

Burning Up the Track: The Next Generation

By: Firingwall

“Hey,” asked a teen, “Ummm... are you sure you should be here?”

“Wh-what do you mean?” responded a younger teen, adjusting her round, thick glasses. She didn’t see who asked that specific question or if they were even directing it at her, but in the young girl’s heart, she knew it had to be for her.

“You don’t seem... too fit or in shape for this,” another girl commented, “From what I heard about just the tryouts alone, your legs are gonna shatter and crumble to pieces if you’re not in shape for this.”

“And you are so not in shape,” the first voice taunted, “Honestly, I think you should just leave. You’ll be a complete embarrassment to all of us.”

“Silver Spoon, knock it off!” A different voice stated, “S-sorry about her, she’s just very rude. ...to be fair though, I’m a bit worried. You might pass out on the track. Are you sure you’re up for running?”

“I’ll... I’ll be fine.” The glasses-wearing girl stuttered out. There was silence, all eyes on the scrawny, twig of a girl who sat alone on a bench in the locker room. The talking soon filled the room after a moment though, the girls going back to their changing as they excitedly discussed today’s tryouts.

A new year had begun at a private school up north, Freshmen eagerly finding places for themselves to fit into. One such Freshman was a young, scrawny and thin girl named Hazel, a very quiet, shy student that fit the bill of your super stereotypical geek archetype. She was super smart and quite skilled with computers, was covered in freckles, and wore oversized glasses.

She had been an outcast throughout most of her life, constantly picked on and the butt of jokes for her appearance and brains in middle school. However, starting at this new, private high school, she was determined to change all of that. No, she was certain she was going to change and it all involved joining the school’s track team.

However, after hearing all the comments from the girls who were trying out, Hazel wasn’t exactly full of confidence now. She tried focusing on tying her new tennis shoes and think about the tryouts, but she kept getting distracted when she heard names being tossed her way: twig, scrawny, freak, idiot, and more.

All I want to do is run, she thought tearfully, I know I can do this... right? I mean, I was practicing running through my neighborhood before school started... I can do this...

Hazel finished changing her clothes, but did nothing else beyond that. She simply sat on the bench, staring at her feet as the others left for the field and get ready.

I can do this... I'm sure I can do this... maybe I can't... I'm not sure I can... I can't do this... I should just leave... Gloomily though Hazel, brushing one of her thick, brown braids from her face. She just didn't feel like she could do it, talking herself out of even trying.

She moved towards the exit quietly, even though there was no one else around. *I'll just leave, she told herself, just leave and no one will ever know I tried to...*

“Oh!” A strong, commanding, female voice spoke, “I didn't think there was anyone left in here.” Hazel's heart skipped a beat and her head jolted upwards. Just entering the room and standing before her was the second big reason why she wanted to join the track team.

It was “Wonderbolt” Spitfire, the school's track team coach and former biggest Equine American track star in the world. She had been on America's Olympics team as one of their star sprinters and flyers, dazzling the world over by winning several gold medals before the age of 25. She was an inspiration to all, human and equines alike.

She was especially important to Hazel ever since she was a child and saw her run on TV. She was a hero, an inspiration, and going to the school where she taught was like a dream come true to her. But now, after everything that was said and that she thought, Hazel felt insignificant in her presence, an utter embarrassment.

“Oh I... I was just leaving,” weakly answered the braided girl, trying to hurry by curvy anthro, “I was just thinking... it's nothing. Just a mistake.”

Spitfire's arm shot out and latched onto the girl's shoulder. Hazel looked up and saw the equine's eyes gaze into her own. “Hey now,” she spoke, her voice warm and comforting, “Is something wrong? I would hate to see a promising young lady just quit before she even stepped onto the field. You can tell me anything.”

Looking into those serious, but warm and friendly eyes, Hazel knew she couldn't hide anything from her. The geeky girl took a deep breath and began to explain, unloading every single thing she just experienced and thought. Spitfire said nothing in return, carefully listening, nodding, and rubbing her hand against the tip of her bottom jaw.

After finishing, Hazel glumly said, “So... I'll just get out of your way and...”

“Not so fast!” Spitfire declared. Hazel balked, freezing in place as the coach held out her golden furred hand at her. She continued, “I hear what you're saying and to be honest, I understand. I was in your shoes once.”

“N-no way! But you're... you're so...”

“We all start somewhere Miss Hazel,” the equine answered, giving her a soft smile, “Listen... since you're feeling down, why don't I give you something? When I'm feeling down and out, I have one of these to cheer me right up!”

“W-what is it?” Hazel asked, watching as the equine headed over to a locked locker and started opening it.

“It’s my favorite energy drink!” Spitfire declared, “Not one of those stupid, half-assed ones that I had to advertise when I was running either, but one I had since... what?” Her hand emerged from her locker, but in it was not energy drink. Instead, it was a glass perfume bottle that held sky blue, hazy liquid in it.

“I don’t remember putting this in here...” the coach muttered, “Where did my... oh never mind. This might work anyways.”

“Why’s that?”

“Well aroma therapy and all that,” Spitfire explained, handling the glass bottle over to Hazel, “It’s something Miss Cheerilee turned me onto. It’s about how certain scents and smells can help stimulate the body, ease your worries, and all of that. She might’ve given me this from her personal collection and I forgot or something...”

Hazel took the bottle and looked at it. Would perfume really help her, especially since that wasn’t even what Spitfire was originally going to give her? She sighed and prepared to hand it back to the coach, but accidentally pressed down on the nozzle. The blue liquid sprayed her in the face and against her shirt, her body shivering and her mind going hazy for a second.

Spitfire took the bottle from her and asked, “Whoa! You alright there?”

Hazel rubbed her eyes fiercely, thankfully they didn’t hurt or sting. After a moment, she pulled her hands away and looked at Spitfire. Instead of a dullish green gazing at the anthro, there was a passionate, energetic fuchsia color to them. Her body felt anxious and excited, her worries significantly diminished.

“Y-yeah,” Hazel spoke, “I... I feel a bit better... maybe I should run after all.”

Spitfire smiled brightly and declared, “There we go! That stuff worked after all! Let’s get you out there and you finally show your stuff! Come on, I’ll walk you to the field.”

“Alright everyone!” Shouted Spitfire, “Line up on the line! It’s time to see what you can all do!” Every girl, including Hazel, quickly converged on the track and got in a line like Spitfire demanded. They stood shoulder to shoulder, sweat rolling down their foreheads and they looked down the track before them.

Hazel was the most nervous of them all. Despite feeling more confident than ever and walking out with Spitfire, thankfully quieting any harsh words from the other runners, she still felt on the edge. She wasn’t sure if she would be able to finish...

She shook her head and looked confidently ahead, thinking, *no... I can definitely finish this without a doubt. I practiced a lot already... it’s just... will... will I be good enough?*

The tips of her hair turned snow white and the light, almost invisible hairs on her hands and arms turned sky blue as Spitfire spoke again, “Now, first things first. To gage your abilities,

I'm going to have you start with something simple. Run this track twice. It's about half a mile and should serve as a good warm up to get you ready for the real deal."

There was some light muttering, including from another equine anthro named Silver Spoon a few people to the right. Spitfire strongly responded, "If anyone has any problems with how I run things, you're more than welcome to air them right now if you like."

No said anything, the coach smiling and answering, "I see. Well then, let's get going. On your marks..."

I can do this, I can maybe do this... Hazel thought. Her eyes wandered over to Spitfire, who gave her a small, confident wink as she spoke. Hazel's body warmed, her cheeks blushing as her confidence rose.

"Get set... and... GO!" Hollered the anthro Pegasus. With that, all the girls leapt forward and began charging down the track as far as they could possibly go. Hazel, much to her surprise and delight, found herself running alongside some of the girls in the middle.

Holy crap, she thought as she raced down the track, sky blue fur slowly covering her hands and feet, *I'm... I'm actually doing this... I'm actually doing this!*

Her mind wandered slightly as she thought that, her pace decreasing and some girls beginning to outrun her. Passing by, Silver Spoon gave her a big, condensing smirk and kept going. Hazel's heart dropped, the fur growth slowing down on her limbs.

I thought I... I thought I could do this... I did so well around blocks in my neighborhood... right? Her head stung and her pacing slowed further, putting her in dead last. Her mind felt fuzzy and strange, like she was in a fog or something.

No... I didn't run blocks JUST in my neighborhood... I did that and ran all the way to the park and through it several times... I... I can do this! Hazel brought her speed back up to a more moderate, normal tone, picking the pace up again. The muscles in her body expanded and her limbs toned, giving her the strength and energy to keep going.

I ran through the park several times over the summer and never got tired at all! I can really do this... probably... Her pace quickened and by the time the first lap was over, she was among the middle runners again. Her gym shorts tightened on her as her thighs and hips slightly thickened and widened, blue fur crawling further up her fitter legs.

Wait... no. I've been running through the park for years now! That's why I'm so fast and was on the track team in middle school! I'm being so weird now. Hazel's pace had gotten better, putting her on par with fastest runners of the group now. Hazel's waist toned and her chest pushed forward, a small tuft of white hair poking out between her shorts and shirt.

As Hazel picked up the pace, she outraced Silver Spoon, the pony girl's jaws dropping as she saw the overtake. Hazel looked back at her and her eyes narrowed, a new emotion and feeling

arising within her. The nerdy girl gave Spoon a cocky smile, her face pushing forward into a short, blue muzzle, as she kept getting faster.

Hazel was soon moving up to the front, going even past the top runners as she reached the halfway point of the track. Her hair completely turning white, she thought satisfyingly, *I don't like getting all cocky like that... but for that jerk? I think I'd prefer to rub it in her face as I grind her into the dust... that's what she gets for messing with the middle school track star!*

And like that, her speed exploded, Hazel going faster than ever before. Her hair braids fell apart, a large, puffy mane of hair exploding out into a backwards pompadour, her glasses vanishing soon after. From her back, the nub exploded out into a large, flowing white tail that whisked happily as the girl breezed down the track.

Deciding to show off a little, Hazel grinned and leapt several feet forward, crossing the finish line and landing with satisfying thump across it. Upon impact, blue fur finished covering her body, a hole opening in the back of her gym shirt. With that new, big opening, two large, graceful blue wings sprouted out and flapped majestically behind her.

“And that’s how it’s done!” The new pony anthro declared, brushing her long mane back. She turned around, the rest of the girls barely reaching the final fourth of the track itself.

“Not bad,” Spitfire spoke with a chuckle, “Not bad at all Miss Fleetfoot. While I don’t mind a little showboating myself, I would like you to reframe from doing that in tryouts.”

“Yes Miss Spitfire,” the new Fleetfoot politely spoke, giving her a formal bow.

The rest of the girls came running up soon and they all huddle around Fleetfoot, giggling and praising her. “Oh my god!” One girl cried out, “You’re totally awesome!”

“You’re so fast! I bet our school will win big this year with you on the team!”

“We got to totally hang out sometime and you can show me how to be as fast as you!”

“Hey hey!” Fleetfoot nervously said, a little overwhelmed by the crowd that surrounded her on all sides, “One at a time! First, thanks. Second, sure, I would love to hang out sometimes after school! Third, let’s wait to see if I get added to the team first.”

“With that speed, you’ll probably be coach’s favorite,” grumbled Silver Spoon. Fleetfoot smiled, her heart so warm and happy. It was always her dream to run alongside her childhood hero, Spitfire, and now, she would at least be a part of her own track team! She couldn’t believe she ever felt nervous. The tryouts were going to be a piece of cake!

THE END