

The Smuggler



A clever smuggler led a donkey burdened with bundles of straw to the border between two lands. The inspector at the border eyed the donkey's bundles with suspicion.

"You must allow me to search your bundles!" the inspector said. "I think that you have hidden a valuable treasure that you wish to sell at the market. If so, you must pay me a border fee!"

"Search as you wish," said the man. "If you find something other than straw, I will pay whatever fee you ask."

The inspector pulled apart the straw bundles until there was straw in the air, straw on the ground, straw, straw, straw all around. Yet not a valuable thing in the straw was found.

"You are a clever smuggler!" said the inspector. "I am certain that you are hiding something. Yet so carefully have you covered it, I have not discovered it. Go!"

The man crossed the border with his donkey. The suspicious inspector looked on with a scowl.

The next day the man came back to the border with a donkey burdened with straw. Once again the inspector pulled apart the bundles. There was straw in the air, straw on the ground, straw, straw, straw all around.

"Not one valuable thing have I found!" the exasperated inspector said. "Go!" The man and the donkey went across the border. "Bah!" cried the inspector once again, scowling.

The next day and the next day, for ten years, the man came to the border with a donkey burdened with straw. Each day the inspector carefully searched his

bundles, but he found nothing.

Finally, the inspector retired. Even as an old man, he could not stop thinking about that clever smuggler. One day as he walked through the marketplace, still trying to solve the mystery at the border, he muttered to himself, "I am certain that man was smuggling something. Perhaps I should have looked more carefully in the donkey's mouth. He could have hidden something between the hairs on the donkey's tail!"

As he mumbled to himself, he noticed a familiar face in the crowd. "You!" he exclaimed. "I know you! You were the man who came to the border every day with a donkey burdened with straw. Come and speak with me!"

When the man walked toward him, the old inspector said, "Admit it! You were smuggling something across the border, weren't you?"

The man nodded and grinned.

"Aha!" said the old inspector. "Just as I suspected. You were sneaking something to market! Tell me what it was! What were you smuggling? Tell me, if you can."

"Donkeys," said the man.

smuggler: a person who brings goods into a country illegally

bundle: a group of objects held or gathered together; a packet, package

scowl: frown

exasperated: very irritated and frustrated