

## The Donkey That Had a Sweet Tooth

I'm going to tell you a story about a little donkey who loved to eat sugar cubes. But first, let me check if everything's ready for a story.

Snuggle up.

(whispering) Press your secret button to listen to a story.

There we go. Now we can start.

On Jolly Rooster's Farm, the animals were going about their day as usual. There was nothing strange about it; the horse was pulling hay, the cow was giving milk, and the hens were pecking at seeds... and the donkey was eating sugar. That wasn't strange either, except that the donkey was already eating his sixth sugar cube. Now, that was a bit strange. Six sugar cubes for such a little donkey! If Jolly Rooster had known, he might have been a bit upset.

From time to time, the donkey got a sugar cube on "Sweet Day"—a special day when they all had treats. But eating so much sugar at once wasn't allowed. Too much sugar could rot his teeth, make his stomach hurt, or even make him seriously ill. But the donkey didn't care, he just wanted to enjoy the sugar.

That afternoon, the animals decided to have a small party. They brought logs, pebbles, walnuts, and bales of hay, and set them up all around the yard. They made a playground.

Archie the dog barked, "I'll be the referee for today's game without borders. Please split into two teams. The big ones with the small ones—I want this to be fair!"

The animals ran here and there happily, making two teams. Curly the cat, Lily the cow, Pip the chick, and Danny the donkey were one team. On the other team, there were Clyde the horse, Sadie the duck, Vicky the goat, and Dandelion the Bunny. The rest of the animals sat in the audience to cheer them on.

Jolly Rooster was old, and he stopped playing games a long time ago. He and his hen, Hattie, sat up on a haystack for the best view.

Archie barked, "Here are the rules: first, roll the walnuts with your nose or beak to the hay bales, jump over the bales, then throw pebbles at the wooden logs. Once you hit them, run back to the start. When your whole team has finished, you're done. Play fair—if I see anyone cheating, I'll be strict. REA-DYYYY... GO!"

First up were the cat and the duck, running as fast as their legs could carry them. The duck even flapped her wings to go faster. They aimed well, jumped easily, it was a close race. Next were the cow and the horse. The cow ran more slowly, but she was better at hitting the target. Still close!

Then it was the goat and the donkey's turn. They rolled the walnuts skillfully and started jumping over the hay bales. The goat, being a goat, could jump forever, but the donkey was getting tired. He jumped over the first bale, then slowed down. Everyone watched, it was strange. And then something really bad happened—the donkey fell.

He was panting, sweating all over. Even though animals rarely sweat, this donkey somehow managed it.

The others rushed over. Archie blew the whistle to stop the game. Even Hattie and Jolly Rooster, who never flew, fluttered down this time.

“Give him some space! Make room! Bring water!” Hattie clucked with authority.

Jolly Rooster was desperate since he didn’t know what to do.

The animals brought a bucket of water, and Clyde the horse splashed it over the donkey. Finally, the donkey lifted his head.

“How are you feeling?”

“I feel tired... I can’t breathe... and my stomach hurts.”

“Did you sleep well last night?” Jolly asked.

“Yes,” the donkey replied, puzzled.

“Did you have a good breakfast?”

“Yes,” the donkey said, even more puzzled. “I ate everything I should and drank water.”

“All right, we’re calling the vet,” Jolly decided, not giving him a chance to change his mind.

No one liked the vet, even though the vet liked all the animals. The donkey was scared, but he was even more scared to admit that he had eaten all that sugar. He decided it was better to see the vet than listen to a rooster crow and a hen cluck about sugar for the next five days.

As the donkey stood up, the sugar cubes tumbled out of his pocket. Oh no! Not only had he been eating sugar, but he had stolen it, hidden it in his pocket, and planned to eat more later. This was so shocking that all the animals stepped back. They didn’t want to stick around for the scolding.

Hattie began, “Do you know that you’re feeling sick because of the sugar? Do you know your stomach might hurt for days? If you keep eating that much sugar, you won’t be able to walk, let alone play or run. You fell because you ate something that’s not good for you. What if you had eaten even more? I can’t even think about it.”

Jolly Rooster crowed so loudly that the haystack collapsed. “Sugar isn’t good for you—why are you eating it?”

The donkey said softly, “Because it tastes good.”

Hattie and Jolly Rooster paced back and forth—she was going right, he was going left... or maybe she went left and he went right... oh well, it doesn’t matter. Then they stopped.

“We want to say we’re not angry,” Hattie announced.

The animals were surprised.

“We’re not angry because we understand why the donkey ate the sugar cubes. Sugar is tasty. We all like it. But now we’ve all seen what happens when you eat too much of it. That doesn’t mean we’ll never eat sugar again. Oh no! We’ll eat it sometimes, only a little, and then everything will be fine. And you, Dave the donkey, now you know what you need to do.”

Dave knew: he returned the sugar and never ate that much again. He was a little afraid it could happen to him again. He decided to be kind to himself and not eat things that would make him sick. That was much easier than being ill.

Story's done, hope you had fun!

Now it's time for you to sleep. Tomorrow, I'll tell you another story.

(whispering) You can turn off your secret button for stories now. Sweet dreams!

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