

THE FARMER AND HIS DONKEY



Once there was a farmer who lived alone on a small farm. His prized possession was his donkey named Billy.

Billy was a very friendly donkey, but sometimes he could be very stubborn. There were times when he just did not want to work at all. On those occasions, the farmer did not mind. When Billy was lazy so was he. They had the same personality. That is why they got along so well.

Unfortunately, the older Billy got the less work he wanted to do. The farmer was the same.

The farm began to fall into disrepair. The roof leaked, the door was only on one hinge, and the front porch was falling down. The barn needed paint, the fence was broken in many places, and the chickens ran around because a storm had damaged the chicken roost the summer before.

About the only thing the farmer did was feed his animals. He knew if they were not fed, they would die, and then he would be all alone.

The farmer began to run out of money. He did not plant his crops and he did not sell any of his chickens.

One day, while he was sitting on his broken porch, a man came by. He drove up in his old red pickup truck and stopped in front of the house.

The farmer was so lazy he did not even get out of his chair to say hello.

The man walked up to the house and greeted the old farmer.

“Are you Farmer Jones?” the man asked.

“Yes, that would be me. Who’s asking?” the old farmer replied.

“I’m Rusty Walters. I just bought the farm down the road from you, and I wanted to come by and say hello,” Rusty introduced himself.

“Nice to make your acquaintance, Rusty. I’d offer you some coffee, but I didn’t make any today. Would you like to sit on my porch with me and watch the clouds go by? It’s a real nice day for watching clouds,” Farmer Jones suggested.

“No, thank you. I have many things I need to get done over at the farm. I just moved in and there are so many things I need to finish.

“What I was wondering was if I could borrow your donkey. Bill Mitchell told me you had a donkey and I have a job that only a donkey can do. Would it be possible for me to borrow him for a day or two?” Rusty asked.

The old farmer laughed.

“You want my old donkey to do work for you?”

Still laughing, Farmer Jones about fell out of his chair.

“Why are you laughing so hard?” Rusty asked.

“Obviously, someone is playing a joke on you. That old donkey of mine wouldn’t do a day’s worth of work if you starved him. He’s the laziest donkey in the world!” the old farmer continued to laugh.

The farmer thought Rusty was joking.

“No, really. I would like to borrow your donkey for just a day. I’ll bring him home tomorrow,” Rusty asked again.

The old farmer stood up, still laughing, and waved for Rusty to follow him.

They walked over to the barn. When the old farmer opened the door to the barn, the smell from inside almost knocked Rusty over.

“Whew! That’s a strong smell in there!” Rusty commented while covering his face with a cloth.

Inside they found Billy, slowly chewing on some hay. He was tied up to a

post in the middle of the barn on a chain.

“Why is your donkey tied up on a chain in the middle of the barn?” Rusty asked.

“If I let him loose he’ll destroy just about everything in here,” the old farmer answered. “He’s lazy, but he likes to have fun.”

Farmer Jones took a key from his pocket and opened the lock to the chain.

He handed the chain to Rusty and said. “Here, you can have him for the day. Be sure to feed him or he’ll get pretty angry, and when he’s angry, look out. He’ll kick and make so much noise you won’t know what to do.”

Rusty took the chain and walked up to Billy. He whispered something into his ear and then led Billy out of the barn.

“How did you do that?” the old farmer asked, amazed that Billy went so easily with Rusty. “He has never walked out of the barn like that for me!”

Farmer Jones was very surprised.

“It’s a little secret,” Rusty replied.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” Rusty said, as he loaded Billy into the back of his truck.

The next day Rusty returned with Billy.

“Thank you so much for letting me have Billy for the day. He did so much work and we finished everything I needed to get done. He’s a great donkey,” Rusty praised Billy.

The old farmer was shocked.

“Are you serious? He hasn’t done a decent day’s work in years. What did you do to get him to work for you?” farmer Jones asked.

“It’s a little secret,” Rusty responded with a smile. “Thanks again.”

Rusty started to walk away, but turned to ask another question, “May I come and use him again in the future?”

“I guess so,” was all Farmer Jones could answer, since he was so surprised

that Billy had done such good work.

The old farmer took Billy back to the barn where Billy began to eat. He looked very contented.

Two weeks later, Rusty returned.

“Hi, Mr. Jones. I was wondering if I could use Billy again. I have something that only a donkey can do. Is it OK?” Rusty asked.

The old farmer tossed him the key to the lock and told him, “You know where he is. He hasn’t moved since you brought him back.”

Once again, Rusty loaded Billy into the truck as easy as could be and then drove off.

The next day Rusty brought him back.

“So, how did it go this time?” farmer Jones asked.

“He was wonderful. We got everything we needed to get done finished. He’s an amazing donkey. I wish I had one just like him,” Rusty commented.

“Really? That’s a big surprise,” the old farmer said once again in shock over the fact that Billy had been a good worker.

He thought about what Rusty had said, and then asked, “Do you want to buy him?”

“How much do you want for him?” Rusty asked.

“Let’s see. How about one thousand dollars?” the farmer offered.

“That sounds about right. Let me get the money from my truck,” Rusty answered, and then went to his pickup.

The old farmer was surprised at how quickly Rusty had accepted his offer and began to wonder if he had asked too little for the lazy donkey.

When Rusty returned, he had changed his mind.

“I think he’s worth two thousand dollars. Will you take him for that?” The old farmer waited for Rusty’s response.

“You’re a good negotiator. Tell you what. I’ll make it even better so we don’t

have to argue and you'll get a good deal. I'll give you the two thousand dollars for the donkey but only on one condition," Rusty responded to the new price.

"Really? You'll give me two thousand dollars for my donkey? What's the condition?" the old farmer asked.

"I'll give you two thousand dollars for Billy, if you throw in the farm," Rusty smiled.

"You want my farm?" the old farmer responded in surprise.

"What else are you going to do with an old lazy donkey and a broken down farm house?" Rusty answered.

The old farmer thought about it for a few minutes and then agreed to the terms.

He thought to himself, "With two thousand dollars, I'll be able to move to a nicer place and I won't have to take care of the animals anymore."

"I'll do it!" the old farmer said as he put his hand out to seal the deal.

"When do I have to move?" Farmer Jones asked.

"Take your time, just make sure the title is transferred to my name by Friday," Rusty smiled, as they shook hands on the deal.

When Rusty arrived on Friday, the old farmer had the title to his property and gave it to Rusty.

"She's all yours!" he said with a big smile on his face.

Farmer Jones moved to town, but he did not go out very often because he was still lazy.

One day, as he was walking through the town, he saw Rusty at the post office. The old farmer walked across the street to say hello.

"Hi, Rusty. How are things going on the farm?"

"Pretty well," Rusty answered while trying to put a box into the mailbox outside of the post office.

"How's Billy?" the farmer asked.

"Who?" Rusty answered, with a look of confusion on his face.

“You know, Billy. My donkey,” the farmer inquired further.

“Oh yeah, Billy. He’s as lazy as ever,” Rusty replied.

“I thought you said Billy was a hard worker,” the old farmer stated.

“No, he’s just a lazy old donkey,” Rusty replied with a smile on his face.

“So, what kind of work did he do for you?” the old farmer inquired further.

“He was helping me with my investments,” Rusty answered.

“What kind of investments?” the old farmer’s curiosity was getting stronger.

“Do you really want to know?” Rusty asked.

“Of course!” the old farmer answered.

“He helped me buy your farm. That’s how he helped me!” Rusty said as he walked away.

VOCABULARY: (*Match the word to its definition*)

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. prized possession _____ | a. home for chickens |
| 2. stubborn _____ | b. clearly, evidently |
| 3. disrepair _____ | c. finances, assets |
| 4. chicken roost _____ | d. exchange, give over |
| 5. porch _____ | e. most valuable |
| 6. acquaintance _____ | f. mediator, dealer, bargainer |
| 7. obviously _____ | g. friendship, hello |
| 8. negotiator _____ | h. pigheaded, obstinate |
| 9. transfer _____ | i. bad condition, shabby |
| 10. investments _____ | j. entry, veranda, terrace |

TRUE / FALSE:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. The donkey's name was Fred. | T / F |
| 2. The donkey and the old farmer were lazy. | T / F |
| 3. The old famer was always busy. | T / F |
| 4. The farm was in disrepair. | T / F |
| 5. Walter Mitty borrowed Billy. | T / F |
| 6. The farmer's name was Farmer Smith. | T / F |
| 7. The donkey did a good days work for Rusty. | T / F |
| 8. The famer sold the farm and Billy. | T / F |
| 9. Farmer Jones moved to town. | T / F |
| 10. Rusty returned Billy to Farmer Jones. | T / F |

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. What was the donkey's name? _____
 - a) Fred
 - b) Rusty
 - c) Billy
 - d) Donkey

2. What kind of vehicle did Rusty Drive? _____
 - a) blue sedan
 - b) brown motorcycle
 - c) red pickup truck
 - d) silver tractor

3. Where did the farmer tie up Billy? _____
 - a) in the barn to a pole
 - b) in the house to a couch
 - c) in the pasture to the fence
 - d) to the back of the pickup truck

4. How much did Famer Jones sell his farm and Billy for? _____
 - a) \$200
 - b) \$300
 - c) \$1,000
 - d) \$400

COMPREHENSION: *(Write a complete sentence to answer the question.)*

1. What was the old farmer's prized possession?

2. Who drove up in an old red pickup truck?

3. Who wanted to borrow the donkey?

4. Who told Rusty about the donkey?

5. What did Rusty say to Billy to make him follow him quietly?

6. How many times did Rusty borrow Billy?

7. Where did Farmer Jones move after he sold his farm?

8. Where did Farmer Jones see Rusty after he left the farm?

9. What kind of work did Billy do for Rusty?

10. Who got a good price for the farm?
