

The Lost Orthani

Written by - Jaredin Snow (<https://www.furaffinity.net/user/rakuenwolf>)

Written for - AeonOrtha (<https://www.furaffinity.net/user/aeonortha>)

It was a cold and snowy day in Kaldaheim. The bitter winds did nothing in the slightest for the mood of Ingrid, clan shaman and spiritual leader to the people who called his place home. Her evening had not been going the way she had hoped it would have been. What should have been a time spent drying herbs and painting rune stones, had been turned completely upside down. Only a moment ago she had been trying to scry for the location of a lost young boy who had gone missing during the day whilst attending to a rite of passage to become a man in the eyes of the clan by climbing the mountain and obtaining a chain which was placed at its very peak.

The whole event had gone wrong from the start as during the rite a storm, powerful and vicious, had put an end to that and now turned into a massive rescue operation of the lost youth. Hunters and scouts had been sent out to the mountain to locate him but were forced by the sheer strength of the storm, which now encapsulated their home, to turn back and call off their search.

This meant the task now fell to her and so she did what she did best whilst she attended to her longhouse to secure it from the elements which threatened to batter it into the ground.

The howling winds beat at the window frames and pummeled the door as it rattled in place on its hinges, a storm intense like this was a rarity where they were located but every so often they would strike with the ferocity of a hungry wolf and it had chosen the worst of nights to do so.

The mountain was not safe at the best of times and had claimed the lives of even seasoned hunters who had become complacent. A young boy stood even less of a chance unless they located him, and quickly.

Ingrid was growing increasingly concerned for the boy and his welfare and safety. Whilst it was not unknown for aspirants to die or become lost and injured during the rite Ingrid did not want to think the worst had happened and instead hoped the boy was safe and sound, that she would find and locate him and bring him home to his family.

Her hopes dwindled though as she heard the storm whip up in intensity outside and she knew if he was not located before too long he would not survive the night. This was a bitter unnatural cold.

Ingrid had to work quickly.

Attending her shrine she made practiced motions to awaken the spirits and appeal to them directly, this was not something she did lightly as it always carried a risk to herself and to the subject but it was their only hope.

Acting with haste but a veteran hand she applied the blood of an animal killed that day to the bones as well as inscribing the runes onto the stones surrounding the wooden bowl sat on the table she filled the bowl with water taken from the spring high upon the mountain top which was said to be a mirror pool to speak to the gods, one of only few known in their lands to hold such power.

Ingrid was sure to be fastidious in her preparation despite the urgency; she did not want any of this to go wrong nor for her message not to reach the ears of the gods above, or worse to be twisted and changed.

She had well seen the results of those rituals and cared not to repeat that tonight.

Finally after a short while she had everything needed and required of her in order to speak to those above and to gain their ear, and hopefully their assistance. Sitting down in front of the table she began to hum softly, a deep almost feral sound echoing through her chest whilst reaching out to light several candles at her side arranged in various esoteric shapes, her hand moved deftly from one to the other and after a minute all the candles were lit and the longhouse was filled with brilliant incandescent light as wax dripped slowly down and pooled onto the floor onto familiar past stains, sizzling softly as white smoke rose into the air and into the rafters above.

She closed her eyes for a moment and took a deep breath before they snapped open.

She was ready.

Reaching up to the table from her position she lifted the bowl down in front of her and held it in the palm of both of her hands, clutching it firmly and carefully whilst taking in her own dark reflection looking back at her from the still waters within. Her own deep blue eyes staring back at her she continued to hum and slowly swilled the water around in a clockwise motion being exceedingly careful not to spill any of the content as her image became muddled in the shifting liquid.

Within the bowl it began to mirror the motions of an ocean lapping up along the beach at the sides. Various herbs which had been added to the water began to dissolve and shimmer in the light of the candles reflecting into dark waters and it felt almost as if something was reflecting back through the waters to Ingrid.

She paused as she watched the shimmers increase and stopped the movements of the bowl slowly as the water once more returned to stillness and brought it on closer to her face, tipping it gently, the sweet smell of the herbs in the water tickling her nose,

She had reached someone, or something.

Her humming began to decrease in volume until all which could be heard was the crackling of fire and the howling of the storm outside as the bowl came to a stand still in her hands she placed it on the ground in front of her and closed her eyes focusing her full attention on it and the energies now emerging from it

Clearing her voice with a soft cough she tipped her head forward towards the bowl on the ground.

“Oh great and mighty spirits of the mountains here your chosen daughter! One of your own, a young boy in his eagerness to become a man has become lost and wayward on your mighty peaks! Please, harken to me mighty spirits and if it is your will to see this boy returned I implore your assistance! A loss of a life so young and so full of potential would be a great loss to all!”

Ingrid let her voice come through louder and clear as she implored to the spirits, to whomever was listening to assist her. She knew better than to make commands or dictates to the spirits and as such only requested their aid and their assistance. Sometimes they would answer, sometimes she would be greeted with nothing at all, such was the way of the gods.

Such was the way of spirits. One could never predict their unknowing ways and methods.

In many ways she expected half as much now, the loss of one boy to the gods was hardly anything of note and she had seen them ignore her pleas on matters of significant more import.

This time proved to be different - the spirits, they answered.

When Ingrid opened her eyes and looked down into the water within the bowl she saw something, it was a flash and only lasted for but a moment but it was most certainly there. A pair of deep green eyes and the sound of a deep and powerful growl filled her ears before the image faded away. It was not an omen she had seen before and was unfamiliar on how to interpret such a unique sign, especially those piercing eyes, she had never felt watched back from her scrying.

That interpretation would have to wait however as before she could ponder more on its meaning she felt the ground shudder and shake as ripples filled out within the bowl in front of her. Leaning in to view it closer she got the fright of her life as he leapt up upon the sound of a mighty and potent roar which filled the night air outside her longhouse! So loud, so intense and so bestial it overwhelmed the noise of the storm!

Immediately jumping to her feet Ingrid knocked the bowl over in front of her in her haste as the water and its content ran out from the edges and across the chalk rune markings on her floor. Cursing under her breath knowing how much time it would take to repair the damage she put that to the back of her mind for now as she turned back to her door, the ground continued to shake in a rhythmic fashion and the impacts were only getting stronger, closer...

Whatever it was, it approached.

Walking cautiously to the side she reached for her spear and shield placed on racks next to her door. Ingrid was well aware of the dangers of living remote as she did in the mountains and was more than capable of defending herself. Many a time wild mountain beasts descended to her home in search for an easy meal from her carcass only to find themselves roasted atop her fire pit instead.

It allowed her to keep her skills sharp and potent.

Clutching her spear firmly on her right hand and her shield firmly locked in place on her left forearm she put her hand on the cold dark iron metal of the door handle. The coldness permeated from outside and her hand immediately felt the numbing sensation of the cold spread through her fingers.

Ingrid took a deep breath, the image once more from the bowl filled her mind and distracted her but for a moment, thoughts on what it might have meant or even whom it could have been. Those would be questions for later though. Now was a time for action. Once her home was secure she could ponder and look through her texts for an answer to the green eyes.

The door swung open with a swift motion as Ingrid was immediately hit by the sensation of the cold winds and snow hitting her fur clad body. Accustomed as she was to the colder climate of the mountain, tempests like this even tested her limits and the biting frost that was already building on her exposed skin and spreading like strands of spider silk caused her to shudder and shake as her eyes adjusted to the darkness outside the longhouse, the only light emanating from behind from her fires and candles.

Stepping on outside she peered into her surroundings as her feet crunched the freshly fallen snow upon the ground. Remaining vigilant she turned on the spot holding her spear out in front and her shield close to her chest in a defensive motion as she peered into the storm to try and isolate and locate the source of the sound as well as the ground shaking. The intensity of the storm was unlike anything she had ever seen in all her years on the mountain and struggled to even see the tip of her spear through it all! Such was the loss of visibility which only further cemented her thought this storm was unnatural.

This truly was a tumultuous night...

Still the ground shook and she could feel it more keenly now out in the stormy night, slight reverberations under her feet indicating that whatever was causing such a disturbance drew closer yet.

“Come out, I command you!” Ingrid called into the night, her voice barely carried above the cacophony of sound which was the storm as it whipped around her hair, almost assaulting her for such insolence as to try and command whatever it might be hiding.

Stepping away from her home, the bright light emanating from inside barely visible through the snowy mist caused it to dim as ahead a form took shape in front of her descending down the mountain peak path. Barely visible but surely their silhouette in the night.

Standing in its immense shadow she immediately began to lower her spear upon seeing something familiar pierce the veil of the night staring right back at her.

Bright green eyes, like emeralds in the void.

Like the ones in her bowl.

The eyes looked down at her through the storm at over double her height and Ingrid knew that her weapon would be of no use against what it was she now stood in front of. She had lived upon this mountain and seen all manner of creatures and beasts to which it contained and this was not one of them.

This was a spirit of a sort, the spirit she had summoned in her scrying.

“I apologize!” Ingrid called over the sound of the storm in an attempt to communicate her intent.

“Had I known it was no beast I would bear not my spear to you!”

Whilst speaking the storm suddenly began to calm, as if her words had reached the maker of the tempest and they took pity on her cold, snow covered frame. The winds faded and the snow fall receded as she shuddered gently and bowed her head forward in reverence to the approaching spirit.

“You are of course welcome here, spirit of the mountains. Thank you for answering my call”

Stepping forward into the light emanating from the open door Ingrid got a clear view of the spirit that now stood before her.

Standing close to 20ft tall, taller than any man was a spirit far different than any she had ever witnessed in her time as a shaman. Covered in a purple flesh and white fur over a frame

which redefined the term 'Muscular' it stared down at her with its bright green eyes. Its head and back covered in horns tipped in a similar green colour with tattooed chains which wrapped around its arms. It had a spade like tail which reached out behind it and swayed slowly and gently.

Most telling this spirit was more than just an animal though was the fact it walked on two legs and in its arms it carried something which was bundled wrapped in cloth.

For a moment there was silence, eerie and total silence. The storm around them continued but there was calm, serenity...peace in this eye of the storm. The spirit stared down at Ingrid who in return shared the same as if inspecting one another for their worth and measure.

There was no tenseness in the air however, as if both knew the other's internal reasons for being here and an unspoken understanding that neither meant the other harm.

"Ingrid Bowdottir, Shaman of Kaldaheim" the spirit spoke, breaking the silence with a voice while shook the very ground, the snow shifting at its timbre whilst its eyes remained locked firmly on the smaller human as the muscles across its chest rippled with strength and power,

"Yes, that is me! Oh great spirit!" Her response came as she slipped her shield off her arm and onto the ground, placing it beside her spear recognising there was nothing to fear here. Slowly standing she held out her arms and opened her palms up to the spirit in a practiced reverence "I am the daughter of this mountain, its keeper and its guardian. I thank you for answering my plea!"

The spirit ahead smiled and nodded his head to the motions taken in front and bowed his head gently,

"My name is Ortha, Aeon of Consonance. I heard the call of my people, the Orthani, and I came to offer my assistance to your dire need" the muscular spirit shifted once more the bundle in his arm and moved to place it down in front of Ingrid, his large form belying a sense of agility as he deftly placed it down gently with a softness which barely shifted the snow, "I return to you the member of your lost clan. They are someone special to me, and to the whole of the Orthani people. Raise them, care for them, tend to them. They have a special role to play in the future to come. Teach them my ways and help them understand, will you do that for me?"

"Of course, Great Ortha! It shall be done!" it was a name she was familiar with, one all her people knew. The guardian of her people long thought lost to them now stood in front of her. She could hardly believe it! Of course she would do as asked by the great and powerful Behemoth!

Ingrid kneeled down beside the bundled mass, tugging away at the cloth which covered them. It took only moments for her to reveal the face of the boy inside, the one who had been

lost in the mountains, sound asleep and safe. Looking over his form for any sign of injury or malady she could find none, so far as Ingrid could tell he was the picture of health! No doubt Ortha's influence.

"Thank you, thank you Spir—" looking back up, a smile across her face as a tear trickled down her cheek she went to show her proper appreciation to Ortha but in but a blink of an eye he was gone, his mighty form having vanished into the night taking the storm with him leaving only the tracks of his mighty paws in the snow has any indication he had ever been there at all.

Leaving Ingrid and the boy alone in the mountain once more.

She felt a pang of sadness that she had not been able to spend more time with Ortha but knew, somehow, this would not be the last time she would see his countenance.

Despite the storm having passed now she could not linger, the boy would need warmth and shelter before returning to the village tomorrow. She would raise him and act as his teacher from this day on, teaching him in the ways of the Orthani lore and of Ortha himself.

When picking him she spotted something unique, special around his neck. Inspecting it for a moment it looked to be some kind of golden chain with a jewel encrusted in concentric circles. She had never seen anything quite like it before but could sense a lingering presence of Ortha coming from it, a strange power which felt comforting.

Smiling to herself she held the child in both her arms and pulled him close to provide warmth as she made her way back inside.

"Come on, Hakon, you must rest now. Tomorrow, a new chapter in your life begins" with that she returned back to her longhouse to tend to Hakon, chosen of Ortha.

His and her life would never be the same again, and as they entered into their home from the cosmos above Ortha smiled down at the pair, watching over them from afar and proud that his people continued to thrive and remember the old ways, remember him.

He would always look over them. Because that is what this Behemoth was born to do.

The Orthani were his people, and he was their Guardian. And they were his strength to allow him to keep on protecting.

In the night sky a new star twinkled gently that night, one of prosperity and hope, one which would guide those who looked upon it in their most dire most times and lead them back to the light.