

# Aesop's Fables

## 10. THE MILLER, HIS SON AND THE DONKEY

By Sue Reid

"Fetch our old donkey," the Miller said to his son one day. "We're taking him to market. We need money and we've nothing else to sell."

The son ran to the stable where the Donkey was kept. He threw a halter over its neck. And the Donkey wasn't happy!

"Grumpy old thing!" said the son, as he led the Donkey out of the stable. "I'm not sorry we're selling you!"

"I'm not sorry either," brayed the Donkey. "When was the last time you gave me a carrot!"

"We won't ride him," said the Miller. "It'll be easier to sell him if he's not tired."

They led the donkey down the street towards the town.

"Hey, you!" a man shouted suddenly. "Why don't you ride the Donkey?"

"That's what it's for!" another man hollered.

The crowd began to laugh. The Miller hated to be laughed at. "Get up, son," he said. The son climbed up on to the

Donkey's back.

"At least it's the smaller one," the Donkey grumbled as he felt the son's weight on his back. "Something to be grateful for, I suppose."

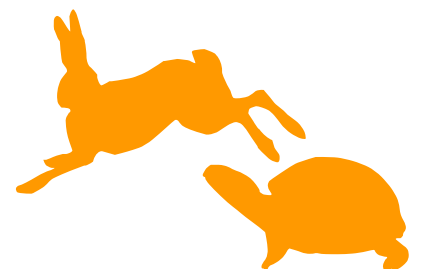
But they hadn't travelled far before they passed three merchants, whispering and shaking their heads.

"What is the world coming to?" the Miller heard one of them say. "Get down, young man. Let your master ride the donkey."

The Miller thought he'd better do as they said. "Hop down, lad, and help me up," he said to his son.

So the son climbed down and helped his father clamber up. "Ee-aw!" grumbled the Donkey, as the Miller landed on his back. "What a lump! Worse than a sack of potatoes." His back was hard and bony.

The Miller wasn't sorry when they reached the gates of the town. A group of girls were standing there, bags and baskets in their hands. The Miller pulled on the Donkey's halter. "Whoa!" he said. "Let the ladies through first."





“Cor, look at that poor boy,” one of the girls said, seeing the son lead the donkey, his father on top. “His master should let him ride too. Lazy thing.”

The Miller was a bit cross, but he liked to please. “Get up behind me, son,” he said. “What! Both of you at once!” the Donkey screeched. “I’m an old donkey. Ee-aw!”

“Look at that poor creature,” a woman said as the Donkey crawled slowly along the road, head drooping. “Two of them on his back.”

“And one of them so big!” said her friend. “They should be carrying it!”

“Yes, they are right,” thought the Miller, and climbed down. “Get down, son. We’ll carry him between us.”

They tied the Donkey’s legs to a pole, the Donkey slung between them.

“Now they know what it’s like to be a donkey - carrying great loads all day,” he thought, as the Miller and his son stumbled down the street.

The townspeople had never seen such a sight before. They ran out of their houses to watch. “Don’t they look silly!” they laughed.

The Donkey hated to be laughed at. He pushed and he pulled, trying to free himself.

Slowly the ropes that bound him began to loosen. “One - more - heave,” he gasped as they stumbled up to the bridge.

And with a final tug and a kick he was free. Over the bridge he tumbled. Down, down, down he fell. Splash! Into the river below.

He thrashed and he brayed. But there was nothing he could do.

“Ee-aw. Ee-aw,” he cried. Ee...aw!”

The Miller watched helplessly as his donkey was swept away.

“Silly me,” he said as he and his son trudged homewards. “By trying to please everyone I have lost my donkey - and now I have nothing left to sell.”