

## **Of those not entered**

The *Behemoth* did not enter. For the *Behemoth* did not care for crafting, only strength and its own running.

The *Swamp* worked but fashioned nothing. For it could not contain its own hunger, and consumed what it created.

*Dream* thought and fashioned everything. But it could not keep thought and form, for that which it made real became real, and that which was real was not its, for its realm was that which was not real. Thus wonders were born again and again, but these it could not keep, for *Dream* can have anything but can keep nothing.

*Darkness* fashioned a steed, but did not do so in order to win. Instead it fashioned one in order to mock its brethren. For though the *Others* sought to hide their creations, *Darkness* did not yet exist, and that which does not exist cannot be guarded against, and so it saw all their work. And *Darkness* fashioned its creation. To mock the *Mountain* it gave it a shaggy coat, to mock the *Desert* it gave it a long droopy face, to mock the *Sea* it made it spit, to mock *Vision* it gave it legs which could cross mountains but would look ridiculous doing so, to mock the *River* it gave it an elongated neck. And when the time of judging came, it mocked the trio by declaring it the finest steed, as it was a mix of all *Others* work, not merely three. Finally, when the sun came to it, darkness had the steed spit in the sun's eyes, so that that it might mock the entire contest, and so did the *King* fly into a rage behead it.

There was one *Other* who was crippled, and weaker than the rest, and the *Crippled One* sat in his workshop and sought to forge the finest steed possible. It was a steed of gears and metal, not flesh and blood. But it was said that all beings that saw the steed were amazed at its work and wonder. It was fast, and strong, and agile and much, much more, and the *Crippled One* looked upon his work with pride, for it would surely bring him victory and glory. But he worked too long, and by the time he was finished, the contest was already started. He could not make it in time, and thus rode his steed to the contest. But the *King* was angry, for the *Crippled One* had presented a steed which was already ridden. Thus was he cast out and his steed destroyed before his eyes.

## **Of the judging**

The steeds were assembled before the sun and in turn each was ridden.

First the sun rode Oeg. And for a time the sun was satisfied. Oeg was strong and steady, and carried the sun well. But soon the sun began to grow dissatisfied, for while Oeg could run, he was not swift enough for the sun. So the sun began to beat against him, but he could not hurt Oeg, for Oeg's horns were straight and his hide thick. Thus the sun continued to beat against him, and Oeg continued to run, until the all of Creation began to plead for him to stop, for the

sun had remained in the sky for several days, and had not turned its back once, and it grew far too hot. And so the sun declared Oeg an unworthy steed. And Oeg went to the farthest mountain, away from everything, for he was ashamed of his sloth.

Next the sun rode Prospecta. And for a time the sun was satisfied. Prospecta was not as strong, but she could endure the sun's heat, and she was swifter than Oeg. But soon the *King* began to grow dissatisfied. "Look at the steed," said he. "It may ride well, but it does no credit to the sun's magnificence. Its face is long and distorted. Its back is hunched and odd. Its neck is hanged and wrinkly. The sun cannot ride a steed such as this." And so the sun declared Prospecta an unworthy steed, and cast her down. And Prospecta hid, for she was ashamed of her appearance.

Next the sun rode Tidalos. And for a time the sun was satisfied. Tidalos was swift and strong, and noble of bearing. But soon the sun began to grow dissatisfied. For Tidalos was a creature of the ocean, and while he was the finest steed in the ocean, he could not travel upon land for he had no hoofs. The *Sea* tried to assuage him, pointed to his fine wings, with which the air was as ocean to him, and the sun nodded, but the *King* was not satisfied. For said he, "This steed's hoofs are weak and worry, he travels by tail and fin. What good is such a steed? For without hoofs he cannot crush lesser beings beneath him. The sun cannot ride a steed such as this." And so the sun declared Tidalos an unworthy steed, and cast him down. And Tidalos swam to the deepest depths, for he was ashamed.

Next Ramus was shown. And for a time the sun was satisfied. Ramus pranced about the sky, dancing and showing off his magnificent horns and gleaming coat. And the sun was enraptured with his dance, but then the sun attempted to ride Ramus, and Ramus could not carry his weight. For Ramus was made for dance and beauty, not strength and power, and his back was broke. And so the sun declared Ramus an unworthy steed, and cast him down. And Ramus hid, for he was ashamed of his weakness.

Next the sun rode Isadora. And for a time the sun was satisfied. Isadora was strong and swift, no obstacle could slow her charge, be it mountain, or forest or ocean, and she would never slow nor stop, for it was not her nature to give up. But soon the sun began to grow dissatisfied, for Isadora was of the *Behemoth*, and was fashioned in his image and manor, and the *Behemoth* was not a tame creature. Thus did Isadora ever struggle against the sun, trying to break the reigns and buck him off. The sun beat against her, and did grievous injury, but Isadora struggled on. Finally, said he "I cannot break a creature such as this, only kill it, and I have need of a steed, not a meal." And so the sun declared Isadora an unworthy steed, and cast her down. And Isadora ran about the land, for she was not ashamed, she was angry.

Finally did the sun ride Zephyr. And the sun was satisfied. Zephyr was swift and strong, he could run through any terrain, and his long neck let the sun ride high in the clouds, as was the sun's desire. And the stripes adorning his back blew as the winds and gave glory to the sun. Thus was the sun satisfied, and he declared, "This steed is a worthy above all others. This shall

be my steed.”

But as he declared it so, the trio cried, for their steed had not yet been ridden. And the sun and even the *King* could not ignore them, for the *Earth* rumbled and shook, and the *Storm* blew all manner of winds across the land, and *Language* cried out in all the tongues that were and are and would be. As so the *King* yelled out, “Cease your lamentations! Cease at once! The sun shall ride your steed if only you cease.”

As so did the sun ride Luna. And once again sun was satisfied. Luna was swift and strong, she could run through any terrain, and her wings let the sun ride high in the sky, as was his desire. The color of her hide gave glory to the sun, making his glow all the more noticeable against her darkness. Thus was the sun satisfied, and declared, “This steed is also a worthy steed, above all others save Zephyr.”

“But which is better?” demanded the *King* and all the assembled *Others*.

“I cannot say, for they are near equal in measure and perfection. Let us hold a contest; three feats shall decide their worth. First, we shall see which steed is swiftest, for I will wish to ride quickly. Second, we will see which steed may carry me the highest, for my home is the sky and I shine over all Creation. Finally, we will see which is the most skilled in magic, for none may see the future, and I do not know what else I may need in a steed, but with magic they can be prepared for anything.

And so both the *River* and the trio were satisfied. For the trio were sure they could win, for what single *Other* could stand against the finest work of three of them? But *River* was also satisfied, for *River* had placed a fragment of her own power within Zephyr, a small fragment, for Zephyr was not of the *River* as the sun was of the *King*, but he was connected still.

### **Of the contest**

And so the first contest was held. Both were laden with bags of iron weighted to the sun, and the iron was that of several mountains, but neither Zephyr nor Luna buckled. They began to race across the whole of creation. And though both tired, neither gave nor slowed, and neither could overtake the other. But Zephyr was crafty, and he did lower his long neck and stretch it far, and in this way did he cross first.

The next test was of the sky, and both rose up, for though Luna could fly, Zephyr could stretch his neck and legs. And both rose, and at first the trio were joyous, for surely the wings would bring them certain victory. But as the two rose higher and higher, they began to despair, for Zephyr could stretch his neck as long as the *River*, which was his creator, and none knew the full length of the *River*. And thus did the *Others* rise to see the duel, and it is said that *Mountain* grew over three times its height in order to watch them rise. But there was one who could not, for *Earth* could not rise as she was earth, and so she waited, until all the *Others* were so high

she was as a mere speck, and then did she shift and shake. Zephyr, whose feet were still upon the *Earth*, did stumble and fall, and was brought down, and in this way did Luna rise higher.

Finally, both prepared to duel in magic. And both were excellent in it. For Luna had the horn *Language* had made, and knew all of the magic that *Language* did. But Zephyr had his piece of *River*, and through it had great strength. And so the two dueled, and slowly did Luna begin to tire. And *Earth* and *Storm* were afraid, but *Language* was not, and whispered to them, "Be not afraid, for *River* does not know magic. He has given his creation two horns, for he believes it will make it twice as magical, but this is not true. It will only divide the magic. Luna has one horn, and her spells are more for it." As *Language* spoke, his words were proven true, and Zephyr was thrown to the ground by Luna's magic. And did the trio shout in joy and the *River* in despair.

Thus was Zephyr was cast down, and he ran to the furthest corners of Creation, for he was ashamed of his loss.

### **Of The Steed of the Sun**

Said the sun, "Behold, this is a worthy steed. Luna shall be my steed, above all others. She is the perfect steed, and the King shall grant you your boon."

But the *King* was obstinate and would not grant the boon. And the Trio were angry, for they had won. Said the *King*, "I do not deny your steed is the best of the contest, but it is not perfect, and is not worthy of being ridden by the sun." And with that did the *King* craft his own steed. It was like Luna, but it was not Luna, for it was greater in might and stature, and made of pure white. "Behold, this is the perfect steed, this is what the sun shall ride. Behold Celestia."

And all the assembled *Others* were angry, for they saw how they had been tricked. But they could do nothing, for none could deny that the new steed was the best. Under its majesty Luna was lesser, in strength, magic and flight. Its coat was as the sun. It was the perfect steed. And so the *King* made plans to destroy Luna, for it could not stand the proof Celestia was not its own idea.

But *Earth* had grown attached to her creation, and so she pleaded with the *King*, "Let it live, please. We will say it was the second. That yours was first, and ours built after your magnificence, for is not your steed's glory greater if one can see a lesser version?" And so the *King* agreed, and Luna lived, and all the *Others* swore oaths that Celestia was the first and Luna second, and these oaths did they force on their creations so that all were bound to act as if Celestia was the first. And thus was Luna cast down, and she ran away, afraid of the *King* and ashamed of being the lesser.