

'EASY READERS' SHORT STORIES

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The Pet Shop

Cody and his sister April decide they want a dog. They head down to the local pet store and have a look around.

It is a very small pet store that doesn't have many animals.

The owner of the shop is a nice old man named Mr. Smith. He walks over and greets Cody and April.

"How can I help you?" he asks.

"We would like to buy a dog," April responds.

"Ah, well, we are not a big pet shop," Mr. Smith tells her. "So we only have two dogs to choose from."

They ask Mr. Smith to show them the dogs.

Mr. Smith leads them to the back of store where the two dogs are. One of them is a very big bulldog named Buster. The other is a very tiny chihuahua named Teacup.

April wants Teacup. Cody wants Buster. They walk outside to discuss.

They can't agree on a dog. April suggests they race home for it. The winner of the race chooses the dog.

Cody agrees, then tells April her shoelace is untied. When April looks down, he runs off and gets a head start.

Cody runs as hard as he can. He really wants that bulldog. He looks back. April is so far behind he can't even see her.

Cody finally gets home. He is tired but he is happy. He knows he is the winner.

April arrives a few minutes after Cody. She congratulates him. They return to the pet store to purchase Buster the bulldog.

However, when they arrive they only see Teacup the chihuahua. They ask Mr. Smith where Buster is.

Mr. Smith gives the details. He explains that a few minutes after April and Cody leave, two boys walk in and buy the bulldog.

Cody looks at April, and she holds back a smile. Cody sighs. He turns back to Mr. Smith.

"Sometimes you win the race, but not the prize!" Cody smiles sadly. "We'll take the chihuahua, please."

Act like the Others

Jack and Lydia are on holiday in France with their friends, Mike and Anna.

Mike loves to visit historical buildings. Jack agrees to sightsee some historical buildings with him.

Lydia and Anna decide to shop in the city. "See you boys when we get back!" the girls shout.

In the village Jack and Mike see a beautiful old church, but when they enter the church, a service is already in progress.

"Shh! Just sit quietly, so that we don't stand out. And act like the others!" Mike whispers.

Since they don't really know French, Jack and Mike quietly sit down. During the service, they stand, kneel and sit to follow what the rest of the crowd do.

"I hope we blend in and don't look like tourists!" Mike tells Jack.

At one point, the priest makes an announcement and the man who sits next to Jack and Mike stands up.

"We should stand up, too!" Jack whispers to Mike.

So, Jack and Mike stand up with the man. Suddenly, all the people burst into laughter!

After the service, Jack and Mike approach the priest, who speaks English.

"What's so funny?" Jack asks.

With a smile on his face the priest says, "Well boys, there is a new baby born, and it's tradition to ask the father to stand up."

Jack and Mike look at each other and Mike shakes his head. He smiles and says, "I guess we should understand what people do before we act like the others!"

A Secret Talent

Eve is excited to go to her first Dylan Wyman concert in New York. Dylan Wyman is Eve's favorite singer. In fact, Eve tells her mother Jeannine, Dylan Wyman is her favorite *person*!

When they are about halfway to New York, Jeannine hears a weird noise. "Oh no," she says, realizing that they have a flat tire.

There isn't much room on the side of the road, but Jeannine pulls the car over and climbs out. Sure enough, their right rear tire is completely flat.

Jeannine opens the trunk to get the jack and the spare tire. Traffic continues to whiz by at seventy miles per hour.

"Mom, are we going to die?" Eve asks. She is really scared.

"Don't worry honey, I'll be quick," Jeannine says as she starts to jack up the car.

"Wow Mom, how do you know how to do this?" Eve is shocked at her mother's secret talent.

Then Jeannine takes off the flat tire.

"Wow Mom, how do you know how to do *that*?" Eve asks in wonder.

Jeannine just laughs. Then she puts the spare tire on. Eve says, "Mom, who *are* you?"

The entire tire change takes only 10 minutes. They both climb back into the car and Jeannine says, "I'm so sorry honey, but we can't drive all the way to Albany on this spare tire. We're going to have to stop and buy a new tire. We might be late for your concert."

"That's okay, Mom," Eve says, "You're my favorite person now!"

Lost and Found

Donna and her husband John go to the beach every Saturday in the summer. Today is no exception. Donna packs a picnic lunch. She packs the beach umbrella and sun lotion.

She cannot find their beach towels. Donna always loses things. The towels are not in the laundry basket or dryer. They are not in the closet, either. She finally looks in her beach bag. She sees the towels folded in the bottom. Of course, the beach towels are exactly where they should be.

Donna puts on her swimsuit and floppy sun hat. She is almost ready. She just needs her sunglasses. She thinks they are on the table by the door. Or maybe they are in the bathroom. They could also be in her purse. Donna sighs.

John puts the picnic basket, umbrella, and beach bag in the car. He checks his fishing poles and equipment. He places them in the car beside the picnic basket.. Daisy, their dog, jumps in the backseat. She loves the beach! John is ready to leave. Where is Donna? She knows he likes to arrive at the beach before the crowds.

John groans and shakes his head. Donna is always late!

Donna searches for her sunglasses. She cannot find them, and she knows John is waiting. He hates when she is late! She grabs her purse and locks the door.

"You are late," John says as Donna gets in the car. Donna tells John that she could not find her sunglasses.

John looks at her and laughs! He flips down the sun visor so Donna can see herself in the mirror. Donna looks in the mirror and laughs too. Her sunglasses are on top of her head. They were there the whole time!

"It is always in the last place that you look," Donna giggles!

The Donkey and The Cotton

There once lived a salt merchant. He had a monkey for his assistance. Every morning, he would load a sack of salt on the donkey and go to the nearby town to sell it. On the way, they had to walk across a pond.

One day, while crossing the pond, the donkey thought, "Ooh! This load is so heavy that I become exhausted very soon. I wish I could get some of this load taken off my back." Just then the donkey tripped and fell into the water.

Fortunately, the donkey was not hurt. But the sack of salt on the donkey's back fell into the water. Both the donkey and the salt became wet. Some of the salt in the sack got dissolved, making the load on the donkey lighter. The donkey felt very happy about the reduction in the weight of the sack of salt on its back. The merchant did his best to help the donkey to get up and they carried on their journey.

From that day, it became a regular practice for the donkey to slip and fall in the pond whenever they crossed the pond to the market. This would dissolve some salt in the sack thus reducing the weight and relieving the donkey of some load. The merchant was not aware of the donkey's cunningness. This continued for a few days.

One day, the merchant noticed the donkey deliberately slipping and landing with the sack into the water. "Oh! So this is the way I am losing my salt everyday" he thought. He decided to teach the donkey a lesson.

Next morning, instead of loading a sack of salt, the merchant loaded a sack of cotton on the donkey's back. As usual they had decided to reach the market by crossing the same pond. While crossing the same pond, the donkey, as usual, slipped and fell into the pond, hoping that after some time the weight of the sack would go reduced. As usual, both the donkey and the cotton would become wet. But this time, when he got up, the load on his back seemed heavier. "Ooh! The Load seems to have gotten heavier," thought the donkey. The donkey was astonished at what had taken place against the usual result.

The merchant looked at the donkey and said, "Dear friend, I saw you fall into the water of the pond deliberately every day with the malicious intention of reducing the weight of the salt. So, I loaded a sack of cotton today. Cotton when wet gets more weight and becomes heavier. Now you will have to carry it to the town." The poor donkey had learnt his lesson.

The Donkey and The Dog

A washer man had a donkey and a dog. Both the donkey and the dog helped his master in many ways. One night, few thieves broke in the house of that washer man. The dog heard them and started barking. The washer man got up and so did the neighbors. "What is that? A dog. Let us run," said the thieves. They feared some dangerous consequences. By that time many people gathered in the street. They tried to run away but they were caught by the people.

The washer man said, "I am glad I had this dog in my house. I am sure the thieves would have looted me if my dog had not barked." The washer man was highly proud of the dog. Every one too praised the dog.

From that day, the donkey started thinking, "The master thinks that the dog is a more useful animal than me." The donkey decided he will show his master, the washer man, that he too could be useful just like the dog. Few days passed. One night, it so happened, two thieves again entered the washer man's house. The thieves became aware of the animals, present in that house. "We should be careful, friend! I have heard that a dog guards this house," one thief said to the other.

As the thieves peeped in, they saw the dog sitting just outside the main door. "It seems the dog is quite alert," said one thief.

"It is better to leave this house alone. We had better go at once," the other thief said and the two thieves fled. But unknown to the thieves, the donkey was watching all this. He thought, "It is a good opportunity for me to show my master that I too can be useful to him. The thieves have run away. If I start shouting, the master will think that I have driven the thieves away and out of this house." And the foolish donkey started braying loudly.

When the washer man heard the donkey bray at this odd hour, he got angry. He came out with a stick and thrashed the donkey. "This will teach him not to bray at night," he screamed. The donkey got all the thrashes in silence. It did not know what was taking place.

Just then the dog came to the donkey and said, "It is better to do your duties than try to be like me." The donkey knew that the dog was right. There after both the donkey and the dog remained peaceful.

Hercules

Hercules was a strong and brave man. He lived in Greece. The King was jealous of Hercules. People might make Hercules the King. Therefore he wanted to get rid of Hercules. He set difficult tasks for Hercules to keep him away from the country so that he would not be a possible threat to him (the King).

Once he asked Hercules to get three golden apples. Some trees were said to bear golden apples. These trees were said to be in a place called Hesperides. But no one knew the way to Hesperides. So the King thought of Hesperides. Hercules would be away for a longer period.

Hercules set out on the journey. At first he met three maidens during the journey. Hercules asked them the way to Hesperides. They told him to ask the old man of the sea. But they also warned him, "Hold the old man of the sea tightly. Otherwise he will escape. No one else knows the way."

Hercules saw the old man. He was sleeping on the shore. He was looking strange. He had long hair and a beard. Hercules walked to him without making any noise. Then he seized him very firmly.

The old man of the sea opened his eyes. He was surprised. He changed himself into a stag. He tried to free himself from the grip of Hercules. But Hercules held him tight. Then the old man changed himself into a sea-bird and then to other animal forms. But he could not free himself from the clutches of Hercules, because Hercules was making his clutches tighter and tighter. Finally the old man said to Hercules, "Who are you? What do you want from me?"

Hercules replied, "I am Hercules. Tell me the way to Hesperides."

The old man said, "It is an island. Go along the sea-shore. You will meet a giant. He will show you the way to Hesperides."

Hercules continued his journey. He met the giant. The giant was very huge and strong. He was sleeping on the shore. Hercules woke him up. The giant was angry. He struck Hercules with a club. Hercules charged at the giant. He lifted the giant and threw him down. But the giant got up immediately. He had become ten times stronger. Hercules threw him down again and again. But each time the giant rose up much stronger. Then Hercules lifted the giant high up in the air. But he did not throw him down. The giant slowly lost all his strength. He now pleaded with Hercules to put him down on the earth. Hercules asked him to tell the way to Hesperides. The giant asked Hercules to meet Atlas. He told him the way to the place where Atlas was.

Hercules continued his journey. He, at last, met Atlas.

“Why do you want the golden apples?” asked Atlas.

“My King has ordered me to get him these three golden apples,” said Hercules.

“It is a long way from here to that place. Only I can go there. Hold this sky for me. I shall get them for you,” said Atlas.

Hercules agreed. He held the sky on his shoulders. Atlas walked away. He was back in a short time. He put down the three golden apples at the foot of Hercules. Hercules thanked Atlas. He requested Atlas to take back the sky from him.

“Take back the sky!” said Atlas cunningly. “I have held it for a thousand years. I shall come back after another thousand years!”

Hercules was astonished at what Atlas told him. But he did not express his astonishment. He recovered his senses and replied, “Oh! In that case, will you please hold the sky for a little while? I shall make a pad for my shoulders to support the sky. Then I shall take back the sky from you.” Thus Hercules talked very quietly.

Atlas agreed. Atlas took back the sky from Hercules. Hercules immediately collected the three golden apples. He bid Atlas goodbye with a mischievous smile on his face. Then he walked away towards Greece leaving Atlas speechless and surprised.

Hercules reached his homeland Greece after many days of travel. He gave the three golden apples to the King. The King was surprised to have got the golden apples from Hercules. He was happy. But he pretended not to have been satisfied. But he secretly, he was planning to send away Hercules away on another perilous adventure.

The Greedy Dog

Once there lived a dog. He was very greedy. There were many times that he had to pay for his greed. Each time the dog promised himself, "I have learnt my lesson. Now I will never be greedy again." But he soon forgot his promises and was as greedy as ever.

One afternoon, the dog was terribly hungry. He decided to go look for something to eat. Just outside his house, there was a bridge. "I will go and look for food on the other side of the bridge. The food there is definitely better," he thought to himself.

He walked across the wooden bridge and started sniffing around for food. Suddenly, he spotted a bone lying at a distance. "Ah, I am in luck. This looks a delicious bone," he said.

Without wasting any time, the hungry dog picked up the bone and was just about to eat it, when he thought, "Somebody might see here with this bone and then I will have to share it with them. So, I had better go home and eat it." Holding the bone in his mouth, he ran towards his house.

While crossing the wooden bridge, the dog looked down into the river. There he saw his own reflection. The foolish dog mistook it for another dog. "There is another dog in the water with bone in its mouth," he thought. Greedy, as he was, he thought, "How nice it would be to snatch that piece of bone as well. Then, I will have two bones."

So, the greedy dog looked at his reflection and growled. The reflection growled back, too. This made the dog angry. He looked down at his reflection and barked, "Woof! Woof!" As he opened his mouth, the bone in his mouth fell into the river. It was only when the water splashed that the greedy dog realized that what he had seen was nothing but his own reflections and not another dog. But it was too late. He had lost the piece of bone because of his greed. Now he had to go hungry.

The Ugly Tree

Long, long ago, in a dense forest there were thousands of tall and beautiful trees. They were happy, but proud of themselves. Among them there also an ugly tree whose branches were badly twisted. Its roots had uneven curves. All the trees made fun of that ugly tree.

“How are you, hunchback?” the other trees always shouted and their laughter made the ugly tree feel sad. But, he never raised a voice against them. The ugly tree thought, “I wish I were as beautiful as the other trees. Why did God do this to me? Neither can I provide shade to the travelers nor can the birds make their nests on me. Nobody needs me.”

One day, a woodcutter came to the forest. He took a look at the trees and said, “These trees are lovely. I must cut them.” As soon as he picked up his axe the trees became frightened.

‘Chop, Chop, Chop’ went the woodcutter’s axe and one by one the trees started to fall. “None of us is going to be spared,” screamed one of the beautiful trees. Soon that tree too was brought to ground by the woodcutter’s axe.

By now, the woodcutter had come near to the ugly tree. He had just raised his axe when suddenly he noticed how crooked the ugly tree was. “Hmm! This crooked tree seems to be useless for me. I cannot make long straight logs of this ugly tree,” he thought. And he moved towards another beautiful tree. The ugly tree heaved a huge sigh of relief. He realized that by making him ugly, God had actually given him a boon.

From that day the ugly tree never complained. He was happy with his crooked branches. He never forgot how he was spared from the woodcutter’s axe, only because he was crooked and ugly.

The Foolish Fish

In a huge pond, there lived many fish. They were arrogant and never listened to anyone. In this pond, there also lived a kind-hearted crocodile.

He advised the fish, "It does not pay to be arrogant and overconfident. It could be your downfall." But the fish never listened to him. "There is that crocodile, advising us again," they would say.

One afternoon, the crocodile was resting beside a stone near the pond, when two fishermen stopped there to drink water.

The fishermen noticed that the pond had many fish. "Look! This pond is full of fish. Let's come here tomorrow with our fishing net," said one of them. "I am surprised we have not seen this place before!" exclaimed the other.

The crocodile heard all this. When the fishermen left, he slowly slipped into the pond and went straight to the fish. "You all had better leave this pond before dawn. Early morning those two fishermen are going to come to this pond with their net," warned the crocodile.

But the fish just laughed and said, "There have been many fishermen who have tried to catch us. These two are not going to catch us either. Do not you worry about us, Mr. Crocodile," they said in a mocking voice.

The next morning, the fishermen came and threw their net in the pond. The nets were big and strong. Very soon all the fish were caught. "If only we had listened to Mr. Crocodile. He had only wanted to help. For our arrogance we have to pay with our lives," said the fish.

The fishermen took the foolish fish to the market and sold them for a good profit.

The Selfish Crows

Once upon a time, there was a very big forest. There on a huge banyan tree lived many crows. They were selfish and arrogant. They always quarreled with other birds. This behavior irritated other birds. They had no friends, as no one liked them.

When the rainy season came, dark clouds gathered in the sky. A small mynah was returning to her nest. When she was passing by the banyan tree, it started raining. "I will stay here for a while until it stops raining," thought the little mynah. And I took rest on the banyan tree for a while.

The selfish crows saw her perching on the tree. One of them shouted, "Get off the tree. This tree belongs to us." The mynah humbly pleaded, "The weather is bad and my nest is far off from this forest. Please let me take a rest for a while on this tree, brother. As soon as it stops raining, I will return to my nest."

"Leave this banyan tree at once. Or we will peck you," said the other crows. The merciless tendency of the selfish crows scared the mynah. The mynah found no other way except to fly off. Then immediately the mynah flew off to a nearby tree, where luckily she found a hollow in a broken branch. She took her shelter there.

Shortly after, the rain became heavy followed by thunderstorm. The wind was in high speed. Even the leaves and branches were not enough to give shelter to the crows. Many of the branches of many tree in which the crows had taken shelter were damaged and hurt by the hailstones. But the mynah was safe inside the hollow place in the tree.

One of the crows said, "Look at the mynah! How comfortable she is. Let us go there." Another crow said, "I do not think she will let us share the hollow. We did not have sympathy for her when she was in need of this tree." Then another crow said, "We should not have been so rude. We forgot that we may need help someday."

Suddenly the mynah called out, "Come! My friends! Come to this hollow. Or you will get hurt. The rain is not going to stop soon. It seems that it may rain for a long time"

The crows flew down to the hollow. They thanked the mynah. "We are sorry for having unkind, dear friend! Now we will never be so selfish."

Then the crows took shelter in the hollow place of the tree in which the mynah had taken her shelter. After some time, it stopped raining. All the birds flew to their respective nests happily as new friends.

The Ungrateful Lion

In a dense forest, lived a fierce lion. He was very cruel. One day the lion was caught in a hunter's trap. One by one many animals passed by. "Please help me!" pleaded the lion. But none of the animals listened to his plea.

After a while, a man happened to come into the forest. He saw the lion. The lion said, "I will die of hunger and suffocation. Please help me out, O! kind man." The man was thoughtful. "I assure you I will never harm you. Please help me now. The hunter will be anytime now," said the lion.

The man felt sorry for the lion and set the beast free. As soon as the lion was free, he let out a fierce roar. "I have been trapped in the cage for a long time. I am hungry. I will have to eat you," said the lion, looking at the man. "But you promised that you would not harm me," said the man, in a meek tone. "Yes, I said that. But only to convince you to free me. Now, I am terribly hungry," said the lion.

The terrified man thought quickly. He said, "Alright, you can eat me. But let a judge decide if you are right in eating the person who has rescued you."

The lion agreed. He was sure that no animal would speak against him. Just then a jackal came that way and the lion asked the jackal to be the judge. He addressed the lion, "Sir, would you please show me how it all happened?" The lion was only too willing. He entered the cage and closed the cage door. The jackal immediately bolted the cage from outside.

"Now the lion is trapped again. Run away, you foolish man! And never offer help to anyone without thinking," said the jackal. The frightened man ran for his life. And the ungrateful lion was trapped in the cage again. The hunter came and took the lion away to his circus.

The Stubborn Hunter

Once upon a time, there was a forest. That forest contained many animals. There lived a hunter. He loved hunting rabbits, because he loved the rabbit meat.

Many a time he was advised by his friends to give up hunting in general and hunting the rabbits in particular. "You should stop being cruel to animals," said his friends. "I know what I am doing. Please do not advise me," shouted the hunter, annoyed.

One sunny afternoon, the hunter was busy preparing to go on another hunting expedition. Just then a saint happened to pass by. Seeing the hunter holding a rope, a spear, a knife and a net, the saint said to the hunter, "It seems to me you are going to catch an animal."

"Yes, I am going to catch a rabbit in the forest," replied the hunter.

"But what will you do with the rabbit?" asked the saint.

"I will cut its throat, roast it and eat it up. Will you stop me?" asked the hunter.

The raw behavior of the hunter irritated the saint. "No, my son! I only wanted to tell you that killing innocent animals is a sin. All sinners get punished some day in their lives," said the humble saint.

The hunter yelled back at the saint, "let me see who comes to punish me." And he left in anger. The saint smiled and sat there in meditation.

After some time, the hunter was back. He was holding a rabbit by its ears. "Ha! Ha! See I have caught my prey. Now I will cut its throat and roast it right in front of you. No one will come to punish me," he said to the still meditating saint. Just as the hunter was about to raise his knife, it slipped out of his hand and landed on his foot. "Yieeee!" he screamed, letting go of the rabbit. The rabbit ran away.

The hunter's foot was badly cut. He was in pain. It was bleeding profusely. But the hunter knew that what happened was nothing but the divine justice. "I have now realized how cruel and stubborn I have been. I will give up hunting completely," said the hunter to the saint.

The hunter thanked the saint for the wise words and went on his way. The saint was happy that the hunter gave up hunting. The hunter became a civilized man and lived a righteous life.

The Judge Monkey

Once upon a time, two cats were passing through a street. Suddenly they spotted a loaf of bread lying beneath a tree. Both pounced upon it and caught the loaf at the same time. "It is mine. I saw it first," claimed one cat. While the other said, "I pounced upon it first and so it belongs to me." After having fought for a while, one cat said, "Let us divide it into two and take one piece each." "Indeed, a good idea," said the other cat. "But how do we divide it now?"

A monkey sitting on the branch of the tree had watched all that happened between the two cats. "That loaf of bread looks good. I could do with it myself," he thought. Slowly he came down from the tree and walked up to the confused cats.

"Yes, my dear friends! Can I help you?" asked the monkey. The cats told the monkey what the problem was and said, "Why do not you be the judge between us?" When the monkey nodded, the cats said, "Please divide this loaf for us."

The clever monkey smilingly broke the bread into two pieces. But one piece was a little bigger than the other. "OH no! I will take a little bite of this bigger piece to make both equal," said the monkey, slyly. He took a bite from the bigger piece. But, he had taken a big bite. "Uh oh! Now it has become smaller than the other piece. I will just have to take a little bite from this piece now," said the clever monkey.

The Judge Monkey took another bite. The two cats sat in front of the monkey, seeing the loaf of bread they had found getting smaller and smaller. When the whole loaf was eaten by the monkey, the monkey said, "I am sorry. I was really difficult to divide that loaf. I must be going now." And the monkey jumped onto the tree and was gone. "If only we had not quarreled among ourselves, we would have remained united and we need not have to go to the monkey and to become hungry now," said the two cats.

The Bonded Donkey

In a small village, there lived a potter. He had a donkey. Everyday his donkey would carry soil from the field to his house. Since the field was quite far off, the potter would rest under a tree midway, tying his donkey nearby.

One day, the potter forgot to take the rope with which he tied the donkey everyday. When he reached the tree, he thought, "How do I tie this donkey today? He might run away if I sleep." The potter decided to tie down holding the donkey's ears so that the donkey would not run away.

But this way neither the donkey was comfortable nor the potter was able to take rest. A saint, who happened to be passing by, saw the potter holding on to the donkey's ears. Then the saint wanted to know what the problem of the potter was. When the potter told the saint what the problem was, the wise saint said, "Take the donkey to the place where you tie him everyday. Pretend to tie him using an imaginary rope. I assure you he won't run away." The potter did what the saint had said.

He left the donkey and went to take a nap. When he woke up, to his surprise and relief, he found the donkey standing in the same place.

Soon the potter prepared to leave for home. But the donkey did not move. "What is wrong with this donkey!" exclaimed the potter in frustration.

Luckily, the potter saw the wise saint again. He ran up to the saint and told him about the donkey's strange behavior. The saint said, "You tied up the donkey, but did you untie him?" Go and pretend to untie the rope with which you had tied the donkey." The potter followed the saint's advice.

Now the donkey was ready to leave for home. The potter understood that donkey was the bonded donkey. The potter thanked the wise saint and went home happily with his donkey.