

A Door None Could Open

Thunder rumbled as Volibear's rage retreated with him, a distant echo of their battle in Hearth-Home. Ornn *hrumphed* at the memory, his powerful lungs and fiery heart making him sound like a Forge billows. His brother was meddlesome. Their battle had come and gone as they always did, accomplishing nothing and keeping Ornn from his Craft.

Since the battle, a foul mood had befallen him – perhaps visiting the mortals of Hearthblood would cheer him up? He trudged down the mountain, secretly eager to see the pathetic, yet ever-improving Crafts they had to offer. His trudge slowed to a stand-still as Hearthblood came into view.

Ashes.

The town was black and still, with ash and snow mingling on the breeze. Grey bone protruded from ash piles in some places, revealing the hopeless poses of men and women caught between the wrath of Demigods. Forges that had stayed lit for decades were cooling in the Freljordian wind.

These mortals, so intent on improving their Craft in the face of crushingly finite lifespans. So brief the fires of their lives burned to begin with, and heedless, he had snuffed them out in the face of their diligence.

He felt his burning heart grow cold with grief.

Ornn's knuckles strained white-hot as he gripped the haft of his Hammer. His damnable brother, so quick to meddle and distract – so quick to rage. Without a word, Ornn turned and trudged back toward his Foundry. He was done with the affairs of mortals. Done with the affairs of the gods. He would not be interrupted again.

The coals of his Forge flared with heat as he approached, responding to his call. Ore he had been saving, refined beyond the ability of mortals, was heated and placed upon his Anvil. The earth shook with each beat of his Hammer, responding to his devastation.

For years the earth shook. The mortals near enough to feel it called it the heartbeat of Hearth-Home. Grim as the ice in his heart, Ornn continued his craft, determined to exceed even his own standards. The door to his foundry would withstand the wrath of the gods.

He would make a door that none could open.

A literal age passed, and Ornn inspected the product of his determination. Following his heart, he had inscribed runes whose meaning and power were known only to him. A ram's head adorned the center of the door, daring those foolish enough to try their strength and open it. At long last, he nodded, satisfied. It was nearly complete.

He closed his eyes and raised his hammer to his breast. The grief still corrupted his heart, a frozen cancer of memory that he had allowed to fester for an age. With a sigh – half from exertion and half from relief – he *pushed* the frozen grief into his hammer. The Hammer readily absorbed the True Ice,

and frost immediately began to form on its surface. Freezing vapor began to wisp from the metal. As the last of the grief left his heart, Ornn raised the hammer and brought it down on the face of the door.

He swung with all his strength, trailing clouds of frozen fog. The very foundations of Hearth-Home shook with the impact, and the resulting cloud of frozen air nearly put out his Forge-fire. As the frost settled, he noted with satisfaction that the runes, as well as the eyes of the ram's head glowed blue with the power of True Ice.

It was ready. Ornn lifted the door and trudged purposefully to the entrance of his foundry, but as he went, emotions long-dormant began to press him for attention. The ice in his heart had made him so grim, he had forgotten his passion. The gleam of perfect craftsmanship grows dim without eyes to behold it. Was eternal solitude something that he truly desired?

Was he ready to remove himself from the world of mortals?

At the entrance to his foundry he paused, feeling the mountain breeze on his face for the first time in this new age. The ruins of Hearthblood were nearly buried by the passage of time. How quickly the world had moved on. The Freljord felt... different. An unfamiliar tenacity flavored the air. There was change on the wind. Change, and potential.

In the distance, thunder rumbled.

This world needed his Foundry. They needed to be guided by his example. And... He allowed himself a smile, unburdened by an age of frozen grief. Perhaps he needed *them*.

He lifted what was once to be the door of the Foundry, and met the frosty gaze of the ram.

"Perhaps the mortals will find a better use for you." He said, and hurled the door with all his strength toward the mountains of the Freljord. He watched with satisfaction as it sailed through the air until it was out of sight. It had felt right, and Ornn always followed his heart.

He turned and marched back into his Foundry. For now, his Forge would remain open.