Dudley the dissatisfied donkey

A story by Yvette Thomson

Below are some of the words you will find in the story.

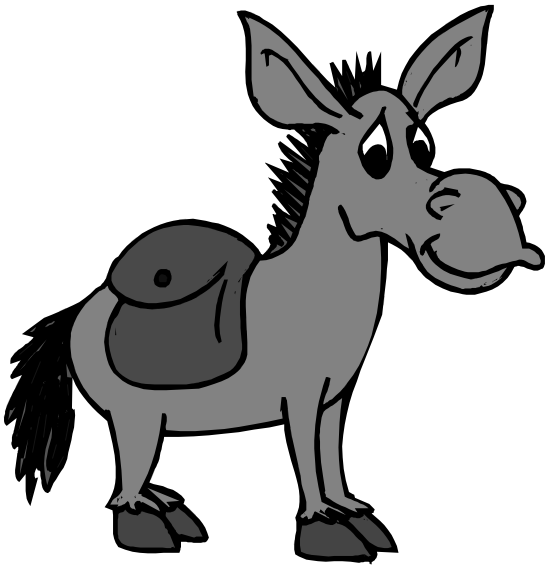
complained floppy satisfied convince stubbornly whining
transition pranks scared heights scowled
confusion poked convinced grinned frowned trot
reluctantly tasteless obstacles nibble soared
better judgement tumbled realised

'I hate my long ears,' Dudley Longears complained, for what seemed like the hundredth time that morning. 'They are too floppy and are always getting in the way. Why can't I have small, pointy ears like Hector the horse?'

Mrs Longears sighed. As Dudley's mother, she had become used to her son's constant complaining. He was never satisfied with anything and was always grumbling. 'Oh Dudley, there is absolutely nothing wrong with your ears. See, mine look exactly the same.' Mrs Longears pointed to her long brown ears.

'Our ears are better because they help us to hear other donkeys' calls from far away.' But no matter what Mrs Longears said, she could never convince Dudley to see his ears differently.

Dudley lived on a farm with his parents, Mr and Mrs Longears. It was a very nice farm where pigs, cows, horses and, of course, donkeys lived. Everyone was happy. Everyone, except Dudley. He shook his head stubbornly.



'No, I don't like my ears. I want to have ears like Hector,' he said, stamping his hoof. 'I also don't like my short legs or my shaggy coat. Hector's coat is waterproof. I always have to hide from the rain because mine isn't. It's not fair!'

'Oh, for goodness sake, stop whining!' Mrs Longears said. 'Horses aren't that special. Did you know that horses have to sleep standing up? Just imagine how uncomfortable that must be! They are also not nearly as intelligent as donkeys are.'

‘I don’t care. I want to be a horse,’ Dudley pouted. ‘From now on, I am Dudley the horse.’ And so Dudley began his transition from donkey to horse. At first no one really noticed any change, but as time passed the other donkeys noticed Dudley’s very strange behaviour.

‘Hi Dudley! Do you want to come out and play?’ Sheila the girl donkey asked. Sheila was his best friend and they had known each other since they were very young. They always played together and often got into trouble. Everyone on the farm called them ‘the terrible two’ because of all the mischief they got up to.

Dudley and Sheila loved playing pranks on the other animals. Once, they buried Henrietta the hen’s eggs so she couldn’t find them. Another time, while Henrietta was sleeping, they put her in a very high tree. When she woke up she couldn’t get down because she was scared of heights!

‘No, today I am going to play with Hector the horse,’ Dudley informed Sheila.

‘What?’ she exclaimed. ‘Why would you want to play with Hector? You know horses don’t like donkeys.’

Dudley frowned at her. ‘Well, that’s exactly why I don’t want to play with you any more – you’re a donkey and I’m a horse.’

Sheila burst out laughing. ‘Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw, you are so funny Dudley,’ she said. ‘That was a really good joke!’

Dudley scowled. ‘It’s not a joke. I am a horse and that is that,’ he said as he turned and walked away.

Dudley walked towards the stables where Hector and his family lived, leaving Sheila behind in complete confusion. She thought he had lost his mind.

Dudley knocked on the dark brown door of the stable. Knock-knock. ‘Hector! Are you there?’

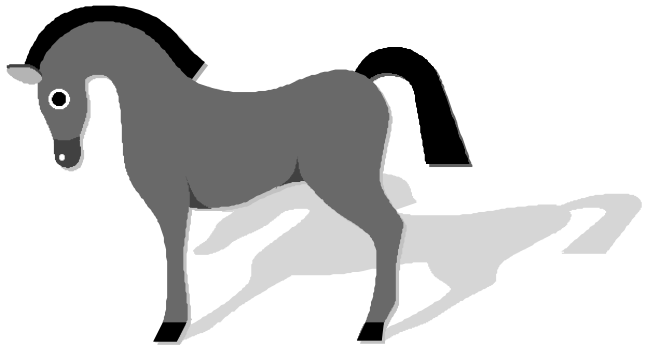
After another, harder knock, Hector poked his head around the corner. ‘What are you doing here?’ he asked, looking at Dudley in surprise.

‘I came to play with you,’ he replied. ‘From now on I am a horse.’

‘Um, I suppose that will be okay,’ Hector said, not looking convinced.

Dudley grinned. ‘What do you want to do first?’ he asked.

‘Let’s go for a trot,’ Hector suggested. But a few minutes into their trot, Dudley caught himself wishing he was with Sheila, playing in the mud. ‘Come on! Faster, faster, faster!’ Hector said.



‘I can’t go any faster,’ Dudley complained. ‘Can’t we rather do something else?’

They were very hungry from all the running so they decided to have lunch. ‘Hmm, I feel like some fresh hay,’ said Hector.

Dudley wrinkled his nose. ‘Yuck. I never eat hay.’

Hector frowned. ‘If you want to be a horse you have to eat hay.’ Reluctantly, Dudley ate the dry, tasteless hay. How he wished he was having lunch with Sheila! Mrs Longears always gave them juicy carrots and sugar cubes to nibble on.

‘I want to practise my jumping,’ Hector said. He was a show jumping horse and loved to jump over big obstacles. Dudley, on the other hand, had short legs and couldn’t jump high at all. He watched as Hector soared over a very high jump. ‘Come on, try it. It’s so much fun,’ Hector called. Against his better judgement, Dudley started running towards the jump.

Suddenly he tripped and tumbled to the ground with a great big thud. As he lay there in the mud, Dudley remembered how much fun it used to be as a donkey. They never jumped. They never ran – except if it was to get away from Henrietta the hen. And they never ate hay. He missed Sheila terribly!

‘I’ve decided that I don’t want to be a horse any more,’ Dudley told Hector. ‘I think you’re very nice but I miss my donkey friends.’

As he walked home he realised how foolish he had been.

‘I should never have tried to be something that I’m not,’ he said to himself. ‘I should be proud of my floppy ears and my short legs!’ Dudley just hoped that Sheila wouldn’t be too cross with him for thinking he was too good to be a donkey.

Luckily he had nothing to be worried about. As soon as Sheila saw him, she grinned.

‘I knew playing with Hector wouldn’t be nearly as much fun as playing in the mud with me!’

Dudley smile and nodded. ‘Why pretend to be something else when I’m already something great – a delightful donkey!’