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Girls and Bridle

Chapter 3 - Little Horseshoes

"Higher, the knees!"

"Why?"

"Because I know what I'm doing. So, higher, the knee, then pause for a sec, then switch."

"Aaaah!"

For the past three days, Sophie has been training Moonlight to walk properly in pony boots and improve her overall balance. They were practicing inside a good size interior paddock. Morning Star, on her side, was sitting on a bench, reading her racing magazines, and occasionally analyzing her future racemate's progress.

No encouragement came from Morning Star as she much preferred to wear her bridle and bit, which made her feel closer to her goal of running again. Today, she came to the barn using crutches. Soon, depending on what the doctor would say, she will be cleared for walking to reinforce her ankle which was necessary before being able to train again.

There was no huge rush in her case as the Triple Cup qualification races were much later in the season. The first few races before that would just make them eligible for the qualification ones. It didn't matter if they finished first or last during those.

But if Morning Star was not ready to train again, Moonlight was even farther from being able to compete. Walking around the paddock was just to condition her tiny stabilizer muscles that never really worked before when she was running without pony boots. Unfortunately, the young girl was about to have enough of these pointless exercises.

So far, being owned by Penny's stable was okay. Sophie and Morning Star were friendly, but she felt that they treated her like an incompetent child and only made her do boring exercises. Boots or not, she wanted to run, not uselessly dance around.

"Okay, Sophie! That's enough. I feel strong. I know you want me to have good form and all, but I'm ready to run. Let me show you what I can do, at least!"

"You are not ready."

"Stop saying that! I am!"

"You have to trust me, Moonlight. I'm making you a better runner."

"I do trust you, but..."

"But you don't. And as long as you don't, we are not going anywhere."

"Ah, yeah? Well, watch me!"

"Moonlight... Don't!"

There was nothing else Sophie could have said to stop Moonlight at this point, so she just watched her do whatever she wanted to do, hoping it wouldn't result in an injury. Sophie didn't have the proper tools in place yet to control the impatient girl.

Moonlight trotted to one end of the paddock and prepared for a sprint. Sophie attempted one last time to prevent her from making a mistake.

"Moonlight, come back here. Don't do this. It won't help your case."

"Well, if that is the only way to change your mind. 3... 2... 1..."

Her new hooves dug into the dirt, and throwing away everything she had learned so far, she initiated a sprint, much like her human form would have done; this was probably the worst thing she could have done while wearing pony boots. After a couple of powerful steps, one of her hooves ended up behind the other, and she tripped herself. A gracious dive followed, and Moonlight landed face first on the soft dirt like a dolphin on a beach.

"Pffaaah! Pfffah!"

"Sand doesn't taste good, right?"

Sophie crouched in front of the humiliated pony and ordered her to stay on the ground. This was an excellent opportunity for some special teachings.

"Stay on your belly! Now listen to me! You just experienced a kinetic trip. Your hooves are heavier than your human feet. Once they start going sideways, it is almost impossible to stabilize them. The harder you run, the harder it is to control."

"Mmm ... Then hooves are stupid..."

"Are they now? There is a reason for their weight. You'll be pulling a cart. Get those hooves moving properly, and their energy will help you pull it. It will be easier than if you try to do it as a human."

"... Can I stand up now?"

"No, stay down... I'll be back in a minute."

Moonlight watched Sophie walk away, leaving her face down in the dirt. She turned her head to the left to perhaps get some encouragement from Morning Star, but the elite pony didn't seem to be phased out by what had just happened; her nose was still pointing toward her racing magazine.

A minute later, Sophie came back with a couple of scary items.

"Follow me, Moonlight. Sit on the bench next to Star."

"What's all this?"

"You'll see. I didn't plan on using it on you, but you just changed my mind. I just noticed your biggest problem. You don't trust me."

"That's not true, I've done everything you asked me to."

"That's nice, but it doesn't mean anything. There is a huge difference between doing what I'm asking and trusting that I'm right about it."

"... What are we going to do? Is this a bridle?"

"Yes. It's a training bridle... You won't like it very much, but it will help you break your bad habits. I'm not even going to ask you to trust me on that because you won't."

"..."

On top of the training bridle, Sophie brought a wide leather belt that had seen better days and a long rope. She wrapped the leather belt around Moonlight's waist and tightened it loosely. Then she untangled the bridle and approached Moonlight's face with the bit, which caused her to jerk back.

"Wait... Did Morning Star have to do this too?"

"Yes, she did. She wasn't always that obedient pony."

Morning Star looked at Moonlight, nodded, and gave her a thumbs-up. The young ponygirl frowned a little and decided that it was enough to give it a shot; Morning Star provided some credibility to the exercise. She opened her mouth and let Sophie put it on her with some reluctance.

"Relax, it's not going to kill you. It's just a small head harness."

"Feew weiw!"

"Don't try to talk when you have a bit. Just imagine you are an obedient pony, okay? When we get you a real bridle, it's going to be much more comfortable, and you are going to ask for it."

Sophie roughly adjusted the straps on the training bridle; one under the chin, one on top of the head, and one behind the upper neck. Moonlight brought her hands to her face to inspect what was attached to her head, which Sophie allowed.

"Yeah, take a look. See, it's no big deal. You can't see on the sides because there are blinkers, I'll tell you about those in a sec. Stand up, now."

Sophie helped Moonlight up and attached an end of the long rope to a ring on the side of her bit. Then she lowered the pony's head and placed them in the cuffs dangling from the belt. They were just velcros and not very restrictive, but it was just enough for this exercise.

"Alright, so, the goal here is to teach you that you can trust me blindly. If you listen to me, you will do well. If you don't, you will struggle a lot and maybe fall. Let's start simple."

Sophie grabbed the rope, only a short inches away from the bridle, which was very restrictive.

"Come, Moonlight. We are just going to walk for a bit. Don't worry. If you lose balance, I'll catch you. Follow me."

Using the rope as a guide, Sophie made Moonlight do her first steps. It was a languid walk, not challenging the slightest. The weird thing was that Moonlight couldn't see Sophie because of the blinkers. She couldn't help but turn her head to look at her.

"No, Moonlight. Don't look at me. Just walk casually, look where you are going and let me lead you. Pay attention to how you feel. Notice this little feeling of loss of control because you have to rely on someone else to know where to go. Just be aware of it, don't fight it. It will go away on its own. Just keep walking with me."

It was as if Sophie could read minds. Moonlight focused on that feeling her trainer was talking about, and it was how she felt exactly. It was anxiety mixed with fear. She couldn't do what she wanted. She wanted to run but couldn't. She wanted to look at Sophie, but couldn't. She had to accept that she wasn't in control.

It was a bit like going to the dentist. Everybody wanted good looking teeth, but the thought of having somebody else using tools in their mouth was far from appealing. It was natural to get anxious. But knowing the dentist was the most qualified person to do the work, it was easier to trust him.

For the next ten to fifteen minutes, they walked around the paddock together. Sophie just chatted about random things that had nothing to do with the training, and Moonlight eventually calmed down quite a bit. She was no longer trying to fight her emotions and just followed along without thinking.

"Good girl, Moonlight. You are doing so well. Did you even realize that I was six feet away from you now? See... Nothing bad happened. Now, stay in that mood. I want you to walk how I taught you earlier. High knee and one-second pause. Keep looking ahead, so you don't lose balance."

Moonlight kind of wanted to smile because Sophie was right; it did feel good to let it go. She had not fallen; Sophie didn't make her crash into a wall; everything was okay.

"Good posture! Follow the gentle tug of the rope. Don't fight it. High knee... Perfect! That is exactly it! That is SO much better, Moonlight. You should see you go. Keep relaxing. We will increase the pace in a minute or two. How do you feel?"

Neigh!

"Oh, my God, Moonlight! Did you just make a pony noise!? That's ADORABLE!"

Morning Star, who heard the same thing, got all excited and traded her sports magazine for a little clapping round.

At that moment, Moonlight felt something unique coursing through her veins. A feeling of pride that she had never experienced before. Sophie caught that from her pony and decided it was time to kick the exercise up a notch.

"Alright, Moon! Don't change ANYTHING, but just go faster. Make the pause shorter and follow the gentle tug of the rope!"

And the ponygirl, circling Sophie, started to fly. Adding speed to her awkward walk made it so much more comfortable. She began to sense wind hitting her face, that feeling of freedom only running could provide.

"AWESOME! Awesome! Don't push too hard. Focus on your perfect form. Let me take care of everything else. I'm not letting you go! Does it feel good? Running without thinking? Does it not feel good to be a ponygirl? You are AMAZING Moonlight! Look at her go, Morning Star. She reminds me of you when we first met! Alright! Follow me now!"

Sophie started running around in front of Moonlight, but her short legs had trouble keeping up with such a powerful ponygirl; it was a lot of fun. Sophie was zigzagging in every direction and even made some very sharp turns to test Moonlight agility, but the ponygirl did everything perfectly.

After a couple of minutes, Sophie was out of breath, and she let herself fall on the sandy ground. Moonlight landed next to her on her knees, panting as well.

"Hahaha! You did it, Moonlight! You did it! You are so good!"

Neigh!

"Haaa! Stop doing that! You are way too cute! I'm SO proud of you."



"Hey, you two, look at this!"

Hemlock and Nightshade were making out on the haystack in their stall when Brittany slid the metal door open and walked toward them with a big book in her hands.

"Move, let me sit between you."

Having no other choice, the pink ponies separated, and Brittany's butt came crashing in the hay.

"Look, that is our photo album from when we went to town for the photoshoot. Remember? When you got molested by your fans."

Why would she have to add this detail to the conversation when the two ponies who suffered from this event were next to her was a mystery. Her morality standards were as low as ever. However, she managed to catch their attention. The actual photoshoot was kind of fun, and they were looking forward to seeing the result of it.

"It's only in black and white, but still, look at how great you two look."

"Mmm... We do look good. Those pictures are very sexy. Thanks, Brittany."

Hemlock was quite satisfied with what she saw. Those pictures could be used for promotional purposes, like special events where they signed photos for the fans. Paul's stable had no shame in asking for money for everything.

Brittany flipped the pages, and Hemlock's chin was now resting on her shoulder in approval of the good final product. However, Nightshade remained silent, so much that it raised suspicion.

"What's up, Nightshade? You don't like the photos?"

"I... I do... They are okay."

"Okay? It doesn't sound like it. Are you still mad that I had to put ice on your butt when we came back home?"

"No... It's just..."

"Just what? Tell us..."

"I... I don't really like myself on those pics."

Brittany lacked empathy but not Hemlock, so she pushed the small driver in the hay and rejoined Nightshade on the other side.

"Why are you saying that? You are the prettiest girl on the circuit. Why do you think I'm always after you?"

"Well... The pictures just made me realize that... I'm a bit flat-chested."

"WHAT? Nightshade. You are not flat-chested at all. Your boobs are as big as mine."

"I don't think they are big enough. Look at that picture, here... It's like I have nothing."

"That's because we are wearing tight latex bodysuits. It's normal. It's just an angle."

"Aaah! It's fine. Nevermind. The pictures are okay."

Nightshade stood up and went for a stroll in the barn, leaving Brittany alone with Hemlock. As she was picking the hay out of her hair, Brittany chuckled a bit.

"Hehe, that was unexpected. I didn't know Nightshade felt bad about her body. Who would have thought? She is so pretty."

"Well, that's sad. She is gorgeous. I don't know why she thinks she is not."

"You, ponies, are insane, so I'm not surprised. I'm not dealing with that kind of crap! As long as she can run, I don't care about her chest size."

Hemlock had an urge to explain to Brittany how insensitive she was and how inferior it made her look, but since she was the driver and trainer, it was better to refrain from doing so. Having ill feelings toward her would just lead to a disaster on the race track.

She would ignore Brittany's comment for now and have a chat with Nightshade later.



"Tiang? Are you asleep?"

It was close to midnight when Xiuying showed up in Tiantang Zhi Ma's stall. The Chinese ponygirl was deep asleep on her haystack and didn't react when her driver called her name.

Xiuying got closer and put her hand on the sleeping ponygirl; she was so warm and looked so peaceful; it was almost a shame to wake her up like this.

"Hey, wake up... we are going for a ride."

"Mmm..."

"It's a perfect night. Let's go."

Even though Tiantang didn't wear her bridle, she preferred to remain silent and stay in her pony role. She let Xiu help her up and pull her to a corner.

Xiu unhooked the bridle from the wall and fastened it around Tiang's head and then attached a set of reins to it. Next, she grabbed the leather armbinder; tonight, the Asian ponygirl wouldn't have her hands cuffed to her side. It was a special occasion, not a race.

"Put your arms in there."

Not resisting one bit, Tiantang rolled her shoulders and placed her wrists together behind her back. She felt the leather monoglove engulfing her arms comfortably, which always sent good feelings through her body.

Two sturdy leather straps were crossed in front of her chest and tightened, which ensured the impossibility of an escape. As Xiuying pulled on the laces to bring the ponygirl's arms closer, the sexy crackling of the leather made the ambiance so romantic.

After pushing the extra length of laces inside the armbinder, she snapped a padded leather blindfold on the bridle, taking away the wearer's sense of vision until further notice.

Tiantang followed the slight tug of the reins and exited her stall. There was no other feeling comparable to this one, to surrender entirely to a loved person, in this case, her lover and driver.

Together they had reached the summit of confidence in each other that only a few teams could achieve over a very long amount of time. There was no questioning, no resistance, no worries—only love and trust.

Xiu went to fetch a cart. It was not their racing one; this one had a more robust frame to withstand the roughest terrains. She attached it to Tiantang's harness and tested the setup to make sure it was safe and that they were good to go.

The small Asian driver put her riding hat on and grabbed a crop from the rack along with a lantern. She climbed in the cart, making the old suspension springs squeal, and used the reins to direct her blinded pony out of the barn.

"Trot!"

The little cart was now in motion, rolling down the alley leading to the property gate. As soon as they hit the paved road, Xiuying gave another simple command.

"Canter!"

Tiantang picked up the pace.

As the clock struck midnight, the ambiance was just right,
The little horseshoes pulled hard, causing sparks to fly,
Two lovers embracing their life, under the moon and the stars,
Destiny was not a destination. Destiny was this perfect moment.

"Trot!"

After fifteen minutes on the hard pavement, Xiu guided the cart to a crossing dirt road.

"Lift your knees higher not to trip. We are going uphill."

Dancing around on the uneven path, the little cart made its way to the location Xiu had in mind. Going uphill was hard work, but nothing Tiantang couldn't handle, even while blindfolded; she loved those small surprise trips and the freshness of the night wind.

For another fifteen minutes, Tiantang zigzagged on the dirt road, unconsciously following the barely noticeable tugs of the reins. She felt safe and at peace in the hands of her rider; it was what being a ponygirl was all about.

"Walk!"

The road had become much rougher, but they were close now. After another fifty meters, Xiuying directed Tiang to a grassy patch and stopped her cart.

"Woah! We arrived. That was a fun ride, was it not?"

Neigh!

"I thought you would agree. It truly is a perfect night."

Xiu got off her cart and unclipped it from Tiantang's harness and tossed the reins over her head.

"Come."

The blinded pony followed the gentle tug; her hooves crushed some dry vegetation.

"Sit down and close your eyes behind your blindfold, okay?"

This odd command filled Tiantang with joy. It was not the first time she received it from Xiu, and she knew what was going to happen next. She was about to experience her favorite thing in the whole world, and this was an understatement.

She crouched down and let herself fall onto her muscular posterior while keeping balance using the tip of her armbinder. Xiu joined her on the ground, sitting behind her and wrapping her arms around her chest.

"I love you, Tiang. I wanted to give you this gift tonight, for all the good things that happened to us. Let me take off your bridle, okay? But don't say anything and wait before opening your eyes."

Tiantang silently nodded. Her heart was racing, and she wanted to sink into her partner so much it felt comfortable and helped her contain her excitement. One by one, the straps loosened from around her head, and she let the bit go.

Xiuying wrapped an arm around Tiang's neck, and another gripped the harness at her belly level. The Asian ponygirl wasn't going anywhere.

"Okay, this is it. Look up a little bit and open your eyes when you are ready. Heaven is your home."

The beautiful black eyes opened and reflected all the light from the Universe!

Before Tiang's eyes was a giant full moon, painfully brilliant, surrounded by a billion stars. After being blindfolded for the past half hour, her sensitivity to light was at its peak, allowing her to see everything present in the night sky. Xiu had brought her here to witness the infinity of space, the birthplace of all and everything.

Among this endless amount of bright dots was a little red ponygirl hugged amorously by a caring driver.

"Only a majestic night sky such as this one can rival the love I have for you. You are my ponygirl, and I will never let you go!"

Tiantang Zhi Ma turned her head sidway, looked deeply in Xiuying's eyes for a moment, and then kissed her. There was nothing else to do.



"As per your last x-rays, you are making an incredible recovery. Sophie must have been taking great care of you."

"She wouldn't let me do anything."

"And it worked. Why don't you stand up for me without your crutches..."

"NO! WHAT IF HER ANKLE BREAKS AGAIN!"

Sophie wasn't mentally prepared for this. It was a routine checkup at the doctor's office, but now he asked Morning Star to walk again, so soon. As small as it could be, another injury would send their Triple Crown hopes right to a coffin.

The doctor just chuckled at Sophie's overreaction and adopted a different approach to defuse the small driver crisis.

"Her ankle is not going to break. She healed quickly, but it's not unheard of. It varies from people to people. Morning Star is a very healthy woman, so I'm sure it helped. It's up to her... If she wants to walk now, good, else we can wait another week. But it is only going to improve.

"I want to walk now!"

Sophie was preventing Morning Star from getting off from the examination table.

"Are you suuuure?"

"Let me go, Sophie! I want to walk."

"I know you! You want to run! You can't run yet!"

"I won't run. Let me walk!"

"No!"

Rolling his eyes at this childish scene, the doctor chipped in once more.

"The sooner she walks, the sooner she will complete her recovery. She is losing muscle mass by the day."

"Don't encourage her! What kind of doctor are you to encourage her to move!?"

"Sophie, that's enough! Let me walk now!"

Morning Star was way stronger than Sophie and could have pushed her away sooner, but she didn't like to roughen her driver as it was not very pony-like. But she also heard what the doctor had said, so she effortlessly moved Sophie aside.

"Heey! You can't do that! You have to obey me!"

"Just let me walk, okay?"

"Fiiiine! But... be careful!"

The brave pony cautiously slid off the table and put all her weight on her good foot. Then she slowly transferred to her injured one, hoping nothing wrong would happen; it just felt stiff and uncomfortable.

"It's going to be awkward at first, but the more you will move, the more it will get back to normal. Here, go walk a bit in the hallway to see how it feels."

The doctor opened the door to let the ponygirl out. In the waiting room was Moonlight, eating a cookie, who noticed her pony friend standing on her own.

"Hey! Morning Star. You can walk now?"

"I think so... it's stiff, though."

After a few backs and forth in the hallway, things were already feeling much better. Her leg was weak, but it wasn't painful. She accelerated to a normal pace, but she attempted to jog after five steps, sending Sophie to panic mode.

"NO! STOP! You can't run yet! Moonlight! Help me stop her!"

"Leave me alone! I want to run! Let me go, Moonlight! Let me go!"



"Thanks for making a scene in the doctor's office, Star. It was just embarrassing for all of us."

"I want to run!"

"Yeah, but you've done it. I will ensure you are not escaping at night and get yourself injured again."

"..."

"That's right. You are going to sleep in your stall until I decide otherwise."

"But..."

"No buts! It's time to change your regimen a bit. I've been spoiling you with that comfy bed and magazines, so if you want those again, you are going to listen to me."

Moonlight, who was sitting on the back seat, was a bit puzzled. Was Sophie really going to make Morning Star sleep in the barn? That seemed a bit harsh.

"You'll make her sleep alone in the barn?"

"Ah! I'm debating about making you sleep there too, Moonlight."

"What? Why? What did I do!?"

"Where did you find that cookie?"

"The nurse gave it to me. She said she didn't want to get fat."

"And you thought it was okay? You don't care that I'm the one in charge of feeding you?"

"But..."

"Argue again, and you know where you'll sleep."

Sophie was in a foul mood after the Morning Star's unwanted stunt at the clinic. She felt as if she was losing control; her ponies weren't listening recently. It was time to regain that control, or else things would not end well for anybody.

"Also, Moonlight, I'm going to find you a race for next week. It's more than time for you to show off your skills."

"... I'm... going to race?"

"Yes, probably one of those amateur Saturday night races."

"But... Morning Star is not ready... How..."

"It's just going to be you and me. You'll pull my cart alone."

"But... I never pulled a cart."

"You will as soon as we get home. And tomorrow, we will get you a real bridle."



"BREAST IMPLANTS!?"

"What? I thought you would be happy! What's the problem?"

Hemlock and Nightshade looked at each other as soon as they heard what Paul Clover told them. They were summoned to his office, unsure about the reason, but then he dropped that bomb on them.

"Don't make that face, that is a great and generous gift from me. Do you know how much those things cost?"

"But..."

"Listen... Brittany came to see me the other day, saying that you would like bigger breasts. You should thank her. She said that from a promotional standpoint, it would be a great move. So she proposed that we get you breast implants. Going up in size won't change much to your performance, but fans will drool all over you, which means more money for us."

"But... our breasts are already bigger than average... I think."

Hemlock squeezed her own boobs to make sure that what she had stated was accurate...

"Are you saying you don't want bigger breasts?"

"Well... Yes..."

"..."

Hemlock never considered such a thing, but unfortunately for her, Nightshade remained silent and looked down at her feet.

"Nightshade! Tell him we don't need to do that..."

"Well..."

"..."

"... I kinda like the idea..."

"You cannot be serious! I told you, you are beautiful as is!"

"Yeah... I know.... But... I think I would like bigger breasts... It's kind of hot."

Paul stood up from behind his desk and clapped his hands loudly, snapping the ponies out of their private conversation.

"Good! I'm glad you agree to it because you have an appointment for your operation this weekend. The sooner, the better. That way, you can recover from the surgery before your first race."

"We... We didn't agree to anything!"



"This is not a cart."

"No, it is not. It's called a sled. And those grey things are called concrete blocks."

"I know what concrete is..."

Once they came back from the hospital, Sophie was still furious at Morning Star for attempting to run. She had locked her in her stall after placing her arms inside an armbinder. The bridle went on, and she tied her up to the wall with a short rope. There was no way she could run now. Morning Star would have to wait for Sophie to interact with her later.

As for Moonlight, she was back in the interior paddock wearing her pony boots and a sturdy training harness. Sophie had attached two big ropes from her hips to an old wooden sled. They were both standing in a corner next to a pile of concrete blocks.

"So, once you are used to pulling this thing, pulling a cart will be easy. Give me a lap with the sled only, so that you get a feel for it before we add weight."

"Okay..."

Moonlight quickly got her legs moving, and the sled followed closely.

"Keep your hands to your side, or else I'll have to cuff them!"

"Well... It's not very hard..."

"Yeah, you make it look easy, but wait till we add a few blocks on it."

It looked easy, indeed. The empty sled just dragged on the dirt without offering any challenge. It was heavier than a cart, even without the extra weight, so, to Sophie, this was

secretly encouraging. Since day one, she knew Moonlight was exceptionally strong for a girl her age, but now she was about to discover how strong she really was.

When Moonlight finished her first lap, she stopped in front of the concrete blocks pile and demanded more weight.

"Yeah, that was too easy, Sophie. You can add a couple. Let's start with four."

"FOUR!?"

"Is... is it too much?"

"Well, it won't be light, but you are strong... Okay, worst-case scenario, you won't go very far."

Sophie went to the pile of concrete and brought one block at a time, placing them on the sled. Moonlight didn't seem overly concerned but obviously expected this to be harder.

"Oof! That was a good workout. Alright, try to pull it if you can. Hehe."

"MMmph!"

The first step looked hard, but then the sled started to move, and not just a little bit. Moonlight seemed to have more in common with a tractor than a ponygirl. Her new boots were working perfectly well, and her ankles seemed so very strong.

Her second lap was slower than her first, but still. Sophie had seen many pony girls who had failed to pull an empty sled; the good ones pulled two or three blocks on top of it. Morning Star managed to pull six on a good day but very rarely completed a full lap.

When Moonlight came back from her second lap, she parked in front of the pile.

"Okay, how was it?"

"Not bad, it's not that I'm not strong enough, my feet are sliding."

"That's because you are turning your hooves sideways. Your horseshoes will lose grip if you do that. Try keeping your feet straight, okay? I'll add another block, but if you have trouble, let me know, and I'll help you."

Sophie added another concrete block on the sled. This time around, she made sure to coach Moonlight who was still turning her feet unconsciously. Quickly enough, the lap was over.

She added another block for a total of six... and after a short break, moonlight restarted to pull... successfully. It was hard for Sophie to keep such a poker face, but Moonlight had less difficulty doing it than Morning Star ever had. This was getting exciting a bit too quickly.

After another lap, much more strenuous this time, Moonlight was panting quite a bit and crouched down. Sophie rubbed her warm back and chuckled.

"Not that easy anymore. Hehe. Let's call it a day."

"... No."

"What do you mean no? Pulling six blocks is amazing. You really improved your technique too. You are so strong."

"I want to try one more."

"Really? Do you think you can do more than this?"

"Yes. Just let me rest for a few minutes."

"Okay... Hey, why are you rubbing your jaw?"

"It hurts a bit... I may have clenched it too hard."

"Ah... That's what I thought. Let me go grab a bridle. Biting in rubber will prevent that. I don't want you to get injured. I'll get you some water too."

Sophie headed back to the barn and murmured to herself her astonishment.

"Oh my God! This is unreal! She is so strong! And she didn't even do any strength training yet. This is ridiculous. I better go get Morning Star so she can witness that."

She immediately went to Morning Star's stall... and the ponygirl was mad. As soon as Sophie approached, she tried to headbutt her.

"Hey! Calm down! You can be angry at me later if you want, but I'm not joking right now. You **MUST** come see this. I'm going to untie you, but please, don't try to run. It's not the time, okay? It's about Moonlight. You have to see this. Do you promise you won't try to run?"

Morning Star rolled her eyes and sighed. Then she nodded. Her trainer made it sound more important than usual, so she decided to obey... for now. Perhaps if she behaved, Sophie wouldn't tie her with such a short rope later on.

"Okay, follow me. You won't believe it."

There was no doubt that Morning Star would appreciate what she was about to see, and maybe even get jealous.

Sophie grabbed the training bridle and filled a bucket of water, and then, she went back to the paddock with her elite ponygirl.

As soon as they entered the training area, Morning Star went a bit crazy and started to pull on her reins to get free. It was the first time since her accident that she was standing and wearing boots in this place where she used to run all the time. She just wanted to bolt and sprint. Sophie had to drop her other items and grab the reins with two hands, almost being dragged by the yanks.

"STOP! You promised! Stop! You'll hurt yourself!"

Morning Star had lost it. Her endless convalescence got the best of her, and the urge of galloping was just too strong to contain. She was determined to get away from Sophie and run, no matter what the consequences would be.

The poor trainer didn't expect that kind of attitude and was really struggling to hold on. Morning Star was way stronger than her so she had no chance to win this tug of war; she had to react quickly to prevent a disaster. Out of sheer luck, she saw an old forgotten riding crop leaning against the wall; it was just out of her reach, though. There was only one option...

"COME HERE, YOU!"

She pulled only on one side of the reins, painfully forcing Morning Star's head to turn. It was just enough distraction to cause her to make a few unbalanced steps in the right direction.

Sophie fingers wrapped around the crop and then she returned a severe gaze at Morning Star, who froze for an instant. It was too late for the ponygirl to have remorse.

THWACK!

Without any hesitation, Sophie whacked the frenzy ponygirl on the side of her thigh, causing her to twist due to the sharp pain.

"MMMPPH!"

"That hurt, right? Now CALM DOWN!"

Morning Star really wanted to run... She just wanted to run... She knew it wouldn't happen now, and her thigh was on fire. But she still yanked one more time, just in case she would get lucky...

THWACK!

"MMMPH!"

Another hit right where the previous one had landed brought her to her knee. Sophie didn't feel guilty one bit. She had done what was necessary to protect her pony against herself.

The last time she had to use a riding crop that way on Morning Star was when she lost her cool after being disqualified from her first Super Cup. They had accidentally bumped into Fifty Shades of Hay's cart, causing them to abandon the race. Morning Star believed that she was not responsible for the incident and tried to charge Fifty Shades. Sophie had managed to regain control before something ugly happened.

"ARE YOU DONE?"

"Ffff fffff."

"Right... Just try pulling on those reins one more time, and you'll see what happens. Stand up! I said, stand up! I don't care if it hurts."

"Ffff"

"What were you thinking? Do you want to break your ankle again? The doctor said you could only walk... But no... You stubborn pony, you want to run! I get that. But you'll run when I say you can run. Not a second before. Is that clear?"

"FFFF!"

"IS THAT CLEAR?"

Morning Star felt defeated. Her dream had been crushed, and she had been moralized in front of Moonlight on top of it. Because of that, she knew the next few weeks would turn into a nightmare. Sophie wouldn't let her do anything fun and wouldn't give her any slack. She lowered her head and let go of all resistance.

"Good. I'm glad we have an understanding. Now follow me. I still want you to watch Moonlight. She was on a roll, so I hope you didn't break her good mood with your shitty attitude. What a good example you give her. You should be proud of yourself."

As Sophie was tying Morning Star to a wall ring, Moonlight, at the other end of the paddock, had witnessed something she had never expected to see; Sophie battling her Elite pony and even

hurting her with a riding crop. It had been a scary sight, and she couldn't help but wonder if it would happen to her one day. The girl who was coming back to her had been so nice as of yet but was suddenly a bit more intimidating.

"I'm sorry you had to see that, Moon. Morning Star had been in a bad mood recently and finally lost it. I'm not that surprised."

"..."

"Ah, don't worry. I won't hit you like that so early in your training. You'll understand Morning Star's feeling later on when you start competing. Being unable to run can be very frustrating when you are addicted to it. Here, drink a bit of water, do you still want to try seven blocks?"

"Yes... I can do it."

Using a metal ladle, she cupped some of the water from the bucket and brought it to Moonlight's lips.

"No... don't touch it! Let me take care of you, okay?"

Every little action could be used as a training opportunity. Making Moonlight drink was just another way to promote trust between the pony and the trainer. It was a friendly gesture and Sophie's habit; she liked doing this kind of work a lot.

"So, ready?"

"Yes!"

As Sophie loaded the seventh concrete block on the sled, Morning Star was miserable. Her thigh throbbed with pain, and she wanted to go back to her stall to crash on her haystack; she didn't want to be here anymore. Watching Moonlight run would just make her feel worse. She pressed her forehead against the rough wooden wall, refusing to look and almost crying.

Sophie pulled her out of her self-loathing.

"Hey Morning Star, look at me one sec! Come on! Stop feeling sorry for yourself and look! That's why I brought you here."

Sophie insisted... Did she want to moralize her some more in front of Moonlight? Resigned, Morning Star turned her head around just enough to see Sophie from the corner of her eye... and her heart skipped a beat when she saw what she was doing.

The small trainer had her two arms lifted in front of her. On one hand, she extended five fingers, and on the other, two more fingers. Seven? It couldn't be. Did Sophie really mean...!?

Morning Star squinted at the sled while Sophie attached the training bridle to Moonlight's head. She counted seven blocks... Was this young girl that much more powerful than her? If it were true, it would be insane. The only ones on the circuit who could pull six blocks were Hemlock, Tiantang, and herself. Hemlock was the strongest and only managed to do seven once during a promotional event, and only on a very short distance. Nobody else could pull that much weight. Particularly not a young untrained girl.

"Alright, Moonlight. Just focus on your technique. I'm taking care of everything else. Imagine yourself as a strong workhorse, and you need to transport those blocks for me. When you are ready..."

Sophie, holding a rope attached to Moonlight's bridle, stood in front of her with a confidence-inspiring smile. The young ponygirl took a deep breath and tried to pull the sled.

"Mmmmp!"

It was not moving. It felt so much heavier with that seventh block on. Moonlight wasn't so sure if she could do this anymore.

"Come on, Moon. Remember what I taught you. Focus on pulling. Not on me and not on the sled. It's all in your head."

"MMMPHH!"

The sled jerked forward by about a few inches, which was a feat in itself. But it stopped immediately. Sophie walked up to Moonlight and pressed her two hands on the side of her warm head. Her face was so close...

"Trust me, this time. It WILL move. I promise. Give it all you got."

Moonlight frowned and bit her gag hard.

"AAAmmmp!"

"GO GO GO! You GOT IT! Keep pulling hard! Pull, pull, PULL!"

Morning Star couldn't believe what she was seeing. Moonlight was pulling seven bricks and not only on a short distance. Sophie kept yelling at Moonlight and encouraging her after every step she made. This was absolute insanity!

"ALMOST HALFWAY! Don't stop! If you stop, it's over! Go Go Go! Focus! Focus on pulling! Follow me!"

"AAaaaammph!"

"I know it hurts, but keep pulling! You can do this, Moon!"

Moonlight's entire body was burning when she crossed the halfway mark. But she didn't stop. Sophie's intention was crystal clear; she aimed at a full lap, which was unheard of.

"COME ON, MOON! Only a few more meters."

The sled came to a stop, three-quarter of the way, but it was not over yet. The strong ponygirl drew on her resolve and got it moving again, even faster this time.

"Five meters! ... FOUR ... THREE! ... TWO METERS! COME ON! ONE!"

"AAAAAAMMMMPH!"

"STOP Stop! Stop! You did it... Calm, CALM! Come here, come here...."

Moonlight's body was flooded with level adrenaline and pain that she never came close from experiencing before. She couldn't breathe enough air anymore and was extremely confused. Her anxiety skyrocketed, her whole body was shaking, and she didn't know what to do to make it stop. Sophie had seen this before, so she rushed to the panicked pony and wrapped her into a hug.

"It's all good... Calm... You're good. shhhh.... Breathe... breathe... shhhh. Come on... You're good. Kneel for me, okay? Good girl! Just calm down with me."

Moonlight fell on her knees and pressed her face against Sophie's warm belly. The soothing words made her close her eyes too. It felt as if her eyeballs were trying to look in every direction at once.

From afar, Morning Star was baffled. She had just witnessed an unofficial world record. Pulling seven blocks on such a distance had never happened before. Moonlight didn't look like it, didn't know about it either, but she was the strongest pony on Earth.



In the ward next to the operation room at the central hospital, two beautiful blonde girls were lying down on two side by side beds. As the anesthetic effects were wearing off, they started chatting with each other using a low voice.

"Hemlock? Are... Are you awake?"

"Yes... and I feel like shit."

"My... My boobs hurt."

"No kidding! So are mine. I wonder why."

"Sorry... I didn't mean to..."

"Mean to what? To go one size above what they recommended?"

"Are... are you mad at me?"

"Nah! I'll never be mad at you, Nightshade. I'm just worried. Our new boobs won't make you any more confident. I hope you'll believe me next time when I say you are gorgeous."

"I m... I'm sure you'll still like playing with my bigger breasts."

"Hehe... Probably... I hope mine will feel good too. They say we have to take it easy for the first two weeks, though."

"Aaanh!"

"Nightshade? What are you... Are you masturbating right now?"

"Mmmm... maybe."



The next day after the sled and concrete fun, Sophie and Moonlight were back at the store, Pony Exchange, to get what they needed for Moonlight's first amateur race. Right now, they were trying on a latex suit.

"It feels so weird! Remind me why I need to wear this again?"

"I told you, the rulebook says you have to wear one. It helps the commentators identify you on the track. It won't impede any of your movements. On top of that, latex will stick to your body more than anything else and follow all your curves. That way, your harness won't slide around and burn you. Plus, black suits you."

"It still feels strange... And it doesn't look as good as the ones I saw on Hemlock and Nightshade when their fans were molesting them."

"Hehe. That was funny. But yes, it needs to be polished. We will do that at home."

"But even Morning Star's suit didn't look as good as Hemlock and Nightshade's one."

"Aaah, it makes me puke to say that about her, but Brittany is probably the best at making her ponies look stunning. She has some secret tricks that I don't know about. Don't compare us to them. Okay, this one fits you great. We will buy it."

"Okay, I'll take it off now."

"Nooo... We need to get you a body harness first. Stop being so impatient."

Being a ponygirl was still very new to Moonlight. She never considered having anything to do with pony races until she met Tiantang and Xiuying. Even then, it was not something that interested her. On that aspect, she was different from every other ponygirl out there.

Spending the past few weeks under Sophie's care had changed things a little bit, though. Her life was filling up with small successes, something she had never experienced in her previous miserable life. So playing pony was slowly growing on her, and that made things way more fun than anticipated.

Despite that, she didn't feel like a real ponygirl most of the time. She wasn't like Morning Star, who was way more bestial and instinctive. When observing her, occasionally, she couldn't tell there was a human under that bridle.

Moonlight couldn't help but wonder if Sophie expected the same thing from her.

"Alright, let me try this harness on you."

"Hey... Sophie? What if I don't want to be a ponygirl?"

"What do you mean? You have a lot of fun with us, no?"

"Oh, yes. It's not what I meant. What if I don't want to act like a pony?... Like Morning Star does."

"Aaah, I see what you mean. Let me ask you this. How would you describe my personality?"

Answering a question by a question was a bit odd, and it was rather off-topic. As the straps tightened snugly around her body, Moonlight decided to attempt an answer anyway.

"You are joyful. You like taking care of us. You are funny. But I also know you like being in control."

"That's right. Now, how would you describe... Let's say... Xiuying?"

"Oh, totally different personality. Xiuying is like all serious and super by the book. But yet, she is such a loving person."

"Who is the better trainer, then? Her or me?"

"You can't ask me that! I didn't spend much time with Xiu, but I'm sure she is an excellent trainer too."

Sophie chuckled as she brought Moonlight exactly where she wanted in order to answer her initial question.

"Et voila. You answered your own question, Moonlight. There is not a right or wrong way to become a good ponygirl. Sure, you have to be willing to wear the boots and harness, but ultimately, the way you feel in them is up to you."

"Really?"

"Yes! You are not Morning Star and will never be. But you know what? Yes, I want you to become more pony-like, it's what will make you shine on the track, believe me on that. When you see the good results, maybe you'll decide to act more like a pony because you know it will bring you good things."

"Is that what happened to Morning Star? That's why she is so into it?"

"God no! Morning Star has been obsessed with pony racing since she was a kid. Let's say she is a natural. I have a picture of her wearing pony boots at 11 years old. Hehe. So cute."

Sophie gave a good tug on the harness.

"So, how does it feel?"

"It... It hurts here, in the middle of my chest."

Sophie examined Moonlight's chest and pressed on it with her fingertip.

"Here?"

"Yes, I always had that little lump there, I don't know what it is."

"Haha. A lump. Cute. That is your xiphoid process, silly. It's a bone. Yours is sticking out a bit more than average. Harnesses with a center ring are not good for you then. I'll make you try a different one."

After trying different models, the duo settled on a beautiful black harness with a diamond pattern. It was not causing any discomfort and was following flawlessly every single curve on Moonlight's body.

The next step was to find a decent bridle. Sophie didn't want to negotiate on that one; she wanted to purchase the exact same one that Morning Star had, the one with the cute leather ears.

"Do the ears serve a purpose?"

"Oh, no! They are just pretty. Hehe. Not all ponygirl items are useful. Hey, see that patch on the forehead? It's detachable."

Sophie pulled on it, and it came off.

"We can have the leatherworker add a symbol to it. Morning Star has a ... well... a white star."

"Can I get a moon? It would fit my name."

"Yeah! That would be awesome! Let's buy everything and go to the leatherworker right away."



"Aaaanh! They are so sensitive!"

"We... we are not supposed to play with each other like this. It's not even been a week."

"I know... but... keep sucking on my nipples... So good. Aaaanh!"

"They taste as good as before too. I really like our new size."

Nightshade, all naked, was lying down on her back on the living room couch. Kneeling on the floor next to her was Hemlock, carefully massaging her lover's newly augmented breasts. It was not allowed, but they failed at resisting to explore their new mountainous landscape.

The stretched skins caused by the inserts and the soreness of procedure made the experience a sensitive one. The soft hands rubbing her warm breasts reinforced Nightshade's belief that going through this was a great decision.

"They still feel real. They are just much bigger."

"Aaanh! Don't pinch! Aaaanh! They feel heavier too, but our latex suit will support them well, I'm sure."

"Paul said he was going to buy new suits for us with bigger breast cups that fit better. There is no doubt that all the eyes will be on us from now on."

Looking pretty and sexy was very important to both of them. Being the best-looking ponygirls on top of being among the strongest was such a source of pride. They had so many fans who copied their style and so many girls had dyed their hair blonde and wore a ponytail like them. They were idols, the ones people loved to see on the front page of sports magazines.

Some people would say that they were a bad influence on the young girls, pushing them toward a more superficial set of values, but a lot more supported their efforts to show that it was okay to be both sexy and powerful. It was okay to be sexual, and it was okay to display it in

public. Hemlock and Nightshade never forced their specific lifestyle on anyone; they promoted everybody's lifestyle, so people would do whatever they felt was right for themselves, no matter what it was.

This minor surgery was by no means necessary in the grand scheme of things. But, for Nightshade, it was a scream saying, "I would like to look this way, and I can if I want to. So don't tell me what to do or not with my body!" And having Hemlock playing with her new boobs and providing her with such a pleasurable experience comforted her in her choice.

"Aaanh! I'm so happy right now. I hope it's true that you really like them."

"Of course it's true, silly! Night, your new breasts are amazing. All I said was that you didn't have to get them to be happy... but if that's what you really wanted, I'm fine with it. Now sit up, I want to lick your crotch and make you cum, then we will go to bed."

Nightshade's perfect abs contracted to effortlessly bring her to a sitting position on the couch despite her new upper mass, then she slid down a little while opening her legs, inviting Hemlock's long tongue to a feast.

"AAaanh! You started to strong... aAaahh!"

"Mmm... Because I'm more and more attracted to you every passing day."

"I... Aaaah! I love you so much, Hemlock!"

Out of the blue, Brittany irrupted the living room, in a foul mood!

"WOULD YOU STOP having sex for just ten minutes!? Geez... Every single night when you sleep in the house, it's the same thing. If you are not racing, you are fucking! What are you? Machines? Damn! People are trying to sleep here!"



"Why didn't you want Morning Star to come to my first race? I would have liked that."

"Seriously, Moonlight, do you think she would have just sat there watching the race after the stunt she pulled in the paddock?"

"No... but... I mean... You have been keeping her locked in her stall for the past week. You only let her out a couple of times per day for walks and light training. She told me she misses reading her sports magazines. Can't you at least let her do that."

"That is my decision as a trainer. I know Morning Star much better than you do. Anyway, stop thinking about her for now, let's put your harness and bridle on, we have to prepare for our race."

Moonlight and Sophie were getting ready in one of the stalls of the Balk Raceway. Every Saturday night, they were hosting amateur races in front of about two thousand people. The dirt track wasn't outstanding quality, but it would do just fine to give Moonlight a first taste of what racing felt like.

This was all new to her. For the past few days, she had been pulling that sled over and over on longer distances, obviously not doing it with seven blocks again; that was a bit too intense. Then finally, yesterday, she got to pull a real cart for the first time. It was like pulling a bag full of feathers; Sophie was so light.

"There! How does it feel?"

"It's snug... I like it."

"Good, so remember, your first race is just to get a feel for it, I don't care if we win or lose. It's just to see how it goes. You HAVE to listen to everything I say, okay?"

"Yes... I'll do my best."

"And I know you have no experience being guided by reins, so try to pay attention and obey. I don't want us to cause an accident. We will stay away from the others at first, so don't try to keep up with them unless I tell you too. I'm the one deciding how fast we are going and where. Not you."

"If I know I can go faster and beat them, how will you know?"

"I will. That's what I do for a living. You run, I drive. You focus on your technique and breathing, and I'll keep an eye on everything else to keep you safe."

Just hearing this question was enough to make Sophie understand that the first race would be a good challenge. She was pretty sure Moonlight wouldn't listen or understand half of her commands, but that was okay. It would be a great learning experience. The only important thing was not to cause trouble.

Sophie placed the bit in Moonlight's mouth and buckled the bridle around her head. She gave her latex suit a quick shine, just for the show, and led her out of the stall, giving her a few more instructions.

"So, you understand that if you pull too hard on your cuffs, they will disconnect, right? So don't do it or else it's an automatic disqualification. Keep your wrist to your waist at all times. It

will open up your chest and allow more oxygen in your lungs. It's a 2000 meters race, two laps of a 1000. If you forget to breathe, it's going to be a long race."

Cart number 7 was waiting outside the barn. Sophie led Moonlight to it and attached the small vehicle to her hips before climbing on.

"Walk!"

It was still a funny feeling for Moonlight to pull a cart. It felt so unnatural but kind of fun at the same time. However, it only took a couple of meters before Sophie reprimanded her for the first time.

"You are not even paying attention, Moonlight. You are pulling me and going wherever you want to go. Don't you feel the tugging on your reins? Stop thinking about where YOU want to go, just let ME drive, else we are going to get in trouble."

Moonlight understood the words, but it was not as easy as Sophie made it sound. Her driver asked her to stop thinking and just do whatever the reins told her to. She remembered that Sophie had taught her about trust in the past. When she was obeying, everything went so much better, so she tried to go back to that place in her head, to retrieve this feeling of freedom from when she let things go.

After the inspection, they got on the racetrack, trotting around to warm up and practice the reins commands. The crowd watched the unknown ponygirl, but the thrill was nowhere near the one experienced during the Super Cup.

Sophie kept reminding Moonlight to relax and not to look at the crowd, which was curiously easy. Moonlight didn't seem intimidated by the crowd at all. She was the kind of ponygirl that didn't care about what people were thinking of her. She had been treated poorly all her life by stupid people, so she learned not to give a shit about people's opinions. Her ability to naturally deflect all pressure effortlessly was a fantastic trait for a pony.

"Ladies and Gentlemen! Welcome to the Balk Raceway! The first race of the night is a two laps, 2000 meters race. We have a line up of seven amazing ponygirls that are ready to give us a good show."

"We will now be calling the teams to the gates."

"Gate 1 ... Cart number 32 ... Silver Sword!"

"Aaah! I know her... She is not bad at all."

"Gate 2 ... Cart number 2 ... Last Moment"

"Never heard of them ... That is a creepy name..."

"Gate 3 ... Cart number 80 ... Lady Wallenstein!"

"She is the one to beat tonight. Look at her blonde hair; she is beautiful. She is like the doll ponygirl that all the teenage girls want."

"Gate 4 ... Cart number 7 ... Moonlight!"

"That's us... Alright, be careful. Take your time and get in the gate. Remember what I taught you. Don't go crazy."

"Gate 5 ... Cart number 99 ... Electra!"

"Gate 6 ... Cart number 71 ... Private Grin!"

"Gate 7 ... Cart number 11 ... Red Pearl!"

"What? Is Red Pearl here too? Well, Moonlight, we have a nice lineup tonight. Alright, place your forehead on the gate, and wait for it to open. Then accelerate as fast as you can until I tell you to pace yourself. Remember, we are not trying to win this one. It's just to get some experience, okay?"

Moonlight was getting anxious. Everything was new to her, and an official race was not something she was familiar with at all. But she wanted to do well; she wanted to win despite what Sophie had explained to her. While observing the other ponygirls entering their gates, she understood that she was probably better than all of them. She had that conviction that she could finish first.

Her hooves were trying to find a comfortable position in the dirt, but it was as if there was none. The rusty white gate in front of her squeaked a bit when she pressed her forehead on it. Her foot was shaking, which didn't escape Sophie's attention.

"Calm down, Moonlight! Take it easy!"

"Ready! IN THREE ... TWO ... ONE..."

As soon as Moonlight heard the number one, she bolted forward with all the strength she had charged in her calves for the past minute. Her astonishing power made Sophie sink in her cart like never before.

But the gate wasn't open yet.

In ponygirl racing, the gates never opened on the number one of the countdown... never. Moonlight knew that ... but forgot. She slammed very hard in the metal doors, which just rattled loudly, making the whole crowd gasp.

Immediately after the severe impact, the gates opened and all the other ponygirls jerked forward and ran, leaving in the dust a confused Moonlight who had fallen to her knees. Sophie quickly tried to communicate with her to provide very specific commands to address the incident.

"Moonlight! Moonlight! Get up! Don't worry, just get up! Get out of the gate and go to the outer edge of the track. It's all good. We are just going to wait for the race to finish, but you have to get up now so they can move the gates out of the way before the racers come back."

Moonlight was in pain, and her soul was screaming humiliation. Her bells were still ringing, but she managed to follow Sophie's directives and limped out of the way.

When she reached the side of the track, all she could hear was the crowd laughing at what had just happened. Sophie jumped off her cart and went to see her.

"Hey!?! Are you okay? Are you hurt?"

Moonlight's face was red, and her eyes welled up because of the embarrassment. Her first race shouldn't have been like this... everything but this. This was the absolute opposite of winning, what she had wanted the most. This was pure shame...

Sophie grabbed her reins very closely to her chin and told her about the upcoming steps.

"We have to stay here until they finish the race, then we will go back to our stall and have a chat about what happened. Don't worry. Everything is going to be just fine."



"So? Where does it hurt?"

"... I'm fine."

"No, you are not. You were limping. It is your foot?"

"... My knee... But it's better now."

"Let me apply some ice, just in case. If you don't feel any better, we will skip the next race."

"We should go home!"

No, Moonlight didn't want to race again tonight. Not after what she had done. She didn't feel ready for this anymore, and her overconfidence had deflated like a birthday balloon bursting under pressure.

"What are you talking about?"

"I made a fool of myself... in front of everybody! I knew the gates were not opening on one, but I still went before they opened."

"Aaah... I have to admit that it is the first time I see a pony hitting the gate this hard. That was quite something."

"SOPHIE! You make me feel even worse about it!"

"Okay, listen to me! You are my ponygirl, and we are not going home unless you can't run. I don't care if you like it or not, but we have another race in less than an hour against the same ponies. Let's take a quick break, and then we go to the paddock to check if you are okay."

"But..."

What was that authoritarian tone all of a sudden? Sophie had never spoken to Moonlight that way before.

"No buts! You do as I say, and that is the end of it! Let me take care of you. Trust me."

Sophie stood up, placed a finger under Moonlight's chin, and gazed into her eyes.

"We have a race to win!"

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