



Snout and the Mother Ice

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Action/Adventure

Once upon a time there was an orphan named Snout who lived on the streets of a mountain kingdom called Brae. The kingdom of Brae was a harsh place, built high up in the harshest of weather. Though Brae was harshest for Snout. But Snout was a spirited young boy, resourceful too, and Brae was lucky to have him on their streets.

Every day, Snout did chores for the people of Brae. He'd shovel their snow, for Brae was so high that it had snow all year round. He'd make the treacherous journey up the mountain to collect firewood for the chopper. Only Snout knew where to get the best wood, that burnt the longest. He'd clean the slaughterhouse and smokery, a tireless and horrible job that made Snout very hungry.

One day, when Snout had finished in the slaughterhouse cleaning fresh blood off the floor, for the folk's winter rations, he stepped back out into the streets ready to find his sleeping spot for the night. But an unusual cloud had drifted over Brae. It was a deep, angry, purple-black cloud. Snout thought it looked like an awful bruise in the sky. Snout was about to hurry away. To him, the cloud meant that a winter storm so terrible and dangerous was approaching. But a noise so loud and awful stopped Snout in his tracks. It was such a hideous wailing that even citizens of Brae left their fire-lit homes to investigate. Snout looked up at the mountain that towered over Brae and at the cloud. He decided to take the journey up the mountain to put an end to the wailing. And whilst he was up there, see about removing that horrible cloud.

Because of that, Snout found himself stuck in the worst storm he'd ever seen. He used every ounce of strength he could, to put one foot in front of the other and find any type of shelter. The sleet and the snow burst from the cloud. Soaking Snout through. But even worse, he hadn't come any closer to figuring out where the wailing

was coming from! It was still loud and obnoxious when Snout climbed his way up to a small cave. He thought he'd found a fine shelter from the storm until morning. So, he curled up as small as he could and tried his best to get some sleep. He hadn't closed his eyes for a minute when the wailing began again. It was louder and more disastrous than it had been in Brae. The wail rattled through Snout, causing Snout's already freezing bones to shiver in fear. It seemed that the wailing was coming from deeper within the cave! Snout knew what he had to do and relinquished his sleep to the exploration of the wail. He stepped deeper into the cave. Wishing that he'd thought to bring a flame to light his way.

Because of that, when Snout turned a corner of the cave he came face to face with a hideous, humongous troll.

"Who's there?" Growled the troll. Snout stayed very quiet, very still and held his breath. Then after a while had passed. The troll began to weep. She howled and wailed so loudly that even when Snout covered his ears, he was unable to block out the sound.

"Ah, my ears!" Snout said, when his ears stung like a walk in the icy winter breeze. "Why do you cry so?" The words had left his mouth before he realised what was happening. And the troll towered over him, mighty and massive, Snout cowered in her shadow.

"Who are you?" The troll said, through sniffs and cries.

"My name is Snout. I am here to stop the wailing." Snout said, hoping that the troll couldn't hear the shaking in his voice or see the shuddering in his bones. "Who are you?"

"My name is Mother. And my son has died." Mother said. And wailed, louder and fiercer than before. Snout covered his ears with his hands and willed her to stop.

"What will make you happy, Mother?" Snout said. The word 'mother' foreign on his lips. He found that he liked to say it. It filled him with warmth that even the icicles in the cave couldn't freeze.

"My son, to be alive again." Said Mother and Snout's spirit fell. He didn't know how to do that, and nor did he think anyone from Brae would know. Then Snout had a spark of an idea.

“I know Mother!” He said, his voice echoing around the cave. “I will be your son!” He said filled with glee. “We’ll live here together. And you will be happy, and I will have a home.” Snout said, with a smile. And he waited for Mother to think through his abrupt idea.

“But you are a human.” She said finally.

“I know Mother!” He said, his voice echoing around the cave. “I will be your son!” He said filled with glee. “We’ll live here together. And you will be happy, and I will have a home.” Snout said, with a smile. And he waited for Mother to think through his abrupt idea.

To Snout’s surprise, the citizens of Brae greeted him with a parade. They were so thankful that Snout had put an end to the almighty wailing. The citizens of Brae showered Snout with all types of gifts as each person showed him their thanks. Snout got toys and clothes and food and even a house! Snout had never seen gifts so opulent and abundant before. Let alone be their recipient! He swelled with pride and joy. This was everything he ever wanted. But as the citizens of Brae showed Snout to his new home in the very centre of town, Snout thought of the cave and of Mother. The gifts that the people of Brae were throwing his direction were pleasant. But did he need them? Did this wonderful plush armchair and silver cutlery make him happy and warm inside?

It took Snout several days to decide what he wanted to do and where he wanted to live. In that time the wailing began again. Snout felt guilty knowing that the wailing was Mother. And that he was the cause of her cries. He thought of Mother, losing her son and then with the promise of a new son lost on the horizon. His guilt overwhelmed him.

He packed up his house and told the citizens of Brae he’d return in the summer. He made sure to pack a candle and matches so that he could stay warm in his cave. And then made the journey up to Mother. It was harder than last time. Snout wondered if it had anything to do with the confectioner’s gifts. But dismissed the idea as farfetched.

Finally, he made it up to Mother. She greeted him warmly. And he showed her things he had brought and offered to cook them a lovely dinner. So, Mother agreed. And Snout began by gathering wood for the fire. As soon as he’d struck the match and caught the wood a light. Mother began to wail. No, scream. Snout panicked. As Mother tried to stomp out the flame. But Snout had brought the best wood and knew that that wasn’t enough to put out the flame. Mother screamed more as instead her foot caught on fire. And to Snout’s terror,

Mother began to melt. There was nothing Snout could do, except watch Mother melt in front of eyes. And die by his hand. He cried and she begged him to help. But he didn't know how! And then it was too late!

Eventually, Mother was gone, and all that remained was a pool of frosty water that then sizzled out the flame. Snout scooped up a jar of the water and packed it away with the rest of his belongings. And he headed back down the mountain to Brae. He ignored the citizens of Brae as he returned to his home in the town. And set the jar in the window as far away from the fireplace as he could.

Snout barely noticed that the purple cloud had disappeared from above Brae, but the citizens had not. And every year they would celebrate Snout's triumph over the cloud. But Snout never spoke a word of his winter dream-come-nightmare to the citizens of Brae. In fact, he rarely spoke again, instead wailing in his armchair and calling out for his Mother.

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