

Tessa McDowell
10 years old
USA

WINGLESS FLYER

Story of love, hope, and determination.

Prologue

There was once a magical, delightful island. All the villagers owned pegs (Pegasus) and they rode them around town. One of the farmers in the town was a very wise man. He had a special love for the flying creatures on the island. The farmer's 8-year old daughter shared his love for animals: she could even talk to them and understand them.

One night, the farmer's daughter looked out at the stars. The stars shined brightly and she could see one that looked like a shooting star in the sky. As she gazed at it she wished that she could have a peg of her own; a very fast one.

On the magical island, pegs meant everything to the villagers. They even had races for them called Peg-races. Peg-races were much like the sport of horseracing. The pegs would line up at the starting string, with riders on their backs. When the string was pulled they would start galloping. They would run very fast and when they reached a certain speed, they would take off flying around the track. Whichever Peg crossed the finish line first would win.

Lucy, the farmer's daughter dreamed of being a rider in the Peg-races. All she needed was a fast peg. Suddenly, she heard the sound of a crying peg! The farmer's daughter ran to the door to see what was happening. She peered out the door and saw a baby peg. A smile came to her face as she slowly walked toward the creature. The peg was brown with a black mane and a diamond on his forehead. But the only problem was he had no wings! The farmer's daughter could not help but gasp when she saw the peg's predicament. For a minute, she just stood there and looked into the peg's eyes.

"Lucy, what are you doing out here?" asked the farmer, who was now standing at the door after hearing the commotion. Then his eyes turned to the wingless, baby peg. He slowly walked closer to the baby peg, examining him. The farmer was very poor and he hoped to find a fast peg so he could win some Peg-races. When he noticed that the baby peg had no wings, his smile turned into a frown. "What are we going to do with a wingless peg? Lucy, I'm going to take him to the sale barn right now," said the farmer, clearly disappointed. "Yes, Father, but what did you see in this peg. I know you had to see something special in him," answered Lucy.

Finally, after a few moments of silence, the farmer answered, "His eyes look quite fierce and knowledgeable. I thought that maybe those traits would form a good Peg-racer." Lucy responded, "Father, I know that he is wingless, but he has nice strong legs. Don't you think that he could still win races? After all, you did say that I could choose a peg of my own and I think I want this one." Her father sadly answered, "Yes, but he has no wings, what's the point of

having a wingless peg." Lucy looked heartbroken as she sat by the wingless peg. Lucy's father looked at her lovingly, "Oh very well. Time will tell if his heart is as big as yours."

The farmer smiled as his now 10-year old daughter, Lucy and her wingless peg, Wingless Flyer, ran across the field. He clocked them going 1 mile in 1:24.5, which was even faster than the times for his winged pegs. "What was our time, Father?"

asked Lucy. "I clocked you at 1:24.5 for a mile," her father replied. "Do you think he is ready?" she asked her father. "I don't want to speak too soon, but I would say yes," answered the farmer. Lucy trotted Wingless back over to the bam, patting him on the shoulder as they went.

It had only been 2 years since Lucy had found Wingless in their yard and had begged her father to keep him. Even though Wingless didn't have wings, her father had seen how fond Lucy was of the peg and had reluctantly said yes. Now, Lucy and Wingless were the closest of friends. Lucy and Wingless could even talk to each other.

Back at the stable, Lucy was brushing Wingless. "Wingless, did you hear what Father said? He said that you are going to get to race in a Peg-race in a week or so! Are you excited?" "Really, does he think I am ready? Do you think I'm ready?" Wingless asked, unsure of himself. It was very rare for a peg to be able to speak, but Wingless and Lucy were such good friends that they were able to communicate in a special way. "I think you're ready, but the most important thing is how you feel about it." Wingless responded, "Well, what if I'm not ready, Lucy? And what if everyone laughs at me?" Lucy looked at him intently and said, "If they do laugh at you, don't pay any attention to them and you'll do fine."

Wingless still did not think he was ready, but he did not say anything more to Lucy about it. He was nervous and scared and was afraid that everyone would make fun of him.

That night Wingless had a dream that mud was being kicked in his face during a race as the whole crowd laughed at him. In the dream, he was 300 yards behind the rest of the peg pack.

A few days later. Wingless woke up to the voice of his best friend. "Wingless, do you know what today is?" asked Lucy excitedly. Wingless's heart skipped a beat as he realized that today was race day. A shiver ran down his tail and it felt like he had butterflies in his stomach. "Wingless, are you awake?" Lucy asked. "Yes, I'm awake," Wingless moaned. "What's wrong," asked Lucy sympathetically? "Oh it's nothing," answered Wingless. "But it has to be something or you wouldn't be so discouraged," she responded. "It's just that I'm scared because, because,

because.....I do not want to have any rider on my back except you." Lucy had been training

Wingless, however was not planning to ride him in the race because of her age. "Well, I'll talk

to Father and see if maybe I could ride you." Despite the fact that Lucy's father agreed to let Lucy ride Wingless, the peg's confidence was still lagging.

When Wingless got to the track, the people and the pegs there immediately started laughing at him. His head was low and his body was shaking, which made the people and pegs laugh even harder at him. Lucy could sense that something was wrong with Wingless when she saddled him, but she decided not to say anything about it.

As they walked toward the starting line, the farmer helped Lucy onto Wingless. Lucy patted Wingless on the shoulder and said, "You're going to do great." The farmer gave Lucy and Wingless a few last words of encouragement and then walked towards the stands.

Just as soon as they were lined up, the string was pulled to start the race. As the pegs took off, Wingless became disoriented and got stuck in the middle of the pack. The other peg's wings were hitting him and dirt was flying in his face. Wingless struggled so much that he fell back to last place, only to have more dirt kicked in his face.

Suddenly Wingless picked up the pace. He ran his heart out trying to take the lead, yet he could not mount a serious challenge as the rest of the pegs started flying. As their

wings expanded, there was no room to run on the track. Disaster struck as one of the peg's wings clipped him on his shoulder. Pure exhaustion, combined with the stress of the collision, caused Wingless to collapse to the ground.

Lucy jumped off Wingless's back before he hit the ground and yelled, "Wingless, Wingless, are you okay?" Wingless was in terrible pain and lying on the track. "Kind of, but my leg hurts," moaned Wingless. "Which leg hurts?" Lucy asked worriedly. "All of them, I can hardly breath."

Everyone watched in horror as the wingless peg lay on the track motionless. The farmer ran over as fast as he could. "Lucy, Lucy, is he okay?" screamed the farmer! "I don't know Father, he says it hurts everywhere," Lucy cried.

The peg-ambulance came roaring down the track, the siren screeching. People were yelling, "I told you that no wingless peg could ever win." Wingless could not believe what had happened; he just wanted to get back to the farmer's stable. The siren was so loud that Wingless could not even hear Lucy's calming voice.

When Wingless finally woke up, he was at the stable lying in his stall. Lucy lay by his side asleep. The stables were quiet, which usually meant that it was night. Wingless wondered if he was seriously injured. All that he knew was that his whole body ached and that his back right foot hurt terribly. A bruise, where he had been kicked in the shoulder, stung badly.

The next morning Lucy woke up Wingless. "What happened to me? When can I run again?" asked Wingless. "Wingless, I decided to wait to tell you, but you will never be able to run again. You might not even walk again. The doctors say that there is really not much hope. But I know that your heart is bigger than your injuries. I have never met a more courageous and determined peg. Wingless, you broke your right back leg, all your legs are badly bruised, you lost all of your shoes during the race, and there is a list of 20 things that are wrong with you. But together we can fight through this!!!"

Wingless did not believe that he could overcome all of the challenges that he was up against. He sadly said to Lucy, "Well, since there are 20 things that are wrong with me, I think the doctor is right. I don't see a reason to live."

Lucy paused for a moment and then said, "Wingless, all I want is for you to be happy. I will do what is best for you." Then Lucy ran back to the house crying. Wingless felt horrible about causing Lucy pain, but it was true that he didn't want to live.

A couple of hours later, Lucy went back to see Wingless. Wingless was very glad to see her. "Hey Wingless, are you okay?" asked Lucy. "Kind of, my body aches," answered Wingless. "What is your decision? Do you want to live?" Wingless paused for a moment and thought about that question. He was about to say no, but then as he searched his heart he began to realize he had a reason to live: his friendship with Lucy. Then, his spunky, spirited attitude came back. "Of course I want to live! You know me! Not only do I want to live, but I want to run again." The sad tears on Lucy's face turned into happy tears. Joy filled her face as she hugged the peg that she had raised from birth.

Each day during his recovery, Wingless asked, "When can I run?" Lucy was glad that her peg never gave up even when he broke his leg. His hopeful spirit was contagious to all who were around him.

One day, for the first time in weeks, Lucy took Wingless out for a walk. "Lucy, can I gallop?" asked Wingless. "Maybe not right now, because I cannot run as fast as you," joked Lucy. Lucy was surprised that only weeks after the accident Wingless already wanted to run again. The question was: Would he still be a successful peg-racer?

After their walk, Lucy put Wingless in a peg-pen to play. As she set him free, he

started to run around the pen. Wingless was as playful as ever as he romped around the pen kicking up his heels. Tears of happiness filled Lucy's eyes as she watched Wingless play, knowing how severely injured he had been.

After months of training, amazingly, the wingless peg was at the racetrack once again! This time the laughter was even worse. However, this time Wingless was not discouraged.

What a beautiful sight it was to see Wingless being saddled once again. This was a peg that nearly died, yet now he was not only healthy again but was strong enough to face his fears. The sad thing was that there wasn't a single person in the stands cheering for him.

The farmer led Wingless and Lucy towards the starting line. "Lucy, Wingless, if either one of you are in danger, stop," said the farmer. The farmer's last words before the peg-race began were, "Today the world gets to see how big your hearts are."

The string was pulled and Wingless jumped into the lead. Wingless wanted to go even faster, but Lucy held him back. The rest of the pegs tried to steal the lead from Wingless, but Wingless would not yield. Though Wingless was tiring, he tried to hide it so Lucy wouldn't slow him down. The rest of the pegs started to take off in flight. Wingless whispered to himself, "I will not let them beat me again!" He sped up and kept the lead on the ground. With sheer determination, Wingless started to run like no peg had ever run before! As he crossed the finish line he was 313 yards in front of the flying pegs!

Epilogue

The story of Lucy and Wingless was passed down from generation to generation. Their bravery, courage, and determination helped them to accomplish their dreams. The friendship between Lucy and Wingless encouraged countless people to face challenges with faith, love and hope.