

## Chapter 7

### Without Even Leaving the Ranch

"I wish we could have exciting adventures like Little Black had." Berry sighed. She and Wall\*E were standing in the sun next to the haybarn, enjoying the breeze. It was a perfect spring day. Not too hot, not too cold. The air felt gentle and fresh on their skin.

"What kind of adventures would you like to have? A sailing adventure, like Little Black?" Wall\*E asked.

"I don't know... Maybe not sailing."

"I know! Let's play Wild Horses!"

"How do we play that?"

"Well, first of all, we need new names. I'll be called Midnight, wild stallion."

"Okay, I'll be Moonlight, lead mare!"

"We've lost all the other horses in our herd."

"I know! They've all been rounded up by humans and we've got to save them. But first, we need to cross the desert, and all sorts of other obstacles along the way."

Buttons looked up as Wall\*E and Berry went trotting towards the arena. They seemed to be on a mission of some sort. She

wondered vaguely what it was, before going back to munching grass.

"Oh Midnight! It's so hot. This sand is scorching my hooves." Berry limped dramatically across the arena.

"Yes, I think my fur is melting, Moonlight."

"But we must persevere! We must find the other wild horses and save them from the humans!"

Thousands of miles of open desert lay ahead of Midnight and Moonlight. But they were wild horses, so they were tough and alert, and ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead of them.

"I think I see an oasis!" cried Midnight.

"Where? Oh no, I bet it's just a mirage."

"Well let's head towards it anyways. We must find shelter before nightfall, or else the coyotes and cougars will get us."



“Oh yikes! Coyotes and cougars! I forgot how scary it is to be a wild horse.” Moonlight shivered slightly, despite the unbearable heat.

The wind howled and blew sand into their noses, eyes, and mouths. They could just barely see a glimpse of green along the horizon, but they had many miles to go before they reached the oasis.

“Moonlight, look! There’s a dead bush. Maybe we should eat some of it to give us enough energy to reach the oasis.”

“Good idea. Now that we’re wild horses we have to be resourceful.” They went over to the lone, dead bush in the middle of the desert and started munching on it. “Mmm, this dead wood is so delicious. If I close my eyes, I can almost pretend it is fresh, green grass like we used to eat with our family in our wild meadow. But that was before the wild horses got taken away in the roundup...” Moonlight dropped her head. Her heart throbbed with sadness at the thought of the other horses. They had been taken away in trucks and were now somewhere across this desert. They were going to be sold as riding horses! Just imagine!



“I know, it is so sad.” A tear dropped out of Midnight’s eye as he chewed the tough wood. Back at MVRU, Homer looked up in surprise. Berry and Wall\*E were standing at a dead bush by the creek, surrounded by lush, green grass. *Why are they eating that dead bush?* he wondered.

But Homer didn’t realize that it wasn’t Berry and Wall\*E eating the dead bush, it was Moonlight and Midnight, and they were wild horses!

“Are you ready to keep going Midnight?”

“Yes, let’s keep going. It’s going to take us forever to reach the oasis. And hopefully it’s not just a mirage.” They started walking, heads bowed low against the blowing sand.

“Oh yikes! What is that?” Moonlight gasped. There, hiding behind some more dead bushes, was something huge and brown.

“A COUGAR!” They both yelled and bolted. Brushy jumped in surprise. Why were Berry and Wall\*E running away from him?



"Phew. Glad we escaped. And oh, look! We've run all the way to the oasis!" Midnight stood on his hind legs and did a little dance to celebrate. Moonlight joined in, laughing. They basked in the glory of the oasis, eating grass and drinking water from the giant river. They took a little nap, and then were ready to start on their rescue mission again.

"We need to cross this river, Midnight, in order to rescue the others."

"Ooh, cross the river! You're right, but it's going to be challenging. There might be sharks in there."

"I didn't think of sharks! Yikes. We will need to be careful and come up with a good plan."

Berry and Wall\*E sat by the creek that stretched in between the fields at MVRU. But to them, it wasn't a creek. It was a huge, raging river full of sharks!

"Maybe we can swim across."

Midnight suggested.

"Oh no! Think of the sharks."

Moonlight shook her head.

"Hmm, good point."

"Let's build a raft!" Moonlight sprung to her feet. They gathered logs and sticks, and tied them together with baling twine. They placed it on the bank, part way in the water. Then they attached pieces of bark to the end of sticks to use as paddles. The river was moving swiftly, so they would have to paddle hard to not get swept away. "Are you ready, Midnight? We'll have to paddle as fast as we can." They both loaded onto the raft. The mud on the banks of the river was knee deep. Moonlight peered down into the swirling depths of water and thought of sharks. She shivered.

Moonlight shoved off from shore, and they were off! They paddled as hard as they could, but the river was sweeping them downstream. "Paddle harder!" Midnight shouted over the roar of the water.

"You paddle harder!" Moonlight retorted. Moonlight looked down and gasped. Water was seeping through the cracks in the raft. They were sinking! "We're sinking, Midnight! We're sinking!"









“We’re going to have to swim to shore, and hope the sharks don’t get us. I heard if you hum loudly the sharks are afraid and won’t go near you.” As the last of the raft sank, Midnight and Moonlight were submerged in icy water. They both started humming loudly as they desperately swam towards shore. At last, their hooves felt the muddy ground, and they collapsed on the bank, gasping for air. After several minutes of rest, Moonlight lifted her head and gazed around. “There are the horses!” she exclaimed. They ran up to their wild horse friends, who were in pens, and opened the gates to set them free. “We did it!” Moonlight and Midnight galloped across the meadows with their wild horse friends, whinnying and frolicking.



“Berry! Wall\*E!” Buttons was calling from across the jump field. “It’s almost dinner time. Annie’s coming soon.”

Berry and Wall\*E looked up. “Dinner time, oh boy!” They rushed back across the jump field to their pastures.

“Well, Berry, how did you enjoy being a wild horse?” Buttons asked as they chewed on their rich green hay later that day.

“It was fun for a day,” Berry said thoughtfully as she chewed. “But I think the next adventure I have I’d like to go to a big city. New York City.”

Buttons chuckled. “New York City is shut down for Coronavirus, Berry. It wouldn’t be much fun right now.”

Berry smiled mischievously. “There’s no Coronavirus in my imagination!” she said. “In my imagination I can go anywhere I want, without even leaving the ranch.”