she would work to safeguard all living creatures within the world. Due to her supreme wisdom and limitless compassion for all living things, Alexstrasza was crowned the Dragonqueen and given dominion over her kind.

Eonar also blessed Alexstrasza's younger sister, the lithe green dragon Ysera, with a portion of nature's influence. Ysera fell into an eternal trance, bound to the waking Dream of Creation. Known as the Dreamer, she would watch over the growing wilds of the world from her verdant realm, the Emerald Dream.

Norgannon, the Titan lore keeper and master-magician, granted the blue dragon, Malygos, a portion of his vast power. From then on, Malygos would be known as the Spell-Weaver, the guardian of magic and hidden arcanum.

Khaz'goroth, the Titan shaper and forger of the world, bestowed some of his vast power upon the mighty black wyrm, Neltharion. The great-hearted Neltharion, known afterwards as the Earth-Warder, was given dominion over the earth and the deep places of the world. He embodied the strength of the world and served as Alexstrasza's greatest supporter.

Thus empowered, the Five Aspects were charged with the world's defense in the Titans' absence. With the dragons prepared to safeguard their creation, the Titans left Azeroth behind forever. Unfortunately it was only a matter of time before Sargeras learned of the newborn world's existence....

The Waking World and the Well of Eternity

Ten thousand years before the orcs and humans clashed in their First War, the world of Azeroth cradled only one massive continent, surrounded by the sea. That landmass, known as Kalimdor, was home to a number of disparate races and creatures, all vying for survival amongst the savage elements of the waking world. At the dark continent's center was a mysterious lake of incandescent energies. The lake, which would later be called the Well of Eternity, was the true heart of the world's magic and natural power. Drawing its energies from the infinite Great Dark beyond the world, the Well acted as a mystical fount, sending its potent energies out across the world to nourish life in all its wondrous forms.

In time, a primitive tribe of nocturnal humanoids cautiously made their way to the edges of the mesmerizing enchanted lake. The feral, nomadic humanoids, drawn by the Well's strange energies, built crude homes upon its tranquil shores. Over time, the Well's cosmic power affected the tribe, making them strong, wise, and virtually immortal. The tribe adopted the name Kaldorei, which meant "children of the stars" in their native tongue. To celebrate their budding society, they constructed great structures and temples around the lake's periphery.

The Kaldorei, or night elves as they would later be known, worshipped the moon goddess, Elune, and believed that she slept within the Well's shimmering depths during the daylight hours. The early night elf priests and seers studied the Well with an insatiable curiosity, driven to plumb its untold secrets and power. As their society grew, the night elves explored the breadth of Kalimdor and encountered its other denizens. The only creatures that gave them pause were the ancient and powerful dragons. The great serpentine beasts were often reclusive, but they did much to safeguard the known lands from potential threats. The night elves discovered that the dragons held themselves to be the protectors of the world - and agreed that they and their secrets were best left alone.

In time, the night elves' curiosity led them to meet and befriend a number of powerful entities, not the least of which was Cenarius, a mighty demigod of the primordial forestlands. The greathearted Cenarius grew fond of the inquisitive night elves and spent a great deal of time teaching them about the natural world. The tranquil Kaldorei developed a strong empathy for the living forests of Kalimdor and reveled in the harmonious balance of nature.

As the seemingly endless ages passed, the night elves' civilization expanded both territorially and culturally. Their temples, roads, and dwelling places stretched across the breadth of the dark continent. Azshara, the night elves' beautiful and gifted queen, built an immense, wondrous palace on the Well's shore that housed her favored servitors within its bejeweled halls. Her servitors, whom she called the Quel'dorei or "Highborne", doted on her every command and believed themselves to be greater

than the rest of their brethren. Though Queen Azshara was loved equally by all of her people, the Highborne were secretly envied and disliked by the rest of the night elves.

Sharing the priests' curiosity towards the Well of Eternity, Azshara ordered the Highborne to plumb its secrets and reveal its true purpose in the world. The Highborne buried themselves in their work and studied the Well ceaselessly. In time they developed the ability to manipulate and control the Well's cosmic energies. As their experiments progressed, the Highborne found that they could use their newfound powers to either create or destroy at their leisure. The heedless Highborne had stumbled upon primitive magic and were now resolved to devote themselves to its mastery. Although they agreed that magic was inherently dangerous if handled irresponsibly, Azshara and her Highborne began to practice their spellcraft with reckless abandon. Cenarius and many wizened night elf scholars warned that only calamity would result from toying with the clearly volatile arts of magic. Even so, Azshara and her followers stubbornly continued to expand their burgeoning powers.

As their powers grew, a distinct change came over Azshara and the Highborne. The haughty, aloof upper class became increasingly callous and cruel towards their fellow night elves. A dark, brooding pall veiled Azshara's once-entrancing beauty. She began to withdraw from her loving subjects and refused to interact with any but her trusted Highborne priests.

A young scholar named Malfurion Stormrage, who had spent much of his time studying the primitive arts of druidism, began to suspect that a terrible power was corrupting the Highborne and his beloved queen. Though he could not conceive of the evil that was to come, he knew that the night elves' lives would soon be changed forever....

The War of the Ancients

10,000 years before Warcraft I

The Highborne's reckless use of magic sent ripples of energy spiraling out from the Well of Eternity and into the Great Dark Beyond. The streaming ripples of energy were felt by terrible alien minds. Sargeras - the Great Enemy of all life, the Destroyer of Worlds - felt the potent ripples and was drawn to their distant point of origin. Spying the primordial world of Azeroth and sensing the limitless energies of the Well of Eternity, Sargeras was consumed by an insatiable hunger. The great dark god of the Nameless Void resolved to destroy the fledgling world and claim its energies as his own.

Sargeras gathered his vast Burning Legion and made his way towards the unsuspecting world of Azeroth. The Legion was comprised of a million screaming demons, all ripped from the far corners of the universe, and the demons hungered for conquest. Sargeras' lieutenants, Archimonde the Defiler and Mannoroth the Destructor, prepared their infernal minions to strike.

Queen Azshara, overwhelmed by the terrible ecstasy of her magic, fell victim to Sargeras' undeniable power and agreed to grant him entrance to her world. Even her Highborne servitors gave themselves over to magic's inevitable corruption and began to worship Sargeras as their god. To show their allegiance to the Legion, the Highborne aided their queen in opening a vast, swirling portal within the depths of the Well of Eternity.

Once all his preparations had been made, Sargeras began his catastrophic invasion of Azeroth. The warrior-demons of the Burning Legion stormed into the world through the Well of Eternity and laid siege to the night elves' sleeping cities. Led by Archimonde and Mannoroth, the Legion swarmed over the lands of Kalimdor, leaving only ash and sorrow in its wake. The demon warlocks called down searing infernals that crashed like hellish meteors into the graceful spires of Kalimdor's temples. A band of burning, bloodletting killers known as the Doomguard marched across Kalimdor's fields, slaughtering everyone in their path. Packs of wild, demonic felhounds ravaged the countryside unopposed. Though the brave Kaldorei warriors rushed to defend their ancient homeland, they were forced to give ground, inch by inch, before the fury of the Legion's onslaught.

It fell to Malfurion Stormrage to find help for his beleaguered people. Stormrage, whose own brother, Illidan, practiced the Highborne's magics, was incensed by the growing corruption amongst the upper class. Convincing Illidan to forsake his dangerous obsession, Malfurion set out to find Cenarius and muster a resistance force. The beautiful young priestess, Tyrande, agreed to accompany the brothers in the name of Elune. Though Malfurion and Illidan shared a love for the idealistic priestess, Tyrande's heart belonged to Malfurion alone. Illidan resented his brother's budding romance with Tyrande, but knew that his heartache was nothing compared to the pain of his magical addiction.

Illidan, who had grown dependent on magic's empowering energies, struggled to keep control of his nearly overwhelming hunger to tap the Well's energies once again. However, with Tyrande's patient support, he was able to restrain himself and help his brother find the reclusive demigod, Cenarius. Cenarius, who dwelt within the sacred Moonglades of the distant Mount

Hyjal, agreed to help the night elves by finding the ancient dragons and enlisting their aid. The dragons, led by the great red leviathan, Alexstrasza, agreed to send their mighty flights to engage the demons and their infernal masters.

Cenarius, calling on the spirits of the enchanted forests, rallied an army of ancient tree-men and led them against the Legion in a daring ground assault. As the night elves' allies converged upon Azshara's temple and the Well of Eternity, all-out warfare erupted. Despite the strength of their newfound allies, Malfurion and his colleagues realized that the Legion could not be defeated by martial strength alone.

As the titanic battle raged around Azshara's capital city, the delusional queen waited in anticipation for Sargeras' arrival. The lord of the Legion was preparing to pass through the Well of Eternity and enter the ravaged world. As his impossibly huge shadow drew ever closer to the Well's raging surface, Azshara gathered the most powerful of her Highborne followers. Only by linking their magics together in one focused spell would they be able to create a gateway large enough for Sargeras to enter.

As the battle raged across the burning fields of Kalimdor, a terrible turn of events unfolded. The details of the event have been lost to time, but it is known that Neltharion, the Dragon Aspect of the Earth, went mad during a critical engagement against the Burning Legion. He began to split apart as flame and rage erupted from his dark hide. Renaming himself Deathwing, the burning dragon turned on his brethren and drove the five dragonflights from the field of battle.

Deathwing's sudden betrayal was so destructive that the five dragonflights never truly recovered. Wounded and shocked, Alexstrasza and the other noble dragons were forced to abandon their mortal allies. Malfurion and his companions, now hopelessly outnumbered, barely survived the ensuing onslaught.

Malfurion, convinced that the Well of Eternity was the demons' umbilical link to the physical world, insisted that it should be destroyed. His companions, knowing that the Well was the source of their immortality and powers, were horrified by the rash notion. Yet Tyrande saw the wisdom of Malfurion's theory, so she convinced Cenarius and their comrades to storm Azshara's temple and find a way to shut the Well down for good.

The Sundering of the World

Knowing that the Well's destruction would prevent him from ever wielding magic again, Illidan selfishly abandoned the group and set out to warn the Highborne of Malfurion's plan. Due to the insanity brought on by his addiction and the stinging resentment towards his brother's affair with Tyrande, Illidan felt no remorse at betraying Malfurion and siding with Azshara and her ilk. Above all else, Illidan vowed to protect the Well's power by any means necessary.

Heartbroken by his brother's departure, Malfurion led his companions into the heart of Azshara's temple. Yet as they stormed into the main audience chamber, they found the Highborne in the midst of their final dark incantation. The communal spell created an unstable vortex of power within the Well's turbulent depths. As Sargeras' ominous shadow drew ever closer to the surface, Malfurion and his allies rushed to attack.

Azshara, having received Illidan's warning, was more than prepared for them. Nearly all of Malfurion's followers fell before the mad queen's powers. Tyrande, attempting to attack Azshara from behind, was caught off-guard by the queen's Highborne guardsmen. Though she vanquished the guardsmen, Tyrande suffered grievous wounds at their hands. When Malfurion saw his love fall, he went into a murderous rage and resolved to end Azshara's life.

As the battle raged inside and outside of the temple, Illidan appeared from the shadows near the shores of the great Well. Producing a set of specially crafted vials, Illidan knelt and filled each with the Well's shimmering waters. Convinced that the demons would crush the night elves' civilization, he planned to steal the sacred waters and keep their energies for himself.

The ensuing battle between Malfurion and Azshara threw the Highborne's carefully crafted spellwork into chaos. The unstable vortex within the Well's depths exploded and ignited a catastrophic chain of events that would sunder the world forever. The massive explosion rocked the temple to its foundations and sent massive quakes ripping through the tortured earth. As the horrific battle between the Legion and the night elves' allies raged around and above the ruined capital city, the surging Well of Eternity buckled in upon itself and collapsed.

The resultant catastrophic explosion shattered the earth and blotted out the skies.

As the aftershocks from the Well's implosion rattled the bones of the world, the seas rushed in to fill the gaping wound left in the earth. Nearly eighty percent of Kalimdor's landmass had been blasted apart, leaving only a handful of separate continents surrounding the new, raging sea. At the center of the new sea, where the Well of Eternity once stood, was a tumultuous storm of tidal fury and chaotic energies. This terrible scar, known as the Maelstrom, would never cease its furious spinning. It would remain a constant reminder of the terrible catastrophe... and the utopian era that had been lost forever.

Somehow, against all odds, Queen Azshara and her Highborne elite managed to survive the ordeal. Tortured and twisted by the powers they had released, Azshara and her followers were dragged down beneath the raging sea by the Well's implosion. Cursed - transformed - they took on new shapes and became the hateful serpentine naga. Azshara herself expanded with hate and rage, becoming a massive monstrosity, reflecting the wickedness and malice that had always hidden within her core.

There, at the bottom of the Maelstrom, the naga built for themselves a new city, Nazjatar, from which they would rebuild their power. It would take over ten thousand years before the naga would reveal their existence to the surface world.

Mount Hyjal and Illidan's Gift

The few night elves that survived the horrific explosion rallied together on crudely made rafts and slowly made their way to the only landmass in sight. Somehow, by the grace of Elune, Malfurion, Tyrande, and Cenarius had survived the Great Sundering. The weary heroes agreed to lead their fellow survivors and establish a new home for their people. As they journeyed in silence, they surveyed the wreckage of their world and realized that their passions had wrought the destruction all around them. Though Sargeras and his Legion had been ripped from the world by the Well's destruction, Malfurion and his companions were left to ponder the terrible cost of victory.

There were many Highborne who did survive the cataclysm unscathed. They made their way to the shores of the new land along with the other night elves. Though Malfurion mistrusted the Highborne's motivations, he was satisfied that they could cause no real mischief without the Well's energies.

As the weary mass of night elves landed upon the shores of the new land, they found that the holy mountain, Hyjal, had survived the catastrophe. Seeking to establish a new home for themselves, Malfurion and the night elves climbed the slopes of Hyjal and reached its windswept summit. As they descended into the wooded bowl, nestled between the mountain's enormous peaks, they found a small, tranquil lake. To their horror, they found that the lake's waters had been fouled by magic.

Illidan, having survived the Sundering as well, had reached Hyjal summit long before Malfurion and the night elves. In his mad bid to maintain the flows of magic in the world, Illidan had poured his vials, which contained the precious waters from the Well of Eternity, into the mountain lake. The Well's potent energies quickly ignited and coalesced into a new Well of Eternity. The exultant Illidan, believing that the new Well was a gift to future generations, was shocked when Malfurion hunted him down. Malfurion explained to his brother that magic was innately chaotic and that its use would inevitably lead to widespread corruption and strife. Still, Illidan refused to relinquish his magical powers.

Knowing full well where Illidan's ruthless schemes would eventually lead, Malfurion decided to deal with his power-crazed brother once and for all. With Cenarius' help, Malfurion sealed Illidan within a vast underground barrow prison, where he would remain chained and powerless until the end of time. To ensure his brother's containment, Malfurion empowered the young warden, Maiev Shadowsong, to be Illidan's personal jailor.

Concerned that destroying the new Well might bring about an even greater catastrophe, the night elves resolved to leave it be. However, Malfurion declared that they would never practice the arts of magic again. Under Cenarius' watchful eye, they began to study the ancient arts of druidism that would enable them to heal the ravaged earth and re-grow their beloved forests at the base of Mount Hyjal.

The World Tree and the Emerald Dream 9,000 years before Warcraft I

For many years, the night elves worked tirelessly to rebuild what they could of their ancient homeland. Leaving their broken temples and roads to be overgrown, they constructed their new homes amidst the verdant trees and shadowed hills at Hyjal's base. In time, the dragons that had survived the great Sundering came forth from their secret abodes.

Alexstrasza the red, Ysera the green, and Nozdormu the bronze descended upon the druids' tranquil glades and surveyed the fruits of the night elves' labors. Malfurion, who had become an arch-druid of immense power, greeted the mighty dragons and told them about the creation of the new Well of Eternity. The great dragons were alarmed to hear the dark news and speculated that as long as the Well remained, the Legion might one day return and assault the world once again. Malfurion and the three dragons made a pact to keep the Well safe and ensure that the agents of the Burning Legion would never find their way back into the world.

Alexstrasza, the Lifebinder, placed a single, enchanted acorn within the heart of the Well of Eternity. The acorn, activated by the potent, magical waters, sprung to life as a colossal tree. The mighty tree's roots grew from the Well's waters, and its verdant canopy seemed to scrape the roof of the sky. The immense tree would be an everlasting symbol of the night elves' bond with nature, and its life-giving energies would extend out to heal the rest of the world over time. The night elves' gave their World Tree the new name Nordrassil, which meant "crown of the heavens" in their native tongue.

Nozdormu, the Timeless, placed an enchantment upon the World Tree to ensure that as long as the colossal tree stood, the night elves would never age or fall prey to sickness or disease.

Ysera, the Dreamer, also placed an enchantment upon the World Tree by linking it to her own realm, the ethereal dimension known as the Emerald Dream. The Emerald Dream, a vast, ever-changing spirit world, existed outside the boundaries of the physical world. From the Dream, Ysera regulated the ebb and flow of nature and the evolutionary path of the world itself. The night elf druids, including Malfurion himself, were bound to the Dream through the World Tree. As part of the mystical pact, the druids agreed to sleep for centuries at a time so that their spirits could roam the infinite paths of Ysera's Dreamways. Though the druids were grieved at the prospect of losing so many years of their lives to hibernation, they selflessly agreed to uphold their bargain with Ysera.

Exile of the High Elves

7,300 years before Warcraft I

As the centuries passed, the night elves' new society grew strong and expanded throughout the budding forest that they came to call Ashenvale. Many of the creatures and species that were abundant before the Great Sundering, such as furbolgs and quilboars, reappeared and flourished in the land. Under the druids' benevolent leadership, the night elves enjoyed an era of unprecedented peace and tranquility under the stars.

However, many of the original Highborne survivors grew restless. Like Illidan before them, they fell victim to the withdrawal that came from the loss of their coveted magics. They were tempted to tap the energies of the Well of Eternity and exult in their magical practices. Dath'Remar, the brash, outspoken leader of the Highborne, began to mock the druids publicly, calling them cowards for refusing to wield the magic that he said was theirs by right. Malfurion and the druids dismissed Dath'Remar's arguments and warned the Highborne that any use of magic would be punishable by death. In an insolent and ill-fated attempt to convince the druids to rescind their law, Dath'Remar and his followers unleashed a terrible magical storm upon Ashenvale.

The druids could not bring themselves to put so many of their kin to death, so they decided to exile the reckless Highborne from their lands. Dath'Remar and his followers, glad to be rid of their conservative cousins at last, boarded a number of specially crafted ships and set sail upon the seas. Though none of them knew what awaited them beyond the waters of the raging Maelstrom, they were eager to establish their own homeland, where they could practice their coveted magics with impunity. The Highborne, or Quel'dorei, as Azshara had named them in ages past, would eventually set shore upon the eastern land men would call Lordaeron. They planned to build their own magical kingdom, Quel'Thalas, and reject the night elves' precepts of moon worship and nocturnal activity. Forever after, they would embrace the sun and be known only as the high elves.

The Sentinels and the Long Vigil

With the departure of their wayward cousins, the night elves turned their attention back to the safekeeping of their enchanted homeland. The druids, sensing that their time of hibernation was drawing near, prepared to sleep and leave their loved ones and families behind. Tyrande, who had become the High Priestess of Elune, asked her love, Malfurion, not to leave her for Ysera's Emerald Dream. But Malfurion, honor bound to enter the changing Dreamways, bid the priestess farewell and swore that they would never be apart so long as they held true to their love.

Left alone to protect Kalimdor from the dangers of the new world, Tyrande assembled a powerful fighting force from amongst her night elf sisters. The fearless, highly trained warrior women who pledged themselves to Kalimdor's defense became known as the Sentinels. Though they preferred to patrol the shadowy forests of Ashenvale on their own, they had many allies upon which they could call in times of urgency.

The demigod Cenarius remained nearby in the Moonglades of Mount Hyjal. His sons, known as the Keepers of the Grove, kept close watch on the night elves and regularly helped the Sentinels maintain peace in the land. Even Cenarius' shy daughters, the dryads, appeared in the open with increasing frequency.

The task of policing Ashenvale kept Tyrande busy, but without Malfurion at her side, she knew little joy. As the long centuries passed while the druids slept, her fears of a second demonic invasion grew. She could not shake the unnerving feeling that the Burning Legion might still be out there, beyond the Great Dark of the sky, plotting its revenge upon the night elves and the world of Azeroth.

Chapter II: The New World

The Founding of Quel'Thalas ***6,800 years before Warcraft I***

The high elves, led by Dath'Remar, left Kalimdor behind them and challenged the storms of the Maelstrom. Their fleets wandered the wreckage of the world for many long years, and they discovered mysteries and lost kingdoms along their sojourn. Dath'Remar, who had taken the name Sunstrider (or "he who walks the day"), sought out places of considerable ley power upon which to build a new homeland for his people.

His fleet finally landed on the beaches of the kingdom men would later call Lordaeron. Forging inland, the high elves founded a settlement within the tranquil Tirisfal Glades. After a few years, many of them began to go mad. It was theorized that something evil slept beneath that particular part of the world, but the rumors were never proven to be true. The high elves packed up their encampment and moved northward towards another land rich with ley energies.

As the high elves crossed the rugged, mountainous lands of Lordaeron, their journey became more perilous. Since they were effectively cut off from the life-giving energies of the Well of Eternity, many of them fell ill from the frigid climate or died from starvation. The most disconcerting change, however, was the fact that they were no longer immortal or immune to the elements. They also shrank somewhat in height, and their skin lost its characteristic violet hue. Despite their hardships, they encountered many wondrous creatures that had never been seen in Kalimdor. They also found tribes of primitive humans who hunted throughout the ancient forestlands. However, the direst threat they encountered were the voracious and cunning forest trolls of Zul'Aman.

These moss-skinned trolls could regenerate lost limbs and heal grievous physical injuries, but they proved to be a barbaric, evil race. The Amani empire stretched across most of northern Lordaeron, and the trolls fought hard to keep unwanted strangers from their borders. The elves developed a deep loathing for the vicious trolls and killed them on sight whenever they were encountered.

After many long years, the high elves finally found a land which was reminiscent of Kalimdor. Deep within the northern forests of the continent, they founded the kingdom of Quel'Thalas and vowed to create a mighty empire which would dwarf that of their Kaldorei cousins. Unfortunately they soon learned that Quel'Thalas was founded upon an ancient troll city that the trolls still held to be sacred. Almost immediately, the trolls began to attack the elven settlements en masse.

The stubborn elves, unwilling to give up their new land, utilized the magics which they had gleaned from the Well of Eternity and kept the savage trolls at bay. Under Dath'Remar's leadership, they were able to defeat the Amani warbands that outnumbered them ten to one. Some elves, wary of the Kaldorei's ancient warnings, felt that their use of magic might possibly draw the attention of the banished Burning Legion. Therefore, they decided to mask their lands within a protective barrier which would still allow them to work their enchantments. They constructed a series of monolithic Runestones at various points around Quel'Thalas which marked the boundaries of the magic barrier. The Runestones not only masked the elves' magic from extra-dimensional threats, but helped to frighten away the superstitious troll warbands as well.

As time wore on, Quel'Thalas became a shining monument to the high elves' efforts and magical prowess. Its beauteous palaces were crafted in the same architectural style as the ancient halls of Kalimdor, yet they were interwoven with the natural topography of the land. Quel'Thalas had become the shining jewel that the elves had longed to create. The Convocation of Silvermoon was founded as the ruling power over Quel'Thalas, though the Sunstrider Dynasty maintained a modicum of political power. Comprised of seven of the greatest high elf lords, the Convocation worked to secure the safety of the elven lands and people. Surrounded by their protective barrier, the high elves remained unmoved by the old warnings of the Kaldorei and continued to use magic flagrantly in almost all aspects of their lives.

For nearly four thousand years the high elves lived peacefully within the secluded safety of their kingdom. Nevertheless, the vindictive trolls were not so easily defeated. They plotted and schemed in the depths of the forests and waited for the numbers of their warbands to grow. Finally, a mighty troll army charged out from the shadowy forests and once again laid siege to the shining spires of Quel'Thalas.

Arathor and the Troll Wars ***2,800 years before Warcraft I***

As the high elves fought for their lives against the trolls' fierce onslaught, the scattered, nomadic humans of Lordaeron fought to consolidate their own tribal lands. The tribes of early humanity raided each other's settlements with little heed for racial unification or honor. Yet one tribe, known as the Arathi, saw that the trolls were becoming too great a threat to ignore. The Arathi wished to bring all of the tribes under its rule so that they could provide a unified front against the troll warbands.

Over the course of six years, the cunning Arathi outmaneuvered and outfought the rival tribes. After every victory, the Arathi offered peace and equality to the conquered people; thus, they won the loyalty of those they had beaten. Eventually the Arathi tribe came to include many disparate tribes, and the ranks of its army grew vast. Confident that they could hold their own against the troll warbands or even the reclusive elves if need be, the Arathi warlords decided to construct a mighty fortress city in the southern regions of Lordaeron. The city-state, named Strom, became the capital of the Arathi nation, Arathor. As Arathor prospered, humans from all over the vast continent traveled south to the protection and safety of Strom.

United under one banner, the human tribes developed a strong, optimistic culture. Thoradin, the king of Arathor, knew that the mysterious elves in the northlands were under constant siege by the trolls, but refused to risk the safety of his people in defense of reclusive strangers. Many months passed as rumors of the elves' supposed defeat trickled down from the north. It was only when weary ambassadors from Quel'Thalas reached Strom that Thoradin realized how great the troll threat truly was.

The elves informed Thoradin that the troll armies were vast and that once the trolls had destroyed Quel'Thalas, they would move on to attack the southlands. The desperate elves, in dire need of military aid, hastily agreed to teach certain select humans to wield magic in exchange for their help against the warbands. Thoradin, distrustful of any magic, agreed to aid the elves out of necessity. Almost immediately, elven sorcerers arrived in Arathor and began to instruct a group of humans in the ways of magic.

The elves found that although humans were innately clumsy in their handling of magic, they possessed a startling natural affinity for it. One hundred men were taught the very basics of the elves' magical secrets: no more than was absolutely necessary to combat the trolls. Convinced that their human students were ready to aid in the struggle, the elves left Strom and traveled north alongside the mighty armies of King Thoradin.

The united elf and human armies clashed against the overwhelming troll warbands at the foot of the Alterac Mountains. The battle lasted for many days, but the unflagging armies of Arathor never tired or gave an inch of ground before the troll onslaught. The elven lords deemed that the time had come to release the powers of their magic upon the enemy. The hundred human magi and a multitude of elven sorcerers called down the fury of the heavens and set the troll armies ablaze. The elemental fires prevented the trolls from regenerating their wounds and burned their tortured forms from the inside out.

As the troll armies broke and attempted to flee, Thoradin's armies ran them down and slaughtered every last one of their soldiers. The trolls would never fully recover from their defeat, and history would never see the trolls rise as one nation again. Assured that Quel'Thalas was saved from destruction, the elves made a pledge of loyalty and friendship to the nation of Arathor and to the bloodline of its king, Thoradin. Humans and elves would nurture peaceful relations for ages to come.

The Guardians of Tirisfal

2,700 years before Warcraft I

With the absence of trolls in the northlands, the elves of Quel'Thalas bent their efforts towards rebuilding their glorious homeland. The victorious armies of Arathor returned home to southlands of Strom. The human society of Arathor grew and prospered, yet Thoradin, fearful that his kingdom would splinter apart if it overextended itself, maintained that Strom was the center of the Arathorian empire. After many peaceful years of growth and commerce, mighty Thoradin died of old age, leaving Arathor's younger generation free to expand the empire beyond the lands of Strom.

The original hundred magi, who were tutored in the ways of magic by the elves, expanded their powers and studied the mystic disciplines of spell-weaving in much greater detail. These magi, initially chosen for their strong wills and noble spirits, had always practiced their magic with care and responsibility; however, they passed their secrets and powers onto a newer generation that had no concept of the rigors of war or the necessity for self-restraint. These younger magicians began to practice magic for personal gain rather than out of any responsibility towards their fellows.

As the empire grew and expanded into new lands, the young magicians also spread out into the southlands. Wielding their mystical powers, the magicians protected their brethren from the wild creatures of the land and made it possible for new city-states to be constructed in the wilderness. Yet, as their powers grew, the magicians became ever more conceited and isolated from the rest of society.

The second Arathorian city-state of Dalaran was founded in the lands north of Strom. Many fledgling wizards left the restraining confines of Strom behind and traveled to Dalaran, where they hoped to use their new powers with greater freedom. These magicians used their skills to build up the enchanted spires of Dalaran and reveled in the pursuit of their studies. The citizens of Dalaran tolerated the magicians' endeavors and built up a bustling economy under the protection of their magic-using defenders. Yet, as more and more magicians practiced their arts, the fabric of reality around Dalaran began to weaken and tear.

The sinister agents of the Burning Legion, who had been banished when the Well of Eternity collapsed, were lured back into the world by the heedless spellcasting of the magicians of Dalaran. Though these relatively weak demons did not appear in force, they did sow considerable confusion and chaos within the streets of Dalaran. Most of these demonic encounters were isolated events, and the ruling Magocrats did what they could to keep such events hidden from the public. The most powerful magicians were sent to capture the elusive demons, but they often found themselves hopelessly outmatched by the lone agents of the mighty Legion.

After a few months the superstitious peasantry began to suspect that their sorcerous rulers were hiding something terrible from them. Rumors of revolution began to sweep through the streets of Dalaran as the paranoid citizenry questioned the motives and practices of the magicians they had once admired. The Magocrats, fearing that the peasants would revolt and that Strom would take action against them, turned to the only group they felt would understand their particular problem: the elves.

Upon hearing the Magocrats' news of demonic activity in Dalaran, the elves quickly dispatched their mightiest wizards to the human lands. The elven wizards studied the energy currents in Dalaran and made detailed reports of all demonic activity that they beheld. They concluded that although there were only a few demons loose in the world, the Legion itself would remain a dire threat so long as humans continued to wield the forces of magic.

The Council of Silvermoon, which ruled over the elves of Quel'Thalas, entered into a secret pact with the Magocrat lords of Dalaran. The elves told the Magocrats about the history of ancient Kalimdor and of the Burning Legion, a history which still threatened the world. They informed the humans that so long as they used magic, they would need to protect their citizenry from the malicious agents of the Legion. The Magocrats proposed the notion of empowering a single mortal champion who would utilize their collective powers in order to fight a never-ending secret war against the Legion. It was stressed that the majority of mankind could never know about the Guardians or the threat of the Legion for fear that they would riot in fear and paranoia. The elves agreed to the proposal and founded a secret society that would watch over the selection of the Guardian and help to stem the rise of chaos in the world.

The society held its secret meetings in the shadowed Tirisfal Glades, where the high elves had first settled in Lordaeron. Thus, they named the secret sect the Guardians of Tirisfal. The mortal champions who were chosen to be Guardians were imbued with incredible powers of both elven and human magic. Though there would only ever be one Guardian at a time, they held such vast power that they could single-handedly fight back the Legion's agents wherever they were found in the world. The

Guardian power was so great that only the Council of Tirisfal was allowed to choose potential successors to the mantle of Guardianship. Whenever a Guardian grew too old, or wearied of the secret war against chaos, the Council chose a new champion, and under controlled conditions, formally channeled the Guardian power into its new agent.

As the generations passed, Guardians defended the masses of humanity from the invisible threat of the Burning Legion throughout the lands of Arathor and Quel'Thalas. Arathor grew and prospered while the use of magic spread throughout the empire. Meanwhile, the Guardians kept careful watch for signs of demonic activity.

Ironforge - the Awakening of the Dwarves ***2,500 years before Warcraft I***

In the ancient times, after the Titans departed Azeroth, their children, known as the earthen, continued to shape and guard the deep recesses of the world. The earthen were largely unconcerned with the affairs of the surface-dwelling races and longed only to plumb the dark depths of the earth.

When the world was sundered by the Well of Eternity's implosion, the earthen were deeply affected. Reeling with the pain of the earth itself, the earthen lost much of their identity and sealed themselves within the stone chambers where they were first created. Uldaman, Uldum, Ulduar... these were the names of the ancient Titan cities where the earthen first took shape and form. Buried deep beneath the world, the earthen rested in peace for nearly eight thousand years.

Though it is unclear what awakened them, the earthen sealed within Uldaman eventually arose from their self-imposed slumber. These earthen found that they had changed significantly during their hibernation. Their rocky hides had softened and become smooth skin, and their powers over stone and earth had waned. They had become mortal creatures.

Calling themselves dwarves, the last of the earthen left the halls of Uldaman and ventured out into the waking world. Still lulled by the safety and wonders of the deep places, they founded a vast kingdom under the highest mountain in the land. They named their land Khaz Modan, or "Mountain of Khaz", in honor of the Titan shaper, Khaz'goroth. Constructing an altar for their Titan father, the dwarves crafted a mighty forge within the heart of the mountain. Thus, the city that grew around the forge would be called Ironforge ever after.

The dwarves, by nature fascinated with shaping gems and stone, set out to mine the surrounding mountains for riches and precious minerals. Content with their labors under the world, the dwarves remained isolated from the affairs of their surface-dwelling neighbors.

The Seven Kingdoms ***1,200 years before Warcraft I***

Strom continued to act as the central hub of Arathor, but as with Dalaran, many new city-states arose across the continent of Lordaeron. Gilneas, Alterac, and Kul Tiras were the first city-states to arise, and although they each had their own customs and commercial workings, they all held to the unifying authority of Strom.

Under the vigilant watch of the Order of Tirisfal, Dalaran became the chief center of learning for magicians throughout the land. The Magocrats who ruled Dalaran founded the Kirin Tor, a specialized sect that was charged with cataloguing and researching every spell, artifact, and magic item known to mankind at the time.

Gilneas and Alterac became strong supporters of Strom and developed mighty armies that explored the mountainous southern lands of Khaz Modan. It was during this period that humans first met the ancient race of dwarves and traveled to their cavernous subterranean city of Ironforge. The humans and dwarves shared many secrets of metal-smithing and engineering and discovered a common love for battle and storytelling.

The city-state of Kul Tiras, founded upon a large island south of Lordaeron, developed a prosperous economy based on fishing and shipping. Over time, Kul Tiras built up a mighty fleet of merchant vessels that sailed throughout the known lands in search of exotic goods to trade and sell. Yet even as the economy of Arathor flourished, its strongest elements began to disintegrate.

In time, the lords of Strom sought to move their estates to the lush northlands of Lordaeron and leave the arid lands of the south. The heirs of King Thoradin, the last descendants of the Arathi bloodline, argued that Strom should not be abandoned

and thus incurred the displeasure of the greater citizenry, who were likewise eager to leave. The lords of Strom, seeking to find purity and enlightenment in the untamed north, decided to leave their ancient city behind. Far to the north of Dalaran, the lords of Strom built a new city-state which they named Lordaeron. The entire continent would take its name from this city-state. Lordaeron became a mecca for religious travelers and all those who sought inner peace and security.

The descendants of the Arathi, left within the crumbling walls of ancient Strom, decided to travel south past the rocky mountains of Khaz Modan. Their journey finally ended after many long seasons, and they settled in the northern region of the continent they would name Azeroth. In a fertile valley they founded the kingdom of Stormwind, which quickly became a self-sufficient power in its own right.

The few warriors still left in Strom decided to remain and guard the ancient walls of their city. Strom was no longer the center of the empire, but it developed into a new nation known as Stromgarde. Though each of the city-states became prosperous in its own right, the empire of Arathor had effectively disintegrated. As each nation developed its own customs and beliefs, they became increasingly segregated from one another. King Thoradin's vision of a unified humanity had faded at last.

Aegwynn and the Dragon Hunt

823 years before Warcraft I

As the politics and rivalries of the seven human nations waxed and waned, the line of Guardians kept its constant vigil against chaos. There were many Guardians over the years, but only one ever held the magical powers of Tirisfal at any given time. One of the last Guardians of the age distinguished herself as a mighty warrior against the shadow. Aegwynn, a fiery human girl, won the approbation of the Order and was given the mantle of Guardianship. Aegwynn vigorously worked to hunt down and eradicate demons wherever she found them, but she often questioned the authority of the male-dominated Council of Tirisfal. She believed that the ancient elves and the elderly men who presided over the council were too rigid in their thinking and not farsighted enough to put a decisive end to the conflict against chaos. Impatient with lengthy discussion and debate, she yearned to prove herself worthy to her peers and superiors, and as a result frequently chose valor over wisdom in crucial situations.

As her mastery over the cosmic power of Tirisfal grew, Aegwynn became aware of a number of powerful demons that stalked the icy northern continent of Northrend. Traveling to the distant north, Aegwynn tracked the demons into the mountains. There, she found that the demons were hunting one of the last surviving dragonflights and draining the ancient creatures of their innate magic. The mighty dragons, who had fled from the ever-advancing march of mortal societies, found themselves too evenly matched against the dark magics of the Legion. Aegwynn confronted the demons, and with help from the noble dragons, eradicated them. Yet, as the last demon was banished from the mortal world, a great storm erupted throughout the north. An enormous dark visage appeared in the sky above Northrend. Sargeras, the demon king and lord of the Burning Legion, appeared before Aegwynn and bristled with hellish energy. He informed the young Guardian that the time of Tirisfal was about to come to an end and that the world would soon bow before the onslaught of the Legion.

The proud Aegwynn, believing herself to be a match for the menacing god, unleashed her powers against Sargeras' avatar. With disconcerting ease, Aegwynn battered the demonlord with her powers and succeeded in killing his physical shell. Fearing that Sargeras' spirit would linger on, the naive Aegwynn locked the ruined husk of his body within one of the ancient halls of Kalimdor that had been blasted to the bottom of the sea when the Well of Eternity collapsed. Aegwynn would never know that she had done exactly as Sargeras had planned. She had inadvertently sealed the fate of the mortal world, for Sargeras, at the time of his corporeal death, had transferred his spirit into Aegwynn's weakened body. Unbeknownst to the young Guardian, Sargeras would remain cloaked within the darkest recesses of her soul for many long years.

War of the Three Hammers

230 years before Warcraft I

The dwarves of Ironforge Mountain lived in peace for many long centuries. However, their society grew too large within the confines of their mountain cities. Though the mighty High King, Modimus Anvilmar, ruled over all dwarves with justice and wisdom, three powerful factions had arisen amongst the dwarven society.

The Bronzebeard clan, ruled by Thane Madoran Bronzebeard, held close ties to the High King and stood as the traditional defenders of Ironforge Mountain. The Wildhammer clan, ruled by Thane Khardros Wildhammer, inhabited the foothills and

crag around the base of the mountain and sought to gain more control within the city. The third faction, the Dark Iron clan, was ruled by the sorcerer-thane Thaurissan. The Dark Irons hid within the deepest shadows under the mountain and plotted against both their Bronzebeard and the Wildhammer cousins.

For a time the three factions kept a tenuous peace, but tensions erupted when High King Anvilmar passed away from old age. The three ruling clans went to war for control of Ironforge itself. The dwarf civil war raged under the earth for many years. Eventually the Bronzebeards, who had the largest standing army, banished the Dark Irons and Wildhammers from under the mountain.

Khardros and his Wildhammer warriors traveled north through the barrier gates of Dun Algaz, and they founded their own kingdom within the distant peak of Grim Batol. There, the Wildhammers thrived and rebuilt their stores of treasure. Thaurissan and his Dark Irons did not fare as well. Humiliated and enraged by their defeat, they vowed revenge against Ironforge. Leading his people far to the south, Thaurissan founded a city (which he named after himself) within the beautiful Redridge Mountains. Prosperity and the passing of years did little to ease the Dark Iron's rancor toward their cousins. Thaurissan and his sorceress wife, Modgud, launched a two-pronged assault against both Ironforge and Grim Batol. The Dark Irons were intent on claiming all of Khaz Modan for their own.

The Dark Iron armies smashed against their cousins' strongholds and very nearly took both kingdoms. However, Madoran Bronzebeard ultimately led his clan to a decisive victory over Thaurissan's sorcerous army. Thaurissan and his servants fled back to the safety of their city, unaware of the events transpiring at Grim Batol, where Modgud's army would fare no better against Khardros and his Wildhammer warriors.

As she confronted the enemy warriors, Modgud used her powers to strike fear into their hearts. Shadows moved at her command, and dark things crawled up from the depths of the earth to stalk the Wildhammers in their own halls. Eventually Modgud broke through the gates and laid siege to the fortress itself. The Wildhammers fought desperately, Khardros himself wading through the roiling masses to slay the sorceress queen. With their queen lost, the Dark Irons fled before the fury of the Wildhammers. They raced south toward their king's stronghold, only to meet the armies of Ironforge, which had come to aid Grim Batol. Crushed between two armies, the remaining Dark Iron forces were utterly destroyed.

The combined armies of Ironforge and Grim Batol then turned south, intent on destroying Thaurissan and his Dark Irons once and for all. They had not gone far when Thaurissan's fury resulted in a spell of cataclysmic proportions. Seeking to summon a supernatural minion that would ensure his victory, Thaurissan called upon the ancient powers sleeping beneath the world. To his shock, and ultimately his doom, the creature that emerged was more terrible than any nightmare he could have imagined.

Ragnaros the Firelord, immortal lord of all fire elementals, had been banished by the Titans when the world was young. Now, freed by Thaurissan's call, Ragnaros erupted into being once again. Ragnaros' apocalyptic rebirth into Azeroth shattered the Redridge Mountains and created a raging volcano at the center of the devastation. The volcano, known as Blackrock Spire, was bordered by the Searing Gorge to the north and the Burning Steppes to the south. Though Thaurissan was killed by the forces he had unleashed, his surviving brethren were ultimately enslaved by Ragnaros and his elementals. They remain within the Spire to this day.

Witnessing the horrific devastation and the fires spreading across the southern mountains, King Madoran and King Khardros halted their armies and hastily turned back towards their kingdoms, unwilling to face the awesome wrath of Ragnaros.

The Bronzebeards returned to Ironforge and rebuilt their glorious city. The Wildhammers also returned home to Grim Batol. However, the death of the Modgud had left an evil stain on the mountain fortress, and the Wildhammers found it uninhabitable. They were bitter in their hearts over the loss of their beloved home. King Bronzebeard offered the Wildhammers a place to live within the borders of Ironforge, but the Wildhammers steadfastly refused. Khardros took his people north towards the lands of Lordaeron. Settling within the lush forests of the Hinterlands, the Wildhammers crafted the city of Aerie Peak, where the Wildhammers grew closer to nature and even bonded with the mighty gryphons of the area.

Seeking to retain relations and trade with their cousins, the dwarves of Ironforge constructed two massive arches, the Thandol Span, to bridge the gap between Khaz Modan and Lordaeron. Bolstered by mutual trade, the two kingdoms prospered. After the deaths of Madoran and Khardros, their sons jointly commissioned two great statues in honor of their fathers. The two statues would stand guard over the pass into the southlands, which had become volcanic in the wake of Ragnaros' scorching presence. They served as both a warning to all who would attack the dwarven kingdoms, and as a reminder of what price the Dark Irons paid for their crimes.

The two kingdoms retained close ties for some years, but the Wildhammers were much changed by the horrors they witnessed at Grim Batol. They took to living above ground on the slopes of Aerie Peak, instead of carving a vast kingdom within the mountain. The ideological differences between the two remaining dwarven clans eventually led to their parting of ways.

The Last Guardian

45 years before Warcraft I

The Guardian Aegwynn grew powerful over the years and used the Tirisfal energies to greatly extend her life. Foolishly believing that she had defeated Sargeras for good, she continued to safeguard the world from the demon king's minions for nearly nine hundred years. However, the Council of Tirisfal finally decreed that her stewardship had come to an end. The Council ordered Aegwynn to return to Dalaran so that they could choose a new successor for the Guardian power. Yet Aegwynn, ever distrustful of the Council, decided to choose a successor on her own.

The proud Aegwynn planned to give birth to a son whom she would divest her power to. She had no intention of allowing the Order of Tirisfal to manipulate her successor as they had tried to manipulate her. Traveling to the southern nation of Azeroth, Aegwynn found the perfect man to father her son: a skilled human magician known as Nielas Aran. Aran was the court conjuror and advisor for Azeroth's king. Aegwynn seduced the magician and conceived a son by him. Nielas' natural affinity for magic would run deep within the unborn child and define the tragic steps the child would later take. The power of Tirisfal was also implanted in the child, yet it wasn't to awaken until he reached physical maturity.

Time passed, and Aegwynn gave birth to her son in a secluded grove. Naming the boy Medivh, which means "keeper of secrets" in the high elven tongue, Aegwynn believed that the boy would mature to become the next Guardian. Unfortunately the malignant spirit of Sargeras, which had been hiding inside her, had possessed the defenseless child while it was still in her womb. Aegwynn had no idea that the world's newest Guardian was already possessed by its greatest nemesis.

Certain that her baby was healthy and sound, Aegwynn delivered young Medivh to the court of Azeroth and left him there to be raised by his mortal father and his people. She then wandered into the wilderness and prepared to pass into whatever afterlife awaited her. Medivh grew to become a strong boy and had no idea of the potential power of his Tirisfalin birthright.

Sargeras bided his time until the youth's power manifested itself. By the time Medivh had reached his teenage years, he had become very popular in Azeroth for his magical prowess and often went off on adventures with his two friends: Llane, the prince of Azeroth, and Anduin Lothar, one of the last descendents of the Arathi bloodline. The three boys constantly caused mischief around the kingdom, but they were well liked by the general citizenry.

When Medivh reached the age of fourteen, the cosmic power inside him awakened and clashed with the pervasive spirit of Sargeras that lurked within his soul. Medivh fell into a catatonic state which lasted for many years. When he awakened from his coma, he found that he had grown to adulthood, and his friends Llane and Anduin had become the regents of Azeroth. Though he wished to use his incredible newfound powers to protect the land he called home, the dark spirit of Sargeras twisted his thoughts and emotions towards an insidious end.

Sargeras reveled within the darkening heart of Medivh, for he knew that his plans for the second invasion of the world were nearing completion, and that the world's last Guardian would bring them all to fruition.

Chapter III: The Doom of Draenor

Kil'jaeden and the Shadow Pact

Around the time of Medivh's birth on Azeroth, Kil'jaeden the Deceiver sat and brooded amongst his followers within the Twisting Nether. The cunning demonlord, under orders of his master, Sargeras, was plotting the Burning Legion's second invasion of Azeroth. This time he would not allow any mistakes. Kil'jaeden surmised that he needed a new force to weaken Azeroth's defenses before the Legion even set foot upon the world. If the mortal races, such as the night elves and dragons, were forced to contend with a new threat, they would be too weak to pose any real resistance when the Legion's true invasion arrived.

It was at this time that Kil'jaeden discovered the lush world of Draenor floating peacefully within the Great Dark Beyond. Home to the shamanistic, clan-based orcs and the peaceful draenei, Draenor was as idyllic as it was vast. The noble orc clans roamed the open prairies and hunted for sport, while the inquisitive draenei built crude cities within the world's towering cliffs and peaks. Kil'jaeden knew that Draenor's denizens had great potential to serve the Burning Legion if they could be cultivated properly.

Of the two races, Kil'jaeden saw that the warrior orcs were more susceptible to the Legion's corruption. He enthralled the elder orc shaman, Ner'zhul, in much the same way that Sargeras brought Queen Azshara under his control in ages past. Using the cunning shaman as his conduit, the demon spread battle lust and savagery throughout the orc clans. Before long, the spiritual race was transformed into a bloodthirsty people. Kil'jaeden then urged Ner'zhul and his people to take the last step: to give themselves over entirely to the pursuit of death and war. Yet the old shaman, sensing that his people would be enslaved to hatred forever, somehow resisted the demon's command.

Frustrated by Ner'zhul's resistance, Kil'jaeden searched for another orc who would deliver his people into the Legion's hands. The clever demonlord finally found the willing disciple he sought - Ner'zhul's ambitious apprentice, Gul'dan. Kil'jaeden promised Gul'dan untold power in exchange for his utter obedience. The young orc became an avid student of demonic magic and developed into the most powerful mortal warlock in history. He taught other young orcs the arcane arts and strove to eradicate the orcs' shamanistic traditions. Gul'dan showed a new brand of magic to his brethren, a terrible new power that reeked of doom.

Kil'jaeden, seeking to tighten his hold over the orcs, helped Gul'dan found the Shadow Council, a secretive sect that manipulated the clans and spread the use of warlock magics throughout Draenor. As more and more orcs began to wield warlock magics, the gentle fields and streams of Draenor began to blacken and fade. Over time, the vast prairies the orcs had called home for generations withered away, leaving only red barren soil. The demon energies were slowly killing the world.

Rise of the Horde

The orcs became increasingly aggressive under the secret control of Gul'dan and his Shadow Council. They constructed massive arenas where the orcs honed their warrior skills in trials of combat and death. During this period, a few clan chieftains spoke out against the growing depravity in their race. One such chieftain, Durotan of the Frostwolf clan, warned against the orcs' losing themselves to hate and fury. His words fell on deaf ears, however, as stronger chieftains such as Grom Hellscream of the Warsong clan stepped forward to champion the new age of warfare and dominance.

Kil'jaeden knew that the orc clans were almost ready, but he needed to be certain of their ultimate loyalty. In secret, he had the Shadow Council summon Mannoroth the Destructor, the living vessel of destruction and rage. Gul'dan called the clan chieftains together and convinced them that drinking Mannoroth's raging blood would make them utterly invincible. Led by Grom Hellscream, all the clan chiefs except Durotan drank and thereby sealed their fates as slaves to the Burning Legion. Empowered by Mannoroth's rage, the chieftains unwittingly extended this subjugation to their unsuspecting brethren.

Consumed with the curse of this new bloodlust, the orcs sought to unleash their fury on any who stood before them. Sensing that the time had come, Gul'dan united the warring clans into a single unstoppable Horde. However, knowing that the various chieftains like Hellscream and Orgrim Doomhammer would vie for overall supremacy, Gul'dan set up a puppet warchief to rule over this new Horde. Blackhand the Destroyer, a particularly depraved and vicious orc warlord, was chosen to be Gul'dan's puppet. Under Blackhand's command, the Horde set out to test itself against the simple draenei.

Over the course of a few months, the Horde eradicated nearly every draenei living on Draenor. Only a scattered handful of survivors managed to evade the orcs' awesome wrath. Flushed with victory, Gul'dan reveled in the Horde's power and might. Still, he knew that without any enemies to fight, the Horde would consume itself with endless infighting in its unstoppable appetite for glorious slaughter.

Kil'jaeden knew that the Horde was finally prepared. The orcs had become the Burning Legion's greatest weapon. The cunning demon shared his knowledge with his waiting master, and Sargeras agreed that the time of his revenge had finally come.

Chapter IV: Alliance And Horde

The Dark Portal and the Fall of Stormwind

Warcraft: Orcs and Humans

As Kil'jaeden prepared the Horde for its invasion of Azeroth, Medivh continued to fight for his soul against Sargeras. King Llane, the noble monarch of Stormwind, grew wary of the darkness which seemed to taint the spirit of his former friend. King Llane shared his concerns with Anduin Lothar, the last descendent of the Arathi bloodline, whom he named his lieutenant-at-arms. Even so, neither man could have imagined that Medivh's slow descent into madness would bring about the horrors that were to come.

As a final incentive, Sargeras promised to bestow great power upon Gul'dan if he agreed to lead the Horde to Azeroth. Through Medivh, Sargeras told the warlock that he could become a living god if he found the undersea tomb where the Guardian Aegwynn had placed Sargeras' crippled body nearly a thousand years before. Gul'dan agreed and decided that once the denizens of Azeroth were beaten, he would find the legendary tomb and claim his reward. Assured that the Horde would serve his purposes, Sargeras ordered the invasion to begin.

Through a joint effort, Medivh and the warlocks of the Shadow Council opened the dimensional gateway known as the Dark Portal. This portal bridged the distance between Azeroth and Draenor, and it was large enough that armies might pass through it. Gul'dan dispatched orc scouts through the portal to survey the lands which they would conquer. The returning scouts assured the Shadow Council that the world of Azeroth was ripe for the taking.

Still convinced that Gul'dan's corruption would destroy his people, Durotan spoke out against the warlocks once more. The brave warrior claimed that warlocks were destroying the purity of the orcish spirit and that this reckless invasion would be their doom. Gul'dan, unable to risk killing such a popular hero, was forced to exile Durotan and his Frostwolf Clan into the far reaches of this new world.

After the exiled Frostwolves charged through the portal, only a few orc clans followed. These orcs quickly set up a base of operations within the Black Morass, a dark and swampy area far to the east of the kingdom of Stormwind. As the orcs began to branch out and explore the new lands, they came into immediate conflict with the human defenders of Stormwind. Though these skirmishes usually ended quickly, they did much to illustrate the weaknesses and strengths of both rival species. Llane and Lothar were never able to gather accurate data of the orcs' numbers and could only guess at how great a force they would have to contend with. After a few years the majority of the orcish Horde had crossed into Azeroth, and Gul'dan deemed that the time for the primary strike against humanity had come. The Horde launched its full might against the unsuspecting kingdom of Stormwind.

As the forces of Azeroth and the Horde clashed across the kingdom, internal conflicts began to take their toll on both armies. King Llane, who believed the bestial orcs to be incapable of conquering Azeroth, contemptuously held his position at his capital of Stormwind. However, Sir Lothar became convinced that the battle should be taken directly to the enemy, and he was forced to choose between his convictions and his loyalty to the king. Choosing to follow his instincts, Lothar stormed Medivh's tower-fortress of Karazhan with the help of the wizard's young apprentice, Khadgar. Khadgar and Lothar succeeded in vanquishing the possessed Guardian, whom they confirmed to be the source of the conflict. By killing Medivh's body, Lothar and the young apprentice inadvertently banished the spirit of Sargeras to the abyss. As a consequence, the pure, virtuous spirit of Medivh was also allowed to live on... and wander the astral plane for many years to come.

Although Medivh had been defeated, the Horde continued to dominate the defenders of Stormwind. As the Horde's victory drew nearer, Orgrim Doomhammer, one of the greatest orc chieftains, began to see the depraved corruption that had spread throughout the clans since their time in Draenor. His old comrade, Durotan, returned from exile and warned him yet again of Gul'dan's treachery. In speedy retribution, Gul'dan's assassins murdered Durotan and his family, leaving only his infant son alive. Unknown to Doomhammer was the fact that Durotan's infant son was found by the human officer, Aedelas Blackmoore, and taken as a slave.

That infant orc would one day rise to become the greatest leader his people would ever know.

Incensed by Durotan's death, Orgrim set out to free the Horde from demonic corruption and ultimately assumed the role of warchief of the Horde by killing Gul'dan's corrupt puppet, Blackhand. Under his decisive leadership the relentless Horde finally laid siege to Stormwind Keep. King Llane had severely underestimated the might of the Horde, and he watched

helplessly as his kingdom fell to the green-skinned invaders. Ultimately King Llane was assassinated by one of the Shadow Council's finest killers: the half-orc, Garona.

Lothar and his warriors, returning home from Karazhan, hoped to stem the loss of life and save their once-glorious homeland. Instead, they returned too late and found their beloved kingdom in smoking ruins. The orcish Horde continued to ravage the countryside and claimed the surrounding lands for its own. Forced into hiding, Lothar and his companions swore a grim oath to reclaim their homeland at any cost.

The Alliance of Lordaeron

Warcraft 2: Tides of Darkness

Lord Lothar rallied the remnants of Azeroth's armies after their defeat at Stormwind Keep, and then launched a massive exodus across the sea to the northern kingdom of Lordaeron. Convinced that the Horde would overcome all of humanity if left unchecked, the leaders of the seven human nations met and agreed to unite in what would become known as the Alliance of Lordaeron. For the first time in nearly three thousand years, the disparate nations of Arathor were once again united under a common banner. Appointed as Supreme Commander of the Alliance forces, Lord Lothar prepared his armies for the coming of the Horde.

Aided by his lieutenants, Uther the Lightbringer, Admiral Daelin Proudmoore, and Turalyon, Lothar was able to convince Lordaeron's demi-human races of the impending threat as well. The Alliance succeeded in gaining the support of the stoic dwarves of Ironforge and a small number of high elves of Quel'Thalas. The elves, led at that time by Anasterian Sunstrider, were largely uninterested in the coming conflict. However, they were duty-bound to aid Lothar because he was the last descendent of the Arathi bloodline, which had aided the elves in ages past.

The Horde, now led by Warchief Doomhammer, brought in ogres from its homeworld of Draenor and conscripted the disenfranchised Amani forest trolls into its fold. Setting out on a massive campaign to overrun the dwarf kingdom of Khaz Modan and the southern reaches of Lordaeron, the Horde effortlessly decimated all opposition.

The epic battles of the Second War ranged from large-scale naval skirmishes to massive aerial dogfights. Somehow the Horde had unearthed a powerful artifact known as the Demon Soul and used it to enslave the ancient Dragonqueen, Alexstrasza. Threatening to destroy her precious eggs, the Horde forced Alexstrasza to send her grown children to war. The noble red dragons were forced to fight for the Horde, and fight they did.

The war raged across the continents of Khaz Modan, Lordaeron, and Azeroth itself. As part of its northern campaign, the Horde succeeded in burning down the borderlands of Quel'Thalas, thereby ensuring the elves' final commitment to the Alliance's cause. The greater cities and townships of Lordaeron were razed and devastated by the conflict. Despite the absence of reinforcements and overwhelming odds, Lothar and his allies succeeded in holding their enemies at bay.

However, during the final days of the Second War, as the Horde's victory over the Alliance seemed almost assured, a terrible feud erupted between the two most powerful orcs on Azeroth. As Doomhammer prepared his final assault against the Capital City of Lordaeron - an assault that would have crushed the last remnants of the Alliance - Gul'dan and his followers abandoned their posts and set out to sea. The bewildered Doomhammer, having lost nearly half of his standing forces to Gul'dan's treachery, was forced to pull back and forsake his greatest chance at victory over the Alliance.

The power-hungry Gul'dan, obsessed with obtaining godhood itself, set out on a desperate search for the undersea Tomb of Sargeras that he believed held the secrets of ultimate power. Having already doomed his fellow orcs to become the slaves of the Burning Legion, Gul'dan thought nothing of his supposed duty to Doomhammer. Backed by the Stormreaver and Twilight's Hammer clans, Gul'dan succeeded in raising the Tomb of Sargeras from the sea floor. However, when he opened the ancient, flooded vault, he found only crazed demons awaiting him.

Seeking to punish the wayward orcs for their costly betrayal, Doomhammer sent his forces to kill Gul'dan and bring the renegades back into the fold. For his recklessness, Gul'dan was torn apart by the maddened demons he had set loose. With their leader dead, the renegade clans quickly fell before Doomhammer's enraged legions. Though the rebellion had been quelled, the Horde was unable to recoup the terrible losses it had suffered. Gul'dan's betrayal had afforded the Alliance not only hope, but also time to regroup and retaliate.

Lord Lothar, seeing that the Horde was fracturing from within, gathered the last of his forces and pushed Doomhammer south, back into the shattered heartland of Stormwind. There, the Alliance forces trapped the retreating Horde within the volcanic fortress of Blackrock Spire. Though Lord Lothar fell in battle at the Spire's base, his lieutenant, Turalyon, rallied the Alliance forces at the eleventh hour and drove the Horde back into the abysmal Swamp of Sorrows. Turalyon's forces succeeded in destroying the Dark Portal, the mystical gateway that connected the orcs to their homeworld of Draenor. Cut off from its reinforcements and fractured by infighting, the Horde finally buckled in upon itself and fell before the might of the Alliance.

The scattered orc clans were quickly rounded up and placed within guarded internment camps. Though it seemed that the Horde had been defeated for good, some remained highly skeptical that peace would last. Khadgar, now an Archmage of some renown, convinced the Alliance high command to build the fortress of Nethergarde that would watch over the ruins of the Dark Portal and ensure that there would be no further invasions from Draenor.

The Invasion of Draenor

Warcraft 2X: Beyond the Dark Portal

As the fires of the Second War died down, the Alliance took aggressive steps to contain the orcish threat. A number of large internment camps, meant to house the captive orcs, were constructed in southern Lordaeron. Guarded by both the paladins and the veteran soldiers of the Alliance, the camps proved to be a great success. Though the captive orcs were tense and anxious to do battle once more, the various camp wardens, based at the old prison-fortress of Durnholde, kept the peace and maintained a strong semblance of order.

However, on the hellish world of Draenor, a new orcish army prepared to strike at the unsuspecting Alliance. Ner'zhul, the former mentor of Gul'dan, rallied the remaining orc clans under his dark banner. Aided by the Shadowmoon clan, the old shaman planned to open a number of portals on Draenor that would lead the Horde to new, unspoiled worlds. To power his new portals, he needed a number of enchanted artifacts from Azeroth. To procure them, Ner'zhul reopened the Dark Portal and sent his ravenous servants charging through it.

The new Horde, led by veteran chieftains such as Grom Hellscream and Kilrogg Deadeye (of the Bleeding Hollow clan), surprised the Alliance defense forces and rampaged through the countryside. Under Ner'zhul's surgical command, the orcs quickly rounded up the artifacts that they needed and fled back to the safety of Draenor.

King Terenas of Lordaeron, convinced that the orcs were preparing a new invasion of Azeroth, assembled his most trusted lieutenants. He ordered General Turalyon and the archmage, Khadgar, to lead an expedition through the Dark Portal to put an end to the orcish threat once and for all. Turalyon and Khadgar's forces marched into Draenor and repeatedly clashed with Ner'zhul's clans upon the ravaged Hellfire Peninsula. Even with the aid of the high elf Alleria Windrunner, the dwarf Kurdran Wildhammer, and the veteran soldier Danath Trollbane, Khadgar was unable to prevent Ner'zhul from opening his portals to other worlds.

Ner'zhul finally opened his portals to other worlds, but he did not foresee the terrible price he would pay. The portals' tremendous energies began to tear the very fabric of Draenor apart. As Turalyon's forces fought desperately to return home to Azeroth, the world of Draenor began to buckle in upon itself. Grom Hellscream and Kilrogg Deadeye, realizing that Ner'zhul's mad plans would doom their entire race, rallied the remaining orcs and escaped back to the relative safety of Azeroth.

On Draenor, Turalyon and Khadgar agreed to make the ultimate sacrifice by destroying the Dark Portal from their side. Though it would cost their lives, and the lives of their companions, they knew that it was the only way to ensure Azeroth's survival. Even as Hellscream and Deadeye hacked their way through the human ranks in a desperate bid for freedom, the Dark Portal exploded behind them. For them, and the remaining orcs on Azeroth, there would be no going back.

Ner'zhul and his loyal Shadowmoon clan passed through the largest of the newly created portals, as massive volcanic eruptions began to break Draenor's continents apart. The burning seas rose up and roiled the shattered landscape as the tortured world was finally consumed in a massive, apocalyptic explosion.

The Birth of the Lich King

Ner'zhul and his followers entered the Twisting Nether, the ethereal plane that connects all of the worlds scattered throughout the Great Dark Beyond. Unfortunately Kil'jaeden and his demonic minions were waiting for them. Kil'jaeden, who had sworn to take vengeance on Ner'zhul for his prideful defiance, slowly tore the old shaman's body apart, piece by piece. Kil'jaeden

kept the shaman's spirit alive and intact, thus leaving Ner'zhul painfully aware of his body's gross dismemberment. Though Ner'zhul pleaded with the demon to release his spirit and grant him death, the demon grimly replied that the Blood Pact they had made long ago was still binding, and that Ner'zhul still had a purpose to serve.

The orcs' failure to conquer the world for the Burning Legion forced Kil'jaeden to create a new army to sew chaos throughout the kingdoms of the Azeroth. This new army could not be allowed to fall prey to the same petty rivalries and infighting that had plagued the Horde. It would have to be merciless and single-minded in its mission. This time, Kil'jaeden could not afford to fail.

Holding Ner'zhul's spirit helpless in stasis, Kil'jaeden gave him one last chance to serve the Legion or suffer eternal torment. Once again, Ner'zhul recklessly agreed to the demon's pact. Ner'zhul's spirit was placed within a specially crafted block of diamond-hard ice gathered from the far reaches of the Twisting Nether. Encased within the frozen cask, Ner'zhul felt his consciousness expand ten thousand-fold. Warped by the demon's chaotic powers, Ner'zhul became a spectral being of unfathomable power. At that moment, the orc known as Ner'zhul was shattered forever, and the Lich King was born.

Ner'zhul's loyal death knights and Shadowmoon followers were also transformed by the demon's chaotic energies. The wicked spellcasters were ripped apart and remade as skeletal lichs. The demons had ensured that even in death, Ner'zhul's followers would serve him unquestioningly.

When the time was right, Kil'jaeden explained the mission for which he had created the Lich King. Ner'zhul was to spread a plague of death and terror across Azeroth that would snuff out human civilization forever. All those who died from the dreaded plague would arise as the undead, and their spirits would be bound to Ner'zhul's iron will forever. Kil'jaeden promised that if Ner'zhul accomplished his dark mission of scouring humanity from the world, he would be freed from his curse and granted a new, healthy body to inhabit.

Though Ner'zhul was agreeable and seemingly anxious to play his part, Kil'jaeden remained skeptical of his pawn's loyalties. Keeping the Lich King bodiless and trapped within the crystal cask assured his good conduct for the short term, but the demon knew that he would need to keep a watchful eye on him. To this end, Kil'jaeden called upon his elite demon guard, the vampiric dreadlords, to police Ner'zhul and ensure that he accomplished his dread task. Tichondrius, the most powerful and cunning of the dreadlords, warmed to the challenge; he was fascinated by the plague's severity and the Lich King's unbridled potential for genocide.

Icecrown and the Frozen Throne

Kil'jaeden cast Ner'zhul's icy cask back into the world of Azeroth. The hardened crystal streaked across the night sky and smashed into the desolate arctic continent of Northrend, burying itself deep within the Icecrown glacier. The frozen crystal, warped and scarred by its violent descent, came to resemble a throne, and Ner'zhul's vengeful spirit soon stirred within it.

From the confines of the Frozen Throne, Ner'zhul began to reach out his vast consciousness and touch the minds of Northrend's native inhabitants. With little effort, he enslaved the minds of many indigenous creatures, including ice trolls and fierce wendigo, and he drew their evil brethren into his growing shadow. His psychic powers proved to be almost limitless, and he used them to create a small army that he housed within Icecrown's twisting labyrinths. As the Lich King mastered his growing abilities under the dreadlords' persistent vigil, he discovered a remote human settlement on the fringe of the vast Dragonblight. On a whim, Ner'zhul decided to test his powers on the unsuspecting humans.

Ner'zhul cast a plague of undeath - which had originated from deep within the Frozen Throne, out into the arctic wasteland. Controlling the plague with his will alone, he drove it straight into the human village. Within three days, everyone in the settlement was dead, but shortly thereafter, the dead villagers began to rise as zombified corpses. Ner'zhul could feel their individual spirits and thoughts as if they were his own. The raging cacophony in his mind caused Ner'zhul to grow even more powerful, as if their spirits provided him with much-needed nourishment. He found it was child's play to control the zombies' actions and steer them to whatever end he wished.

Over the following months, Ner'zhul continued to experiment with his plague of undeath by subjugating every human inhabitant of Northrend. With his army of undead growing daily, he knew that the time for his true test was nearing.

The Battle of Grim Batol

Meanwhile, in the war-torn lands of the south, the scattered remnants of the Horde fought for their very survival. Though Grom Hellscream and his Warsong clan managed to evade capture, Deadeye and his Bleeding Hollow clan were rounded up and placed in the internment camps in Lordaeron. Notwithstanding these costly uprisings, the camps' wardens soon re-established control over their brutish charges.

However, unknown to the Alliance, a large force of orcs still roamed free in the northern wastes of Khaz Modan. The Dragonmaw clan, led by the infamous warlock Nekros, was using an ancient artifact known as the Demon Soul to control the Dragonqueen, Alexstrasza, and her dragonflight. With the Dragonqueen as his hostage, Nekros built up a secret army within the abandoned - some say cursed - Wildhammer stronghold of Grim Batol. Planning to unleash his forces and the mighty red dragons on the Alliance, Nekros hoped to reunite the Horde and continue its conquest of Azeroth. His vision did not come to pass: a small group of resistance fighters, led by the human mage Rhonin managed to destroy the Demon Soul and free the Dragonqueen from Nekros' command.

In their fury, Alexstrasza's dragons tore Grim Batol apart and incinerated the greater bulk of the Dragonmaw clan. Nekros' grand schemes of reunification came crashing down as the Alliance troops rounded up the remaining orc survivors and threw them into the waiting internment camps. The Dragonmaw clan's defeat signaled the end of the Horde, and the end of the orcs' furious bloodlust.

Lethargy of the Orcs

Months passed, and more orc prisoners were rounded up and placed within the internment camps. As the camps began to overflow, the Alliance was forced to construct new camps in the plains south of the Alterac Mountains. To properly maintain and supply the growing number of camps, King Terenas levied a new tax on the Alliance nations. This tax, along with increased political tensions over border disputes, created widespread unrest. It seemed that the fragile pact that had forged the human nations together in their darkest hour would break at any given moment.

Amidst the political turmoil, many of the camp wardens began to notice an unsettling change come over their orc captives. The orcs' efforts to escape from the camps or even fight amongst themselves had greatly decreased in frequency over time. The orcs were becoming increasingly aloof and lethargic. Though it was difficult to believe, the orcs - once held as the most aggressive race ever seen on Azeroth - had completely lost their will to fight. The strange lethargy confounded the Alliance leaders and continued to take its toll on the rapidly weakening orcs.

Some speculated that some strange disease, contractible only by orcs, brought about the baffling lethargy. But Archmage Antonidas of Dalaran posed a different hypothesis. Researching what little he could find of orcish history, Antonidas learned that the orcs had been under the crippling influence of demonic power for generations. He speculated that the orcs had been corrupted by these powers even before their first invasion of Azeroth. Clearly, demons had spiked the orcs' blood, and in turn the brutes had been granted unnaturally heightened strength, endurance, and aggression.

Antonidas theorized that the orcs' communal lethargy was not actually a disease, but a consequence of racial withdrawal from the volatile warlock magics that had made them fearsome, bloodlusted warriors. Though the symptoms were clear, Antonidas was unable to find a cure for the orcs' present condition. Then too, many of his fellow mages, as well as a few notable Alliance leaders, argued that finding a cure for the orcs would be an imprudent venture. Left to ponder the orcs' mysterious condition, Antonidas' conclusion was that the orcs' cure would have to be a spiritual one.

The New Horde

The chief warden of the internment camps, Aedelas Blackmoore, watched over the captive orcs from his prison-stronghold, Durnholde. One orc in particular had always held his interest: the orphaned infant he had found nearly eighteen years before. Blackmoore had raised the young male as a favored slave and named him Thrall. Blackmoore taught the orc about tactics, philosophy, and combat. Thrall was even trained as a gladiator. All the while, the corrupt warden sought to mold the orc into a weapon.

Despite his harsh upbringing, young Thrall grew into a strong, quick-witted orc, and he knew in his heart that a slave's life was not for him. As he grew to maturity, he learned about his people, the orcs, whom he had never met: after their defeat, most of

them had been placed in internment camps. Rumor had it that Doomhammer, the orc leader, had escaped from Lordaeron and gone into hiding. Only one rogue clan still operated in secret, trying to evade the watchful eyes of the Alliance.

The resourceful yet inexperienced Thrall decided to escape from Blackmoore's fortress and set off to find others of his kind. During his journeys Thrall visited the internment camps and found his once-mighty race to be strangely cowed and lethargic. Having not found the proud warriors he hoped to discover, Thrall set out to find the last undefeated orc chieftain, Grom Hellscream.

Constantly hunted by the humans, Hellscream nevertheless held onto the Horde's unquenchable will to fight. Aided only by his own devoted Warsong clan, Hellscream continued to wage an underground war against the oppression of his beleaguered people. Unfortunately, Hellscream could never find a way to rouse the captured orcs from their stupor. The impressionable Thrall, inspired by Hellscream's idealism, developed a strong empathy for the Horde and its warrior traditions.

Seeking the truth of his own origins, Thrall traveled north to find the legendary Frostwolf clan. Thrall learned that Gul'dan had exiled the Frostwolves during the early days of the First War. He also discovered that he was the son and heir of the orc hero Durotan, the true chieftain of the Frostwolves who had been murdered in the wilds nearly twenty years before.

Under the tutelage of the venerable shaman Drek'Thar, Thrall studied his people's ancient shamanistic culture, which had been forgotten under Gul'dan's evil rule. Over time, Thrall became a powerful shaman and took his rightful place as chieftain of the exiled Frostwolves. Empowered by the elements themselves and driven to find his destiny, Thrall set off to free the captive clans and heal his race of demonic corruption.

During his travels, Thrall found the aged warchief, Orgrim Doomhammer, who had been living as a hermit for many years. Doomhammer, who had been a close friend of Thrall's father, decided to follow the young, visionary orc and help him free the captive clans. Supported by many of the veteran chieftains, Thrall ultimately succeeded in revitalizing the Horde and giving his people a new spiritual identity.

To symbolize his people's rebirth, Thrall returned to Blackmoore's fortress of Durnholde and put a decisive end to his former master's plans by laying siege to the internment camps. This victory was not without its price: during the liberation of one camp, Doomhammer fell in battle.

Thrall took up Doomhammer's legendary warhammer and donned his black plate-armor to become the new warchief of the Horde. During the following months, Thrall's small but volatile Horde laid waste to the internment camps and stymied the Alliance's best efforts to counter his clever strategies. Encouraged by his best friend and mentor, Grom Hellscream, Thrall worked to ensure that his people would never be slaves again.

War of the Spider

While Thrall was liberating his brethren in Lordaeron, Ner'zhul continued to build up his power base in Northrend. A great citadel was erected above the Icecrown Glacier and manned by the growing legions of the dead. Yet as the Lich King extended his influence over the land, one shadowy empire stood against his power. The ancient subterranean kingdom of Azjol-Nerub, which had been founded by a race of sinister humanoid spiders, sent their elite warrior-guard to attack Icecrown and end the Lich King's mad bid for dominance. Much to his frustration, Ner'zhul found that the evil nerubians were immune not only to the plague, but to his telepathic domination as well.

The nerubian spider-lords commanded vast forces and had an underground network that stretched nearly half the breadth of Northrend. Their hit-and-run tactics on the Lich King's strongholds stymied his efforts to root them out time after time. Ultimately Ner'zhul's war against the nerubians was won by attrition. With the aid of the sinister dreadlords and innumerable undead warriors, the Lich King invaded Azjol-Nerub and brought its subterranean temples crashing down upon the spider lords' heads.

Though the nerubians were immune to his plague, Ner'zhul's growing necromantic powers allowed him to raise the spider-warriors' corpses and bend them to his will. As a testament to their tenacity and fearlessness, Ner'zhul adopted the nerubians' distinctive architectural style for his own fortresses and structures. Left to rule his kingdom unopposed, the Lich King began preparing for his true mission in the world. Reaching out into the human lands with his vast consciousness, the Lich King called out to any dark soul that would listen....

Kel'Thuzad and the Forming of the Scourge

There were a handful of powerful individuals scattered throughout the world who heard the Lich King's mental summons from Northrend. Most notable of them was the archmage of Dalaran, Kel'Thuzad, who was one of senior members of the Kirin Tor, Dalaran's ruling council. He had been considered a maverick for years due to his insistence on studying the forbidden arts of necromancy. Driven to learn all he could of the magical world and its shadowy wonders, he was frustrated by what he saw as his peers' outmoded and unimaginative precepts. Upon hearing the powerful summons from Northrend, the archmage bent all of his considerable will to communing with the mysterious voice. Convinced that the Kirin Tor was too squeamish to seize the power and knowledge inherent in the dark arts, he resigned himself to learn what he could from the immensely powerful Lich King.

Leaving behind his fortune and prestigious political standing, Kel'Thuzad abandoned the ways of the Kirin Tor and left Dalaran forever. Prodded by the Lich King's persistent voice in his mind, he sold his vast holdings and stored away his fortunes. Traveling alone over many leagues of both land and sea, he finally reached the frozen shores of Northrend. Intent on reaching Icecrown and offering his services to the Lich King, the archmage passed through the ravaged, war-torn ruins of Azjol-Nerub. Kel'Thuzad saw firsthand the scope and ferocity of Ner'zhul's power. He began to realize that allying himself with the mysterious Lich King might be both wise and potentially fruitful.

After long months of trekking through the harsh arctic wastelands, Kel'Thuzad finally reached the dark glacier of Icecrown. He boldly approached Ner'zhul's dark citadel and was shocked when the undead guardsmen silently let him pass as though he was expected. Kel'Thuzad descended deep into the cold earth and found his way down to the bottom of the glacier. There, in the endless cavern of ice and shadows, he prostrated himself before the Frozen Throne and offered his soul to the dark lord of the dead.

The Lich King was pleased with his latest conscript. He promised Kel'Thuzad immortality and great power in exchange for his loyalty and obedience. Eager for dark knowledge and power, Kel'Thuzad accepted his first great mission: to go into the world of men and found a new religion that would worship the Lich King as a god.

To help the archmage accomplish his mission, Ner'zhul left Kel'Thuzad's humanity intact. The aged yet still charismatic wizard was charged with using his powers of illusion and persuasion to lull the downtrodden, disenfranchised masses of Lordaeron into a state of trust and belief. Then, once he had their attention, he would offer them a new vision of what society could be - and a new figurehead to call their king.

Kel'Thuzad returned to Lordaeron in disguise, and over the span of three years, he used his fortune and intellect to gather a clandestine brotherhood of like-minded men and women. The brotherhood, which he called the Cult of the Damned, promised its acolytes social equality and eternal life on Azeroth in exchange for their service and obedience to Ner'zhul. As the months passed, Kel'Thuzad found many eager volunteers for his new cult amongst the tired, overburdened laborers of Lordaeron. It was surprisingly easy for Kel'Thuzad to achieve his goal: namely, to transfer the citizens' faith in the Holy Light into belief in Ner'zhul's dark shadow. As the Cult of the Damned grew in size and influence, Kel'Thuzad made sure to hide its workings from the authorities of Lordaeron.

With Kel'Thuzad's success in Lordaeron, the Lich King made the final preparations for his assault against human civilization. Placing his plague-energies into a number of portable artifacts called plague-cauldrons, Ner'zhul ordered Kel'Thuzad to transport the cauldrons to Lordaeron, where they would be hidden within various cult-controlled villages. The cauldrons, protected by the loyal cultists, would then act as plague-generators, sending the plague seeping out across the unsuspecting farmlands and cities of northern Lordaeron.

The Lich King's plan worked perfectly. Many of Lordaeron's northern villages were contaminated almost immediately. Just as in Northrend, the citizens who contracted the plague died and arose as the Lich King's willing slaves. The cultists under Kel'Thuzad were eager to die and be raised again in their dark lord's service. They exulted in the prospect of immortality through undeath. As the plague spread, more and more feral zombies arose in the northlands. Kel'Thuzad looked upon the Lich King's growing army and named it the Scourge, for soon it would march upon the gates of Lordaeron and scour humanity from the face of the world.

The Alliance Splinters

Unaware of the death cults forming in their lands, the leaders of the Alliance nations began to bicker and argue over territorial holdings and decreasing political influence. King Terenas of Lordaeron began to suspect that the fragile pact they had forged during their darkest hour would not last for much longer. Terenas had convinced the Alliance leaders to lend money and laborers to help rebuild the southern kingdom of Stormwind, which had been destroyed during the orcish occupation of Azeroth. The higher taxes that resulted, along with the high expense of maintaining and operating the numerous orc internment camps, led many leaders - Genn Greymane of Gilneas in particular - to believe that their kingdoms would be better off seceding from the Alliance.

To make matters worse, the high elves of Silvermoon brusquely rescinded their allegiance to the Alliance, stating that the humans' poor leadership had led to the burning of their forests during the Second War. Terenas fought back his impatience and quietly reminded the elves that nothing of Quel'Thalas would have remained if not for the hundreds of valiant humans who'd given their lives to defend it. Nonetheless, the elves stubbornly decided to go their own way. In the wake of the elves' departure, Gilneas and Stromgarde seceded as well.

Though the Alliance was falling apart, King Terenas still had allies that he could count on. Both Admiral Proudmoore of Kul Tiras and the young king, Varian Wrynn of Azeroth, remained committed to the Alliance. Furthermore, the wizards of the Kirin Tor, led by the Archmage Antonidas, pledged Dalaran's steadfast support to Terenas' rule. Perhaps most reassuring of all was the pledge of the mighty dwarven king, Magni Bronzebeard, who vowed that the dwarves of Ironforge would forever owe a debt of honor to the Alliance for liberating Khaz Modan from the Horde's control.

Chapter V: Return of the Burning Legion

The Scourge of Lordaeron

Warcraft 3: Reign of Chaos

After preparing for many long months, Kel'Thuzad and his Cult of the Damned finally struck the first blow by releasing the plague of undeath upon Lordaeron. Uther and his fellow paladins investigated the infected regions in the hope of finding a way to stop the plague. Despite their efforts, the plague continued to spread and threatened to tear the Alliance apart.

As the ranks of the undead swept across Lordaeron, Terenas' only son, Prince Arthas, took up the fight against the Scourge. Arthas succeeded in killing Kel'Thuzad, but even so, the undead ranks swelled with every soldier that fell defending the land. Frustrated and stymied by the seemingly unstoppable enemy, Arthas took increasingly extreme steps to conquer them. Finally Arthas' comrades warned him that he was losing his hold on his humanity.

Arthas' fear and resolve proved to be his ultimate undoing. He tracked the plague's source to Northrend, intending to end its threat forever. Instead, Prince Arthas eventually fell prey to the Lich King's tremendous power. Believing that it would save his people, Arthas took up the cursed runeblade, Frostmourne. Though the sword did grant him unfathomable power, it also stole his soul and transformed him into the greatest of the Lich King's death knights. With his soul cast aside and his sanity shattered, Arthas led the Scourge against his own kingdom. Ultimately, Arthas murdered his own father, King Terenas, and crushed Lordaeron under the Lich King's iron heel.

Sunwell - The Fall of Quel'Thalas

Though he had defeated all of the people he now saw as his enemies, Arthas was still haunted by the ghost of Kel'Thuzad. The ghost told Arthas that he needed to be revived for the next phase of the Lich King's plan. To revive him, Arthas needed to bring Kel'Thuzad's remains to the mystical Sunwell, hidden within the high elves' eternal kingdom of Quel'Thalas.

Arthas and his Scourge invaded Quel'Thalas and laid siege to the elves' crumbling defenses. Sylvanas Windrunner, the Ranger-General of Silvermoon, put up a valiant fight, but Arthas eventually eradicated the high elf army and battled through to the Sunwell. In a cruel gesture of his dominance, he even raised Sylvanas' defeated body as a banshee, cursed to endless undeath in the service of Quel'Thalas' conqueror.

Ultimately, Arthas submerged Kel'Thuzad's remains within the holy waters of the Sunwell. Although the potent waters of Eternity were fouled by this act, Kel'Thuzad was reborn as a sorcerous lich. Resurrected as a far more powerful being,

Kel'Thuzad explained the next phase of the Lich King's plan. By the time Arthas and his army of the dead turned southward, not one living elf remained in Quel'Thalas. The glorious homeland of the high elves, which had stood for more than nine thousand years, was no more.

Archimonde's Return and the Flight to Kalimdor

Once Kel'Thuzad was whole again, Arthas led the Scourge south to Dalaran. There the lich would obtain the powerful spellbook of Medivh, and use it to summon Archimonde back into the world. From that point on, Archimonde himself would begin the Legion's final invasion. Not even the wizards of the Kirin Tor could stop Arthas' forces from stealing Medivh's book, and soon Kel'Thuzad had all he needed to perform his spell. After ten thousand years, the mighty demon Archimonde and his host emerged once again upon the world of Azeroth. Yet Dalaran was not their final destination. Under orders from Kil'jaeden himself, Archimonde and his demons followed the undead Scourge to Kalimdor, bent on destroying Nordrassil, the World Tree.

In the midst of this chaos, a lone, mysterious prophet appeared to lend the mortal races guidance. This prophet proved to be none other than Medivh, the last Guardian, miraculously returned from the Beyond to redeem himself for past sins. Medivh told the Horde and the Alliance of the dangers they faced and urged them to band together. Jaded by generations of hate, the orcs and humans would have none of it. Medivh was forced to deal with each race separately, using prophecy and trickery to guide them across the sea to the legendary land of Kalimdor. The orcs and humans soon encountered the long-hidden civilization of the Kaldorei.

The orcs, led by Thrall, suffered a series of setbacks on their journey across Kalimdor's Barrens. Though they befriended Cairne Bloodhoof and his mighty tauren warriors, many orcs began to succumb to the demonic bloodlust that had plagued them for years. Thrall's greatest lieutenant, Grom Hellscream, even betrayed the Horde by giving himself over to his baser instincts. As Hellscream and his loyal Warsong warriors stalked through the forests of Ashenvale, they clashed with the ancient night elf Sentinels. Certain that the orcs had returned to their warlike ways, the demigod Cenarius came forth to drive Hellscream and his orcs back. Yet Hellscream and his orcs, overcome with supernatural hate and rage, managed to kill Cenarius and corrupt the ancient forestlands. Ultimately, Hellscream redeemed his honor by helping Thrall defeat Mannoroth, the demon lord who first cursed the orcs with his bloodline of hate and rage. With Mannoroth's death, the orcs' blood-curse was finally brought to an end.

While Medivh worked to convince the orcs and humans of the need for an alliance, the night elves fought the Legion in their own secretive ways. Tyrande Whisperwind, the immortal High Priestess of the night elf Sentinels, battled desperately to keep the demons and undead from overrunning the forests of Ashenvale. Tyrande realized that she needed help, so she set out to awaken the night elf druids from their thousand-year slumber. Calling upon her ancient love, Malfurion Stormrage, Tyrande succeeded in galvanizing her defenses and driving the Legion back. With Malfurion's help, nature herself rose up to vanquish the Legion and its Scourge allies.

While searching for more of the hibernating druids, Malfurion found the ancient barrow prison in which he had chained his brother, Illidan. Convinced that Illidan would aid them against the Legion, Tyrande set him free. Though Illidan did aid them for a time, he eventually fled to pursue his own interests.

The night elves braced themselves and fought the Burning Legion with grim determination. The Legion had never ceased in its desire for the Well of Eternity, long the source of strength for the World Tree and itself the heart of the night elf kingdom. If their planned assault on the Tree was successful, the demons would literally tear the world apart.

The Battle of Mount Hyjal

Under Medivh's guidance, Thrall and Jaina Proudmoore - the leader of the human forces in Kalimdor - realized that they had to put aside their differences. Similarly, the night elves, led by Malfurion and Tyrande, agreed that they must unite if they hoped to defend the World Tree. Unified in purpose, the races of Azeroth worked together to fortify the World Tree's energies to their utmost. Empowered by the very strength of the world, Malfurion succeeded in unleashing Nordrassil's primal fury, utterly destroying Archimonde and severing the Legion's anchor to the Well of Eternity. The final battle shook the continent of Kalimdor to its roots. Unable to draw power from the Well itself, the Burning Legion crumbled under the combined might of the mortal armies.

The Betrayer Ascendant

Warcraft 3X: The Frozen Throne

During the Legion's invasion of Ashenvale, Illidan was released from his barrow prison after ten thousand years of captivity. Though he sought to appease his comrades, he soon reverted to true form and consumed the energies of a powerful warlock artifact known as the Skull of Gul'dan. By doing so, Illidan developed demonic features and vastly magnified power. He also gained some of Gul'dan's old memories - especially those of the Tomb of Sargeras, the island dungeon rumored to hold the remains of the Dark Titan, Sargeras.

Bristling with power and free to roam the world once more, Illidan set out to find his own place in the great scheme of things. However, Kil'jaeden confronted Illidan and made him an offer he could not refuse. Kil'jaeden was angered by Archimonde's defeat at Mount Hyjal, but he had greater concerns than vengeance. Sensing that his creation, the Lich King, was growing too powerful to control, Kil'jaeden ordered Illidan to destroy Ner'zhul and put an end to the undead Scourge once and for all. In exchange, Illidan would receive untold power and a true place amongst the remaining lords of the Burning Legion.

Illidan agreed and immediately set out to destroy the Frozen Throne, the icy crystal cask in which the Lich King's spirit resided. Illidan knew that he would need a mighty artifact to destroy the Frozen Throne. Using the knowledge he had gained from Gul'dan's memories, Illidan decided to seek out the Tomb of Sargeras and claim the Dark Titan's remains. He called in some old Highborne debts and lured the serpentine naga from their dark undersea lairs. Led by the cunning witch Lady Vashj the naga helped Illidan reach the Broken Isles, where Sargeras' Tomb was rumored to be located.

As Illidan set out with the naga, Warden Maiev Shadowsong began to hunt him. Maiev had been Illidan's jailor for ten thousand years and relished the prospect of recapturing him. However, Illidan outsmarted Maiev and her Watchers and succeeded in claiming the Eye of Sargeras despite their efforts. With the powerful Eye in his possession, Illidan traveled to the former wizard-city of Dalaran. Strengthened by the city's ley power lines, Illidan used the Eye to cast a destructive spell against the Lich King's citadel of Icecrown in distant Northrend. Illidan's attack shattered the Lich King's defenses and ruptured the very roof of the world. At the final moment, Illidan's destructive spell was stopped when his brother Malfurion and the Priestess Tyrande arrived to aid Maiev.

Knowing that Kil'jaeden would not be pleased with his failure to destroy the Frozen Throne, Illidan fled to the barren dimension known as Outland: the last remnants of Draenor, the orcs' former homeland. There he planned to evade Kil'jaeden's wrath and plan his next moves. After they succeeded in stopping Illidan, Malfurion and Tyrande returned home to Ashenvale Forest to watch over their people. Maiev, however, would not quit so easily, and followed Illidan to Outland, determined to bring him to justice.

Rise of the Blood Elves

At this time, the undead Scourge had essentially transformed Lordaeron and Quel'Thalas into the toxic Plaguelands. There were only a few pockets of Alliance resistance forces left. One such group, consisting primarily of high elves, was led by the last of the Sunstrider dynasty: Prince Kael'thas. Kael, an accomplished wizard himself, grew wary of the failing Alliance. The high elves grieved for the loss of their homeland and decided to call themselves blood elves in honor of their fallen people. Yet as they worked to keep the Scourge at bay, they suffered greatly at being cut off from the Sunwell that had empowered them. Desperate to find a cure for his people's racial addiction to magic, Kael did the unthinkable: he embraced his people's Highborne ancestry and joined with Illidan and his naga in hopes of finding a new magical power source upon which to feed. The remaining Alliance commanders condemned the blood elves as traitors and cast them out for good.

With no place left to go, Kael and his blood elves followed Lady Vashj to Outland to help contest the warden, Maiev, who had recaptured Illidan. With the combined naga and blood elf forces, they managed to defeat Maiev and free Illidan from her grasp. Based in Outland, Illidan gathered his forces for a second strike against the Lich King and his fortress of Icecrown.

Civil War in the Plaguelands

Ner'zhul, the Lich King, knew that his time was short. Imprisoned within the Frozen Throne, he suspected that Kil'jaeden would send his agents to destroy him. The damage caused by Illidan's spell had ruptured the Frozen Throne; thus, the Lich King was losing his power daily. Desperate to save himself, he called his greatest mortal servant to his side: the death knight Prince Arthas.

Though his powers were drained by the Lich King's weakness, Arthas had been involved in a civil war in Lordaeron. Half of the standing undead forces, led by the banshee Sylvanas Windrunner, staged a coup for control over the undead empire. Arthas, called by the Lich King, was forced to leave the Scourge in the hands of his lieutenant, Kel'Thuzad, as the war escalated throughout the Plaguelands.

Ultimately, Sylvanas and her rebel undead (known as the Forsaken) claimed the ruined capital city of Lordaeron as their own. Constructing their own bastion beneath the wrecked city, the Forsaken vowed to defeat the Scourge and drive Kel'Thuzad and his minions from the land.

Weakened, but determined to save his master, Arthas reached Northrend only to find Illidan's naga and blood elves waiting for him. He and his nerubian allies raced against Illidan's forces to reach the Icecrown Glacier and defend the Frozen Throne.

The Lich King Triumphant

Even weakened as he was, Arthas ultimately outmaneuvered Illidan and reached the Frozen Throne first. Using his runeblade, Frostmourne, Arthas shattered the Lich King's icy prison and thereby released Ner'zhul's enchanted helm and breastplate. Arthas placed the unimaginably powerful helm on his head and became the new Lich King. Ner'zhul and Arthas' spirits fused into a single mighty being, just as Ner'zhul had always planned. Illidan and his troops were forced to flee back to Outland in disgrace, while Arthas became one of the most powerful entities the world had ever known.

Currently Arthas, the new and immortal Lich King, resides in Northrend; he is rumored to be rebuilding the citadel of Icecrown. His trusted lieutenant, Kel'Thuzad, commands the Scourge in the Plaguelands. Sylvanas and her rebel Forsaken hold only the Tirisfal Glades, a small portion of the war-torn kingdom.

Old Hatreds - The Colonization of Kalimdor

Though victory was theirs, the mortal races found themselves in a world shattered by war. The Scourge and the Burning Legion had all but destroyed the civilizations of Lordaeron, and had almost finished the job in Kalimdor. There were forests to heal, grudges to bury, and homelands to settle. The war had wounded each race deeply, but they had selflessly banded together to attempt a new beginning, starting with the uneasy truce between the Alliance and Horde.

Thrall led the orcs to the continent of Kalimdor, where they founded a new homeland with the help of their tauren brethren. Naming their new land Durotar after Thrall's murdered father, the orcs settled down to rebuild their once-glorious society. Now that the demon curse was ended, the Horde changed from a warlike juggernaut into more of a loose coalition, dedicated to survival and prosperity rather than conquest. Aided by the noble tauren and the cunning trolls of the Darkspear tribe, Thrall and his orcs looked forward to a new era of peace in their own land.

The remaining Alliance forces under Jaina Proudmoore settled in southern Kalimdor. Off the eastern coast of Dustwallow Marsh, they built the rugged port city of Theramore. There, the humans and their dwarven allies worked to survive in a land that would always be hostile to them. Though the defenders of Durotar and Theramore kept the tentative truce with one another, the fragile colonial serenity was not meant to last.

The peace between the orcs and humans was shattered by the arrival of a massive Alliance fleet in Kalimdor. The mighty fleet, under the command of Grand Admiral Daelin Proudmoore (Jaina's father), had left Lordaeron before Arthas had destroyed the kingdom. Having sailed for many grueling months, Admiral Proudmoore was searching for any Alliance survivors he could find.

Proudmoore's armada posed a serious threat to the stability of the region. As a renowned hero of the Second War, Jaina's father was a staunch enemy of the Horde, and he was determined to destroy Durotar before the orcs could gain a foothold in the land.

The Grand Admiral forced Jaina to make a terrible decision: support him in battle against the orcs and betray her newfound allies, or fight her own father to maintain the fragile peace that the Alliance and the Horde had finally attained. After much soul-searching, Jaina chose the latter and helped Thrall defeat her crazed father. Unfortunately Admiral Proudmoore died in battle before Jaina could reconcile with him or prove that orcs were no longer bloodthirsty monsters. For her loyalty, the orcs allowed Jaina's forces to return home safely to Theramore.