

The man, the boy, and the donkey

A man and his son were going to market with their donkey. The humans walked alongside the animal. It was a lovely summer day and all three were happy to be together. Along the road they passed a countryman who, when they had passed him, said: 'Fools! They own the donkey and yet they are walking.'

The father felt a little foolish so he lifted the boy onto the donkey and they carried on their way. Along the road they passed three men sitting under a tree, talking. One of them said: 'Look at that lazy boy, he lets his father walk while he rides.' The other men laughed as the walkers passed by.

The man again felt foolish. He ordered his boy to get off the donkey and got on himself. 'That's better,' he thought, 'now I'll get the respect I deserve.' They hadn't gone far when they passed two women. One of them said to the other: 'Shame on that lazy lout to let his poor little son trudge along while he rides all high and mighty like a lazy king.'

The man was stunned by this latest judgement against him. He stopped in the road, not knowing what to do. At last he pulled his boy up in front of him and they both rode the donkey.

When they arrived in town, passers-by began to jeer and point at them. The man stopped and asked what they were complaining about. The people said: 'Aren't you ashamed of yourself for overloading that poor donkey. Look at the sweat on him?'

The man and boy got off the donkey in despair. 'This is a DISASTER,' cried the man to no-one in particular. They sat, staring at the road in silence. Then they had the same idea at the same time.

They cut down a pole, tied the donkey's feet to it, and raised the pole and the donkey onto their shoulders. They strode forward as proudly as they could, ignoring the laughter of all who met them.

As they crossed Market Bridge, the donkey got one of his feet loose, kicked out and caused the boy to drop his end of the pole. The donkey plunged over the side of the bridge and drowned. The father and son could do nothing to save him.

An old man who was following them said:

- 'Please all, and you will please none.'
- 'Better to feel foolish than harm another.'
- 'If you take the advice of others, you shouldn't blame yourselves.'
- 'Doing what is right will always seem foolish to some.'

The dog and the wolf

A wolf, almost dead with hunger, met a house-dog in the road. 'Ah, cousin,' said the Dog. 'Your wild life will be the ruin of you. Why don't you work steadily for a master like I do? He'll give you food in return for your labour.'

'I would but I can't find any work,' said the Wolf.

'No problem,' said the dog. 'Let me sort it out. Work for MY master and you'll get some food. Follow me.'

The wolf followed the dog along the road that led to the master's house in town. As they walked, the wolf noticed that the hair around the dog's neck was worn away.

'How did you lose your neck-hair, cousin?' asked the wolf.

'Oh, that's nothing,' said the dog. 'That's the spot where master puts the collar on at night to keep me chained up with the others. It chafes a bit, but we all get used to it.'

'The dog turned to the wolf but the wolf was running in the other direction.'

- Better be free than be a fat slave.
- If you won't make sacrifices, you deserve to suffer.
- Freedom comes at a cost.
- If slaves said "No!" there would be no masters and no chains
- You can't be free in every sense of the word.

The fox and the grapes

One hot summer day, a fox was strolling through an orchard. He spotted a bunch of ripe juicy grapes on a vine that was growing along a high branch.

'Just the thing to quench my thirst,' he said to himself. He stepped back a few paces, looked very determined and took a run, a jump and a leap but missed the grapes.

He turned around and took a longer run up. He ran, he jumped ... and he fell to the ground.

Again and again he tried to capture the grapes but, in the end, he gave up. He walked away muttering to himself: 'I am sure those grapes were sour. I could have got them but I didn't want to waste any more of my valuable time.'

- It is easy to despise what you cannot get.
- Sometimes it is best just to give up.
- It is a good thing not to blame yourself for what you cannot achieve.
- It's better to lie to yourself than to feel disappointed.

The bat, the birds and the beasts

The birds and the beasts declared war on each other. The two armies lined up before battle calling each other names. 'Beasts are poo!' screeched the birds. 'Birds are poo too!' bellowed the beasts even louder, until one beast thought it better to shout: 'Birds are poo ... but beasts aren't!'. The shouting back and forth went on for quite a while until it was nearly dark.

A bat didn't want to join either side.

The birds that passed his perch shouted: 'Join us!' but he said: 'I am a beast, go away.'

Some beasts passed underneath him and said: 'Join us!' but he said: 'I am a bird, go away.'

The beasts and the birds got tired of calling each other names. They made peace and went home. They were glad they didn't have to fight a war. The bat was relieved too. He flew to the birds, thinking he would join in the celebrations, but they all chased after him shouting 'bats are poo!' and he had to fly away. Then he went over to the beasts but they said if he didn't leave they would tear him to pieces. 'Ah,' said the Bat to himself, 'I see now:

- I refused to take sides so I have no friends.
- I refused to take sides so I don't deserve any friends.
- Some creatures need to have enemies.
- When you refuse to take sides, the easiest reason to give is not always the best.'

The mother and the wolf

'Be quiet now!' bawled a mother at her young child. She opened the window and shouted: 'If you make that noise again I'll kill Santa Claus and throw you to the wolf!'

As it happened, a wolf was creeping around the house and heard the mother's words. He crouched down and waited. 'This is my lucky day,' he thought. 'That brat is sure to cry again soon, and I'm hungry.'

He waited, and waited ... and then waited some more. At last the child began to cry. The wolf crept forward and looked up to the mother, wagging his tail and winking. To his surprise and horror, the mother shut the window and called the dogs. Three great slobbering, growling creatures came rushing towards the wolf, who ran off down the road. 'Ah,' he thought:

- 'Enemies' promises were made to be broken.'
- 'It REALLY is wrong to break promises. Shame on that mother'
- 'Humans can't be trusted to keep promises'
- 'Being a human child can't be much fun.'