

# *The precious gift*

A play based on a story by Peta Jones. Adapted by Patricia Hall.

## **Characters**

Chipo the donkey (2 children)  
 Thabo  
 Thabo's father  
 Thabo's mother  
 Sally  
 Phineas  
 Lerato  
 Children (2 or more)  
 Reader



**Scene 1:** *In the home of Thabo. Mother is sitting sewing.*

**(Enter Thabo)**

**Thabo:** Mama, Mama, our donkey Lindi just had her little baby.

**Mother:** Oh that's wonderful Thabo. Do you know what a baby donkey is called?

**Thabo:** Yes Mama, it's called a foal. I'm going to call him Chipo.

**(Enter father)**

**Father:** Now you know that your foal is very precious. One day he will work hard for you, but you will also need to work hard to look after him to make sure that he grows to be healthy and strong.

**Thabo:** What will I have to do, Father?

**Father:** You will need to clean out and trim his hooves regularly.

**Thabo:** Ooh! That sounds sore!

**Father:** I'll show you how to do it so that it doesn't hurt. You'll have to brush him every day and make sure that he always has fresh water.

**Thabo:** I can do that, I'm strong.

**Father:** His eyes will need to be washed when there is too much dust and too many flies. Do you think you will manage to do all that, Thabo?

**Thabo:** I will, Father, I promise.

**(Exit father, mother and Thabo)**

**Reader:** Thabo loved Chipo's silky coat and the velvet skin around his mouth. Holding his hand flat, Thabo gave Chipo little bits of food. Chipo took them from Thabo's hand with his soft, gentle lips. Soon, when he saw Thabo coming, Chipo would bray loudly to greet him.

**Scene 2:**     **Outside** (*suggest in front of the curtain if you are using a stage*)

**(Enter Thabo and his father)**

**Thabo:**     Father, may my friends and I ride Chipo?

**Father:**     No, my son. Chipo is still too young to carry loads. If he is put to work too young, his bones could become twisted and this would give him pain for the rest of his life. If Chipo is well cared for, he can live up to about 50 years. That is even older than I am now.

**Thabo:**     Wow! That's old!

**(Exit Thabo and his father)**

**Reader:** When Chipo was four years old and grown up, he started helping his mother to pull Thabo's father's cart. Chipo also helped to plough Thabo's mother's field. At last the day came when Chipo was allowed to carry Thabo and his heavy books to school.

**Scene 3:**     **In the playground at school, children skipping and throwing a ball.**

**(Enter Thabo. Children stop activities.)**

**Lerato:**     Where have you been, Thabo?

**Thabo:**     I went to give my donkey Chipo some water.

**Sally:**     How funny to use a slow old animal to come to school. My father brings me in a fast, smart car. I can listen to the radio in the car!

**Children:**   We come to school in a taxi ...

**Lerato:**     Yes, and we listen to cds.

**Phineas:**   My bicycle is shiny and new and stays where I put it. It doesn't need to eat grass.

**(Exit children)**

**Reader:** What the children hadn't noticed was that Thabo had trained Chipo to collect him from school at the same time every day. Thabo never had to wait for his transport like some of the other children did.

**Scene 4:**     **Thabo riding on Chipo comes across Sally walking along the road carrying her heavy books.**

**Thabo:**     Where's your father's car Sally?

**Sally:**     My dad ran out of petrol.

**Thabo:**     You can ride with me on Chipo.

**Sally:**     I'm scared. Are you sure it's OK?

**Thabo:**     You'll be fine, come on, Chipo is really strong.

**(Sally climbs on)**

**Sally:** Oh, this is fun. I can't wait to tell my friends. Look Thabo, there is Phineas.

**(Enter Phineas)**

**Thabo:** Why are you walking Phineas?

**Phineas:** My tyre is flat. If I try to ride my bike, the wheel will break!

**Thabo:** Hop on, brother.

**Phineas:** Thanks, Thabo. There's your dad!

**(Phineas tries to get onto Chipso)**

**(Enter father)**

**Father:** Hey! Whoa! Three children and all the books are too much for one donkey! If the load is too heavy you can hurt Chipso's back. Other children must get their own donkeys.

**(Exit all)**

**Reader:** Phineas spent hours fixing his bicycle. He needed to do this again and again, because the rough roads often caused a flat tyre. This meant that he was often late for school.

One day many children did not arrive in time for school. These were the children that came by taxi. The headmaster was very worried. He made a phone call and discovered that the taxi had crashed, but fortunately nobody was hurt.

**Scene 5: The home of Thabo. Mother is seated. Enter Thabo and his father.**

**Thabo:** I never have to worry about Chipso crashing.

**Father:** As long as Chipso does not go along the main roads.

**Thabo:** Father, I have an idea. Why don't you become the taxi driver for the children and the donkey cart can become the taxi.

**Father:** That's a good idea, Thabo, but I think I'll change the two-wheel cart for a four-wheel cart. Then I can carry more children and it is easier for the donkeys if the load is balanced.

**Mother:** Thabo, I need you and your friends to collect plastic bags.

**Thabo:** Why Ma?

**Mother:** I will weave them into nice, soft harnesses for the donkeys so that their skin is not rubbed too hard and does not bleed.

**Reader:** All the children like the new taxi. They love the donkeys that are always gentle and hard-working. Sometimes the children come to help Thabo and his father to feed the fields using donkey manure. In this way Thabo's father saves money and grows good crops. They all agree that in Chipso Thabo has a very precious gift.