

# AESOP'S FABLE: The Ass and His Driver

A Play Written by Connie Frank



**Narrator on the story The Ass and His Driver:** Fables have portrayed donkeys as clumsy and stupid since the time of the Ancient Greeks. There was a paradox developed by philosopher Jean Buridan in 14th century France. The puzzle is a hypothetical situation wherein an equally hungry and thirsty donkey is placed exactly halfway between a bale of hay and a pail of water. In this illustration of free will (and with the ultimate assumption that donkeys are not intelligent), the donkey is unable to choose between the food and the water, and so it dies. This is completely unfair to donkeys. A donkey's behavior is commonly misunderstood, principally because his behavior is compared to that of the horse, rather than viewed as a separate species. Donkey idioms will be used

throughout our play today, so it will be fun to see your face when you hear one.

## Characters:

**Narrator:**

**Jack:**

**Ebenezer the Donkey:**

**Classmate Natalie:**

**Classmate George:**

## Script:

**Narrator:** The tall trees were scattered in thin groups along the narrow dirt road Jack narrowly got hit in the face by a big, clingy limb of an old oak tree.

**Jack:** Hey, there, Ebenezer! Quit aiming for the low branches! I am getting hit back here!

**Narrator:** Ebenezer the Donkey brayed loudly, looking behind him and showing his very big teeth. Ebenezer could talk but he chose not to talk. Jack would not understand him anyway.

**Ebenezer the Donkey:** (Thinking to himself and glancing back at his master every once in a while): Maybe you should be driving the cart, not me, my friend.

**Narrator:** Ebenezer the Donkey and Jack were on a journey. Jack had decided that morning that they needed to go to the market to sell their wares. The road was long, and the truth be told, Ebenezer was bored. He kept trying to nod off to sleep while he dragged the heavy bundle behind him in the cart. The old cart had round wheels, but the Donkey wondered what it would be like to have square wheels. The Donkey chuckled to himself and tried to focus on the landscape as it passed by.

**Jack:** (Squinting in the bright sunlight reflecting off the stream of water they were going to have to cross before they got to town): At least it is a sunny day, Ebenezer. I mean, it could be raining today. The sun is out, and we have many hours before the day is done. We can celebrate when we get home.

**Ebenezer the Donkey:** (Snorting loudly): I can't wait to get home, enjoy the sweet hay, and maybe sneak in a nap.

**Narrator:** It got quiet again, and the Donkey plodded along with his friend following, sniffing the air every once in a while, to find out if any predators were around. A butterfly once lit on the Donkey's nose, making the Donkey sneeze.

**Ebenezer the Donkey:** (His face contorting): Ah-Ah-Ah-Ah-Chooooooooo!

**Jack:** (Grinning): Ebenezer! You really are a loud little Donkey, aren't you! *You could talk the hind legs off a donkey.*

**Ebenezer the Donkey:** (Laughing): Look at you telling jokes about me! Back at you, bud.

**Narrator:** Jack could not hear or understand Ebenezer, but he got the feeling that the Donkey was laughing at his joke.

**Classmate Natalie:** (Waving wildly) Hi Jack! Where are you off to on this fine day?

<b>Jack:</b>	(Looking up to see his friend at school standing on a hill close to the road with her brother, George. Hi Natalie! Hey, George! Yeah, Ebenezer and I are heading to the market. Want to come?)
<b>Classmate George:</b>	I want to come! Natalie, we should go! Maybe we can get a treat at the grocery store. I have had a real craving for a cold pop!
<b>Classmate Natalie:</b>	(Shaking her head): Mom and Dad want us to clean up the barn. We can't come today, but maybe next time. Okay?
<b>Jack:</b>	(Nodding his head): Sure! Of course! Hey, did you get your homework done for class tomorrow?
<b>Classmate Natalie:</b>	(Putting her thumb up): Yes, I did.
<b>Classmate George:</b>	(Laughing): No, I didn't but I know Natalie will help me on it when we get time.
<b>Classmate Natalie:</b>	(Looking shocked and then laughing too): George! Okay, yes, I always help him when he asks.
<b>Narrator:</b>	Jack laughed, waved to his friends, and then caught up with Ebenezer, who had moved on down the rockier part of the road. The rocks were hurting Jack's feet even through his sandals, and Jack suddenly happened to look up and noticed that Ebenezer had turned right when he should have turned left in the road. Ebenezer had missed the crossroads.
<b>Jack:</b>	(Brow furrowed, yelling): Ebenezer! Get back on the road! What are you doing? <i>Donkey work?</i> You know this road like the back of your hoof!
<b>Ebenezer the Donkey:</b>	Okay! Okay!
<b>Narrator:</b>	Resentfully and braying loudly, the Donkey turned the cart slowly around to move toward the other side of the crossroad.
<b>Jack:</b>	(His head down): I'm sorry I yelled at you, Ebenezer.
<b>Narrator:</b>	Ebenezer the Donkey grunted and grumbled but kept pulling the cart on the dusty road.
<b>Ebenezer the Donkey:</b>	All Jack cares about is getting his precious items to the market. I am tired of having to do this every few weeks. I want my barn and my sweet hay. I want a nap!
<b>Narrator:</b>	Of course, Jack could not hear what Ebenezer was saying, but Jack could feel that there was a change in their relationship. Ebenezer seemed focused on getting to the market now and was not as excited about being on a journey. The two friends were no longer communicating, and Jack could see that Ebenezer was not happy. Jack's feet hurt too, and he wished he had worn better shoes. The mountain path was now taking a downward turn. Ebenezer was pulling the cart along the rocky road at a pretty good clip, leading Jack down the mountain side. Suddenly, the cart creaked in irritation when Ebenezer jerked it in an odd manner.
<b>Jack:</b>	(Waving his arms in the air): Ebenezer! You silly Donkey! What are you doing!
<b>Narrator:</b>	Jack watched in terror when he saw Ebenezer lifting his nose, sniffing the air, and driving hard. Ebenezer had suddenly taken it into his silly head to choose his own path. The smell of sweet hay was in the air, and Ebenezer had realized he was hungry. He knew he was tired, and he wanted to rest. Ebenezer could see a stall down below that belonged to his friend, Old Adam, at the foot of the mountain.
<b>Ebenezer the Donkey:</b>	(Sniffing the air and moving faster): I need some of that sweet hay! I need food! Hey, Adam, I'm coming down to see you, my friend!
<b>Narrator:</b>	It took Jack a few minutes to realize that Ebenezer was focused on how to get to Old Adam's barn and that Ebenezer had just sighted the quickest way down.
<b>Jack:</b>	Hey Ebenezer! What are you doing? Are you seriously going to jump over the edge of that cliff?
<b>Narrator:</b>	It appeared that Jack was right. Ebenezer was almost to the edge of the nearest cliff. Ebenezer had surmised that this was the quickest way to get down off the mountain and to Old Adam's barn.

<b>Jack:</b>	Ebenezer, stop! Stop, old boy! What are you doing? We aren't going that way! You are going to get us both killed!
<b>Narrator:</b>	Just as he was about to leap over, Jack reached out, throwing his body and his arms out. At the last moment, Jack caught Ebenezer by the tail at the last second, pulling with all his strength. Jack could hear his bones creaking at the great effort he was using.
<b>Ebenezer the Donkey:</b>	(Turning toward Jack and baring his big teeth): Let go! Let go of me, I say!
<b>Jack:</b>	(Breathlessly and hanging on for dear life): What are you doing? You crazy Donkey!
<b>Ebenezer the Donkey:</b>	(Straining to pull at the ropes that Jack had grabbed): You are so hateful! Let go of me!
<b>Jack:</b>	(Panting from his effort): Ebenezer, <i>you are as stubborn as a mule!</i>
<b>Ebenezer the Donkey:</b>	(Pulling with all his might): Jack, get off of me! You are going to get us both killed! I only have just so many <i>Donkey years</i> ahead of me!
<b>Narrator:</b>	With his jaw locked in determination, the stubborn Donkey would not yield and pulled with all his might. For just a few brief seconds, Jack thought he would do the unthinkable.
<b>Jack:</b>	(Angry and exhausted): Very well, you old stubborn mule! Go your way, you willful beast! See where it leads you!
<b>Narrator:</b>	With that Jack watched himself let his hands slide and as in a dream, Jack let go. He watched regretfully as the foolish Donkey tumbled head over heels down the mountain side.
<b>Jack:</b>	(Rubbing his chafed red hands and looking down at the broken body below): Wow! The cart has been dashed to pieces.
<b>Narrator:</b>	But instead of following through with these vile thoughts, Jack pulled himself up to the reins at the base of the Donkey's head and held Ebenezer back. Ebenezer tried to turn and bite Jack, but Jack was much quicker than the Donkey was. At that very brief instant when Ebenezer could have gone over the edge of the cliff, Jack threw his weight toward the left, pulling Ebenezer off balance. Ebenezer fell toward the left and just an inch from the edge of the cliff. Then Jack threw his weight again, and Ebenezer was turned back toward the road again.
<b>Ebenezer the Donkey:</b>	(Looking confused but following Jack's guidance as Jack led him back to their home): Why did you do that? Why?
<b>Jack:</b>	(Gasping for breath): We are going home. Ebenezer, you must use good common sense! You could have gotten us both killed! You stubborn old Donkey! You're <i>as stubborn as a mule</i> .
<b>Narrator:</b>	At the thought of going back to his barn with the sweet hay for a nap, the Donkey worked with Jack to head back home. His head was confused as to why Jack had stopped him. Jack said he could have killed himself. Jack said he could have killed both of them! Of course, Jack had to be exaggerating. All Ebenezer had wanted to do was get down to Old Adam's barn.
<b>Ebenezer the Donkey:</b>	Of course, Jack was wrong. I know he was wrong! But humans do not listen to me. Okay, I guess I will be home now.
<b>Narrator:</b>	Jack was pretty upset with Ebenezer. Ebenezer tried to make it up to Jack by nuzzling him when Jack brought him carrots, but Jack never did ask Ebenezer to drive his cart to market again. Ebenezer spent out the rest of his days eating grass and sweet hay, still getting his daily carrot, and being loved by Jack's kids who loved to ride on Ebenezer's back, but he never understood why Jack had pulled him away from that cliff. When Ebenezer thought of it, he got upset, but the feeling only lasted for a few short minutes, then Ebenezer would contentedly munch on his sweet hay and think of more pleasant thoughts.

**Narrator:**

Being stubborn can be a detriment in character or a positive attribute. It all depends on the attitude of the one being stubborn. In the case of Ebenezer, the Donkey, he was not only stubborn but never did figure out that he was wrong in making his decision to jump off the cliff. The lesson learned from his story is that, if your personal goal is simply to get your way on every decision made, even if it gets you in trouble or gets you hurt, it is detrimental and can cause you pain as well as to those you love. If the research is sound and shows that you are correct on the decision you made, it becomes your job to convince others that your reasoning is sound. Being persuasive when you are in the right takes training and time, but it is a very important attribute. Being stubborn is also another positive way of saying that you are persistent in the right circumstance. Your stubbornness could prove that you have a worthy goal, and you strive for that goal, which will make you successful. In Ebenezer's case, he was just a foolish donkey that was "as stubborn as a mule".

**The moral of the story is:**

*"They who will not listen to reason but stubbornly go their own way against the friendly advice of those who are wiser than they, are on the road to misfortune."*