

Adventures with Pegasus

- Book One

Pegasus Makes an Entrance

Scout P Walker

STELLA DE BURCA

This book is for the child in everyone – a magical page-turner which engages your heart and soul.

- *N*

*

Love this book. The relationship between the twins is quite special. There is a real earthiness at the centre and the enchanting stories and mythical creatures are totally believable, interweaving effortlessly into daily life. Got hooked right from the start.

- *T*

*

This book transported me to my 'happy place', that child we all have deep inside, where everything is possible and your imagination is in Technicolor. I was there, and I can't wait for my next adventure!

- *Lena*

*

Adventures with Pegasus
- Book One

Pegasus makes an entrance

by Scout P Walker

*This story is dedicated to all curious children
who question what is real and what is not;
and who never believe anything just because
an adult tells them it is so*

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Turn a page
and the story
begins!

1 - A Small Brown Pony

The two children were hanging over the five-bar gate opening from the lane into Farmer Grubble's field. They were trying to attract the attention of a rather scruffy brown pony grazing in the middle of the thistle-filled grass.

The pony however, was totally ignoring them, even though they had called out his name several times and had held out handfuls of lush grass picked from the ditch by the side of the lane.

"Are you sure Mr Nibbs is his name?" Esme asked her brother.

"Yes! I've told you. I heard Dad say so to Mum when he got back from doing that harvesting job for old Mr Grubble."

"Well, he's not taking any notice," Esme commented, pointing out the obvious. "So we might as well go home. He's not a very pretty pony anyway. And he looks quite old."

"**I'm** not going home." Reuben wondered to himself if his sister would have been more enthusiastic if the pony had been 'pretty'. Girls always seemed to want things to be pretty.

It was halfway through the summer holidays and ten year old twins, Esme and Reuben Montana had run out of exciting things to do.

This was unusual.

The children's parents ran a smallholding where they grew things in pollytunnels. The summer was their very busiest time, which meant that the family never went away together on holiday during the summer. Apart from making sure they were well fed, had enough clean clothes and cleaned their teeth regularly, the twins' parents left them to amuse themselves most of the time.

And the twins were very good at keeping themselves happily occupied. They just loved living in the countryside and ... they had loads of imagination, so boredom was not something they experienced very often.

They were very happy spending time in each other's company – even though they did argue a lot. Reuben thought his sister was a bit of a sissy sometimes; and she though he could be a bit stupid sometimes. But of course, woe betides anybody else who tried to criticize one or the other!

But today ... they **were** - bored that is! So this had seemed like a good time to make the acquaintance of this new pony that had appeared a few days earlier in the field.

They were pony mad and had permission to ride several local ponies when the owners weren't needing them. But much to the twins' annoyance they didn't yet have a pony of their own. Their parents never seemed to get any further than 'seriously looking into the possibility' ... something to do with the twins showing they were responsible enough to take care of a pony of their own.

Esme swung her leg backwards and forwards, kicking her foot against the bottom crossbar of the gate. Then she sighed loudly, dropped off the gate onto the dried-out mud below and started to walk away down the lane towards their house.

"I'm going to ride him!" Reuben's voice stopped her in her tracks. Esme swivelled around to look back at her brother. "Don't be silly!"

"I am. I'm going to ride him." Reuben insisted stubbornly.

"Oh come on Reuben, you know we're not allowed!"

"I don't care. I'm going to ride him."

"Reuben!" Esme stamped her foot in annoyance. "You **know** we can't ride him. Mum said he's never been properly broken."

"She doesn't know that for sure; she's only guessing. You've just said he looks quite old. He must be broken. Why would Mr Grubble buy an unbroken pony?" Reuben frowned and then added quietly: "Anyway ... who wants to a pony that's 'broken'. I'm going to be a Horse Whisperer ... I won't need to 'break' ponies to train them!"

Esme shrugged. She too much preferred the idea of horse whispering than horse breaking! But that didn't mean she was convinced that riding Mr Nibbs right now was a good idea.

"You don't know where he's come from. That farmer buys all sorts of things and then sells them again. Like that old bicycle he sold Dad. That was pretty useless until Dad fixed it. Come on Reuben, let's go home. I'm getting hungry!"

"No!" Reuben stuck his chin out and shook his head stubbornly, "You go if you want ... scaredy cat!"

That hurt! Esme was furious. "I am not scared! You know I'm not. And anyway I ride better than you do! **You** are just being stupid!"

Reuben glowered at his sister, climbed over the gate and started walking towards the pony. She **was** a better rider than he was and he didn't like being reminded of it. But he was bored and fed up, and now he was angry with her as well ... he'd show her!

But he did feel his heart beginning to thump a bit. Ponies can be horribly unpredictable and there was no guarantee that this pony would want a small boy clambering onto his back.

Esme returned to the gate and climbed reluctantly over into the field as her brother approached the pony. She didn't like being called a scaredy-cat and wanted to leave him to get on with it. But ... sometimes her brother did the stupidest things just to prove how brave he was, and somehow she felt responsible for him even though he was fifteen minutes older than she was.

The stocky little pony had lifted its head as the boy walked purposefully towards it. Its dark brown coat was covered with a layer of dust. Burrs and grass seeds were attached to its tangled mane and tail, and long strands of summer grass dangled from its mouth. It looked quite comical – and perfectly harmless.

Or did it?

Esme suddenly realised that there was something slightly odd about Mr Nibbs!

‘Something is going to happen!’ The thought just popped into her head. She tried to run and call out a warning to Reuben. But she found she couldn’t move. And her voice wouldn’t work.

All she could do was watch.

Reuben was talking to Mr Nibbs, flattering him with silly remarks about how handsome he was. Mr Nibbs’ lips and nose twitched and several grass stalks dropped to the ground.

“Good pony... look what I’ve got.” Reuben soothed. He reached into his trouser pocket and pulled out a couple of grubby sugar lumps. He knew that sugar was as bad for ponies’ teeth as it was for children’s teeth. But he also knew that horses and ponies really like it, just like children do. So he always kept a few lumps handy in case they were needed for making friends with a new horse or pony.

The pony inspected the offering held out to him on the palm of Reuben's hand. He shuffled the sugar lumps around a bit with his lips – probably in an attempt to get rid of the fluff – then drew them into his mouth and crunched them up.

Having got the formalities over with, the boy and the pony looked each other straight in the eye as though saying: "OK ... what next?"

"Right." muttered Reuben to himself. He patted the pony's neck, drew a deep breath grabbed a handful of mane and threw his right leg upwards. He just managed to propel himself onto the pony's back. Mr Nibbs was only about twelve hands high, and Reuben who was skinny and agile, had managed quite a presentable vault first go.

The boy heaved a sigh of relief. The vault had been more difficult than he had thought it would be, and it would have been embarrassing to have failed in front of his sister.

"See!" he called out to Esme as he gently wriggled around on the warm broad back to find a comfortable position, "He's as quiet as ..." The word 'anything' was shoved back down Reuben's throat as the pony exploded into an impressive display of bucking.

Reuben didn't stand a chance. He flew high, sailing up and out, way ahead of the pony's bucketing form.

Esme, still voiceless and rooted to the spot, watched her brother's body come rushing down towards

the ground. She was both horrified and enthralled by what she was seeing. Because for the flash of a second it had looked just as though her brother and the pony were moving around inside a rainbow. And Mr Nibbs ... **he** looked quite different – much bigger and sort of transparent.

Then, in the same moment Reuben hit the ground with a thump, the vision disappeared. Esme was able to move again, running immediately towards her brother. The pony was standing over Reuben, nostrils close to his face as though examining the boy. But as Esme reached them the pony snorted, gave a surprisingly agile jump sideways over the boy's still form and raced away towards the corner of the field where he disappeared into a small clump of trees.

Esme stood looking down at her brother. She didn't know what to do.

A part of her wanted to run home and get her mother. But another part of her was saying not to do that; to just stay with Reuben. It was as though a voice – her own voice – was talking to her from inside her head. The voice was saying to her over and over again, very loudly: *"It's all right. Reuben is not hurt. Stay with him. It's all right. Reuben is not hurt. Stay with him."*

She could see that her brother was breathing normally. But he was so still. She stared at him, feeling rather dazed herself. Her eyes ran over the scruffy jeans and torn tee-shirt he refused to let their mother throw away. One of his ancient trainers, laces undone, had been dragged off his sockless foot by

the force of his acrobatics. Filthy foot, she noted. Yuk!

Then her eyes moved to his face. Funny how he looked so different from her. Other twins she had seen looked really alike. She knelt down beside him and tugged at his mass of dark curly hair, hoping this might wake him up.

It did. His strange pale green-grey eyes stared up into the dark brown ones of his twin for several seconds.

The blankness of his gaze frightened Esme. It was as though he didn't see her.

"Reuben ... Reuben?" she queried hesitantly.

At that, Reuben jerked bolt upright and grabbed hold of his sister's shoulders, and his gaze switched from blankness to intensity as he peered into her eyes.

She was really startled now. Something **was** the matter with her brother!

He opened his mouth but no words came out. He shut it again and swallowed, all the time keeping a tight grip on Esme's shoulders. He closed his eyes and opened them again very wide. "Esme ..." he breathed.

"Yes Reuben, what **is** it?" Now that she could see that he wasn't hurt, Esme was beginning to get

cross with her brother. His fingers were digging into her shoulders.

“Esme, I’ve got to tell you. I’ve got to tell you now. You’ve got to listen to me!” He took another swallow. “Do you understand ... you’ve got to listen to me! They said I’d got to tell you right away, otherwise I’d forget.”

“Reuben ... are you all right?”

“Yeah ... all right...?” Reuben looked puzzled. Then slowly he relaxed, removed his hands from Esme’s shoulders and glanced around. He looked all around the field and then he looked down at himself, suddenly shoving his hands under the seat of his jeans, pulling them back again and peering at them intently for a moment. “Errr ... hm, yes. Yes, I’m all right ... I think. I mean, I’m not hurt.” He knelt up and peered over his shoulder, trying to see the seat of his jeans at the same time as he asked Esme: “Where is he; Mr Nibbs? Where has he gone?”

“He’s in the corner of the field. He galloped away after he bucked you off. But Reuben, what did you mean? What have you got to tell me? And what’s the matter with your jeans?”

“Have I got glue on my jeans? ... tell you...?” Reuben looked blank. “Oh heavens! I **am** forgetting. They said I would!”

“They? Who’s ‘they’?”

“Old Woman, and ... and ... and the um ... the other Mr Nibbs. It’s very important I tell you. They said if I told **you** it wouldn’t matter if I forgot because **you** would remember for me. Will you Es?” Reuben grabbed one of his sister’s hands.

“Yeh ... I expect so; I usually remember things you tell me.”

“Esme ... I’ve been somewhere!” Reuben was almost whispering.

Esme looked at her brother intently. She knew that sometimes funny things happen to people when they get a bang on the head. But at the same time she was recalling the strange way her own voice had spoken to her - inside her head. And she was remembering the rainbow and the large transparent horse she thought she had seen. The ‘other’ Mr Nibbs, Reuben had just said.

“OK then. Go on, tell me. Where have you been?”

2 - Cloud Nine

Esme moved away from the prickly thistle she had been sitting on and settled herself more comfortably on the grass. She nodded encouragingly at her brother.

“Go on then, tell me where you’ve been.”

“Promise you’ll listen. Promise you won’t interrupt?”

She promised.

Reuben grabbed at his hair with both hands, leant backwards, squinched his eyes tight shut and screwed up his nose. He took an enormous deep breath, blew it out noisily *‘phwhooooh!’*, leaned forward, opened his eyes and began his story.

“When I opened my eyes – not just now with you but ‘before’ – there was this enormous horse standing over me. It was his breath on my face that woke me up.” Reuben paused before continuing and regarded Esme with such intensity that she shivered.

“This horse spoke to me!” He raised his hand at Esme as he saw her begin to open her mouth. “Honest Es, he did, he spoke to me ... I mean ... hmm ... you’ll see what I mean.” He hastened on to his next sentence, not giving Esme the slightest chance to prevent him from continuing his story.

“So anyway, this horse said: ‘At last! Thought you were never going to wake up Boy. You’re late you know. School started yesterday.’”

And so Reuben told his sister about ‘where he had been’.

School ... yesterday! Reuben felt his mind beginning to race, confused. It was the middle of August and school wasn’t due to start for weeks!

The horse spoke again: *‘No, no, you silly boy, not **that** school. I’m referring to The School of How It Really Is.’*

Reuben was still lying on the ground. But he could tell that the horse was probably looking quite exasperated in that way horses can when their humans are being particularly stupid. It’s the same way children can look at their parents when the adults can’t understand something really obvious.

‘Help, what’s happening?’ thought Reuben to himself. ‘I must be dreaming.’

‘Not dreaming in the way you mean it. Come on now, we must be going. Stand up and get on my back and we’ll be off.’ The horse’s very large soft muzzle was so close that its long stiff whiskers were tickling Reuben’s face.

Reuben’s body obeyed the gruff voice and scrambled him to his feet as the horse lifted its head. But his mind was yelling at him: ‘this horse knows what I’m thinking!’

'We'd be in a right mess now if I didn't wouldn't we? You don't speak Equus, and I don't speak Human.' The horse tossed his head powerfully and snorted loudly with what almost appeared to be laughter.

At this point Reuben had a chance to take a better look at the huge silvery grey animal that was like no other horse he'd ever seen.

It must have been twenty hands high or more, and it had a wonderfully arched neck like those famous 'dancing' Spanish horses he had seen on television. Its eyes were so bright that sparks seemed to be flashing from them, and every time it breathed out Reuben could see the breath all misty, like you can on cold mornings. And its body was just ... spectacular! Not exactly transparent so you could see through it, but sort of ... quivery all over ... as though it wasn't really solid. 'Shimmery' was the word that popped into Reuben's head.

But the weirdest thing was that most of its shoulders and flanks seemed to be covered in feathers.

As she heard this part of the story, the boy's sister let out a little tiny gasp and shivered slightly. She crossed her arms and held them tight against her belly.

This incredible animal stamped a front leg impatiently. *'Stop gawping Boy!'* it snorted, huffing out a stream of smoky breath. *'And would you mind shutting your mouth. There are lots of insects around and*

getting caught inside your throat would be the death of most of them.'

Reuben hadn't realised his mouth was hanging open in amazement. He shut it quickly, still gazing up at the huge silver-grey animal.

'Come on ... I've told you ... you're late! You've got an appointment with Old Woman, and she's really hot on time keeping. It's been arranged for you to meet her on Cloud Nine ... and you know what clouds are like.'

Before Reuben had a chance to say that 'no', he didn't really know what clouds are like, the horse continued: *'Can't trust them. They never stay in the same place for very long. I waste more time looking for clouds than almost anything else! If we don't get there soon, 'Nine' might have moved to somewhere else ... and then where would we be? I'll tell you, my boy. We'd be in the middle of no-where, that's where we'd be, the middle of no-where ... because no-where only become somewhere when there is some-thing there to make it a somewhere. So will you please hurry and get onto my back.'*

"Get onto your ... "

'Ye-es ... that's right ... up ... on ... to ... my ... back.' said the horse with exaggerated patience. *'All you have to do is **thinkthink** yourself there. You can **think**, can't you? Most humans are so busy thinking they never have time to **feel** anything.'*

"Um ... er ... yes ... but ... "

'Oh my goodness, you humans are so slow ... because you spend so much time thinking useless thoughts. Ha ha ha!' The horse snorted out laughter at its own joke. 'I can see I'll have to do it for you this time. But you'll have to learn you know, to think-think that is.'

Reuben had just about time to prevent his mouth from falling open again when he found himself upon the animal's back. He was surprised – and pleased – to find it felt really solid.

'Make sure you're nice and secure. You might come unseated if we meet up with a fast corner – they often bounce up unexpectedly just to catch you off guard – nasty habit of theirs. And we'll be travelling fast too. Not breaking any speed limits of course, just fast enough to catch up with the time we're losing.'

A quick thought flitted into Reuben's mind that this really was a 'jaw-dropping' experience! A small giggle began to arise in his throat as his boggled mind saw the funny side of things.

But before that thought could develop, Reuben was taken aback yet again when he looked down at his legs and saw them resting on a mass of ... feathers! How on earth was he supposed to make himself secure? Perhaps this strange animal had a safety harness attached to it.

'No need to worry Boy, you'll soon get the hang of things,' huffed the horse in gentler tones as he realised Reuben was frightened. 'Humans are always frightened the first time, but you'll eventually find the most comfortable position and develop perfect balance. For now

though ... just think-think what you need to feel safe. Er, let me see ... I know. Think-think glue onto the seat of your pants. That should fix you! He gave a horsey chuckle.

*'Oh wow. **Glue** on my jeans ... what will Mum say!'*

The deep horsey 'voice' cut through Reuben's image of his Mother's look of disbelief as he tried to explain why there was a gluey patch on the seat of his jeans.

'Use think-think - that's the magic form of think - for when you want things to happen instantly. Think-think it on ... think-think it off ... easy as pie ... or cake if you prefer. Now come on, make it snappy otherwise we'll never catch that lost time.'

Reuben, whose mind was now so boggled he couldn't think straight anyway, wondered how on earth he was supposed to think-think. Nonetheless, he crouched forward a bit and tentatively imagined smearing the contents of a tube of glue over the seat of his trousers ... and then he wriggled around on the horse's back. At least, he did a couple of wriggles and then found he couldn't move his bottom at all. He was stuck fast to the horse's back!

He gulped.

'Ouch, that hurts! No need to test quite so vigorously!' The horse twitched its shoulder muscles in protest. *'Right then, we're off.'*

The feathers beneath Reuben's legs began to ruffle up and the boy felt his legs being pushed upwards

as the giant wings (for that is what they were) began to unfurl. Having his backside immobilised by the glue prevented him from shuffling around and dropping his legs down the animal's sides behind the wings as these expanded to their full width. He felt a real idiot with his legs stuck out straight in front of him, and just for a moment he forgot to feel frightened.

The wings were ... absolutely HUGE. Reuben was mesmerised.

There was a noisy rush of air as these great wings began to beat slowly and strongly, lifting the horse and its young rider straight upwards ... just like a helicopter.

Fear returned! Reuben was terrified now! But there he was, stuck on this creature's back as it moved higher and higher, up into the sky.

Slowly, as he managed to overcome his fear, he found he was able to wiggle his legs around just enough for them to drop down behind the place where the horse's wings joined its shoulders. He thought he heard another muttered protest of pain.

This was a better position though, it felt more balanced. He was able to lean forward, almost lying down, and reach out to grab a fistful of the horse's long wavy mane in each hand. He buried his head into its hairy warmth and found himself noting that it was a bit odd that this 'shimmery' creature felt ... and smelled ... like a real horse!

Acknowledgements

I've had support and encouragement from many people during the long drawn out process of producing this book, but without the input from many of the story's own characters I would never have put pen to paper in the first place. Some of these characters badger me within my mind or dreams, demanding I tell a story about them. Others are actual animal personalities I have lived with or known, who have brought joy and on occasion sadness into my life and caused me to wish that I could speak dog, cat, horse, eagle, crow or mouse.

And I thank those 10-year olds who read the first two chapters and asked me to write more; and the adults who read the story and told me how much they enjoyed it; and my twin daughters who helped in various ways with getting the story ready for publication. And I thank those members of the Shaumbra family who responded to my request for advice on how to 'get this book out into the world', and started me off on my steps towards publication by putting me in touch with Erik my oh so patient publisher, and Stella who created the lovely image of Mr Nibbs and Pegasus that adorns the front cover. And I thank earth angel Belara.

Author's note

Although I have always enjoyed writing, it had never occurred to me to write a book. Articles were what I enjoyed: researching a topic, including through experience where possible. I was good at that. And then one day a character from this book popped into my head and asked that I write a story about him. This of course was Pegasus. I wrote the first two chapters with ease, and having received constructive criticism and approval from a couple of 10-year olds, blithely carried on with chapter three. I completed it and hit a blank wall: the story lines completely dried up and I had no idea where to go next.

That was over 25 years ago. Life was busy at the time and I forgot all about Adventures with Pegasus ... until a few years ago when a clear-out of my old writings led me to handwritten sheets of those first two chapters. I read through them, felt enthusiasm rising and ended up having to say 'Woa' to the numerous characters and their stories that were clamouring to get out of my head and onto the page.

And Pegasus, bless his beautiful wings, although not the main protagonist in the stories, remains a key character in the background, ready to rather grumpily lead the children into new adventures when they are in danger of becoming complacent, and stop questioning whether 'how things are' is the best way they can be.

The main theme running through the adventures that Pegasus initiates for the twins and their friends is that of our human relationships: with each other and with all the other sentient beings with whom we share life on this beautiful planet Earth, including those Beings who are invisible to most people. The more adventures the children have, the more they learn to be ever curious and open to other realities.