

# A Horse is a Horse

Max handed Shisen a device with a distinctive shaped end. Shisen took it and four thin legs held together by mechanical joints dropped down.

"This is like a gag on the new guy right? Now, what am I supposed to do with a toy horse?" Shisen asked incredulously.

It was heavy and there were jewels involved. It had small ruby eyes, a pair of diamonds in its belly, quartz hooves, and a tail of gold wires. "I suppose that I could throw it at someone and maybe knock them over."

"It's a techno-wizardry device. Give it a try."

Shisen concentrated on the toy. He activated it and a mystical horse of blue and white energy with red glowing eyes appeared. Of the armature there was no sign. "That's a fair load. I feel quite drained. This thing should come with batteries."

Shisen slipped his foot into the stirrup of the conveniently created magical saddle on the ghostly horse's back. He pulled himself up and over. Max told him, "What's a knight without a good horse?"

Shisen patted the animal's neck and asked, "Are you a good horse?"

Grabbing the reins Shisen turned the phantom mount around toward Max and then back again the other way. He grinned, "Pretty easy. It certainly isn't going to be

bothersome. If you'll excuse me a bit Max I'll put it through its paces and see how fast it goes and long it lasts."

Max nodded. Shisen whipped the reins slightly and the horse took off like a shot. He rode through the trees at breakneck speed. The horse was incredibly nimble and eminently manoeuvrable. It moved where he wanted when he wanted. Soon he slacked off on the reins and guided the horse with pure thought alone. The hooves of the phantom mount made a fair bit of noise but over that Shisen could hear the whipping flat of his hat's brim.

Shisen could see that they were coming up on some sort of embankment's edge. He brought the horse to a halt and rubbed at his buttons. Patting the horse he asked it, "Shall we do it?"

The horse snorted and threw its head. It leaned forward and nosed at the air in front of it. Shisen urged the horse into a full tilt gallop. They reached the edge in no time and Shisen willed the horse to jump. The embankment was only a shallow incline down a long hill. The horse soared through the air for a huge distance and landed with a loud thud and continued running without the slightest pause. Shisen pulled it to a stop. "Whoa, that was amazing! This sure isn't a toy."

He set the horse off at a trot.

o o o o

Shisen knew just before the spell from the TW horse device was about to expire that it would do so. He brought the horse to a stop and dismounted. The horse began to fade from sight. Up underneath of the saddle was the armature. He grabbed for it as it began to fall. He caught it just inches from the ground. Slipping it into his satchel he headed west. He had taken the horse away from the ley line to a strip with fewer trees so he could really push it to its top speed. When he reached the ley line he moved to its middle. The sullen grey sky and the thick clouds overhead made the blue energy of the line shine brightly. In that azure glow Shisen's material was cast a shade of sapphire.

Shisen concentrated. The material around his buttons bunched up swallowing the edges of each disc. Within seconds Shisen began to fade from sight. Suddenly he disappeared. Miles away where the ley line intersected another ley line and formed a nexus Shisen appeared. He pulled out his claymore and summoned energy from the nexus to activate the Battle Fury. He practised with the sword and its extended abilities during the fury's influence. He recharged the sword four times until he had expended all of the energy he had gathered from the nexus. While he practised his own energy reserves slowly replenished themselves. He was nearly done when a noise drew his attention. Three beings were headed in his direction. They bobbed and weaved along through the trees. Shisen knew them for

what they were right away.

Three Black Faeries approached him. They were hideous, abhorrent, dishonourable things. Their limbs were long and sharp with no hands or feet just sharp points. Their bodies were bloated sacks with vaguely humanoid definition and the size of a grown human male. Their faces were indistinguishable except for the pair of jaws filled with broken razor sharp teeth. They didn't really seem to use their slick stiff wings. Their long tails covered in sharp gnarled spines lashed about as they floated along. Shisen held himself in check and said to them, "Welcome, fellow defenders of Tolkeen."

Two of them broke out into a horrid giggling while the third answered, "Yes, defenders of Tolkeen. Slayers of the C.S. human hordes."

A different one said, "Nice sword."

The third nudged the first that spoke with its tail. "Yes, nice sword. We must, ah, reque... requesire--no, we must uh have it for the war effort."

"Do you not who you are speaking to? I am with the war effort." Shisen said feigning ignorance.

The leader said, "With the effort? We're with the army. You mercs should be more helpful. Give us the sword."

Shisen slipped it into his scabbard and put his hands on his hips. Beneath the edge of his satchel was the hilt of his other sword. He told the Black Faerie, "Now why should I do such a thing as that? I can't help out without

my sword. More bodies are needed."

The other two chimed together like it was some twisted song, "Give us the sword, we both getting bored!"

The leader moved quicker than Shisen anticipated and grabbed his right arm. With his left Shisen drew his Death Bringer sword. A second faerie grabbed for his other arm with its tail. Shisen lopped off the end of its tail. The third faerie didn't advance but watched. The first tried unsuccessfully to pull him off of his feet. Shisen slashed at its tail cuttings it off nearly halfway along its length. The second stabbed at him with one of its arms and Shisen blocked it sending the foul thing spinning through the air. Shisen ran the leader through with his sword. The second faerie backed away. The first impaled upon the sword beat upon the blade with its arms. Shisen drove his foot into the thing's lower abdomen driving it off of the blade. It reeled for a moment and then Shisen cut it right across the bloated belly. He cut back the other way at a sharp angle and gutted the thing. Thick, stinking, yellow foam and ropy, grey strands fell out of the Black Faerie as it sank to the ground.

The other two faeries were hanging onto each other and wailing. Shisen approached the fallen thing. It looked dead but with such creatures it was better safe than sorry. Shisen raised the Death Bringer over his head and brought it smashing down on the terrible creature's head. Sure that he hadn't missed it, Shisen caught the

mystical energy as it exploded out of the Black Faerie, doubled at the instant of the fiendish creature's death. Hoping to catch him off guard the second Black Faerie cast a fireball at him. The flames fizzled uselessly against him. Shisen closed the distance. The faerie struck out at him with the stump of its tail. It knocked him and sent him sprawling to the ground. The creature jumped him immediately stabbing him in the stomach with its leg. It stabbed him again before he swung the sword at it. It swept the blow away and stabbed him where his heart would be if he had such an organ.

Shisen's next swipe was blocked and the faerie stabbed him once more after he feebly failed to block the blow. The third faerie joined in and tried to stab him but he fended off the blow and slashed it sending out a spray of foul, foamy pus. The faeries kept stabbing him and Shisen let them as he began to cast a spell using some of the energy from the dead faerie. Part way through the spell one of them stabbed him through the throat but he didn't need it to speak anyway. He completed the spell before they thought to turn from stabbing to slashing. The sword glowed with a white light now. Shisen's chest was full of holes.

Though he was on his back Shisen gained the initiative and sliced the second Black Faerie in half right to left. The other faerie had no idea what had happened and stabbed Shisen in the groin as if it would make a difference. It turned as the other, it's mobile top half at

least, sank to the ground. Shisen slashed it across the side opening it deeply. It turned to flee. Shisen tried to slash it again but was too late. He got to his feet and scrambled over to the half Black Faerie. It was still alive. Shisen slit its throat and as its energy bloomed he grabbed it up.

Shisen got to his feet properly and set off at a run after the fleeing Black Faerie. It was flying fast and picking up speed. Shisen pulled the TW horse from his satchel and pumped some of the faeries' energy into it. The phantom mount appeared trotting next to him. He grabbed the reins and missed the stirrup but caught it on the second try. He got into the saddle properly and willed the horse to its top speed. The Black Faerie was still faster and would soon get away.

They zigged and zagged around the trees but the horse kept after the faerie even as it began to pull away. Shisen still had the Death Bringer in his hand. He pointed it at the fleeing fiend and pumped more dead Black Faerie energy into it. A glittering beam of energy fired from the sword and obliterated a huge section of a tree. The tree fell away from Shisen as the horse ran past it. He fired a second shot that vaporised a huge hole through the Black Fairy's chest. It tumbled end for end and smacked wetly into a tree. Shisen pulled the horse to a stop at the tree. It was most definitely dead; foul and senseless creature.

From out of nowhere Thosl appeared. Shisen almost

pointed his sword at her. She gave him a look before saying, "A teleportation team dropped me off at the centre of the nexus. When I saw the slain Black Faeries I thought it best to investigate. I see I should not have wasted my time. The General told me not to be slaying our allies."

"These bastard creatures thought they'd relieve me of my sword. They had it coming to them."

"So there is bounds to your honour then? You chased this one after it obviously fled."

"Brigands deserve nothing less."

"I care not. These are pathetic creatures. Not worth a thing."

"Not worth the magical energy they release upon their deaths like everything else that lives? I have some left over if you care to fiddle with a spell. If not I'm just going to release it. I don't really care to hang onto it."

"Do not waste it Shisen. I will put it to use if only not to waste it. I am fresh from the Tolkeen market and have everything needed to create my summoning circles."

"I'll have to give it to you and then leave. I told 2nd Lieutenant Walker that I would not be gone long."

"He gave you the equine?"

"Yes, it's actually a techno-wizard device that summons it."

"Max had a talisman for me, and this amulet." she said holding it up for Shisen to see.

"It would seem switching Generals has been good for

us."

"So it would seem. Tell Max, or whomever you need to, that I will need some time to return from this nexus when I am done. I do not have a radio with me."

Shisen sighed loudly, "Take mine then."

"I flew to Tolkeen as a Luck Bird."

"And boy were your arms tired."