

Dusty Duchess Prologue

The wooden hammer crashed down, causing the two foals to press against their mother's sides. The auctioneer waved the hammer around until the crowd settled down.

"Up next is lot number 385, to be sold together. Registered Welsh ponies..."

A piercing wail erupted from the speakers on either side of the pen, causing the humans to cover their ears while the buckskin filly skittered under her mom's belly. The small bay colt stood shaking as his dam turned her back on the crowd.

The noise stopped to the relief of everyone in the auction barn; human and horse alike.

"Just a little feedback, folks," the auctioneer chuckled, "Settle back down into your seats and let's get this lot of perfect little ponies sold."

"You call that a little feedback, Ernie? You near exploded my hearing aid!"

Some in the crowded room laughed, but an older man, near the back, slumped and shook his head as his wife took a tissue to her eyes.

"Okay, Fred, I apologize," Ernie tipped his hat to the old man in the front row. "Now can we get on with the auction?" Fred tipped his hat back.

After a few more chuckles, Ernie continued. "We have here two mares with foals at foot. Number 385a, a pretty ten-year-old buckskin mare with two white hind feet." He waved the hammer in the mare's direction. "Prime age folks. She's broke to ride and drive. Even comes from a long line of champions."

He paused, giving the crowd a chance to admire the pretty Welsh pony. Sam, the action handler, scowled as he led the mare around. The small filly tried to keep as close as possible to her dam, avoiding the unpleasant man.

"That there's a purebred filly at her side, folks," the auctioneer continued, "Same colour as her mama and with a unique crescent moon shaped white marking in the middle of her pretty forehead."

Fred, the old man with the hearing aid, leaned closer for a better look. The filly bolted to the other side of the mare, away from the crowd.

"Sam, show the folks the filly's marking."

Sam snagged her with his powerful hands, jerking the filly's head around by the new leather halter.

The tiny pony screamed.