



I would like to start off by extending my gratitude to D4K for allowing me opportunities in my riding education! I received a scholarship that allowed me to take lessons under Naomi Parry on her PSG schoolmaster, Trumpy. Trumpy and Naomi have been a beacon of light in my life. They both are welcoming, enthusiastic and an absolute wealth of knowledge.

Trumpy is known for being a tricky ride (lovingly nicknamed “corkscrew”). The task of dressage for him requires a light, present and thoughtful rider. He has been extremely telling of my habits including a perched seat, tight legs and misguided hands. He is incredibly rewarding to ride as he will fall right into place as soon as you do; he is the king of operational conditioning.

Many wonderful pieces of advice have been imparted on me. One of which has been the concept of “giving contact”. Rather than pulling back on the rein, the hands push forward and the horse’s body is ridden up to that point. I have a tendency to drop my hands, pulling down on the rein. This habit has been countered by the teaching to bring the bit up into the corners of his mouth. Pulling back on the rein pulls on the bars of his mouth whereas lifting up makes for conversation in a friendlier manner.

Another struggle has been the juggle of inside and outside rein, and the ongoing struggle to keep a steady contact in both. The light-bulb teaching in relation to this problem was that the reins don’t simply guide the nose; instead, they are like railroad tracks that the shoulders follow.



Trumpy tends to get tight in the base of his neck and his body falls out of alignment. Our tactic of approach in terms of his twists are to free his shoulders and pick him up at his “elbow” with the inside leg. Before our rides we do some groundwork involving stretching his neck down and then crossing over in both the fronts and hinds to laterally loosen him up. We continue the lateral work in our walk as well.

The left lead canter has been difficult for me to master on Trumpy. His corkscrew tendencies creep out and my own twists simply exacerbate the issue. He tends to fall in on the left shoulder mainly because he struggles to step his right hind beneath him. We have done lateral work lessons with shoulder-fore, shoulder-in, and haunches-in so I could work on familiarizing myself with controlling the tracks of his legs. Another simple piece has been opening the right rein towards the outside while coaxing with the inside leg at the elbow in order to encourage improved balance on his end.



My past hunter experience tends to show up in the upward canter transitions. We addressed my tendency to let go in both reins and seat by working on sitting trot transitions. Another idea that has really helped me is to think of lifting my hips to my hands.

The most abstract piece of learning I want to share is “kitten paws”. The idea of light and invisible aids has been imparted since the start of my learning of dressage, but nothing has resonated with me like kitten paws has. The idea is that, like a content kitten, you’re kneading dough with both your fingers and legs. You very softly alternate aids within the body in a way that keeps you from holding tensions for too long. I have never had a lesson with Trumpy more rideable than after this token of knowledge.

*Thank you again to D4K for this wonderful opportunity! I have been having a ton of fun!*