



in the picture:
"a state of being fully informed or noticed"
The Concise Oxford Dictionary

Time to get equal

scope

About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

Declan and the Donkey

1

This is a story about me. I'm a donkey called Mary from a small seaside harbour on the south coast of Ireland. And I live with my uncle John, in his shed at the bottom of his garden. This is unusual I believe as most people keep their lawn mowers in their sheds.

2

Every morning I wake Uncle John up with my braying. I start to bray as daylight breaks. In the summer months, Uncle John will bring a basin of water down to my shed and talk to me while he has his shave. I love our chats in the morning.

3

I've very well known in the harbour, being the only donkey, well nearly! My claim to fame was being one of the stars in the nativity play. Only thing was I ate all the straw under baby Jesus and then I ate baby Jesus. And that was the end of my acting career. John said the next year they used a cardboard cut out of a donkey.

4

I'll eat anything and at lunchtimes John will tie me up to the post outside Murphy's shop and the locals will buy me food. Uncle John calls me 'a clever old girl'. Every now and again I'll pull my rope free from the post and run as fast as I can along the harbour road and I usually end up in Father O'Leary's garden and eat all his lovely vegetables.

5

I used to love my walks along the beach with my Uncle John. We hadn't been for a long while. Uncle John hadn't been well and I'd had my donkey flu. I missed the local children who rode on my back and pretended I was a Blackpool donkey. I missed Kathleen and Liam, Paddy and little Billy from next door. I missed them so much. I love their chatter and the fuss they make of me.

6

One morning I brayed as usual and spied two little eyes peeking at me through the kitchen window. It made me sad because he wouldn't come down to see me. Two more days passed and still no little boy, but he spied me quite often through the kitchen window and copied my braying. His mum often came to see me with a bucket full of carrots. I loved the way she stroked my ears - very soothing. She called Declan to come and see me, he'd scream - two little eyes would appear at the window and disappear again.

7

One morning I threw my shed doors open ready to bray and wake Uncle John. I'd bray loudly so the little boy would know I was there - and there he was in his p.j.s eating one of last night's mouldy carrots off the floor.

OK for us donkeys but not for you humans. Of course I frightened him. He screamed and ran back into the house and looked at me through the window again.

He was beautiful I thought, big green eyes, lovely cute face, but definitely wasn't a donkey like me. Sometimes he would scream when he was happy which was very confusing.

8

Later that day, the little boy Declan came down to my shed again. This time I thought I won't frighten him, I'll stay very quiet. I reached over to him and the hot breath from my nostrils tickled his arm and he smiled and laughed and laughed and I knew he like me after all.

John left my brush on the gate. I love to be brushed. I pushed the brush onto the floor by his feet. But he didn't seem to understand that I wanted to be brushed.

He was very different from the other little girls and boys who rode on my back down on the beach. He flicked his fingers in front of his eyes and got very excited when my nose touched his arm.

9

John came down to my shed with Declan's mum. Declan's mum had his coat. 'Come on Declan, let's go for a walk with John and Mary' she said. Declan became very frightened and ran up the garden screeching. He wouldn't come with us that day or the next day. John told me he was very frightened of outside people, noises and the unknown and that he has autism.

10

I began to think he would never come for a walk with John and myself. I knew he wanted to come with us as he often stood at the gate and looked after us. He would always be there if I turned to look. He hadn't been out for the whole of his holiday. He'd never been to the shop for sweets and toys like other children or played at the beach.

11

That night very late, I heard noises outside my shed door. I threw open my top door. And there was Declan, standing there in his pjs. He laughed when he saw me and put his hand up to my nose. I nuzzled his hand very gently so as not to frighten him. Declan came into my shed and rolled in my hay and laughed and laughed. Maybe he is a donkey disguised as a little boy I still thought.

12

He took out some pictures on a strip. The first picture showed a match-stick man reaching for a box, the words read underneath 'I want'.

The next picture was match stick man walking underneath read 'walk'.

And the third picture showed shells and water and underneath the word read 'Beach'.

He gave me the strip and I began to chew it. It didn't taste very nice.

13

As the stars twinkled, Declan and myself walked along the harbour road towards the beach. He was frightened no more as he held onto my reins and looked around the harbour at all the houses. We stopped at Murphy's shop and Declan peered into the windows at all the sweets and toys. He became excited again and flicked his fingers in front of his eyes. He turned to me and said 'Mary'. The silence was everywhere as we carried on walking. We walked along the beach and stopped to listen to the waves. And still he held my reins.

14

The next day John came down to my shed as usual with his basin and his razor for his shave. He told me about the muddy sand prints right through the house and up the stairs and all over Declan's slippers. 'Mary do you know anything about this' he asked? But I think he knew that myself and Declan had gone down to the beach that night. Do you?

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