

Leonidas I - The Selphie Contest

[WOOL-88]

WORD COUNT: 1,254

+1,200 words - 12 shards

Prompt Entry - 4 shards

NPC Woolyne [Bonnie, Lycra] - 4 shards

Untamned Mount - 2 shards

Monthly Prompt - 1 ethereal shard

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Total: 22 shards + 1 ethereal shard

The city of Seawynn was as lively as ever. When the warmth of Mazrim's summer finally faded and left the costal towns to bear the unforgiving chill of the ocean and the winds that rolled over them. With the encroaching cold the tourists often returned home, taking the extra pocket money that the smaller coastal businesses relied on, back with them. Yet somehow the city of Seawynn always seemed to find a way to retain a steady stream of tourists regardless of the time of year. This year was no exception.

To keep that revenue flowing in during the holiday season the town had doubled down on the Winter Solstine Festival. Creating christmas decorations had been carefully fashioned from shells and bits of coral that had washed ashore, while wreathes and bows had been made using more natural branches and boughs from surrounding trees rather than the traditional pines and evergreens. It gave the entire port a very comfortable homey and relaxed holiday atmosphere.

In fact each part of the port had a slightly different christmas themes, in fact- small glass blown lanterns adorned the walkways. Each district used a unique scent in their candles- giving each place a unique and feel. The food quarter- where many restaurants had setup either carts or had their main building with candles that smelled of freshly baked bread. The trade district- was filled with the scent of ginger bread cookies. The crafters bazar was using candles with a particularly comforting scent of cinnamon and fireplaces. The last location with a unique scent was the port itself was using cranberry and pine scented candles. The ploy had been highly successful so, but this was far from the only thing the city was doing to continue to push for tourists.

The Selphie Deep Dive Treasure Hunt, The Nikyak Barrel Race, The Draken Cloud Control Contest, The High Elking Trot Top, and Companion Conquest Competition weren't exactly unique style contests- with similar variations existing all across Andras, but it was uncommon to find them all in one spot. Perhaps a lesser woolyne would have been phased by so much interest and an increase in the number of competitors, but Leonidas was completely unbothered. Not only had he been riding selphies since we was a child- but he had been working with his current selphie for over seven years. There wasn't a single doubt in his mind that he would be walking away as the winner.

Leonidas stood at the edge of the dock, shoulder to shoulder with several other woolyne- they were unimportant though- the announcer had already introduced all the contestants a few moments ago but he could barely even remember their names.

"Thank you all for participating today. Now today's treasure hunt is simple!" Bonnie shouted into the horn in her hooves- an item enchanted with air lyss, so her voice could be heard by every woolyne gathered. "Selphie's will take directions from their riders and perform a series of loops before diving down as far as they can go. They will be swimming above and possible around the wreckage of the S.S. Lapis. Around the ship wreck and under the water we've hidden treasure boxes. Inside each treasure box is a different number of points- if your selphie returns with something other than a treasure box we'll evaluate it at the end and you'll be given point based on what they found."

The crowd excitedly chattered, the shipwreck was well known to most of the local residents and the unfortunate tale of the sunken wreck was popular around halloween. Yet the ship had been so large and the wreck so spread out that treasures from the lost ship still turned up from time to time. "The Selphies will have 30 minutes to bring up as much treasure as they can. Please make sure you give your thanks to our favorite ambassador, Lycra! Without all their help I'm not sure if this would have been possible." There was a round of cheerful cries, Leonidas noticed an orange sea touched woolyne shifting from side to side, looking a touch embarrassed.

"With that being said, on your mark!" Leonidas noticed the other competitors bodies shift- tense with anticipation. In the water their Selphies bobbed up and down, their eyes sliding between the shouting Bonnie and their partners.

"Get set!" Leonidas lowered his eyes, he blinked once at his beloved mount, Lapis, the selphie blinked back- unspoken words passing between them.

"Go!" Bonnie shouted. The excited trainers sprung into action, shouting and directing their actions through hand gestures. Leonidas snapped his fingers, Lapis launched herself forward. Their obstacle they needed to loop through was a row of posts, that she needed to loop through before diving. The Selphie hardly needed any direction and easily slid through her required hurdle with ease, but the other Selphie were hardly that far behind them- all of the hard shelled mounts disappeared beneath the waters surface. With baited breath they waited upon the shore as the clock ticked down, the Selphies returned to drop their goods on the shore.

1 treasure dropped on shore

2 treasures dropped on the shore.

Then came a 3rd and 4th treasure returned.

The silent lurch of the waves sliding over the sound were broken by faint splashes as the selphie hurriedly continued to deliver their found prizes. Leonidas's body was always facing out towards the water, but occasionally his eyes flicked back and forth between his competitors. Most were at least 2 treasures behind, but unfortunately the woolyne standing near him had an equal number of treasures.

"Were on the final minute! Treasures that aren't on shore by the time ends wont count towards your points, although you can still keep them!" Lycra called, having moved to be besides Bonnie at some point during the competition. A Selphie broke the surface, it's head cresting the surface as it broke towards the bank, dropping a chest at its owner hooves.

“30 seconds!” Lycra warned. A second woolyne broke the surface, leaping out of the water, before crashing back into the water and hurriedly returning to its owner. Body tilting from side to side as it carried back a large piece of coral.

Leonidas’s shoulders tensed, he had never for a moment considered that he would lose at the beginning of the competition, but was now unexpectedly forced to confront that very reality. Behind him he could hear Lycra and Bonnie excitedly counting down with the eager crowd, but he would still not look away from the water. Then in the final stretch Lapis popped out of the water.

The dedicated Selphie swam swiftly towards the shore. There was something firmly grasped in their jaws but the water splashing around it made it difficult for Leonidas to determine what it was. Lapis arched its head back, tossing its treasure onto the sand just as Lycra and Bonnie shouted to the eager crowd “That’s it folks! All treasures not on shore won’t be used in the final point tally!”

Leonidas knelt down to pet the Selphie’s head, it was a shame- but the final treasure that Lapis had returned with was nothing more than some sort of giant oyster. Looking around he could see that there at least two woolynes with the same amount of treasure and who also had items that were recovered by their own Selphies. It seemed victory would not come as easily as he hoped and that it would be some time before the results were announced.