

The Equine Testament

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In a distant galaxy, many light years away, was a planet filled with horses. They were the highest and smartest life forms (there were no people.) Except for horses who ruled this planet, which they named Latigo, it was just like earth. Horses were everywhere! They lived on continents, countries, on hills, by oceans, and on grassy plains. The horses came in all colors: white, chestnut, gray, spotted, black and others. As you might expect, each horse thought his colors were the best and brightest. Stallions would try to rule over smaller breeds and groups of mares. They would snort, stamp their hooves, and prance about. They even had horse parades during the first day of spring and, of course, loved horseplay.

There were different kinds of horses. Draft horses made furrows with their hooves, and pressed down seeds into the dirt to grow corn, wheat, oats and other food. As a result, over Latigo fields of corn, grain and other tasty plants horses love, grew abundantly. Jumping horses competed to see who could hurtle highest over dead logs. Race horses lined up in rows, and galloped across meadows to win a prize of delightful fresh grass. Mares also competed, but loved to canter in beauty pageants; they would process in single file and flaunt their manes and tails. Mules were considered outcasts and impure. Zebras were the guardians of The Equine Testament, and lived in Great Prairie. Ponies also lived on Latigo, but because they were smaller, many horses made fun of them, and crowded them out at feeding time. Donkeys and burros were looked down upon, because they were not as smart as horses. Latigo even had unicorns, who were soldiers. They had large, sharp horns and were also the strongest breeds. They would amass great unicorn herds, and attack other herds with their horns, teeth and sharp hooves, trying to gain the richest clover fields for themselves. They owned much land, and all other horses loathed them.

This race of horses told stories about winged horses that once lived on Latigo, and the father of them all was named Equus. But something happened in the distant past, and they disappeared. Now most living horses believed they lived on an enormous plateau, twice the size of Mt. Everest and wider than Texas on planet earth. It was called Empyrean Fields, and in horse history it was told that it was full of lush ripe grain, clover, other sumptuous grasses, and even

choice fruits like apples. Besides Father Equus, all winged horses lived there, as a reward for loving and obeying him. They soared above the plateau, and around Latigo, but were invisible to the other horses. They were always peaceful, happy creatures. But they saw below how horses only loved their breeds, and coveted the finest fields of grasslands and orchards. Worse, they often argued, did not share, stole another's grain, neighed loudly at bedtime, and even ambushed each other. Sad as this is, they would even fight to the death and kill each other. Unicorn armies would battle and conquer property, trample other horses' grain and corn fields, again and again. Wherever they conquered, unicorns forced submission in what they pronounced *Pax Unicornus*.

Sometimes these winged mounts whispered into the horses' minds what was right and what was wrong, but horses often didn't listen, acted selfishly and callously.

Long ago Equus gave the Latigo horses' rules and guidelines, *The Equine Testament*, which described how horses should live in peace and kindness. They memorized it and passed it on generation after generation. Some common ones were "Don't kick. Don't bite. Don't lie. Don't crib. Don't eat other horses' grain. Don't pick on ponies. Respect donkeys and burros. Honor and obey Equus." Sadly, many ignored them and did whatever they pleased. Equus was very sad and upset as he watched them from above. Some tried to obey and do the best they could, and Equus felt pleased with them.

Within Empyrean Fields, a magnificent black winged stallion named Morning Star lived and soared above the rest. He often visited the planet, was also invisible, and too felt unhappy and troubled because Latigo's horses acted inconsiderate toward each other, and especially how they teased ponies, donkeys, and burros.

On this special day, Morning Star spoke to all of the winged horses in Empyrean Fields, who hovered in the thousands.

"Equus, the Father of all horses, decided it is time for me to join the race of horses, and teach them how to live peacefully, like they should."

One winged horse asked, "But what about your wings?"

He answered, "I shall lose them, so they cannot know I am from here. I must be like a common horse, with horsehair like them. I shall return one day."

Morning Star was born in a desert area and raised among a breed of ordinary horses. Even as a foal, his parents knew he was special and even wise. When he grew into a mature horse, Equus told him to go to a river, jump in and then swim back to the banks. Morning Star

plunged in headfirst with a great splash, and swam to shore. Other horses, ponies and donkeys nearby heard a voice:

“I am pleased with you, Morning Star. Go and teach the way of Equus, the father of all horses.”

Morning Star journeyed near a vast lake. He met and taught rustic horses, ponies, donkeys, burros, and draft horses about how much Equus loved them. He invited them to follow him and learn how to live grain-fully. He selected a dozen of them and they shadowed him wherever he went. One donkey, a shaggy brown one with a white muzzle and large nostrils, said

“I will follow you wherever you go.”

Morning Star gave a half-mile, knowing he would later eat his words.

Some unicorns, along with zebras witnessing this, scowled and became green-eyed because Morning Star taught that all horses were equal and loved by Equus, and more so since he had growing herds listening and following him.

At one race a big stallion won a big prize of apples, and Morning Star said,

“The swift don’t always win the race. See the one in last place? He is the first.”

His poor donkeys, pitiful ponies, and old nags could not fathom what he meant.

As they ambled along a rocky path, overhead a flock of birds, crow-like, circled.

“Eons ago, some winged horses rebelled against Equus, and he sent them into a dark and fiery cavern below Latigo. They look like those birds—sooty, shady, and flapping in dark places. It is as hot there as a desert at noon. They did bad things and hated Equus. Or, didn’t care about him. This is where ruthless horses go, forever and forever.”

On another occasion, Morning Star spoke about how he knew Equus better than any other breeds of horses, but a group of zebras from great Prairie snorted in outrage, ears stiffly pointed back, so he said to his herd,

“You can take a horse to water but you can’t make it drink.”

They snickered at his joke. The zebras did not.

Once he spoke to large herds by a lake, and said

“You are like a field of seeds in spring. Wherever I plant you, you shall grow into shoots, mature plants, and bear sheaves—but you cannot know how.”

They blinked at him, bewildered.

There was a lame mare, who hobbled in pain and tried to follow him. Morning Star and his herd surrounded her, and he raised his head towards Empyrean Fields

“Equus, I know you are father of all horses on Latigo, and you sent me here to teach them how to live in harmony and peace. To show them this is true, help me mend this mare, your daughter.”

Then he leaned down to the mare’s injured leg, rubbed his lips along its crooked and swollen leg, then raised up and backed away. The mare saw her leg straight, raised up on her back legs, then bucked like a colt bitten by horseflies!

One of his donkey’s said, “How did you do that? Who are you?”

Some nearby unicorns and well-fed zebras glared. Among themselves, they said

“Who is this hayseed eater?” Then, one bellowed

“How dare you talk about Equus as your father? No horse can ever say that! Where do you come from?” A few stomped the ground, raising dust.

“If I told you, you wouldn’t believe me. You saw me mend this crippled mare, a daughter of Equus. That should prove to you Equus sent me.”

Because Morning Star’s herd was large, they left him alone. The mare joined his herd. But he knew the day would come his herd would abandon him.

One of his ponies asked

“Why do they not understand you?”

He said, “Equus had covered their sight. A nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse.”

A donkey joked “They have no horse sense.”

Morning Star winked, “You can’t beat a dead horse.” Of course, lots of horse laughs followed.

He and his herd liked to graze and drink with hill grazers and their bucolic relatives. On this occasion, they filled up on succulent Bermuda grass. One of his herd, a handsome gray steed, saw a few spotted horses, outcasts from horse society. Horses everywhere were fearful they would catch spots from them.

“Look at those spots. I’m glad I’m not like them.”

“So, how pure and spotless are you on the inside?” Morning Star asked.

The steed hung his head. Then he looked at the zebras who always followed him, and reported everything to the Great Prairie zebras. They stretched their necks forward, lips smacking, swishing their tails.

“Get off your high horse! You judge a horse by its color, its crest or fine sweeping tail, it’s shoulder girth—and do not consider his heart. That is what Equus wants. Nor does he care who owns the best grass pastures. You have hearts filled with chaff, not ripe hay. I can show you the way to Equus’ full life.”

Some zebras galloped as fast as they could to testify to Chief Zebra.

Later they traveled into a valley by a river, and came upon a horse family surrounding a palomino colt lying on its side. Tears poured from their big brown eyes.

Morning Star said “what is wrong?”

The father horse said “he died this morning.”

Morning Star sighed, a tear dribbled down his cheek.

“No, not today he’s not. Rise and stand up!”

The palomino gasped, flared his nostrils, blinked his eyes, and struggled to his feet. His family helped lift him with their muzzles. They cheered as he stood, and ran around him in a circle. The horses, ponies, and donkeys could not believe their eyes—even those with Morning Star. Word spread throughout horse territories.

Colts and fillies used to gather around him and he would nuzzle them. One of his dozen, a brazen stallion, brayed out

“Look, he doesn’t have time for this.”

Morning Star said “Horse feathers. Go eat some road apples.” His herd pursed their lips in delight.

As they left the valley, the donkey with brown shaggy hair and white muzzle said, “You are Equus’ son.”

Morning Star said, “Hush up. Tell nobody. This is not the time.”

Walking with his herd, as they neared the biggest horse pasture in Latigo, named Great Prairie, he warned them

“You cannot understand me now, but I will prepare pasture for you in Empyrean Fields. I will enter Great Prairie, tell them one last time about how Equus sent me for you, for zebras, for

all horses, ponies, burros and donkeys—but Chief Zebra will order the unicorns to pierce me through and through.”

The shaggy donkey with the white muzzle and big nostrils brayed

“Equus forbid!”

“Go behind my herd, Jackass. I believe you shall be called Stoney.” Stoney slinked with his tail between his legs, bewildered.

Every year at Great Prairie a festival occurred, where all horses carried in their mouths bundles of grain, corn and other delectables to give to the zebras in Equus’ name. They dropped it into a massive pile as gifts for Equus, although they knew the zebras ate most of it and some went to the unicorns. Morning Star and his herd walked up lush, grassy slopes to level ground, carrying their bundles. There were many full-bodied zebras with flowing manes, the pious leaders of Great Prairie, who viewed themselves as civilized, enlightened, and interpreters of *The Equine Testament*. Morning Star approached them; his small herd, fearful, blended in with many other commoners, watching and wondering, eyes darting back and forth. Unicorns stood alert to maintain order because they knew common horses disliked them, and begrudged their corn and grain revenues. Captain Unicorn ruled over the unicorns, Great Prairie and most of Latigo. The head of the Equus’ zebra followers living there, opposed to Morning Star, was called Chief Zebra. He wore a crown of clover around his head.

“I have heard much about you, troublemaker. Some say you claim to be the son of Equus. And that you do wondrous things in the name of Jackass, the prince of evil horses.”

Morning Star approached, head poised. Every horse stood still, staring at him, not even flicking their tails, ears pointed forward.

“There are more horses’ asses in this world than horses. I have no Jackass for a father. If any horse follows me, Equus will honor him and her. I have come here to observe my father. I can only act by his will. All I do is for him, no other.”

“You swearer! How dare you?” Chief Zebra screamed. A zebra reared up and wacked Morning Star’s head, knocking him down. He rose, stunned.

“This is all I have to say: I shall be at the right side of Equus. You shall see me one day with luminescent wings, and my father’s winged steeds following me from Empyrean Fields.”

Great Zebra neighed “Kill Him” and all zebras and other horses snorted “Kill Him. Kill him.” Some galloped to him, kicking and biting until he fell.

Captain Unicorn, the superior over all unicorns, presided over this and then decreed
“As you will, zebras. So be it.” He ordered some unicorns to approach.

Morning Star’s small herd hid among other horses, nervous and scared.

“Kill him outside Great Prairie. He rides on your back, zebras, not mine.”

As they passed Stoney, one zebra said, “Do you know this traitor?”

“Never saw him in my life,” Stony said, and hoofed back behind the others.

They led him outside, pinned him against a tree, and three unicorns charged him full speed—goring him but their horns broke off, impaling him on the tree. Morning Star groaned, but whispered something and their horns instantly grew back. After too long a time, he died. Some of his mares wept at a distance. When unicorn guards knew he was dead, they left. Some of his herd bit and pulled out the horns like giant splinters, and he slumped to the ground, lifeless. Several ponies and donkeys lifted him with their muzzles, carried him to a cave, laid him gently down, and left for the night. His herd cried and grieved.

A few days later, one early morning, some devoted mares carried spring flowers and spicy plants in their mouths to the cave, to place near him. But when they arrived, it was empty!

“Where is he?” They looked into the dim space. They went outside when suddenly, a glorious glowing horse, with shimmering wings, hovered a few feet above ground like a dragonfly. The mares trembled and shivered in fright.

“Do not be afraid. Morning Star is alive! He is not here. He will meet you at the field he told you about, past Great Prairie but the big lake. Go and tell all of his herd and Stoney.”

The mares galloped as quickly as they could to tell everyone the good news.

This testament is straight from the horse’s mouth.