

If only our own horses spoke to one another about the Esrohs as we do (and who can say, really, whether they do not)! Surely they must think to themselves, "What a jolly time it must have been, growing up as an Esroh!" One certainly can't blame them for this, but it is know, and for a fact, that not every Esroh had an easy time of it.

For one Esroh in particular, foalhood was frightfully hard indeed. But it must be said in all honesty that it was he himself who made it so. For Ares, while clever, beautiful, reasonably fast and reasonably strong, was also altogether self-absorbed. Not in a bad way; at least, not at first. It's just that he used to look around him at what the others were doing, and decide that whatever it was he saw them do was easy. It looked easy. He paid no attention to anyone so far as to see how much effort any person put into anything, and the fact that things took practice never occurred to that youthful mind. Piaffe? Easy. Jumps over a great height? Easy. Obviously, anyone could do it, and if anyone could do it, of course he could do it. He need not practice. He need not even try it. He had simply to know it; and knowing it, he soon turned his mind to other matters.

Ah, how quickly one's circumstances can change. Soon the foals grew, and ventured further and further away from their dams. In that magical place where they lived, but which we, of course, shall never know, Ares soon ran with the other foals. Yet he was not all that keen on their company. Should he like to race them? No, he would say. He should not like to race. Of course, he could run further and faster than any of them, but he was busy. Some of the other foals believed him when he said these things. Others challenged him. Always he refused. He would not race, nor would he even dance. "Of course I can dance, it's so easy!" he would say. "But I'm not interested."

"You're not interested in dancing," said one of the other colts, "because you can't dance!"

Ares had heard their denials before, but always behind his back and never, ever spoken to his face. He stood up very straight. "Are you saying that I am a liar?" he snapped.

The other colt was non-plussed. "I have never seen you dance. I have only heard you say it. I have always heard that you can outrun us, out-jump us and out-pull us, but I've never actually seen you perform any of these feats. So, in that case, I think I am calling you a liar. What have you to say to that?"

"What I have to say," Ares said, "is that you are an ignorant, untrusting and altogether nasty colt, and not even worth knowing!" And with this statement, he left the foal group, and stood apart, under a chestnut tree, to brood upon his fellows' lack of faith.

One day, after a little time went by, Ares' father came to him, and asked why the colt always stood apart. "It's most unnatural," he lamented.

"Can you believe, father," said young Ares in a tone of high temper, "that those foals asked me to actually prove that I could outrun and out-pull and out-jump them all?"

"Oh?" said his father, looking bemused. "And can you, then?"

"Of course I can! It's not as if it's hard."

"But can you?" his father insisted.

Ares looked up in dismay. "Even you, my own father, do not believe me!" And at great length, and it must be said quite hotly, he explained his view that being asked to prove a skill was rude.

His father shook his head, smiling. "If that's what you think, my son, you are going to live a very lonely and most disrespected life. It will take a lot of strength, or mind and body, to overcome what you've set yourself. Well, I'll leave you to it, then." The old stallion turned and, swishing his tail, walked away to graze.

Now Ares was full of doubt. When the herd moved off to other pastures, the colt stayed behind. Could he outrun them all? There was the track. Down it he ran, pacing the others in his mind. And of course, he won!

But now before him were the hurdles. These the others cleared with such grace as if they hardly ever noticed them. Ares raced toward these as fast as he could go ... and crashed straight into the first one when he realised he had, in fact, no idea where to take off and was going far too fast to stop.

He found the sledge that some man had made, and slipped the collar over his neck. But he could not budge it, however hard he tried.

Now he flew into a rage! These things were easy! He'd watched, over and over, how easily everyone ran and jumped and pulled. At first he thought that the others had tricked him somehow. Yes, they must have done! They had surreptitiously raised the height and breadth of the fences, and anchored the stone to the ground! Just to make what they said true and what he said a blatant falsehood! His stomping and roaring in rage sent all the wildlife in the area fleeing in annoyance, and his howls could be heard, one can only suppose, for miles.

It was so unfair! It had to be easy! Nobody ever had any trouble doing it, so why did he? It must be easy, it simply must! He tried again, with as much success. But his father's words came to him. Strength. Strength was what he needed. Strength to pull, strength to jump and strength of mind to make himself try, fail, and keep trying until he succeeded.

Later that year, when the herd returned, they were surprised to see the lone colt now tall, sleek and muscled. Remembering how he was, though, they ignored him otherwise. But when they raced, without saying a word, he joined them. When they jumped, so did he. And when they pulled, it was he, Ares, who tugged the sledge farther than anyone else of their age. He did this day after day. He never won a race, it is true, but he often won the jumping and almost always won the pulling contests. So strong was he that as he aged and became a most handsome stallion, he felt no need to tell anyone what he could or could not do, but instead, just did, saying little. His strength is a lesson and an inspiration to us to this day.