

## Donkey Fables: A Selection

### 1. **The Donkey and the Statue of a God (Aesop's Fables – Greek)**

The statue of a god was being carried to the temple. It was mounted on a donkey adorned with garlands and gorgeous decorations, and a grand procession of priests followed it through the streets. As the donkey walked along, the people bowed their heads in prayer or fell on their knees, and the donkey thought they were honouring himself.

With his head full of this foolish idea, he became so puffed up with pride and vanity that he stopped and started to bray loudly. But in the middle of his song, his driver guessed what the donkey had got into his head, and began to beat him unmercifully with a stick.

"Go along with you, you stupid donkey," he cried. "The prayers are not for you but for the statue you are carrying."

### 2. **The Donkey playing on the Roof (Aesop's Fables – Greek)**

A donkey saw a monkey playing on the roof of his stable. The donkey's owner was laughing at the way the monkey was playing. The donkey decided he wanted to make his owner laugh too, so he climbed up on the roof and started playing with the monkey.

The donkey was too heavy, however, and he broke a hole in the roof! The owner pulled the donkey down, and beat him with a thick wooden club. The donkey said, "But when the monkey was playing on the roof, you were laughing, as if you found it very amusing!"

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### **3. The Donkey and the Tiger Skin (Indian Fable)**

There was a laundryman who had a donkey.

One day, the laundryman found a tiger-skin in the jungle and put the tiger-skin on his donkey.

"The farmers will be afraid of my tiger," he thought.

Wearing the tiger-skin, the donkey was able to graze in the barley-fields at night, getting fat on the farmers' barley.

But one night, the donkey heard the bray of a she-donkey, and he could not resist: he also started to bray!

The farmers realized this was not a tiger, but a donkey, so they beat the poor donkey and drove him away from their fields.

### **4. The Donkey, the Rooster, and the Lion (Aesop's Fables – Greek)**

A donkey and a rooster were in a farmyard together when a lion approached the farm. The lion was starving, and he was about to attack the donkey, when the rooster crowed loudly.

They say that lions are frightened by the sound of a rooster's voice, and so the lion ran away as fast as he could. The donkey, seeing that the lion was so frightened by just the sound of a rooster, became brave enough to attack the lion.

The donkey galloped towards the lion to attack. He had not run very far when the lion turned around, caught the donkey, and tore him apart.

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### **5. The Donkey and the Lapdog (Aesop's Fables – Greek)**

There was once a donkey whose master also owned a lapdog. The master loved the dog very much, and gave him many pats, as well as food from his plate. Every day the dog would run to meet the master, playing with him and leaping up to lick his hands and face.

The donkey watched this sadly. He was well fed, but he had much work to do, and the master never played with him.

Now the jealous donkey got the idea in his silly head that all he had to do to win his master's favor was to act like the dog. So one day he left his stable and ran eagerly into the house.

Finding his master seated at the dinner table, he kicked up his heels and, with a loud bray, pranced joyfully around the table, knocking it over as he did so. Then he planted his front feet on his master's knees and stuck out his tongue to lick the master's face, as he had seen the dog do. But his weight broke the chair, and donkey and man rolled over together in the pile of broken dishes from the table.

The master was much alarmed at the strange behavior of the donkey. He called for help, and the servants came running. When they saw the danger the master was in from the clumsy donkey, they attacked the donkey and drove him with kicks and blows back to the stable.

### **6. The Donkey and the Watchdog (Indian Fable)**

A thief came to rob a house.

The donkey said to the watchdog, "You should bark!"

"Our master treats us badly," said the dog. "Why should I bark?"

Since the dog wouldn't bark, the donkey brayed.

This scared the thief, but the master didn't know anything about that. Instead, he was furious that the donkey woke him up. In his rage, he beat the donkey so badly that the donkey died.

The dog shook his head sadly. "The donkey should have listened to me and kept his mouth shut."

The thief returned the next night. The dog did not bark.

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### 7. The Donkey and his Masters (Aesop's Fables – Greek)

A donkey belonged to a vegetable seller who did not feed him enough, and made him work very hard. He asked Zeus if he would give him to a new master. Zeus warned him that he would regret this decision, and gave him to a brick-maker.

The donkey realized that he had to carry even heavier loads and work even harder making bricks, so he asked Zeus again for a new master. Zeus told him this would be the last time he changes his master, and gave him to a tanner.

The donkey realized this was the worst master of all, and complained, "I was better off being starved by the vegetable seller and overworked by the brick-maker. Now I will have to work hard for the tanner, and even after I die, he will use my skin to make leather."

### 8. The Donkey and the Jackal (Indian Fable)

A farmer allowed his donkey to wander freely at night.

One night the donkey met a jackal, and they became friends.

Together, they broke into a cucumber field and ate all the cucumbers they wanted.

Then the donkey decided to sing.

"Don't do that!" hissed the jackal.

But the donkey insisted on singing. "I have a lovely singing voice," he said. "You're just jealous!"

The jackal hid in the bushes and watched. The donkey sang very loudly, and finally the villagers came and cudgeled him to death.

"Music is all well and good," thought the jackal, "but silence is safer."

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### 9. **The Donkey and the Wolf (Aesop's Fable – Greek)**

A donkey was eating in a pasture near a forest when he saw a wolf hiding in the shadows along the hedge. He easily guessed what the wolf had in mind, and thought of a plan to save himself. So he pretended he was injured, and began to limp painfully.

When the wolf came up, he asked the donkey what had hurt him, and the donkey replied that he had stepped on a sharp thorn.

"Please pull it out," he pleaded, groaning as if in pain. "If you do not, it might stick in your throat when you eat me."

The wolf saw the wisdom of the advice, and he wanted to enjoy his meal without any danger of choking. So the donkey lifted up his foot and the wolf began to search very closely and carefully for the thorn.

Just then the donkey kicked out with all his might, knocking the wolf a dozen paces away. And while the wolf was getting very slowly and painfully to his feet, the donkey galloped away in safety.

"Serves me right," growled the wolf as he crept into the bushes. "I'm a butcher by trade, not a doctor."

### 10. **The Donkey and the Raven (Aesop's Fable – Greek)**

A donkey with a cut on his back was eating in a meadow. A raven landed on him and started picking at the scab. This hurt the donkey, and he started running and jumping around, to make the raven leave. This sight made the donkey's master laugh at the donkey.

A wolf was walking by, and he saw this happen. He complained, "how unfair! The master laughs at the raven, but if a wolf did the same thing, he would be hunted to death!"

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### **11. The Donkey and the Gazelle (Muslim fable)**

A hunter caught a gazelle and then locked it in the stable with his donkey.

He fed the donkey with straw, and he offered straw to the gazelle also, but the gazelle refused to eat.

The donkey laughed. "You must miss your royal throne, delicate creature that you are!"

"It's true," said the gazelle. "I long to eat sweet meadow-grass and drink from fresh streams. The stench here is suffocating."

"In a strange country, anyone can boast!" scoffed the donkey. "I don't believe a word you say."

The gazelle sighed. "What would a dung-worshipping donkey know of good food and clean water?"

### **The Donkeys Touching Noses (African Fable)**

Two men met on a road, each riding a donkey.

The men greeted each other, and the donkeys also touched noses in greeting.

"I understand why people exchange greetings," one man said, "but why do the donkeys put their heads together?"

"Long ago," the other man replied, "the donkeys sent a messenger to God, imploring him to free the donkeys from their servitude. Now when donkeys meet each other, they ask: has our messenger returned yet? They are always hoping for news that God will grant them their freedom."

The donkeys remind us that every creature longs to be free.