
THE EIGHT IRON HARNESS

In the histories told by the Pyroi, there are still times remembered when the red shard was an isolated land at the bottom of the world, before the children of Khar-Ulan had yet to make contact with the other Folk. It was in these times that some of Pyre's most curious works and wonders came to be. The shard is rich with an abundance of ore and metal, and as many of the Pyroi are exceedingly resistant to the touch of flame, the metalworks from Pyre are often marvels to behold.

One such item is the Eight Iron Harness. Though its origins are lost to time, the prevailing theory is that the Harness was a reward, a trophy of sorts, given to the victor of a grueling series of games officiated by the choir of Volcano Priests with ties to some long-dead Pyroi Warband. The riding of wild beasts, the recitation of eloquent poetry while undergoing extreme tests of pain and endurance, to say nothing of the gladiatorial combat... these and more challenges were required of those vying for the Harness. There are some stories that say that every 88 Cycles a massive shard-wide contest was held for the Harness which pulled combatants from all corners of the land.

Now, the Eight Iron Harness lies dormant on a dusty pedestal in a forgotten alcove in the Blackglass Keep of the Skyborn Order called the Scarlet Hand (see: *The Skyborn Order and Its Enemies* pg. 14). It is a four point armored Harness with smooth black iron shoulder plates. The rest of the Harness is a simple and brutal design with thick chunks of iron forming the cross straps and a girdle of burnished red metal hanging almost to the ground.

While the stories of the power given to the wearer of the Harness are many and varied, the truth is the Harness has no inherent power in and of itself. It requires a Skyborn heart and mind to activate its gifts, and even then, it has shown its power in a different way for each bearer. There are tales of the wearer becoming impervious to harm and others that give great leaders the power to turn the fallen morale of their troops. One story tells of a slain warrior continuing to fight while wearing the Harness, long after the life had left his body. Considering the extreme individuality of the Skyborn, it is very likely that the Eight Iron Harness somehow conforms to the Spirit of its wearer, and that the permutations of its power are practically unlimited.

The last person to wear the Eight Iron Harness is a mystery. The hulking orange-skinned individual was possibly once a Pyroi, but with veins of strange purple plasm weeping at the edges of his armor. He was not a member of the Scarlet Hand, but arrived and declared himself at the Blackglass Keep in accordance with that Conclave's traditions. The monster challenged the greatest warrior in the hall, a cocksure brave of near elegant speed and finesse named Zandoro Jahann. After a few short moments, the orange giant broke the young Pyroi against the black stone wall and ripped the Eight Iron Harness from Zandoro's corpse without ceremony.

Dropping the Harness onto its current pedestal, and making his way out of the Keep, the goliath looked back once to tell the elders his final words.

"When one arises who is worthy of the Eight Iron Harness, I will return. When this one defeats me in single combat, I will bow forever at the feet of the Lord of All Might".