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A burst of wind sent leaves scrambling across the barnyard. It was a crisp breeze, much cooler than the hot, hazy days Hogan and Reggie remembered. Hogan sighed with a muted neigh. He absently tossed his tail, swishing at a few ambient flies. It's true he thought; summer was saying goodbye. Another year had passed and for Hogan it was bittersweet. The vibrant palomino stallion longed to relive his performance as a champion Reiner but at the same time, he was enjoying his retirement. The passage of time is inescapable he thought. We devote so much energy to training, travelling and performing and in the blink of an eye, it's over.

“Before I knew it, the spotlight dimmed and attention turned toward younger, stronger competitors anxious to replace me and set their own records”, Hogan reflected.

Wistful but not hopeless, Hogan didn't lose heart. He knew there was still a lot he had left to give. He was fearless, idealistic and loved to argue. With that, he proudly crossed the barnyard to see if his grain bucket had been filled this morning.

Just then Reggie sauntered into the barn with a rather somber expression. Hogan lifted his head, his blond mane tumbling over his eyes and was briefly distracted from his morning feed. The old Bernese mountain dog yawned. Hogan lazily wondered if he should ask, debated whether he should appear disinterested but gave in when Reggie uttered a soft whine.

“What’s bothering you?” Hogan ventured.

“Everyone left. I’m all alone yet again,” Reggie complained. Ten years old, Reggie simply wasn’t the young pup he used to be. “Rue”, Reggie’s younger Bernese companion, had joined Hogan’s four other stable mates earlier that morning as they embarked on a trail ride through the woods.

Hogan laughed. “Is that all? I can think of worse things to worry about than relaxing on a fine autumn morning!” he mused. “The reality is, we’re the lucky ones,” Hogan said.

“I don’t agree,” Reggie moaned.

“I could spout a lot of rhetoric that proves your sadness is exaggerated and unnecessary but you should simply accept your solitude as a gift,” Hogan said emphatically.

“Rhetoric, what do you mean by that?” Reggie asked.

“Well, Rhetoric can take the form of a speech that persuades you to agree or support the ideas I’m suggesting. For that to happen, you must be convinced or persuaded that what I say is the truth. I’m going to try to communicate with you using an “elocutionary” technique. That’s just a fancy way of speaking with emphasis”, Hogan explained.

“What if I proved to you that relaxing here with me on the farm is the ideal place to be? What if I showed you that heading out on a morning trail ride isn’t as great as you think it is? If I do that, will you stop moping and let me finish my breakfast?” Hogan asked.

“Maybe,” Reggie offered.

“Well a wise thinker once said, to convince someone against his will is to leave him unconvinced,” Hogan began. “So at the very least, you must want to consider the possibilities and if not, I’m going out to pasture right now. What do you say?” Hogan asked.

“OK,” Reggie agreed.

Hogan wasted no time. His grain was waiting and a fine green field of alfalfa was calling his name. “Let me paint you a picture of what you think you’re missing,” Hogan explained. “You’re sad and lonely because your friends have deserted you. In fact, they are the ones who should be jealous of us. As we speak, they are loping through thick brush, dodging logs, navigating muddy creeks; all while being swarmed by deer flies. It’s not a pleasure ride, they’re training for an endurance event. What’s more, they probably aren’t having the greatest time either,” Hogan asserted.

“Now we on the other hand are not exerting ourselves and we’ve had a good breakfast, or at least I started one,” Hogan laughed. “The bugs aren’t biting, the sun is shining, our feet are dry and it looks like lunch isn’t too far away. Be thankful for what’s right in front of you,” Hogan said.

“It’s just that I miss the fun of running after everyone on the trail. I get too tired now and I feel lonely when everyone leaves,” Reggie explained.

“I know what you mean and believe me, I do understand,” Hogan empathized. “Not too long ago I spent my days performing in the show arena executing impressive slide stops and dizzying spins. Now I run up to a fence and stop at the last second in order to feel the same excitement. I miss what I used to do but what I have now isn’t necessarily better, it’s just different and that really is enough,” Hogan explained.

“Using your logic then, there is a great benefit to my separation from Rue and the others. While I’m not participating in their adventure, I have much to be content about here. My belly is full, my joints aren’t aching, I’ve plenty of energy and I was able to learn something new about myself this morning. Hey did you just win the argument? How did you do that?” Reggie asked.

“It’s called Rhetoric. I presented the facts through logical, reasoned discussion and you were convinced,” Hogan boasted.

“Whatever it’s called, I see your point. It’s as if I’m looking at my life in a completely different way. Suddenly my paws are tingling with enthusiasm. Thank you for having the patience to reason with me. I feel a lot better,” Reggie exclaimed and with that he wagged his tail in agreement and trotted out of the barn.

Hogan smiled and returned to his feed, proud of his skill in the art of persuasion. In the distance he heard the staccato of hooves cantering up the gravel driveway. Solitude is such a fleeting pleasure on the farm, he thought.

