



Source: no author, 'Bush bites bullet on Iraq strategy',
The Age online, 27/10/06.

Tags: [animals](#), [violence](#), [countryside](#), [retribution](#)
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Once upon a time in a little village, right in the centre of the world, there lived a man, Abdel Malek, well-known for his foul temper and unpredictable moods. Abdel Malek had a donkey. Notwithstanding the brutality of his owner, life for this donkey was harsh, for winters were long and bleak, springs, though sweet-tasting were brief, the valleys were dark and deep, and the hills rocky and steep.

Every day, at sunset, the donkey would climb one of those hills, carrying on his back his owner and the day's harvest. While Abdel Malek would dream of getting home to a nice cold wash and a plate full of figs, the donkey's only dream was to avoid his owner's whip. For the minute he slowed down from fatigue, Abdel Malek twirled his whip in the air in preparation for a series of quick short strikes to his donkey's flank.

One day, in order to avoid such terrible pain, the donkey decided to canter up the hill. But he tripped on a rock and dropped Abdel Malek off his back, as well as the two baskets full of figs and olives. The donkey with a sore hoof now, watched the olives and figs roll and bounce all the way down to the bottom of the hill, dreading what would surely follow. Abdel Malek, with fire in his eyes and lightening in his whip, got up and charged towards his donkey. He whipped his ear twice, once for each fallen basket. So ferocious was his whipping that Abdel Malek fell to the ground with exhaustion.

The double strikes inflicted such deep wounds to the donkey's ear, that blood spurted everywhere, staining Abdel Malek's face and clothes, making him scream and swear with anger at his donkey all the way home. He left the wounded donkey behind, moaning with pain. So deep were the donkey's wounds that blood, and soon pus, started gushing in amounts never witnessed in that part of the world before. The green and red fluids filled all the valleys and even some of the hills. The donkey's pain was unbearable. It threw him to the edge, somewhere between lucidity and coma, requiring extreme patience and detachment from all known things. What he experienced was so unique, that the donkey thought, at times, that surely he must be already dead.

But the donkey was not alone in his suffering. Weeks and months of unresolved pain and infection began to poison the village itself. The villagers, thrown into a state of turmoil, thought of shooting the donkey, but the stench was so bad, that no one could get within rifle range to do it. Filled with pity but also with deep respect for the donkey, the villagers decided to bestow a name on him; Mouattar, the poor, helpless, vulnerable one.

But this did not improve the situation. Everyone was losing heart as well as appetite and strength. To solve the humanitarian crisis the Mayor called a public meeting. After days of speculation, analysis of causes and effects, the villagers agreed unanimously that the senseless pain and suffering to which the whole village was subjected could only be due to 'ass anger'. They vowed to bring

Abdel Malek to trial and inflict senseless wounds to his ears and even other parts of his body in order to appease that anger.

Hearing of this, Abdel Malek went into hiding. He spent many months alone, cursing his bad temper and weeping with remorse.

One night he took his rifle, and went looking for Mouattar, wading through rivers of infection and poison. When he found his donkey, he started crying, filled with love and pity, kissing poor Mouattar's seeping wound. He cried for the cruelty he had committed and for the cruelty he might have committed again. As his tears poured down onto Mouattar's ear, it began to bend and break and finally to drop off entirely, leaving the donkey with only one ear. With that the flow of blood and pus stopped.

Amazed, Abdel Malek watched the rivers of infection transform into beautiful lush fields of large, green, fragrant watermelons. Abdel Malek dropped his rifle, crying out with joy.

Awoken by the scent of the watermelons, the villagers came running towards Mouattar who was standing, nibbling at the leaves in a field of watermelons. Beside him stood Abdel Malek, now purged of 'ass anger'. Not only was he forgiven by the villagers, they made him a hero, for without him and his donkey's pain and suffering, they would never have witnessed such a miracle.

Now the watermelons that grew, were the biggest and juiciest ever, making the village a prosperous tourist attraction, the villagers acting as guides, showcasing their beautiful produce.

Abdel Malek received a badge for the highest achievement and honour from the Mayor. A marble statue of his torso was erected in the village square. Abdel Malek was very happy.

With time however, Abdel Malek settled back into a life of complacency. He became comfortable with himself again and started to forget the past. And though he vowed he would never use it on Mouattar, he began carrying his whip again, this time, just to keep the flies away.

One day, he sat down eating watermelons, admiring the statue of himself, when a crow flew past and stood on the statue's head. The bird released a slimy deposit that slid down the marble effigy of Abdel Malek. Furious, Abdel Malek took up his whip, throwing it left and right, trying to hit the bird, but whipping the head off the statue instead. The broken head, rolled down the hill and lay buried amongst the watermelons.

Worried that the broken head might unleash the same fate on the village as Mouattar's wounded ear, Abdel Malek replaced it with a watermelon and fled, never to be seen in the village again.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Loubna Haikal.