

THE LITTLE DONKEY

There once was a very rich king and queen that had everything they could wish for, except a child. The queen complained and complained, saying things like, "I am a barren field that nothing will ever grow in!"

But then, they did have a child. However, when the child was born it did not look like a normal child. It was a baby donkey. And so the queen wept and wept. She would rather have no child than have a donkey for a child! They should just throw him in the ocean and let the fish eat him.

The king stopped her. "We were finally blessed with a child. He shall be my son and heir. Upon my death he shall take my crown and throne!"

Once there lived a king and a queen who were rich and had everything that they could wish for, but no children. She complained day and night about this, and said, "I am like a field that nothing will grow in."

And so they raised their baby donkey. He got bigger and his ears grew straight and tall. He loved to play and was a child full of cheer. The donkey prince was especially fond of music, so he asked a famous minstrel to teach him to play the lute.

"My dear prince, that will be very difficult since you do not have the right fingers," the minstrel replied sadly. "They are not fingers at all. The strings will not be able to handle them."

However, the donkey refused to listen and demanded he be taught. And so he practiced constantly, even ended up being able to play as well as the minstrel.

While on a stroll one afternoon, he came upon a well. He looked into it and saw his donkey face reflected in the water. Saddened by this, he set off into the world. He came upon a kingdom ruled by an old king with one beautiful daughter.

"I shall stay here," the donkey prince said and knocked on the gate. "Open up, you have a guest!" Yet no one opened the gate. So he took out his lute and began to play it with his front feet. This got the gatekeeper's attention. He hurried to tell the king about the donkey playing the lute as well as any master minstrel he had heard before. The king ordered the gatekeeper to let the donkey in.

When the donkey entered, they all began to laugh at him and sent him below to eat with the servants. He refused, telling the king he was a nobleman.

“Very well, then you can eat with the soldiers,” the king replied. The donkey still refused, stating that he would only sit next to the king. The king began to laugh, “Of course, if that is what you wish, donkey. Hm, little donkey, what do you think of my beautiful daughter?”

“She is beyond beauty, sir,” the donkey prince said. And so the king demanded they sit together. They began to dine and it was obvious the donkey was a true gentleman. He stayed with them for a while, but missed home.

He went to inform the king he was leaving, but the king was far too fond of him to let him leave. He offered him gold and jewels, but the donkey refused. Half his kingdom? Still the donkey would not take the offer. Finally the king offered his daughter.

“Yes, that would keep me from leaving,” the donkey smiled. And so they had a large wedding. That evening when the bride and the bridegroom were led into their bedroom, the king wanted to know if the little donkey would behave himself like a gentleman, so he had a servant hide in the room. When the couple was inside, the bridegroom bolted the door shut, looked around, and thinking that they were all alone, he pulled off his donkey skin and stood there as a handsome young man of royalty.

“Now you see who I am, and that I have been worthy of you,” the donkey said.

The bride was delighted, kissed him, and loved him with all of her heart. The next morning he jumped up, put his animal skin on again, and no one would know except his new bride.

The old king soon came by. “Aha,” he said. “The little donkey is awake already!” Then he said to his daughter, “Are you sad that you do not have an ordinary human for a husband?”

“Not at all, father. I love him just as much as if he were the handsomest man, and I want to keep him as long as I live.” This surprised the king, but then his servant that had spied on them came to tell him what he had seen the night before. The servant suggested the king sneak in that night to steal the donkey’s skin after he removed it and throw it in the fire.

That night, the king snuck in while his daughter and her new groom slept. The king saw a young, handsome man asleep in the bed and the donkey skin on the floor. He snatched it up and ran outside to throw it in a fire. He watched it burn until it was only ash.

When the prince awoke he became worried he could not find his skin. He would have to run away before the princess awoke. However, as soon as he stepped out of the room the king was waiting to meet his new son. He offered him half his kingdom to stay. A year later, the king died and the prince received the other half. When his own father died, he gained that kingdom too.