

Course of the war



Map depicting the military status before the first engagements of the war.



On the shores of Lordaeron

The first stage of the Great War can very well be described as a series of smaller operations in the areas of the Channel Islands and Hillsbrad Foothills. After he had claimed Crestfall as his primary forward base and managed to blockade the eastern shores of Kul Tiras, Doomhammer turned his gaze north. Preparing the main body of his land, sea and air forces for a great invasion in the east, he deemed the west a lesser importance, yet still valuable to protect his flank and create a safe sea connection with Alterac.

The High Command, well aware of the amassing in the east, turned most of its attention and resources there as well. Yet, wary of the possibility of one another attack, they entrusted Lady Mara Fordragon and her lieutenants with maintaining a line of defense against any such. As a part of this effort, Fordragon dispatched a large number of surveillance forces to all the corners of the Channel Islands, including the large southern island of Zul'dare.



*The Amani
Ward*

Breakdown of all the opposing forces at the start of the campaign

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

Three squadrons of 30 ships. Flying the banner of Azeroth, under the command of Azerothien captains.

Two squadrons of 20 ships. Flying the banner of Lordaeron, under the command of Lordaeronian captains.

Ground strength

15 000 men under the banner of Azeroth. Including 50 Knights of the Silver Hand.

8 000 men of the local militia, under the banners of both Lordaeron and Azeroth.

All ground forces under the command of Lady Mara Fordragon and her lieutenants.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

60 ships divided into six squadrons, flying the banner of the Blackrock Clan. Under the command of Blackrock sea captains.

Ground strength

30 000 troops of the Blackrock Clan.

All ground forces under the command of Varok Saurfang and his captains.

Zul'dare and Hillsbrad

"I remember it well. The cold, freezing day the Horde first came. It was as if a dark night fell upon our shores. At first, we had heard of small, isolated attacks against the outlying fishing settlements that had dotted the countless islands south of Hillsbrad, but soon, these drops turned to a stream, and stream turned to a tide. I was at the Hillsbrad Fields by the time, entrusted to strengthen its defenses and make better use of the local mines. It all seemed so calm, the winds being quiet, the living nature hidden under a veil of snow, the locals simply going after their own lives. Yet, I soon realized it to be a mere facade. The orcs had struck us hard, and when they had, the white calm turned into a red storm."

From the Account of the Southern Campaigns,

by Sir Hartal Truesight, Paladin Knight of Azeroth



The first military operations of the Second War began by the end of year 601. In west, the Alliance attempted to secure its perimeter by dispatching the previously mentioned surveillance strikeforces. Soon thereafter, as the main bodies of both the Alliance and Horde militaries were amassing in the east, Doomhammer began his trust towards the southern shore of Lordaeron, all with the intention of creating an uninterrupted naval bridge to Alterac.

Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

A squadron of 10 ships. Flying the banner of Azeroth, under the command of Azerothien captains.

A squadron of 10 ships. Flying the banner of Lordaeron, under the command of Lordaeronian captains.

Ground strength

5 000 men under the banner of Azeroth, including 50 Knights of the Silver Hand. Led by Lady Mara Fordragon and Sir Hartal Truesight.

1 000 of the local Lordaeronian militia, under the military command of Lady Mara Fordragon.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

40 ships divided into four squadrons, flying the banner of the Blackrock Clan. Under the command of Blackrock sea captains.

Ground strength

8 000 troops of the Blackrock Clan. Under the command of Varok Saurfang.

Objectives

The Alliance

The Alliance had two main objectives in this stage of the southern campaigns. First, strengthen the local settlements and defend them against any possible attack. Second, gather the intel required to determine whether the Horde is preparing a larger offensive in these areas or not.

The Horde

For all we know, Doomhammer's sole intentions with this whole operation were to secure his western wing in preparation for the main invasion in the east, as well as to create a secure naval bridge to Alterac. The first stage of this plan would have his forces form a primary operational base, deemed to be Zul'dare, and stage a large number of smaller raids, intended to test the enemy's defenses and scavenge the area for resources, against the mainland of Lordaeron and all the surrounding isles.

The operations

Map depicting the first stage of the Southern Campaigns.



Launching from Crestfall, the Horde fleet separated into three bodies, each commencing its own set of actions. The main body, comprised of two squadrons, had taken the island of Zul'dare, massacring the small force Lady Mara sent there to monitor the area, and proceeded to build a large naval base along its shores. Once the area had

been secured, they launched their ships towards the remainder of the Channel Islands. Meanwhile, the later two bodies, each squadron strong, proceeded towards the mainland of Lordaeron, slowly scouring the islands in between of all the resistance.

Although the islands across the shores of Lordaeron had been largely undefended, bar the local militia and a few insignificant garrisons, the shores itself proved a different matter altogether. Some of the raids had been successful, yet in the end, the soldiers of Azeroth held onto their virtue and sent the raiding warbands back onto the sea. Of the numerous engagements, one has to mention the assault against the Hillsbrad Fields, where Sir Hartal, commander of the southern defense forces, managed to defeat a raiding party four times strong his own force.

Raid at Hillsbrad

Over the first months, the situation in the southeast deteriorated into a series of lesser engagements between the local defense forces and numerous raiding parties. Yet, despite being preoccupied with the preparation of the eastern invasion, Doomhammer still intended to continue on with his plan. Thus, his forces had been ordered to proceed with the intelligence gathering, hoping to find any sort of opportunity. And successful, they were. Torturing the numerous prisoners captured during the forays into the enemy's territory, they learned that Zul'jin, the warlord and leader of the Amani, had been captured by an elven volunteer force while moving from Zul'dare to his northern home of Zul'Aman. Feeling his freeing could very well serve to finally convince the forest trolls to enter the war on the side of the Horde, Doomhammer had decided to send an elite task force under the leadership of Varok Saurfang on a mission to free the troll, once the exact location of his imprisonment would be disclosed. The Warchief had also made a contact with the remaining free trolls on Zul'dare, who promised him they would aid his soldiers on this endeavour.

Breakdown of the opposing forces at the start of the campaign

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Ground strength

An Azerothien garrison 70 men strong. Under the command of Sir Grayson Shadowbreaker.

The Great Orcish Horde



Ground strength

An elite force 100 orcs strong. Aided by troll trackers from Zul'dare. Under the command of Varok Saurfang.

Objectives

The Alliance

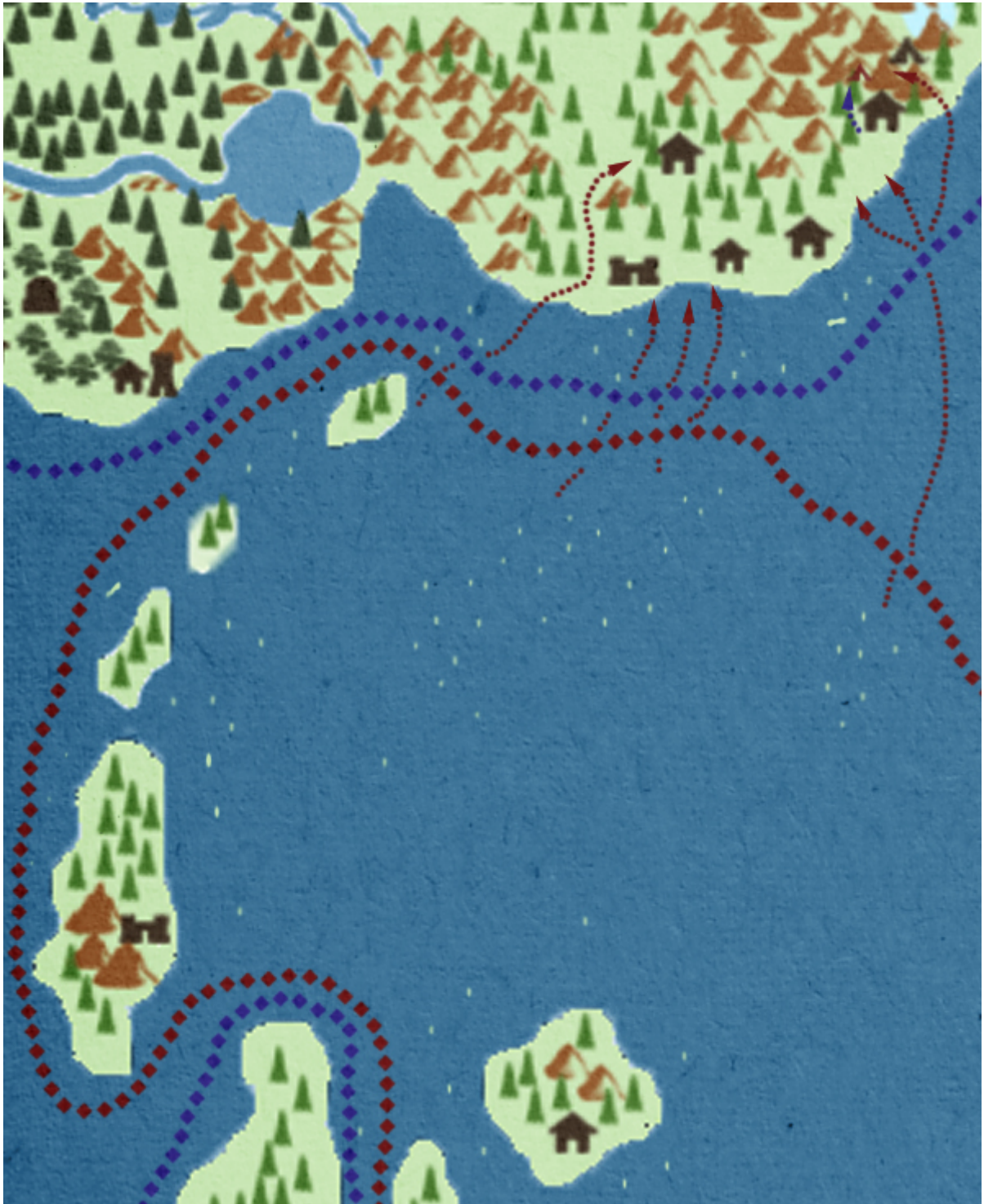
The garrison in the vicinity of the Hillsbrad township was to protect the prison camp until Zul'jin could be extracted and moved north.

The Horde

Saurfang had a clear objective as well; free Zul'jin, well and alive, at any costs, and escort him back onto Zul'dare.

The operation

Map depicting the second stage of the Southern Campaigns, including the raid at Hillsbrad.



One might think, a simple mission, such as the task given to Saurfang, would be rather simplistic in its execution. Yet, on the contrary, there is plenty, as no mission is truly simple in its details. Although Saurfang had indeed managed to land in the wilds east of

the Hillsbrad township without being spotted, problems arose on the way towards his destination. Not only had his force run directly into a large patrol of Azerothien knights, arguably out of bad fortune more than anything else, leaving it a thirty orcs weaker, but it was also caught in a blizzard while crossing the hills east of Hillsbrad, resulting in a loss of yet another five troops. Still, determined to fulfill his mission, Saurfang had continued on and reached the prison camp by the third day of his journey. As his force had managed to sneak into the camp, ambush the guards and free Zul'jin and a few of his remaining warriors by the hours before dawn, a battle took place, for a sole surviving guard had sounded an alarm before they could escape. In the end, the orcish force broke out of the camp, but not before Saurfang took a grievous wound to his left side. The leader of the prison camp, Sir Grayson, had been wounded as well, however, being hit by a troll war axe, losing his eye in the process.

Despite his wound, as grievous as it might had been, Saurfang survived and fulfilled his mission, bringing Zul'jin back to Zul'dare. There, honor bound to the Horde and aware the Alliance would fight his people in any case, the troll made a pact with the orcish Warchief, promising to bring the full might of all the still remaining Amani armies and navies against Lordaeron and its allies. And thus, the forest trolls became a true part of the Great Orcish Horde.

Ambush at Tarren Mill

A little do we know of the early cooperation between the Horde and Alterac. King Perenolde had entered negotiations even before the war began, although the exact time Doomhammer synchronized his forces with Perenolde's and completely integrated Alterac into his war plans remains a rather large unknown. Nevertheless, we know Alterac had been providing the Horde with intelligence of all kind even by the first days of the war. A glaring example would be the incident at Tarren Mill, where Alterac provided the Horde with the routes of the elven strikeforce passing through the Alterac grasslands.

Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Ground strength

A force of 300 Azerothien soldiers. Led by Sir Hartal Truesight.

A cadre of 50 elven rangers. Led by Captain Alleria Windrunner.

A party of 100 elven rangers. Led by Lieutenant Auric Sunchaser.

The Great Orcish Horde



Ground strength

500 troops of the Blackrock Clan, including a large cadre of forest trolls. Under the command of a Blackrock War Captain.

Objectives

The Horde

It might appear unclear as to what Doomhammer intended with the capture of the elven strikeforce. Yet, it is rather simple, and all comes down to the intelligence provided by Alterac. Doomhammer had already known the Alliance had been negotiating with Quel'Thalas for a long time, yet he learned that with the rescue of Zul'jin three weeks ago, these negotiations entered a more serious level. The elves, wishing to assess the situation for themselves, decided to send a ranger strikeforce stationed at the Alteraci Lodge further south and conclude the negotiations based on their findings. Once Doomhammer had learned of this through the Alteraci, he formulated a plan to at least slow down, if not completely stop, the whole process. Ambush and capture the elven force en their route south, an easy task given the provided intelligence, transport them back onto Zul'dare and keep the whole thing in dark for as long as the situation would allow. If possible, ransom the unharmed elves later on for a guarantee that Quel'Thalas would stay out of the war.

And, of course, leave no witnesses, as the whole plan stood on the premise the elves wouldn't know for certain what happened to their task force.

The Alliance

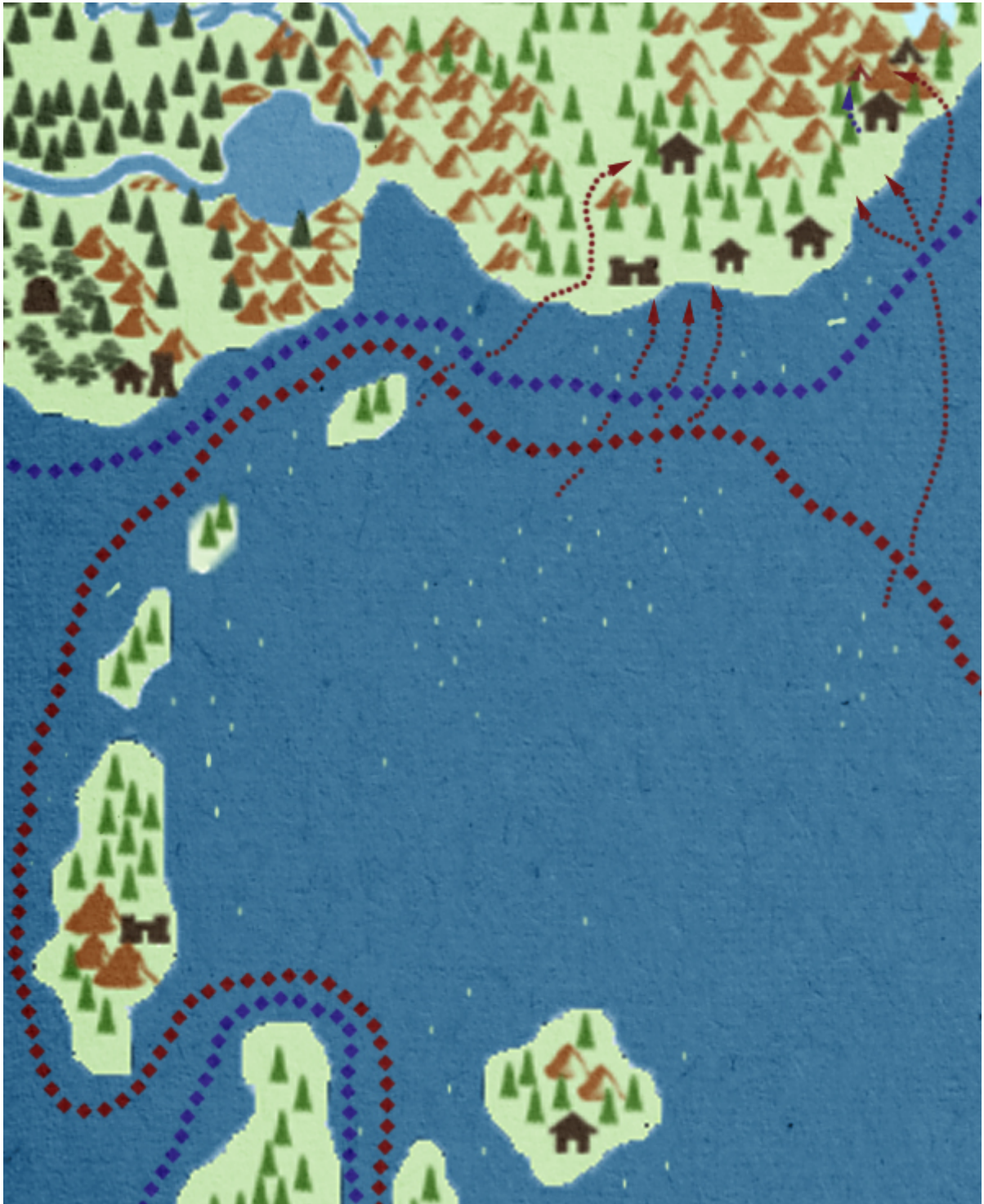
As for the former elven force led by Lieutenant Sunchaser, the objectives given by the Council of Silvermoon were simple. Travel to the southern areas of Hillsbrad Foothills and gather intelligence about the orcs, about their exact nature, about their behaviour, about their alliance with the forest trolls.

Of the latter force, sent to rescue the captured elves, the objectives were straightforward as well. Track down the orcish encampment before the orcs could escape by sea, free the elven party and escort it to the township of Tarren Mill.



The operation

Map depicting the second stage of the Southern Campaigns, including the ambush and subsequent rescue operation near Tarren Mill.



Setting up the stage for their ambush had been a rather easy task for the Horde, as their troll trackers knew the land truly well. Hiding at the mountain pass they knew the elves would be crossing due to the intelligence supplied by Alterac, they had a perfect

position to execute their plan seamlessly. Yet, despite all the planning, it was not so. Although the orcs managed to trap and capture the elven force, it was not without witnesses. Unbeknownst to Alterac and thus to the Horde, a smaller group of elves was to meet the elven strikeforce, approaching from the south. This group, led by none other than the legendary troll hunter Alleria Windrunner, arrived at the site a mere half hour after the ambush. Although the trolls had skillfully hidden their tracks, Alleria was able to follow the group anyway, as she had a wide many years of experience with their hiding techniques. Locating their night camp and confirming the capture of the elven force, she immediately sent her famous hawk Malanore with a message describing the situation to Tarren Mill.

The Alliance responded swiftly. Once the officials at Tarren Mill had forwarded the message to their superiors, the High Command, in conjunction with the Council of Silvermoon itself, put their forces into action. To prevent the extraction of the orcish party and elven prisoners, Alleria was to track them and sent reports of any movement to the Alliance, while their ships were to patrol the coasts of the Tarren Mill region, intercepting any approaching Horde craft. Last, Sir Hartal was to muster a force large enough and rendezvous with Alleria. And so, he did. As the orcs had learned they could not escape by the sea at the time, they fortified their camp, hoping to endure until Doomhammer could send a larger force to rescue them. Yet neither Alleria, nor Hartal, had been put off by this and attacked under a cove of night.

The attack had been successful. Alleria managed to free and arm her brethren as soon as the orcs had learned of their presence, tipping the scales in favor of the Alliance. The Horde had fought hard, and trolls in particular fell into a berserking rage, yet to no avail. By the dawn, they all lay dead, their black and green blood staining the white snow that still held the nature under its cover. Remaining Azerothiëns, together with their freed elven brethren, returned to Tarren Mill and as soon as Alleria and Auric had sent their reports to the Council of Silvermoon, Quel'Thalas entered the final set of negotiations with the Alliance.

Invasion of Stromgarde

As the snows of covering the vast reaches of Lordaeron and Khaz Modan melted, giving their way to the living nature, so did Doomhammer give his orders to finish the last stages of the preparations and commence the invasion. The Amani Warlord Zul'jin would bring a great part of his armada, fleets he had made his people build in preparation for a conflict he had always felt would come, and join them with those of the Horde. Their fleets would launch itself towards the shores of Stromgarde, both in the east and west, while the primary ground invasion force would charge the Thandol Span and its mighty fortress of Dun Modr itself.

Breakdown of all the opposing forces at the start of the campaign

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

Three fleets of 150 ships. Flying the banner of Kul Tiras, under the direct command of Grand Admiral Proudmoore and his captains.

Three fleets of 150 ships. Flying the banner of Stromgarde, under the command of Stromic captains.

A fleet of 50 ships. Flying the banner of Azeroth, under the command of Azerothien

captains.

Two fleets of 100 ships hailing from Quel'Thalas, dispersed to support the human fleets.

All naval forces under the supreme command of Grand Admiral Proudmoore.

Ground strength

80 000 men of the Stromic Black Army. Under the command of King Thoras Trollbane and his officers.

9 000 men of the Stromgarde Militia, led by its captains, including Danath of Stromgarde.

8 000 dwarven defenders of Dun Modr. Led by Captain Steelbeard and Commander Whitebeard.

20 000 men under the banner of Azeroth. Led by the Supreme Commander Lothar and his Azerothien lieutenants.

All ground and air forces under the supreme command of Lord Anduin Lothar.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

Half the Blackrock Armada, four fleets of 160 ships. Under the command of Commander Tharbek and Blackrock sea captains.

Half the Blackhand Armada, three fleets of 120 ships. Under the command of Black Tooth Grin sea captains.

180 Amani destroyers, dispersed to support the orcish fleets.

All naval forces under the supreme command of Commander Tharbek.

Ground strength

80 000 troops of the Black Tooth Grin Clan. Under the command of the Blackhand brothers.

50 000 troops of the Blackrock Clan. Under the command of the Warchief Doomhammer.

30 000 forest trolls, led by Zul'jin, dispersed amongst the orcish forces.

All ground and air forces under the supreme command of the Warchief Doomhammer.

Thandol Span

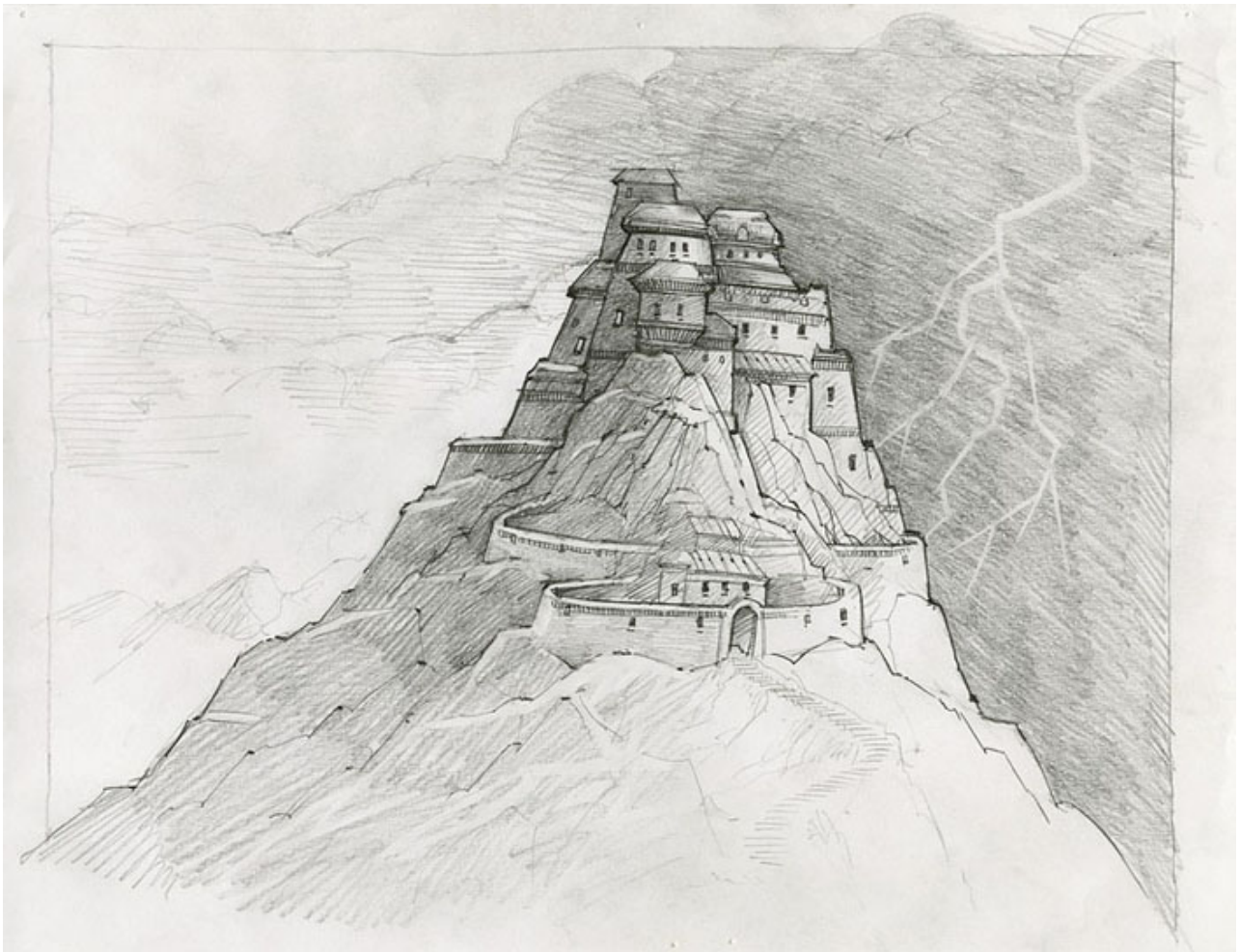
"I would never think we'd get that hard beating until that night. It was a slaughter. My lads fought hardest they could, but the devils took us by surprise. And when that damned troll slew our commander and turned our cannons against the soldiers defending the Thandol itself, all was lost"

*From the Orcish Plight upon Khaz Modan,
by Captain Steelbeard, officer at Dun Modr*



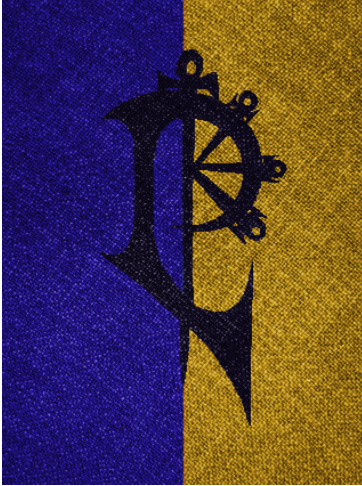
The very first strikes against the shores of the mighty Stromic kingdom began by the ninth day after Noblegarden. At first, Doomhammer had resorted to limited naval attacks to test the enemy's defenses, but in time, he put all of his available strength against the Alliance, engulfing all of southern Lordaeron in the fires of war. In the west, his Blackrock armada relentlessly pushed against the combined fleets of Kul Tiras, Stromgarde and Azeroth, sometimes ranging wide and far into the Great Sea and all its islands, while in the east, Blackhand ships raided the coasts of the Arathi, trying to outmaneuver the remaining Stromic fleets. And in the centre of all this carnage, a vast body of Horde warriors launched one attack after another against the Thandol Span and all its defenders.

Yet, the valor of the Alliance had won the day. The Horde could not breach its defenses, and its Warchief soon realized a mere frontal assault would not be sufficient to achieve his goals, not without a great loss of both material and troops. Yet, in a manner nearly miraculous given the complicated situation, his new ally Zul'jin formulated a new plan. Undertake a stealthy attack against Dun Modr itself and take it by surprise. Something only Zul'jin and his trolls could achieve.



Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Ground strength

30 000 men of the Stromic Black Army. Under the command of General Radulf Callow and his officers.

8 000 dwarven defenders of Dun Modr. Led by Captain Steelbeard and Commander Whitebeard.

5 000 men under the banner of Azeroth. Led by Sir Gavinrad.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

30 light and camouflaged troll vessels. Under the command of Zul'jin.

Ground strength

50 000 troops of the Black Tooth Grin Clan. Under the command of the Blackhand brothers.

A force of 2 000 troops, comprised of trolls, orcs and goblin sappers. Under the command of Zul'jin.

Objectives and strategy

The Alliance

Since the very beginning, Lord Lothar had utilized a strategy of active defense against the orcish invaders. Hold them at bay, disrupt their supply lines and cause them as much mayhem as the situation would permit. His purpose in doing so had been simple. Do not permit any larger orcish force an entry to Lordaeron and slowly wear their forces down, so that they would not be prepared for a massive counter invasion he had been planning to commence once the armies amassing in the north would be prepared to join the fray.

The Horde

As it became clear the Horde would have a hard time penetrating the formidable defense line Lord Lothar and King Trollbane had formed around Stromgarde, Doomhammer turned to Zul'jin's alternative. As trolls developed a vast array of camouflaging techniques during the long years the humans and elves had ruled Lordaeron, allowing them to travel great lengths, either by sea or land, without being spotted, they would be able to approach the fortress of Dun Modr unseen. The plan thus revolved around the very idea. Trolls were to build a large number of smaller camouflaged vessels, and sail the straits of Thandol up to the Thandol Span itself. They would travel only

by night, hiding during day, avoiding any possible patrols that could disclose their position and intent. Upon reaching their destination, the cliffs of the Thandol Span would be scaled, allowing them to approach Dun Modr from the west and commence a surprise attack, using the shock and explosives brought on by goblin sappers to wreck chaos upon the dwarven garrison. Their primary objective at this stage would be to turn all the firepower of the fortress against the lines of defenders at the Span. Once achieved, the Black Tooth Grin forces south of the Span would initiate their own attack against the Alliance defenders, using the chaos and confusion to finally secure the land path to the Highlands.

To ensure the attention of the Alliance would be fixed elsewhere, the Backstabber, as per his norm, would also lead a distracting offensive in the west, transferring a part of the Black Tooth Grin forces in the east to its support and thus quelling any suspicion the Alliance could have of the possible attack against the Thandol Span.

The operation

A risky plan the Horde was to endeavour, indeed. Not only a single misstep, and all would be lost, but there had also been a certain possibility the Alliance could predict the attack and prepare a trap. And even if successful, those who would follow Zul'jin on his task would not see the light of the next day very likely, as its very nature rendered it simply a suicide mission. Yet, despite all the odds, it had been successful in the end and many of its participants even survived, if only to find death on some of the future battlefields of the Second War.

Once the Warchief had begun his own offensive in the west, first transferring large bodies of troops from the east, then launching the attack itself, it became apparent the plan would be allowed to proceed. The High Command, believing the Horde to be genuinely attempting to isolate the island of Tol Barad and secure the southwestern shores of Stromgarde, moved to meet the invaders with a bare steel, leaving the Thandol Span defended by a force large enough, yet without a more significant support. Once the fighting had reached its impetus, fully locking the Alliance's gaze in the southwest,

Zul'jin's force began its journey. As per plan, they had traveled only during night and thus reached their destination in a matter of week.

The weather proved to be a fleeting ally, as it always is in any case. Heavy rain indeed helped the force conceal their movement and ensure they would reach Dun Modr unspotted, yet at the same time, it made certain matters truly problematic. Not only did Zul'jin and his troops have far harder time scaling the walls of the Thandol Valley, but water also damaged a great deal of the explosives they brought with them.

Still, Zul'jin managed to proceed with his ambush. His troops had infiltrated the fortress, planting all the explosives left at its vital spots, including the ammunition depot and barracks, and as they set them ablaze, the attack began. As the garrison was in utter chaos, thrown into disarray, they slaughtered them en masse. As per plan, Zul'jin turned the batteries against the Alliance lines positioned at the Thandol Span and once the bombardment had begun, the Blackhand brothers charged forward. The dwarven commander, Whitebeard, tried to stop the troll, yet Zul'jin himself slew him, taking his head as a trophy in the process. With the death of their commander, all the opposition evaporated, as the dwarves had been utterly demoralized by it. The situation at the Span turned into a carnage as well, for the Alliance troops were unable to defend both against the fire from Dun Modr and attack of the Black Tooth Grins. Within a mere hour, their lines had been broken, and by the end of the day, the whole area was firmly in the hands of the Horde. Only the brilliant leadership of General Callow and Sir Gavinrad saved the Alliance forces from utter annihilation, leading them north before the orcish forces could regroup and pursue. The sadder it is that General himself had been grievously wounded during the battle and left the world of living only a few days later.

Defense of the Highlands

With the fall of Dun Modr, situation turned dire for the Alliance. While the main body of their forces had been directed towards the southwestern operations, the orcs established a free path towards the north for themselves and were now able to flood Stromgarde with their vast numbers, threatening the Alliance armies in the southwest with a complete encirclement. Lothar and Trollbane both knew they had to act immediately. Realizing they could not hold onto their current position, they decided to abandon southern Stromgarde altogether, push north before the Horde could and form a defense line there.



The white banner of Stromgarde, used by the Stromgarde militia as its official war standard.

Breakdown of the opposing forces at the start of the campaign

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Ground strength

21 000 survivors of the Thandol Span. Led by Sir Gavinrad. Not a part of the actual fighting.

4 000 men of the Stromgarde Militia, led by Captain Danath of Stromgarde.

2 000 dwarven survivors of Dun Modr. Led by Captain Steelbeard.

10 000 men under the banner of Azeroth. Led by the Supreme Commander Lothar and his Azerothien lieutenants.

All ground and air forces under the supreme command of Lord Anduin Lothar.

The Great Orcish Horde



Ground strength

44 000 troops of the Black Tooth Grin Clan. Under the command of the Blackhand brothers.

Objectives and strategy

The Alliance

As there was no time to lose, Lord Lothar and Lord Trollbane decided to act without any counsel from the rest of the High Command. King Thoras would proceed north, where his objective would be to rendezvous with the survivors of the southern battle and form an effective line of defense. To slow down the advancing Black Tooth Grins, Lord Lothar would ride forward with a force ten thousand men strong, harass their advance, but not engage directly, unless situation would be absolutely dire. The local militia forces were also ordered to support him in any way possible.

The Horde

The Blackhands had a simple objective. Press the Alliance hard, give them no reprieve and time to regroup, and force their path north. If possible, continue even upon the city of Stromgarde itself, as the rest of the Horde would be soon following in any case.

The operation

They say that without the heroic deeds of Captain Danath and his militia, Stromgarde would fall within a month. As exaggerated claim as that might be, it holds a great deal of truth in it. Even though Lord Lothar raced as hard as he could towards the enemy, it is most likely he would not arrive before they would catch up the fleeing and wholly disorganized survivors from the south. And without these men, Trollbane would have far harder time defending the north, likely ending overwhelmed once the Blackhands would be reinforced by the rest of their forces and Blackrocks.

All of this became apparent to Captain Danath of the Stromgarde militia, once he had learned of the exact position of all the participating forces. Realizing how much is at stake, Danath mustered all the militia he could and marched towards the fleeing survivors and enclosing the Black Tooth Grins. As the surviving forces had been scattered and running for their very lives, he could not gather a large amount of them for his support. Yet, there were still some that would join him and his men, the largest group being the dwarven survivors from Dun Modr led by Captain Steelbeard.

As the terrain in this particular area had always been especially rugged and craggy, Danath chose to split his men, who knew the land truly well, into smaller groups ready to harass the advancing vanguard of the Blackhand host. At first, they had been successful, slowing the advancing forces by numerous attacks from different sides, using the terrain for their advantage, but as more of the Horde had arrived, they had to fall back or face encirclement. Soon enough, it became apparent to Danath this would not be enough. They had managed to slow the Horde by a few hours already, but to be successful, a day would be required at the very least. Thus, he fell back with his men, leaving only few smaller groups to continue with the harassment, and decided to fortify himself at the hills of Faldir, blocking the shortest path to the north. Since Blackhands had no time to loose, they made a decision to proceed against the fortified Stromics, instead of evading and taking a longer path, and ordered all available forces to charge the combat as soon as they would arrive.

A battle took place. As the Blackhand forces had been stretched out, still ordered in marching formations, their overwhelming numbers did not have a larger effect in the beginning. The Stromic militia held their ground heroically, halting the Horde's advancement altogether, yet in the end, the overwhelming numbers took their toll. By the evening, they completely encircled the militia force and it seemed none of the Alliance men would live to see yet another day. Even though Danath had tried to cut his men a way out, one of them even wounding Maim Blackhand by a spear during this heroic sortie, the orcs, furious at their enemies' defiance, held their deadly grip, intending to slaughter every single last one of them. Yet, the wheels of fortune are sometimes indeed fortunate. At the eleventh hour, Lord Lothar had arrived with his force, and smashed the orcish left

flank. As the Black Tooth Grins had been overstretched and in a completely unfeasible position, they had to fall back to regroup and reorganize. The remaining dwarves and militia were saved and enough time for King Trollbane ensured, as delay had been considerable enough by now.

Aftermath

The battle proved only a minor tactical victory, as the Blackhand forces had been barely scratched, yet a significant strategic accomplishment at the same time. King Trollbane, reinforced by the survivors from the Thandol Span and later by Lord Lothar, had enough time and resources to form an effective defense line. After the Black Tooth Grins had finally reached the north, they found they could not proceed with any larger offensive action. Even after the rest of their forces, aided by countless Blackrock troops, had arrived, their efforts proved vain. Over the next months, the situation turned to a bloody stalemate, forcing Doomhammer to change his strategy altogether.

Seas of Blood

During the months accompanying the invasion of Stromgarde, the southern shores of Lordaeron saw only a limited fighting. The orcish forces, led by Varok Saurfang, had claimed most of the islands surrounding these lands, eventually establishing a secret naval base close to the township of Southshore itself, destroying the nearby military base in the process. As the Horde's initiative in the east had been slowly dying and the first snows preceding the winter arriving, Doomhammer resolved to capitalize upon this arguably minor success. Strengthened by yet another fleet of fifty ships and a large host of Blackrock troops, Saurfang was to claim these shores for the Horde and vanquish all the remaining naval resistance in the area. Yet, the Alliance would not give up so easily and soon, the surroundings seas turned red and black of all the blood.

Breakdown of all the opposing forces at the start of the campaign

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

Three veteran squadrons of 29 ships. Flying the banners of Azeroth and Lordaeron, under the command of Azerothien and Lordaeronian captains.

A reinforcing fleet of 50 ships. Flying the banners of Kul Tiras and Lordaeron, under the command of Derek Proudmoore and his captains. Including 4 Tirasian ships-of-the-line and a great deal of elven destroyers.

Ground strength

11 000 veteran men under the banner of Azeroth. Including 39 Knights of the Silver Hand.

5 500 veterans of the local militia, under the banners of both Lordaeron and Azeroth.

9 000 reinforcements under the banner of Lordaeron. Including 30 Knights of the Silver Hand.

3 500 freshmen of the local militia, under the banners of both Lordaeron and Azeroth.

All ground forces under the command of Lady Mara Fordragon and her lieutenants.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

40 veteran ships divided into six squadrons, flying the banner of the Blackrock Clan.
Under the command of Blackrock sea captains.

50 reinforcing ships divided into five squadrons, flying the banner of the Blackrock Clan.
Under the command of Blackrock sea captains. Including 6 ogre juggernauts.

Ground strength

21 000 veteran troops of the Blackrock Clan.

15 000 reinforcements of the Blackrock Clan.

All ground forces under the command of Varok Saurfang and his captains.

Razing of Hillsbrad

Two major obstacles to the orcish domination of the coasts of the Hillsbrad Foothills could one find during the era of the Second War. The townships of Southshore and Hillsbrad. Southshore, serving as the headquarters of the regional military, Hillsbrad with its surrounding mines and villages, serving the main resource supply in the area. Both had to fall, yet there was a choice as to which one would have the honor to be the first? Southshore, to throw the local forces into disarray and leave the rest of the region an easy prey? Hillsbrad, to deprive Southshore of well needed supplies and weaken its resolve before the final attack? A question easily given, yet hard to answer. Nevertheless, the Horde had made its choice and for all that can be said, it cost them dearly, eventually.

We will never be sure how much effort and time had Commander Saurfang put into determining this choice, yet we know that in the end, an assault against Hillsbrad won. He took a rather large force for such a target, as due to his intelligence, he knew the Alliance maintained a strong military presence in the area. Yet, despite all the maneuvering, the Hillsbrad scouts had learned of his movement and the town's leaders sent their messengers to Southshore at once, hoping for an immediate assistance. Saurfang now knew he would have to act without delay, if he were to be successful.

Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

A squadron of 15 ships. Flying the banner of Azeroth, under the command of Azerothien captains.

A squadron of 10 ships. Flying the banner of Lordaeron, under the command of Lordaeronian captains.

Ground strength

2 000 men under the banner of Lordaeron, including 5 Knights of the Silver Hand. Led Sir Raleigh the True.

1 000 men of the local Azerothien militia, led by Captain Stonefield.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

30 ships divided into four squadrons, flying the banner of the Blackrock Clan. Under the command of Blackrock sea captains. Including two ogre juggernauts.

Ground strength

4 000 troops of the Blackrock Clan. Under the command of Varok Saurfang.

Objectives and strategy

The Alliance

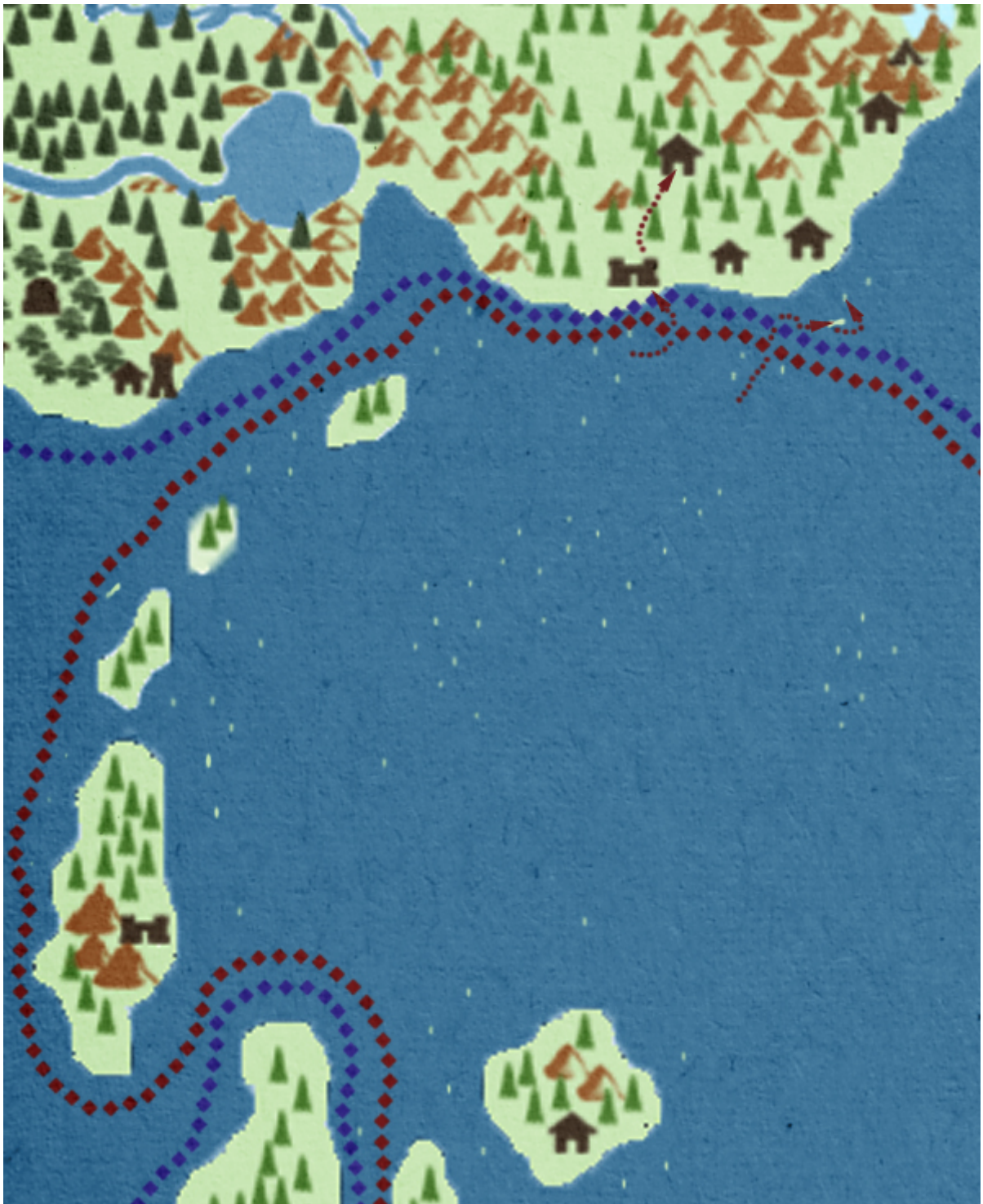
As the defenders of Hillsbrad had sent a message about the impending attack, all that remained now was to protect their town and wait until reinforcements could arrive. If possible, their ships would protect the outlying islands, ones the Horde could use as a staging ground or to field their firepower. If not, they would fall back into the town itself and protect it by any means necessary.

The Horde

Saurfang devised a bold, albeit a risky strategy to achieve an absolute victory. As he had suspected the Alliance would defend the outlying islands at any cost, correctly indeed, he formulated a plan to use it to his advantage and stage a trap. His troops, supported by a larger part of his naval forces, would land on the largest of the islands in the close vicinity of Hillsbrad. This would hopefully draw the Alliance navy to attack, as they could not permit the Horde to gain such an advantageous position. Once locked in a battle, the rest of his fleet, including two massive ogre juggernauts, would attack from the south, encircling the Alliance navy and sending it to the bottom of the sea with all its firepower. With the fleet gone, they would continue on the town itself, level down its defenses and stage a landing in its port itself.

The operations

Map depicting the third stage of the Southern Campaigns, including the assault against Hillsbrad.



Our records, as much as we can trust them, speak of a very cold day the assault came to be. Winds blowing, heavy snowing, air freezing, not a day one would like make his amends with death. Yet Saurfang was a hard orc, one not being put off by the whims of

nature, and so his forces did proceed according to his plan, intending to do nothing else than to make a ruin of Hillsbrad. And as Saurfang had predicted, the Alliance answered swiftly.

As soon as the Horde had made their landing upon the shore of the marked island, their observers spotted the Alliance sails. Elven destroyers and human frigates, all approaching, intending to punish the orcs for their aggression. Saurfang took no chances and did let the Alliance fleet approach and even turn to a firing position before counter attacking with all his might. A mighty sea fight ensued. In the south, the orcish reinforcements, spearheaded by the ogre juggernaughts, attacked the Alliance rear with all their terrible firepower. Once the humans had realized they were about to be encircled and fully caught in a crossfire, they tried to break through, yet to no avail. Neither the winds, nor the orcish resolve would permit them escape. Still, they fought valiantly and even managed to outmaneuver and sink one of the juggernaughts.

As the last of the Alliance vessels found its way to the bottom of the sea, Saurfang took all his power against Hillsbrad itself. Once his juggernaught had torn down its defenses, his troops made for a landing inside the town's port itself. Realizing all is lost, the Alliance leadership decided to evacuate the city. As no other real option had been apparent, Sir Raleigh rallied seven hundred of his men to take as many of the Hillsbrad citizens as possible north, while the rest of the men went on to win them enough time by fighting the Horde off. As Captain Stonefield rallied all the defenders left and charged the attacking forces, Raleigh made his bid. And successful, he was. Although many of the citizens had lost their lives during the bombardment, assault or following journey towards the Hillsbrad Fields, a great deal lives was saved. The more sad is the same could not have been said of those defenders who had stayed behind. They fought bitterly and valiantly, but none of them survived. By the end of the day, their corpses lay amongst the burning ruins of the town once called Hillsbrad.

Battle for Southshore

"I will never forget the sight. Her body. As disfigured as it was, her limbs broken, ribcage pierced and open, her skin burned, I could still recognize her. Her proud, yet kind features, remnants of her golden locks, everything. She did not deserve such an end. She had led us for so long, mended our spirits and healed our wounds, saved our will from being broken forever, yet now, death claimed her nevertheless."

From the Account of the Southern Campaigns,

by Sir Hartal Truesight, Paladin Knight of Azeroth

The township of Hillsbrad now lay wasted, a smoldering corpse of something once beautiful and very much alive. As the survivors led by Sir Raleigh reached the lesser town of the Hillsbrad Fields, so did the message of Hillsbrad's razing reach the regional leadership centered in Southshore. Aware her residence would be the very next target, Lady Fordragon immediately began to assemble all her forces and prepare Southshore for the worst.

Her assumptions would be correct indeed. With Hillsbrad crushed, Saurfang had immediately sailed for his eastern operational base, where proceeded on with the preparations for the final strike against the regional Alliance forces. Yet, he would not stay long enough to see the fruits of his work mature, for Doomhammer, trusting no one else with the task, had decided to transfer him onto a new mission. He was to take a large body of troops, ships and material, sail to the kingdom of Alterac to negotiate with King Perenolde and prepare everything for the coming of the Horde and, if the circumstances would permit, search for the long lost clan of Frostwolves. As the leaving commander had to be replaced, Doomhammer promoted one of his most seasoned sea captains on his personal recommendation. This orc would forever be known to us as Knar.

Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

A fleet of 42 ships. Flying the banners of Kul Tiras, Azeroth and Lordaeron, under the command of Derek Proudmoore and his captains. Including 4 Tirasian ships-of-the-line.

Ground strength

13 000 men under the banners of Azeroth and Lordaeron. Including 54 Knights of the Silver Hand.

3 000 men of the local militia, under the banners of both Lordaeron and Azeroth.

All ground forces under the command of Lady Mara Fordragon and her lieutenants.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

60 ships divided into six squadrons, flying the banner of the Blackrock Clan. Under the command of Blackrock sea captains. Including 5 ogre juggernaughts.

Ground strength

26 000 troops of the Blackrock Clan.

All ground and naval forces under the command of Admiral Knar and his lieutenants.

Objectives and strategy

Thee Horde

As we know, Doomhammer achieved his primary regional strategic objective with the fall of Hillsbrad. Secure the path towards Alterac. The Alliance, now facing a grave danger in form of losing Southshore, transferred all its available forces to secure the location, leaving the Horde a free hand in the region and path towards the north. And the Warchief intended to keep the situation such for as long as possible. To achieve this objective, Commander Saurfang, before leaving for Alterac, conceived a simple plan together with Admiral Knar. Keep the Alliance at bay and slowly weaken its strength by a number of smaller engagements. Once the situation would permit, launch an offensive and encircle all the forces stationed in the area and let them deteriorate to the point they would not pose any significant threat. After this objective would be achieved, destroy them.

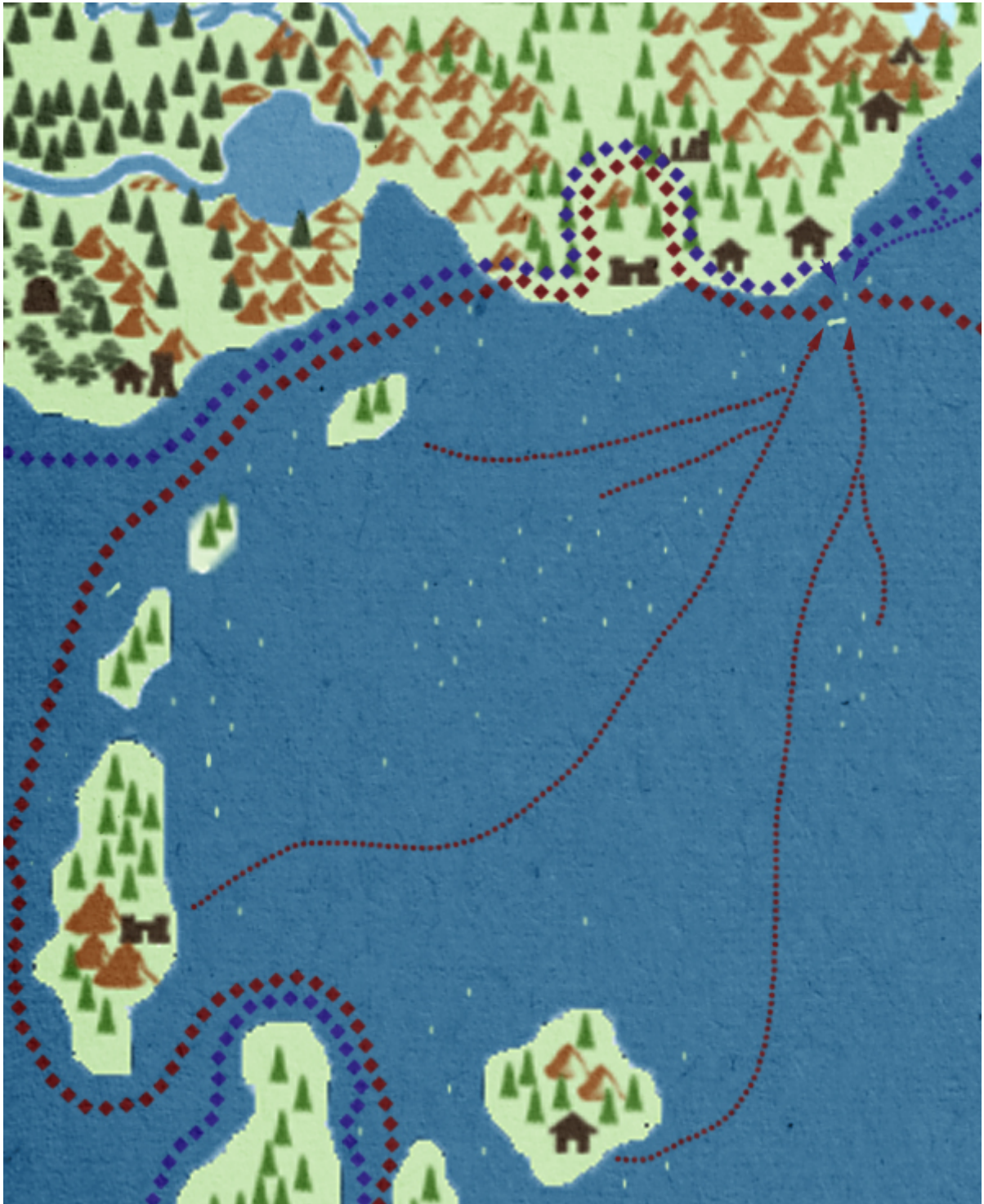
The Alliance

As both Lady Fordragon and Commander Proudmoore knew they were outgunned and outnumbered, they resolved to build a defense strategy that would aid them to overcome this obstacle. After lengthy debates, they did agree on the following strategy; bring the fight to the Horde itself. As they correctly assumed a frontal attack would not

serve the interests of the Horde whatsoever and thus realized it would continue on with its limited attacks, as it had in the past two months, slowly isolating and eventually cutting Southshore off completely, either to slowly starve its defenders and weaken their resolve, or to simply prepare a final crushing strike, they would do something unpredictable, something that would force the Horde to either retreat or do the exact opposite of their former plan. Attack the Horde operational base straight and hamper its offensive capabilities enough to force its hand.

The operation

Map depicting the battle for Southshore.



It is hard to say whether any of the participators predicted the whole engagement would turn the largest naval battle the war had seen so far, not to mention one so costly for both the Lordaeron Alliance and the orcish armada. Nevertheless, it was so. Once the sounds of the battle went quiet, all one could see was a death and destruction. The Horde

had lost most of its fleet, together with its admiral. Lordaeron had lost Southshore, left a burning wreck, while the broken nation of Azeroth had lost one its greatest heroes and idols, the legendary paladin and cleric Mara Fordragon. Grave losses on both sides indeed, yet in the end, it was the Alliance who would be hailed the victor.

But let's look at the whole matter from the very beginning. After more than two months of the limited fighting, the fleet of Commodore Derek had finally assembled and final preparations for the strike against the Horde naval base were put in place. His heavier ships, including the four ships-of-the-line, would stay behind, prepared to counter the attack Proudmoore believed would certainly follow his strike against Admiral Knar. The rest of his forces were to follow him, the swift elven destroyers forming their front. Meanwhile, Lady Mara and her men would evacuate all the civilians out of Southshore, for they all knew the subsequent fight would be wholly destructive. Once everything had been in its place, Derek set sail towards his destination, as the winds were favourable and there was no time to loose. His fleet struck the Horde by the next dawn. As they had been ill-prepared, both to the unpredictability of the attack itself and masterful elimination of all their scouts, Proudmoore managed to cause the Horde a great harm. Two of the juggernauts had sank, together with a multitude of other vessels, and a large portion of the base had been damaged, with a great deal of their supplies lost in the process. And before the Horde could even muster for a counterattack, Proudmoore had been gone.

Knar had been furious. He knew he could not proceed with his former plan now and either would have to leave to reorganize and resupply or attack the Alliance without delay. He chose the latter, for he knew Doomhammer wished to keep the Alliance without a free hand for as long as possible. So he struck and he struck hard. Yet no matter his efforts, the Southshore defenders prevailed. In the end, as Knar saw all had been lost, he led his ships directly head on with the town itself, bombarding it with everything he had left before the last of his ships disappeared beneath the waves. As we know, the town had been set ablaze by the action, ruined in the process, and amongst the many dead lay Lady Mara, killed when a grenade from the last of the juggernauts hit the Southshore Town Hall.

Fall of Zul'dare

The battle for Southshore led to many things, sometimes wholly tragic, yet the one most important from the strategic point of view would be simple to determine. It destroyed the Horde naval supremacy in the region. As the Horde forces, now leaderless, had withdrawn towards their primary operational base at Zul'dare, the Alliance launched its remaining ships and men to cleanse the islands of the orcish plight, hoping to locate and eradicate this hidden stronghold before Doomhammer could further reinforce it and thus free the region of the orcish menace entirely.

Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

A fleet of 36 ships. Flying the banners of Kul Tiras, Azeroth and Lordaeron, under the command of Derek Proudmoore and his captains. Including 2 Tirasian ships-of-the-line.

Ground strength

12 000 men under the banners of Azeroth and Lordaeron. Including 18 Knights of the Silver Hand.

2 500 men of the local militia, under the banners of both Lordaeron and Azeroth.

All ground forces under the command of Sir Harthal Truesight and his lieutenants.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

19 ships flying the banner of the Blackrock Clan. Under the command of Blackrock sea captains.

Ground strength

9 000 troops of the Blackrock Clan.

All ground and naval forces under the command of the surviving Blackrock captains.

Objectives

The Horde

At its core, the Horde had one simple objective. Protect their naval base at Zul'dare until Doomhammer will send reinforcements. Yet, as they had lost most of its ships and troops during the battle for Southshore, they could not hope to effectively defend the base against any full scale attack. Thus, their only hope lay with keeping its location secret, as they had managed so far. To this end, they dispatched a large number of smaller vessels, hoping to distract the Alliance and destroy any scout forces that could disclose their location.

The Alliance

Contrary to the Horde, the Alliance had plenty of everything at hand. As such, their objective had been straightforward as well. Find and destroy all the remaining forces in the region, including their primary operational base, before they could be reinforced.

The operation

Map depicting the last stage of the Southern Campaigns, including the attack against Zul'dare.



To ensure a success for the Alliance, Commodore Proudmoore split his forces in lesser groups. Faster ships moved in parties of four, scouring the area of all the remaining orcish forces. Despite the Hordes best efforts, they had managed to cleanse most of the islands of the Horde and in time even located its primary naval base. Once its location had been disclosed, Proudmoore struck. The main body of his fleet sank the remaining orcish vessels, making a way for the landing of their ground troops, led by none other than the now acclaimed knight paladin Harthal Truesight. The orcs had fought bitterly, almost valiantly, yet Harthal and his men had been relentless. By the end, no orc stood alive, their black blood soaking deep into the snowy reaches of Zul'dare and the surrounding waters.

Campaigns in Khaz Modan

The western winter campaign left the Horde in somewhat troubling position. Even though Doomhammer had managed to establish a temporary link with Alterac, sending a large body of troops, ships and other material under the command of Varok Saurfang north, the fall of Zul'dare effectively cut off any contact with them. Unwilling to pour even more resources west, he turned his gaze east, towards the island citadel of Tol Barad. Aware its fall would allow him to reestablish an uninterrupted link with Alterac, as well as to give yet one another advantage to his forces fighting in the Arathi Highlands, he deemed it a target of the highest priority and set forward the preparations that would bring it to its knees. Yet, despite all the secrecy, the High Command had anticipated this move very well and moved on with its own set of strategy.

Breakdown of all the opposing forces at the start of the campaign

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

Three fleets of 140 ships. Flying the banner of Kul Tiras, under the direct command of Grand Admiral Proudmoore and his captains.

Three fleets of 110 ships. Flying the banner of Stromgarde, under the command of Stromic

captains.

A fleet of 40 ships. Flying the banner of Azeroth, under the command of Azerothien captains.

Two fleets of 80 ships hailing from Quel'Thalas, dispersed to support the human fleets.

All naval forces under the supreme command of Grand Admiral Proudmoore.

Ground strength

66 000 men of the Stromic Black Army. Under the command of King Thoras Trollbane and his officers.

15 000 men of the Stromgarde Militia, led by its captains, including Danath of Stromgarde.

4 000 dwarven warriors of Khaz Modan. Led by Captain Steelbeard.

15 000 men under the banner of Azeroth. Led by the Supreme Commander Lothar and his Azerothien lieutenants.

All ground and air forces under the supreme command of Lord Anduin Lothar.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

Three fleets of the Blackrock Armada, 120 ships. Under the command of Commander Tharbek and Blackrock sea captains.

Three fleets of the Blackhand Armada, 120 ships. Under the command of Black Tooth Grin

sea captains.

155 Amani destroyers, dispersed to support the orcish fleets.

All naval forces under the command of Commander Tharbek.

Ground strength

90 000 troops of the Black Tooth Grin Clan. Under the command of the Blackhand brothers.

18 000 forest trolls, led by Zul'jin, dispersed amongst the orcish forces.

All ground and air forces under the command of the Black Tooth Grin chieftain Rend Blackhand.

From Tol Barad to Dun Algaz

The spring and summer of 603 saw a great many of engagements on the battlefields of Khaz Modan and southeastern Lordaeron. Although the northern front saw the greatest amassing of troops and material, nothing of larger importance happened there during the time, for the Horde could not simply penetrate the mighty defenses that King Thoras, Lord Lothar and Admiral Proudmoore had built to halt its advances. The eastern shore was of the very same matter, albeit a scope far more limited, as the numerous battles occurring there could be considered nothing but mere raids, where Blackhand vessels and their crews simply attempted to weaken the resolve of Stromgarde by pillaging its coastal towns and villages.

The greatest area of importance, and interest as well with no doubt, would lie with the south and southwest. The orcish Warchief, seeing the island citadel of Tol Barad a thorn in his side, proceeded with a plan to remove this nuisance once and for all. However, the High Command had its own set of plans. Realizing the Horde had to be weakened before the main host stationed in the Arathi Highlands could be dealt with, they concluded an indirect approach would be the best option, given the situation. Reinforcing Tol Barad to be better defended and serve a staging ground, they would send an expeditionary force to reconnect with the dwarven resistance, and cause the orcs as much mayhem in their own backyard as possible. If doable, this force would form a site of strong points throughout northern Khaz Modan, one that would be further supplied by Tol Barad. Thus, everything had been set for the campaigns in northern Khaz Modan to begin.

Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

Two squadrons of 18 ships, flying the banner of Tol Barad. Under the command of Baradin Captains.

Three squadrons of 30 ships, flying the banners of Azeroth and Lordaeron. Under the command of Azerothien captains.

A great deal of transport vessels, flying the banners of Azeroth and Kul Tiras.

Ground strength

5 000 men flying the banner of Stromgarde, predominantly of the Stromgarde Militia. Under the command of Captain Danath of Stromgarde.

3 500 men of Tol Barad. Led by Duke Baradin.

An initial reinforcement force of 6 000 men. Flying the banners of Azeroth and Lordaeron. Led by Sir Hartal Truesight.

Additional reinforcement forces 11 000 men strong, transferred into the operational area over the course of a few weeks.

A great deal of dwarven resistance warriors, numbering in thousands. Led by the brothers of King Magni.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

An attacking force of 30 ships. Of the Black Tooth Grin Clan, led by some of its sea captains.

Ground strength

An attacking force 10 000 troops strong. Of the Black Tooth Grin Clan, led by some of its captains.

A garrison at Dun Modr, 4 000 troops strong. Of the Black Tooth Grin Clan, led by some of its captains.

A garrison at Dun Algaz, 8 000 troops strong. Of the Black Tooth Grin and Dragonmaw clans, led by some of their captains.

Objectives and strategy

The Horde

As Doomhammer intended Tol Barad to fall swiftly and without unnecessary delay, he devoted a fairly large force to ensure so. As such, a large host of Black Tooth Grins was to sail and assault the island citadel.

The Alliance

The Alliance had a larger set of objectives to be accomplished ahead of itself. First of all, Tol Barad had to be secured, reinforced and defended of the impending attack. Once completed, the second stage was to proceed. The High Command intended to flood the Wetlands of Khaz Modan, have the expeditionary unit reconnect with the resistance forces led by the younger Bronzebeard brothers and continue on to the east. If possible, they were to cut off the supply lines to Dun Modr, retake the ancient dwarven city and use it as an operational base. As they could not devote a force large enough for an actual invasion, the primary strategy would lie with high mobility and creation of multiple easily defensible strong points, all with the intention of setting the ground for a guerilla war that would hamper the Horde's effectiveness in the north.

The operation

Map depicting the first battle of Tol Barad and the Dun Modr operation.



The first attack against Tol Barad came to be a rather long engagement. As Captain Danath had arrived with his men, reinforcing the garrison of Duke Baradin, so did the Black Tooth Grin force reach the shores of the island. After a lengthy fighting, the town of Rustberg had fallen and the Stromic forces retreated further south, to the citadel of Tol Barad itself. Yet, just as the walls of the citadel appeared to finally give a way to the attackers, the reinforcements under Sir Hartal arrived, surprising the orcs. The Blackhand force had been defeated and the Alliance forces immediately began preparing for a counter attack.

Once Danath and Harthal had put everything in its place, repairing the damaged citadel and clearing the island of all the remaining orcs, they pushed for the east. Landing in the northwestern Wetlands, they were soon joined by the legendary dwarven explorer and tracker Brann Bronzebeard. Acting upon his intelligence, Danath divided his soldiers into several groups. The smaller ones were sent to reinforce the resistance holdings scattered around the Wetlands, providing the exhausted dwarven warriors the most needed supplies, while the remaining two groups continued on with their march upon Dun Modr. As the youngest Bronzebeard provided a great guidance and all the manners of intelligence, the Horde had not learned of the enemy's advancement until they were only a day far. Although the garrison at Dun Modr did send a plea for reinforcements both to the north and south, the distance made any timely response impossible and so, they prepared for a siege. Yet, their efforts had been in vain. Under Bronzebeard's leadership, the Alliance struck hard, both by the land and by the sea. The orcs could not mount an effective defense against those who knew the area far better than they ever would and by the end of the day, Dun Modr was firmly in the hands of the sons of Lordaeron and Khaz Modan.

Map depicting the fall of Dun Algaz.



With the fall of Dun Modr, the Alliance could easily pour more men and material into Khaz Modan. Worse for the Horde, their main supply line to the Arathi frontline had now been cut off, leaving them with a frail connection in the east. Intending to keep the situation same, Danath and Harthal determined to push even further, towards Dun Algaz. And as they were preparing the men, a great opportunity presented itself. After the orcs stationed at Dun Algaz had learned of the situation north, they sent a great force to relieve Dun Modr. Despite the ruins falling in a matter of mere days, this force continued on with its advance. Learning of its movement due to the efforts of brave gnomish pilots, the Alliance commanders concluded its destruction far to the north would further aid their agenda, as without these warriors, Dun Algaz would be significantly weakened. And so, they had retreated beyond the Span, leaving a dwarven force hidden in the nearby area, and let the orcs enter the grandeur bridges, where Sir Harthal and his knights charged into

their ranks seated upon their destriers, forcing them to retreat right into the dwarven ambush. The rest turned a slaughter, although as far as we know, some orcs did manage to escape, as we know of a few orcish records that depict the whole engagement.

As the orcish force had been scattered into four winds, the Alliance marched towards Dun Algaz. Further strengthened by reinforcements from the west, Danath now commanded a force vast enough to safely assail the ancient fortress. And, one must never forget, a formidable one as well. Nested high in the mountains of Khaz, reachable only through a small number of mountain pathways and protected by impressive structures, many would consider it impossible to conquer. Not these Stromics and dwarves, however. Led by Bronzebeard, these men and dwarves easily climbed the slopes leading to Algaz, reaching the stronghold under the veil of night. Once in position, Danath had made his demolition squads plant numerous explosives and as they all fired, his troops attacked. The ensuing battle had been fierce, for the Horde forces were comprised of not only orcish warriors, but trolls and ogres as well. Nevertheless, the Alliance prevailed, forcing the Horde out and claiming the city as its own. After long seven years, Dun Algaz once again rested in the hands of its true and rightful owners.

Retaking of Dun Modr and the battle for Tol Barad

As the ancient fortress of Dun Algaz fell back into the dwarven hands, the situation turned truly dire for the Horde. Tol Barad still standing, its southern holdings shattered, great deals of Alliance men and material pouring into Khaz Modan. Doomhammer had to act swiftly, for without any action, the Blackhand armies stationed in the north would most certainly fall into disarray, letting the whole eastern front implode. Therefore, he ordered the Blackhand brothers to redirect as large sum of their troops and ships towards Tol Barad and Dun Modr as possible, promising to send his own fleets to aid them in their assault against the island citadel. Maim Blackhand had taken the leadership of the force devoted to the task for himself, leaving his brother in sole charge of the Blackhand armies and left with a large force for the south. As the Black Tooth Grin force set towards their goal, so did Doomhammer fulfill his promise and dispatched a large fleet under Commander Tharbak towards Tol Barad.

Citadel at the island of Tol Barad, also known as Baradin Hold.



Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

One squadron of 10 ships, flying the banner of Tol Barad. Under the command of Baradin captains.

A joint fleet of Stromgarde and Kul Tiras, 40 ships strong. Under the command of Stromic and Tirasian captains.

Ground strength

12 000 men at Tol Barad, flying the banners of Stromgarde and Tol Barad, under the leadership of Duke Baradin and his captains.

A garrison at Dun Modr, 3 500 men strong. Flying the banners of Azeroth and Khaz Modan, under the leadership of Alliance captains.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

One fleet of the Blackrock Armada, 30 ships. Under the command of Commander Tharbek and Blackrock sea captains.

One fleet of the Blackhand Armada, 35 ships. Under the command of Ra'tok and Black Tooth Grin sea captains.

Ground strength

21 000 troops of the Black Tooth Grin Clan. Under the command of Maim Blackhand.

Objectives and strategy

The Alliance

For the past weeks, the Alliance forces stationed at Dun Modr and Tol Barad had adopted an aggressive stance towards the Horde lines in the north, performing a large number of smaller strikes aimed at disrupting their operational ability. With the Horde on the move, they adopted a more careful approach, reinforcing their defenses and pulling most of their forces back, yet still kept some in the field, intended to harass Blackhand's advance.

The Horde

Two important decisions lay before the younger Blackhand. Which target to attack first and in what manner. As for the first question, the answer came to lie with Dun Modr, as Maim felt the reestablishment of the supply for his brother to be of larger importance. As for the second one, Blackhand concluded, with the approval of the Warchief nevertheless, the most extreme measures to be the best course of action. Dun Modr proved a liability, a white elephant easily exploitable by the enemy, and as such, it would have to be completely leveled. And Tol Barad would follow.

The operation

Map depicting the operations against Dun Modr and Tol Barad.



The storm. The chaos. The fire. No words could better describe as what happened during the days preceding and leading up to the fall of Tol Barad. Maim split his forces, leaving most of his ships together with a great deal of his troops in the hands of talented Ra'tok, ordered to approach Tol Barad and join with Commander Tharbek, while keeping the rest under his personal command, and began his march towards Dun Modr. Even though the Alliance tried to stop his advance, mounting several attacks aimed at destroying his siege weapons, their efforts had been in vein and Maim reached Dun Modr with most of his equipment and forces intact. A terrible siege took place. Blackhand blasted the ancient fortress with everything he got, and it soon became apparent to its occupants a mere defense would not do. And so, their captains led four sorties against the Black Tooth Grin forces, four desperate attacks with a hope of somehow turning the situation in their favor. Yet, to no avail. Maim repelled them all, killing their captains in the process, and let the siege continue. The sky rained fire, leaving Dun Modr a smoking husk, full of charred remains of once proud warriors. Although some of the Alliance troops managed to retreat south, most found death within the walls of the dwarven stronghold.

With the Thandol Span back in his hands, Blackhand turned all his strength west. His fleets, joined the Blackrock naval force under Tharbek, had already been fighting the Alliance for naval superiority in the area, yet now, the time had come to bear the full might of his fury against the island. The fighting took long. Despite their valor, the Alliance fleets defending the island had been forced back, eventually, leaving a free way for the Horde to blockade the island and make for a landing. Yet, the High Command would not give up of the important stronghold so easily and sent in a large batch of reinforcements, further prolonging the battle. In the end, the relief fleets had to retreat and the Horde claimed most of the island, confining its defenders to the citadel itself. The Baradins and Stromics would not give up, however. They had fought until the bitter end and as the citadel itself fell upon their heads, Tol Barad, already soaked with all the blood spilled, finally cemented its place as the bloodiest battle the war had seen so far.

Guerilla war in Khaz Modan

With both Tol Barad and Dun Modr out of question, left all but crumbling derelicts, Doomhammer could finally reestablish the supply line for the forces bearing against the capital of Stromgarde. However, the problems in Khaz Modan would turn to be far from solved. During the long months before the final fall of Tol Barad, the Alliance had managed to smuggle a great deal of men, supplies and other material into the mountain kingdom, reinforcing the already powerful dwarven resistance. With the fall of Dun Algaz and all these additional resources, the resistance could spring a great deal of many lesser uprisings, eventually engulfing all of Khaz Modan in a guerilla war, as the Bleeding Hollows, already stretched out, now couldn't effectively police these territories.

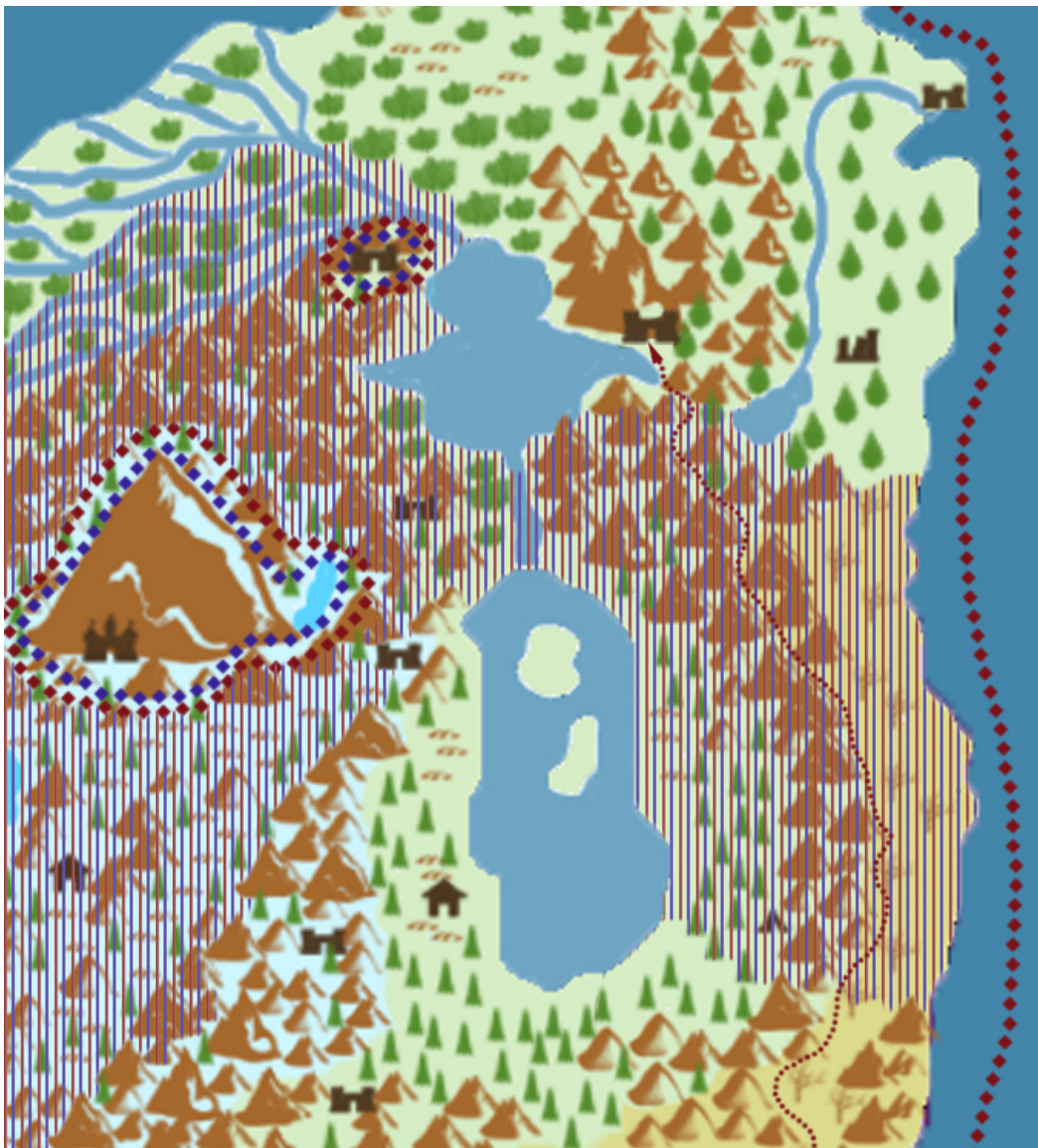
The following months would see a vast number of lesser engagements take their place. The heroic stand of the Anvilmar brothers near the gates of Algaz, the burning of Thelsamar and massacre along the shores of great Loch, the battle atop the very peak of Mount Ironforge, all would find their place amongst the great songs of the dwarven folk. Yet one particular engagement would stand out in the end, for its strategic importance would shadow all the others.

During the lengthy fighting in the north, the great warchief Doomhammer concluded his forces would never penetrate the Alliance lines by the land, for the Highlands provided their defenders a great advantage, one the Stromgarde warriors knew too well to the dismay of the Horde, and realized that only by the sea could he achieve his victory. Yet such an operation would require a great deal of certain resources, the black rich of oil in particular, something his forces in the Arathi lacked, for the resistance in Khaz Modan had been harassing their supply lines to no end. Seeing no better alternative, the warchief entrusted one of his chieftains, the cunning ogre Cho'gall, with a mission to the refineries at Grim Batol, where the ogre was to oversee the collection of a vast amount of oil and secure its shipment towards the front lines in the north.

The following course would be rather simple. Despite all the secrecy, the Stromgarde forces stationed in Khaz Modan soon learned of Cho'gall and his mission. Hoping to intercept and assassinate the ogre and his entourage before they could even

reach Grim Batol, the resistance placed a large number of troops at various passes and choke points leading to the famed orcish fortress. However, the cunning chieftain would prove no fool at all. Avoiding all the traps the Alliance had laid for him, not only he reached Grim Batol unharmed, but had managed to demolish several fortified encampments as well. With his presence, the production at Grim Batol skyrocketed, allowing the Horde to collect the required amount in the matter of weeks. Although the Alliance had tried to sabotage the operation and subsequent transfer multiple times over, Doomhammer went to great lengths to ensure its success, and in the end, the well required resources arrived at the northern front lines. Even though the guerilla war in Khaz Modan would continue on, the situation in the north was at last bound to change.

Map depicting the guerilla war in Khaz Modan and the route of Cho'gall's entourage.



Fall of Stromgarde

"A jewel of our race. A pride of our past. Wrecked and burning, left by the blackbloods. Yet, a glorious battle. We fell the city upon their heads, killed thousands of the fiends and pierced their hearts with the hymns of our ancestors. They would never forget."

Now, Doomhammer finally had everything he required to proceed on with his plans against the capital of Stromgarde. Vast supplies of oil for his amassed fleet, siege weapons, ammunition, resources of all kind. Furthermore, his goblin engineers and mad crafters finally provided him with an actual combat unit formed of their great experiment. The enslaved and weaponized Giant Sea Turtles, ready to break havoc amongst the Lordaeron fleets defending Stromgarde. And to tip the scales even further in his favor, Doomhammer brought in a great number of ogres, as well as countless trolls eager to finally make vengeance upon their ancient enemy. As the brave sons of Stromgarde and their allies braced themselves against the approaching onslaught, the time for the great and ancient city of Stromgarde to see its destiny unravel had finally come.



Royal Standard of Stromgarde

Breakdown of the opposing forces

The Grand Alliance of Lordaeron



Naval strength

Three fleets of 105 ships, including numerous elven destroyers. Flying the banner of Stromgarde, under the command of Stromic captains.

Two squadrons of 20 ships. Flying the banner of Azeroth, under the command of Azerothien captains.

Ground strength

55 000 men of the Stromic Black Army. Under the command of King Thoras Trollbane and his officers.

9 000 men of the Stromgarde Militia, led by its captains, including Danath of Stromgarde.

3 000 dwarven warriors of Khaz Modan. Led by Captain Steelbeard.

12 000 men under the banner of Azeroth. Led by the Supreme Commander Lothar and his Azerothien lieutenants.

All ground and air forces under the supreme command of Lord Anduin Lothar.

The Great Orcish Horde



Naval strength

Three squadrons of the Blackrock Armada, 30 ships including numerous Amani Destroyers. Under the command Blackrock sea captains.

Three fleets of the Blackhand Armada, 110 ships including numerous Amani destroyers. Under the command Maim Blackhand, Ra'tok and Black Tooth Grin sea captains.

All naval forces under the supreme command of Maim Blackhand.

Ground strength

50 000 troops of the Black Tooth Grin Clan. Under the command of Maim Blackhand and Zul'jin.

25 000 troops of the Black Tooth Grin Clan. Under the command of Rend Blackhand.

15 000 troops of the Black Tooth Grin Clan. Under the command of Commander Dro'gan.

Objectives and strategy

The Alliance

During the long months foregoing the final attack against Stromgarde, the Alliance had put its best efforts into securing their perimeter. Using the favorable terrain, Lothar and Trollbane had managed to keep the orcs at bay, while Admiral Proudmoore defended the western shores of Stromgarde from any possible incursion. Most of the civilians had left the capital of Stromgarde as well, fleeing to the safer areas in the northwest, allowing the Alliance to turn the ancient city into a vast military stronghold, providing its forces with a strong focal point. And as the reinforcing armies of Lordaeron finally amassed in the north, their goal came to be perfectly clear. Keep the situation favorable, using the well tested tactics, until winter would arrive, rendering any larger offensive impossible and allowing the Alliance to prepare for its own spring offensive.

The Horde

Even with the question of the resource problematic solved, one another had to be answered before the offensive could commence. How exactly approach and breach the defenses of Stromgarde? We could divide the subsequent operational plan into three principal parts. First, the orcish naval forces would establish a significant naval presence in the bay of Strom, supremacy if possible. To serve as a forward operational base during this phase and subsequent attack, a smaller island south of Stromgarde itself would be taken. Second, while the naval forces of the Alliance would be fixed on defending the bay, Maim Blackhand and his armies would, once again, press against Stromgarde by the land. This attack serving a mere diversion, the last phase would see Chieftain Rend land and assault Stromgarde directly.

The operation

Map depicting the fall of Stromgarde.



The very first movements preceding the fall of Stromgarde had begun in the west. As Doomhammer had launched a series of smaller strikes against the Alliance fleets stationed in the area, Admiral Proudmoore had to move his ships to meet the challenge, for without any action, the Horde could gain a favorable position and in the end, attain naval supremacy in the area. Yet this left the Bay of Strom, even though still well defended, open for an attack, thus allowing the Horde to begin its offensive.

Rend Blackhand would waste no time. As his fleets, reinforced by a group of Blackrock ships sailing from Tol Barad, entered the bay, so did his armies fight to secure its southern shore, slaughtering all the local Stromgarde forces in the process. They even managed to secure a large number of orcish transports that Stromgarde had captured during previous skirmishes in the midst of an assault against one such coastal holding,

further reinforcing Rend's prospects.

The battle for the bay turned to be a terrible affair indeed. The Stromgarde fleets defending the bay would give no quarter to their hated enemy, no room to even approach their beloved, beleaguered capital. Yet, the orcs were relentless and thanks to Ra'tok's cunning tactics progressed towards their final destination. After two days of heavy fighting, the Alliance fleets had to retreat further north, leaving the older Blackhand free to secure the islands in the bay, use them as a staging ground and prepare for the subsequent assault against the capital itself.

With the Horde slowly gaining supremacy over the waters south of Stromgarde, Lothar and Trollbane realized they would have to strengthen the shoreline defenses themselves in order to secure their western flank. Yet, the orcs would not give them much space to do so. Receiving a signal to proceed with their plan, the younger Blackhand launched a full scale offensive against the Alliance frontlines. Heavily pressed, Trollbane concluded that to hold the line, he would have to keep all his forces committed in the east, leaving his seat vulnerable. Seeing no other alternative, the legendary commanders ordered most of their troops to fall back, towards Stromgarde, while the rest was to retreat north, towards the Mark.

Somewhat surprised by this turn of events the Blackhand brothers were, for they had not anticipated the stubborn Stromics to retreat so easily. Nevertheless, their plan still stood and soon, they launched all their might against Stromgarde, before the Alliance armies could burrow in too firmly. The following battles raged for long weeks, magnificent both in their scale and the amount of death and destruction left behind. Although the Alliance fleets fought unwaveringly, they could not stop the black tide. The Horde had superior firepower, and when Rend finally used his weaponized sea turtles, there was nothing that could stop their defeat. As the last of their ships disappeared beneath the waves, the Horde enclosed its deathly embrace. At long last, twilight fell over the ancient city.

The might of the Horde notwithstanding, Trollbane was determined to fight until the bitter end. Yet, it was apparent to both him and Lord Lothar they could not hold the city without massive casualties, not when the Horde could blast their positions from both

the land and sea. And so, a decision had been made to withdraw towards the mountainous regions to the north and northwest, but not before the situation would be exploited to cause a massive damage to the Horde, especially to hamper its immediate offensive capabilities. The Alliance forces slowly retreated, allowing the eager enemy to flood the city, yet at the crucial moment, they retaliated. The battle turned a nightmare, the burning city being a witness to all the kinds of urban warfare and its streets filled with countless corpses and rivers of blood, be it red or black.

In the end, the last Alliance efforts to turn the situation somewhat favourable had been successful. Even though they had to completely withdraw eventually, the lengthy, heavy fighting took its toll upon the Blackhand forces. At certain point, King Trollbane and his elite even managed to corner the older Blackahand in one of the Stromgarde side-streets, the Chieftain's life being miraculously saved by a timely intervention of his ogre maulers, but not before the mighty warrior king had gravely wounded him and taken his right eye. And with their Chieftain injured and so many warriors dead, they could not press their advantage and pursue the retreating Alliance forces. Still, they had achieved their primary strategic objective and most of Stromgarde now resided in the orcish hands. Finally, Doomhammer could bring the war to the lands of the North.