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My Name is Precious

Sue Tregidgo

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Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

Sue's passion for donkeys started at a very early age, when she was taken to Blackpool for the day by her grandparents, to have a ride on a beach donkey. She fell in love with the look, smell and feel of these lovely animals, with their furry coats, enormous ears and silky soft muzzles.

Sue enjoyed a country upbringing with horses, dogs and cats, but always wanted donkeys of her own.

Her first opportunity to own a donkey came when she lived in Snowdonia, North Wales and the donkey family has since continued to grow.

A combined love of rural France and the need for more land, resulted in a move to the Charente in South West France, where the donkey heritage is still particularly strong. Two donkeys, Precious and Mari accompanied the family's move and one of these has since had a foal.

Two more rescue donkeys have also joined the herd. They are all involved in activities and are groomed and handled on a daily basis. One of them in particular likes to pull a cart and all of them enjoy being taken for walks.

Each of the donkeys has its own story to tell, so there is never a dull moment for Sue, her husband and all their animal family.

I dedicate this little book to my precious granddaughter Holly and hope that she will grow up to have the same love and compassion for these wonderful creatures.

My Name is Precious



The First Story in The Precious Series

Written and illustrated by

Sue Tregidgo

A wise old horse once told me that if you look up the word "precious" in the dictionary, it says "beloved, of great value or worth, much prized" This makes me feel very proud, especially as for the first five years of my life I didn't have a name. Nobody cared enough about me to call me anything. This is a story about how I got a name.



.... for the first five years of my life I didn't have a name

Chapter 1

I was born in a cold, wet field in France. My mother was thin and weak because she didn't have enough to eat, but she found the strength to lick me roughly all over so that I felt warm, then nudged me gently until I stood up on wobbly legs and found where to suckle to get a drink of milk.



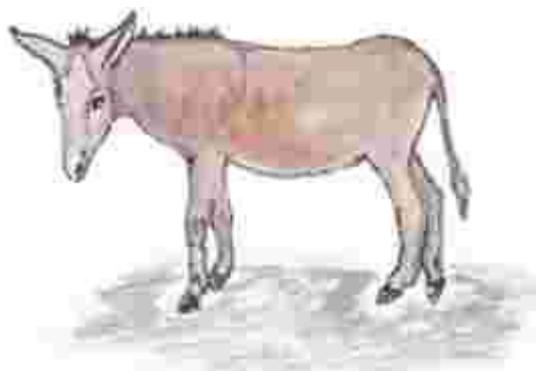
.... I stood up on wobbly legs

This tasted delicious, but there was never enough and I was always hungry.

There were other donkeys and foals in the field with me and my mother, but they all looked bigger and stronger than we did. The foals used to play and chase each other. I would have liked to join in, but I didn't have the energy to run, so I spent most of the time hunched by a hedge, trying to keep warm and dry.

Every now and then we were all rounded up and chased into a big yard. This was very frightening. Big men in flapping coats waved their arms and shouted. I stayed as close to my mother as I could. She made comforting little noises in my ear, but I knew that she too was frightened, although she pretended not to be.

We all stood around in the big yard. There was nothing to eat and no water to drink. My mother wearily hung her head.



.... My mother wearily hung her head

After a couple of hours or so, the big men with the flapping arms came back with more people.

These people chose the donkeys they wanted to buy and gradually our group got smaller and smaller, until eventually there was only me and my mother left. Nobody wanted us, probably because my mother was so thin, and I hadn't grown like I should have done. We were a sorry sight. What would happen to us?

Chapter 2

One morning a big lorry drove into the yard, and I heard alarming, braying noises of frightened donkeys coming from inside. On hearing the sounds I was filled with panic. The big men with flapping arms chased me and my mother into the yard, then up the wooden ramp into the big lorry.



.... I was filled with panic

It was full of donkeys of all sizes and colours, but they all had one thing in common; they looked terrified. The men banged the ramp shut and we all huddled together as the engine started up. Then we began to move. It was hard to keep our balance, but we all leaned into each other which helped a bit.

The journey seemed endless. I was hungry and miserable and wondered where we were going. Suddenly, the outside noises changed and when I looked out through a tiny gap in the side of the lorry, I could see big ships and ferries. We came to a halt, then waited for hours in a queue with lots of cars, trucks and trailers. I couldn't stay on my feet any longer, and slumped to the floor.

I would have liked a drink of water and a bit of hay, but nobody came to us. I could hear my mother's tummy rumbling but she didn't complain. After what seemed like an eternity, the engine started up again and we went onto a big ferry which took us across a wide expanse of water called The Channel, to England.



.... a big ferry took us across a wide expanse of water

After another journey along very wide roads with lots of traffic, we finally came to a stop. The ramp was let down and we were chased out into a field .The light of day dazzled my eyes. I had been in the darkness for so long. My legs were sore and stiff, but I was glad to be out in the fresh air and greedily gobbled some grass. I looked back at the lorry and saw my mother lying motionless inside.

I ran back towards her, but a man with a stick chased me away. He hurriedly closed the ramp and drove off. That was the last time I saw my mother.

Chapter 3

The next few years passed by uneventfully. I lived in a field with lots of other donkeys.

Some were kind and friendly, others were mean and bullies. There were three of us who became friends. They, like me, had come over from France on a big ship and they too were thin and timid. Whenever the weather was bad, we would huddle together for warmth and shelter, as all the best spots under the trees were taken by the bully donkeys.



.... the years passed by

Occasionally, the big men with flapping arms herded us up and chased us into a big shed, where people came to look at us.

It was the same old story. The big, strong donkeys were chosen and we three were left behind. I could tell our owner was tiring of us. One day I heard him say “Leave them in the shed tonight and take them to the sale tomorrow. Just get what you can for them. I’m sick of looking at the scrawny, useless things”.

We spent a miserable night wondering what a sale was and where we would go in the morning.

At daybreak another big lorry rumbled into the yard and there was a great deal of crashing and banging as the ramp was lowered. We were used to the chasing routine by now and offered no resistance. It was easier to do what the big men with the flapping arms wanted, rather than get a swift clout with a stick.

The ramp was slammed shut and the engine started up. The lorry was dirty and wet inside. Consequently we continuously lost our foothold, slithering and sliding from one side to another.

By the time our journey ended we were bruised and filthy. A covering of wet slime added to our dejection and misery. There had been nothing to eat in the lorry, and no water to drink.

I felt weak and shaky and knew that my legs wouldn’t hold me up for much longer. I no longer cared what happened to me and hung my head in despair.

Chapter 4

A sale turned out to be a place where horses, ponies, and occasionally donkeys are taken, and paraded around a fenced ring. Dozens and dozens of people surround this ring and an auctioneer sells the animals one by one to the highest bidder. When my turn came to go into the ring, I dropped my head in shame, as I knew that nobody would want me, let alone pay money for me.



.... I dropped my head in shame

Optimistically, the auctioneer asked who would like to start the bidding. The silence was interminable. A group of men by the railings started to laugh and I heard one of them say “You’d have to pay ME to take that dirty, scrawny thing home”. Laughter erupted around the ring, and gradually the jokes and jibes passed around the whole crowd. I wanted a hole in the ground to open up, so that I could disappear into it.

Suddenly, a bright, high-pitched voice shouted “One hundred pounds!” Everybody turned to see who the voice belonged to, including me. I couldn’t believe it! Somebody actually wanted to give One Hundred Pounds for ME! It was an effort to lift my head, but as I did, I saw a lady with yellow hair holding her hand up in the air and waving it to show that she was bidding. The auctioneer banged down his gavel quickly, as if he was frightened that the lady might change her mind.

Swiftly, I was pushed back down the gangway into a pen. I didn’t see what happened to my two friends. There were so many pens full of horses and ponies, and I was overwhelmed by weariness and confusion.

The pens began to empty as animals were loaded into vehicles and driven off to their new homes. Hours passed as I looked out for the lady with the yellow hair but she didn’t come.

I could stand up no longer and slumped to the floor on the dirty, wet concrete, closed my eyes, and tried to shut out the huge disappointment which was welling up inside me. I must have drifted off into an exhausted, fitful sleep, despite the commotion of voices, engines and whinnying horses.

Suddenly, I felt a gentle hand stroking my neck, and a soft voice whispering in my ear, “Don’t

worry my precious one, everything is going to be alright. I'm sorry I've been so long but it's been difficult finding somebody with a trailer to take you home".

I tried to stand up but couldn't, and the yellow-haired lady told me to be still while she went to get some help.



.... "don't worry my precious one"....

When I saw four big men walk into the pen I felt worried, but the comforting voice and warm hand of my new owner reassured me that all would be well. The men heaved me up onto my feet, half carrying, half dragging me into a trailer. A thick bed of straw welcomed me, and I flopped down onto it. My new owner bent down and offered me a small drink of water which I greedily gulped. She smiled and said "No more for now my precious one or you will have a tummy ache. You can have some more when we get home".

She took hold of my face in her hands, rubbing the sides of my cheeks. "It looks as if I have a name for you already. I shall call you Precious". I had no idea what the word precious meant but I didn't care. I HAD A NAME!

Chapter 5

After a journey of an hour or so, we came to a halt. Refreshed by the water, I managed to get up onto my feet. I was eager to see where we were, and waited impatiently for the ramp to be lowered.

The four men had travelled with the yellow haired lady, and I heard one of them say

“Do you want her put straight in the stable Bonnie?”

“I think so” she replied, and now I knew the name of my new owner- Bonnie. They helped me down the ramp, across a yard and into a stable.



.... down the ramp, across a yard and into a stable

I had never had a place to shelter in, and this stable looked cosy and inviting; straw on the floor, a bucket of water to drink, and a net full of hay to eat. There was a window to look out of, and I could see two donkeys grazing in the paddock outside. Bonnie came over to me and said

“You’ll be able to join them once you’re feeling better and have settled in”. She lifted her hand to give me a pat and I jerked my head away from her.



....“You’ll be able to join them once you’re feeling your better

I’d been so used to being pushed and shoved around that it was hard for me to believe that

somebody would want to be kind. Bonnie made gentle soothing noises and told me not to worry. “Nobody will ever hurt you again Precious, I promise you”.

After eating all the hay I went to sleep, and woke up in the morning to find two donkeys looking in at me over the stable door. They had come to say hello.



... two donkeys had come to say hello

One of the donkeys was called Mari and the other one Bella. After a few weeks we became good friends and spent all our time together. Bonnie brushed me every day until my coat shone and a man came to trim my feet which had become badly overgrown.

I was very nervous when I saw the man, but Bonnie put her arm over my neck and patted me, telling me that there was no need to be frightened, and I wasn't. Not with her to look after me.



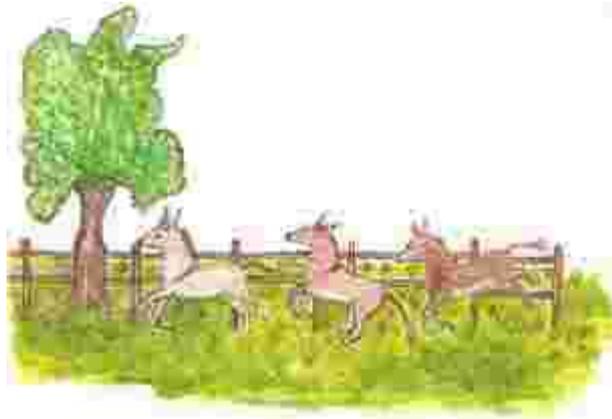
.... Bonnie brushed me until my coat shone ...

Gradually I learnt to trust people and began to enjoy all the fuss and attention .Mari, Bella and I lived happily together in the paddock, and our stable door was always open so that we could go

inside whenever we wanted. There was always plenty of grass and hay to eat and lovely, fresh water from the stream to drink.

As I got stronger I started to join in the chasing games which Mari and Bella enjoyed so much.

We ran round and round the paddock, first in one direction and then the other, kicking up our back legs and having a whale of a time.



.... we ran round and round the paddock

Chapter 6

One day, I noticed that an old horse in the next field had come to the fence to watch our antics.

He called me over and said

“Hello, I’m Bobby. I haven’t seen you before. What is your name?”

“Precious” I replied with pride. I still couldn’t believe that I had a name.



.... “What is your name?”

“Well”, he said, “Aren’t you lucky to have a name like that?”

“Why”, I said. “What does it mean”? He looked at me with wise, kindly eyes and said

“Somebody must think you are very special, because the word precious means “beloved, of great value or worth, much prized”.

I felt ten feet tall. Not only did I have a name, but I had the best name in the whole wide world.

In Praise of the Donkey

These Christ creatures grow on you, invade your spirit,
creep unceremoniously under your skin
and wrap themselves around your heart,
after squeezing it and turning it inside out.

The smell invades your senses, that warm, leathery,
dried-grass scent of child's breath sweetness,
which becomes addictive, causes symptoms
of withdrawal if denied.

Those oversized ears, lined with fur, which though paired,
move independently, outward sign of conflicts within.
Finely tuned barometers, affected by wind and rain,
sensitive to pleasure and pain.

Exasperating attributes of steel, contradicted by
dainty, finely sculptured hooves, not equated with the
digging in of heels and 'ancient crooked will'.

Wise eyes, framed by impossibly long lashes
search souls and tolerate weakness;
they feign indifference but encompass all.
Down-soft muzzle nudges and curls,
a touch of velvet on cheek or palm.

Overburdening is borne with unquestioning grace,
the cruel hand of humankind forgiven.
The heart so brave, brimful of love,
it must surely fill the tiny body.

God's Creature indeed; an indelible hallmark of approval
stamped onto each narrow back.
What higher accolade could there be?

A cross bestowed by a heavenly hand,
a visible seal of recommendation –
By Appointment to The Almighty.

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