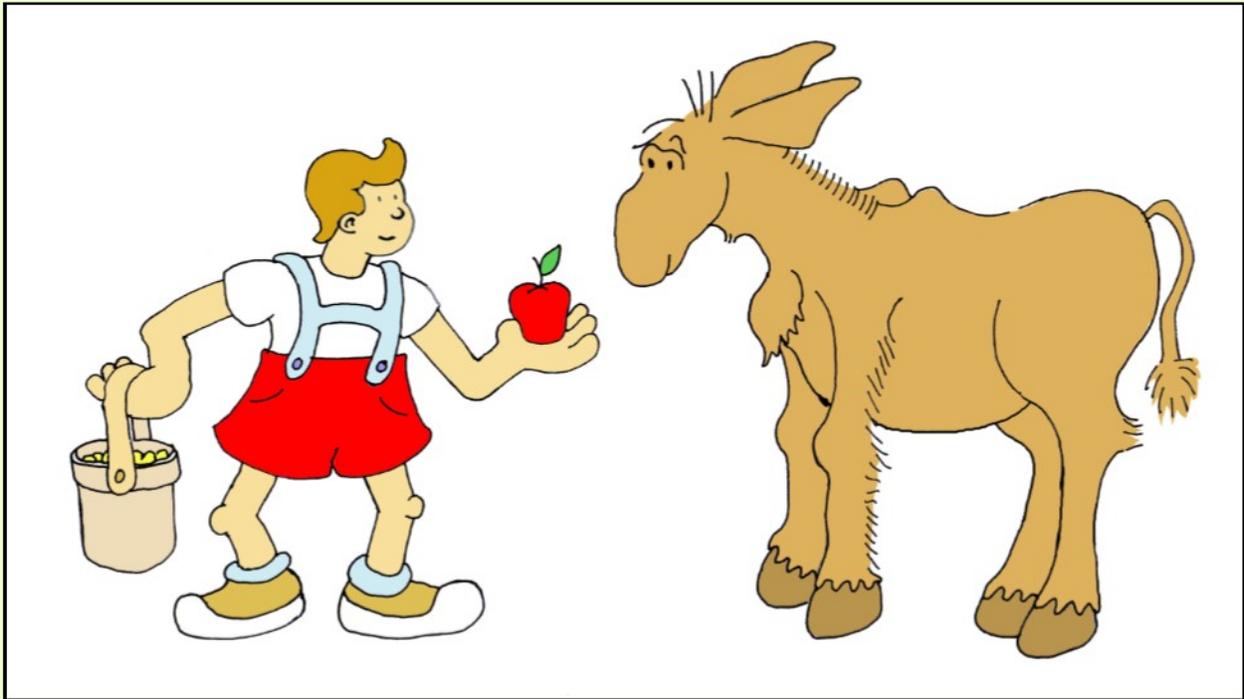


Critique of Capitalism for Kidz!

Volume 1: The Working Class



By C.R. Thompson

Illustrated by Howard Gindoff

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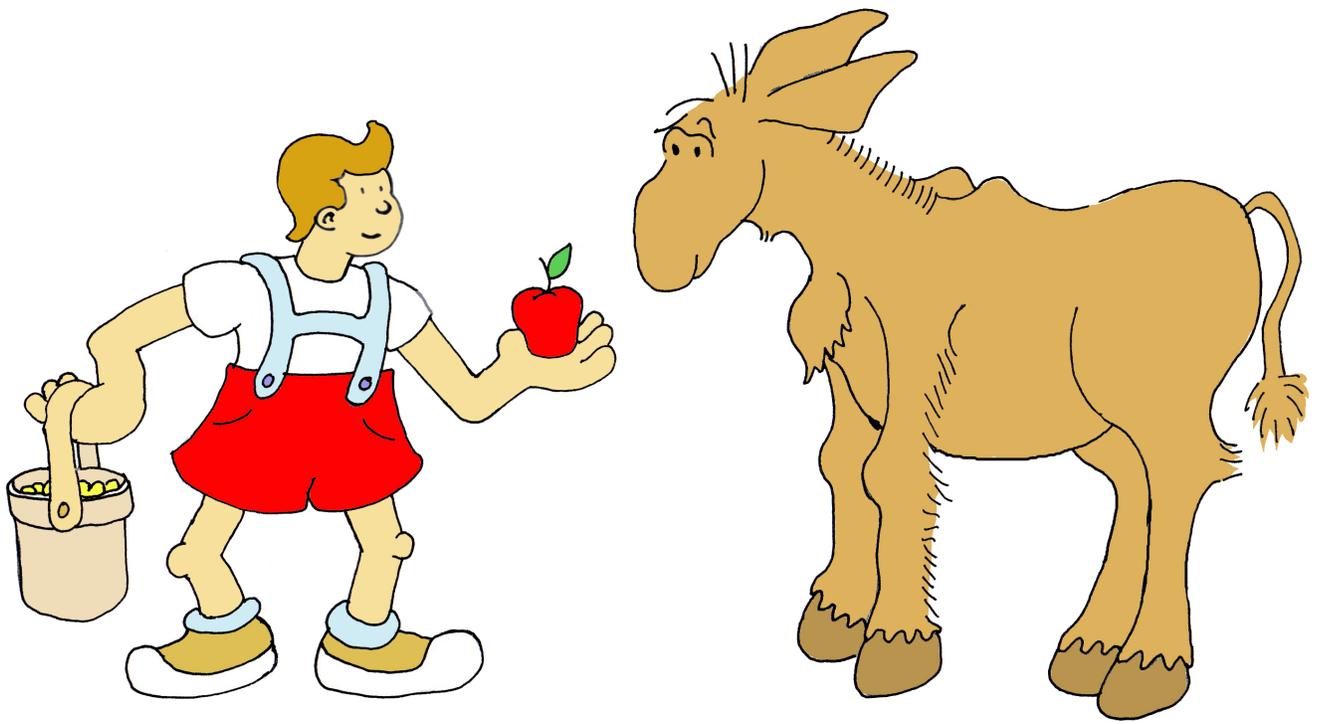
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The Working Class

Once upon a time, in a place not really very far from here, there lived a farmer, who had a son he called Carlos.

One day, the old farmer said to Carlos, "I'm too tired to take our vegetables to town today, and you are now old enough to take them there for me."

The old farmer loaded four sacks of vegetables on the back of their old burro. He told Carlos, "The grocer will give you four gold coins for these four sacks of vegetables. Just follow the path for ten miles. The burro knows the way, and enjoys the walk. He'll stop for a while now and then to look around or listen to the birds sing. Or he'll want you to give him his feedbag for a few minutes. But he'll carry you to town and back again before night falls."

So off Carlos went. As he was riding away, the old farmer called after him, "Remember, take good care of that old burro and he'll take good care of you."



Carlos had traveled only a couple of miles when the old burro stopped for a while to look around and listen to the birds sing. Carlos was looking and listening with him when out of the bushes popped a funny little man in a stovepipe hat and a neat and clean little three piece suit.

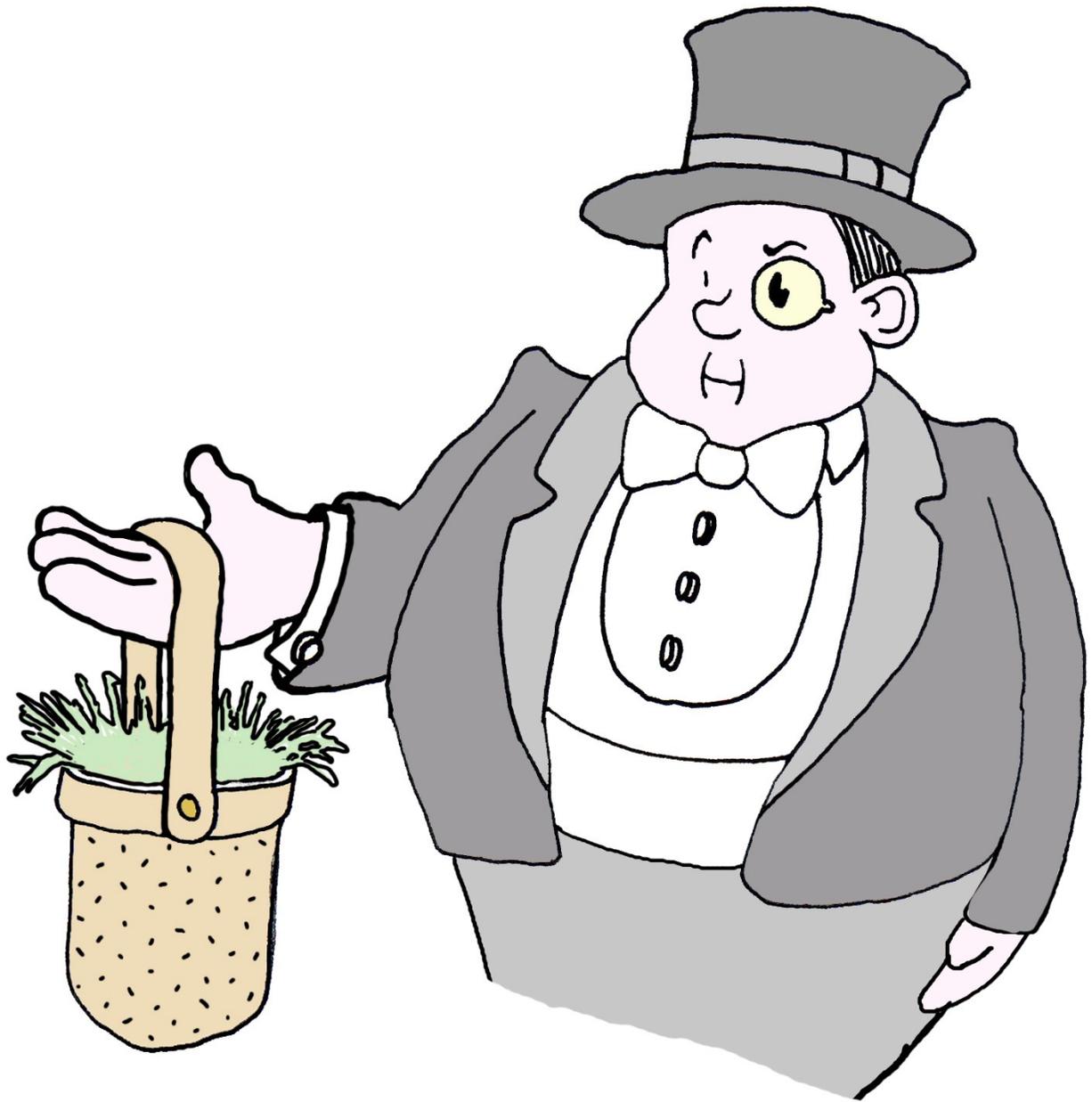
The funny little man said, "If you put blinkers on that old burro, he won't stop to look around. And if you plug up his ears, he won't stop to listen to the birds sing. He'll walk straight and fast, and stop wasting your valuable time."

It seemed like a good idea. Carlos knew it wasn't good to waste valuable time. "But I do not have blinkers or ear plugs," Carlos said.

"It just so happens," said the funny little man, "that I have an extra pair of each. I will happily lend them to you."

"How fortunate for me," said Carlos. So Carlos put the blinkers on the old burro, and plugged his ears. Just as the funny little man had said, the old burro walked straight and fast, and did not stop to look around or listen to the birds sing.

Carlos figured he'd learned something about how to handle burros.



A couple of miles later, the old burro stopped again, though he didn't look around or listen to the birds sing. Carlos gave the old burro his feedbag, and was waiting while the burro ate grain, when out of the bushes on the side of the path popped another funny little man in a stovepipe hat and a neat and clean little three piece suit. He looked so much like the first one that Carlos wondered if they might be brothers.

The funny little man said to Carlos, "If you fill that feedbag with hay instead of grain, you could sell the extra grain, and make a bit more money. You can spend it in the time you've saved by using those blinkers and ear plugs."

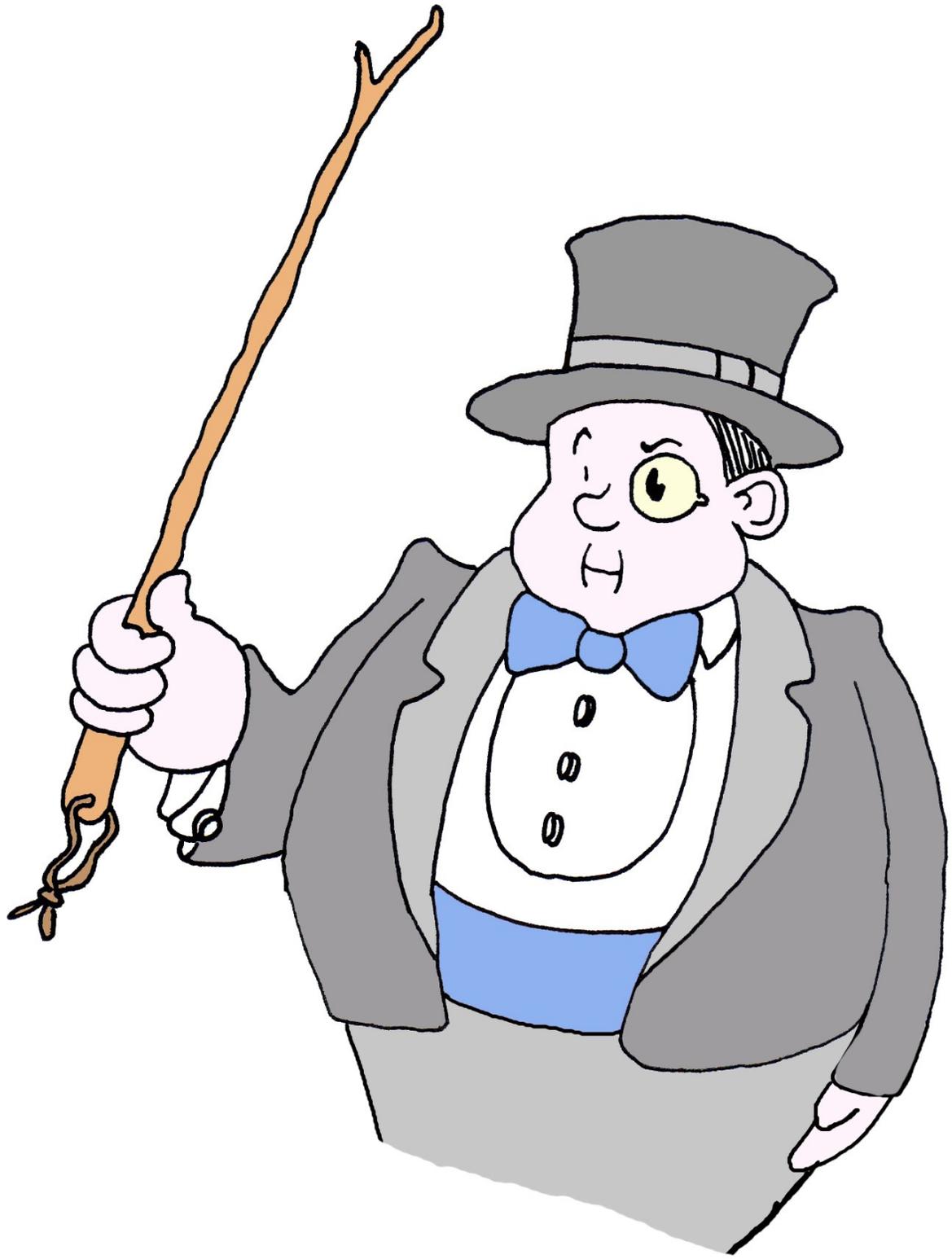
It seemed like a good idea. Carlos knew people could always use a bit more money. "But I do not have any hay," said Carlos.

"It just so happens," said the little man, "that I have some hay that I could give you."

"How fortunate for me," said Carlos.

So he filled the feedbag with hay, and he put the grain aside to sell. And sure enough, the old burro ate the hay, and then walked straight and fast, and did not stop to look around or listen to the birds sing.

Carlos figured he'd learned something about how to handle burros.



A couple of miles later when the old burro stopped to eat a little more hay, out of the bushes popped a third little man in a stovepipe hat and a neat and clean little three piece suit, who looked very much like the first two. The funny little man told Carlos, "If you whip that old burro with a hickory stick, he'll walk a bit faster. You'll save even more valuable time in which you can spend the bit more money you've made."

It seemed like a good idea.

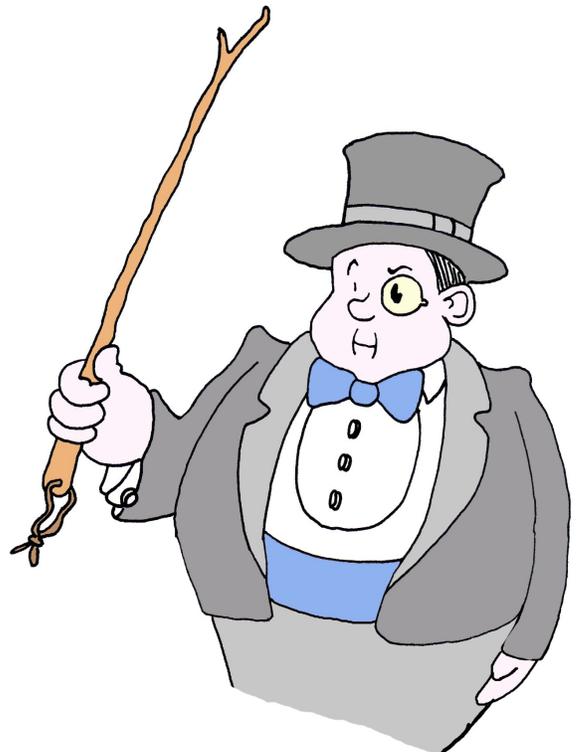
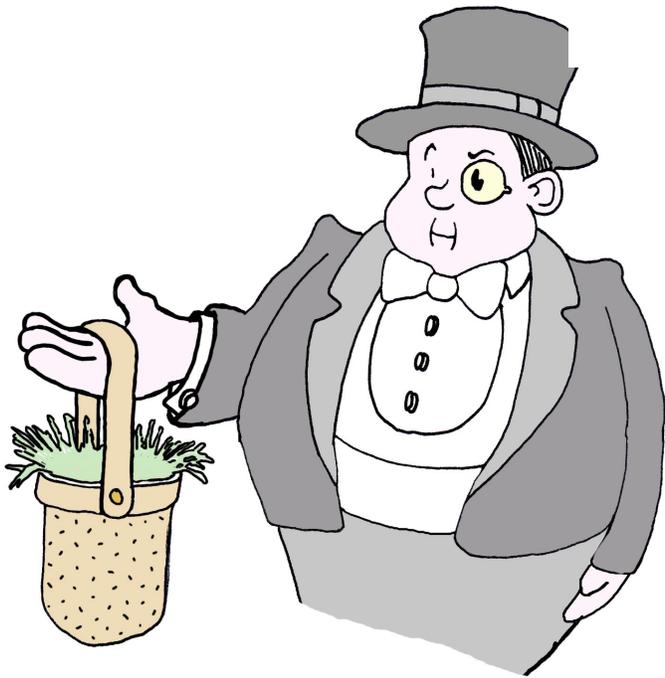
"But I do not have a hickory stick," said Carlos.

"It just so happens," said the third funny little man in a stovepipe hat and a neat and clean little three piece suit, "that I have an extra one that I could lend to you."

"How fortunate for me," said Carlos.

So Carlos whipped the old burro with the hickory stick. And sure enough the old burro hurried right along, and did not stop to look around or listen to the birds sing, or even to eat.

Carlos figured he'd learned something about how to handle burros.



Soon Carlos could see the town only a mile or so ahead, but suddenly the old burro began to slow down. Carlos whipped harder, but then the old burro just stopped. Carlos kept whipping, but the old burro wouldn't move another inch.

Carlos didn't know what to do. He could see the town, less than a mile away now, but he couldn't get the four sacks of vegetables there. No matter how hard he whipped the old burro, it would not move.

Suddenly there appeared before him on the road the three little men in their stovepipe hats and neat and clean little three piece suits.

They all agreed that everything Carlos had done so far was just right.

"Blinkers and ear plugs," the first one pointed out to the others.

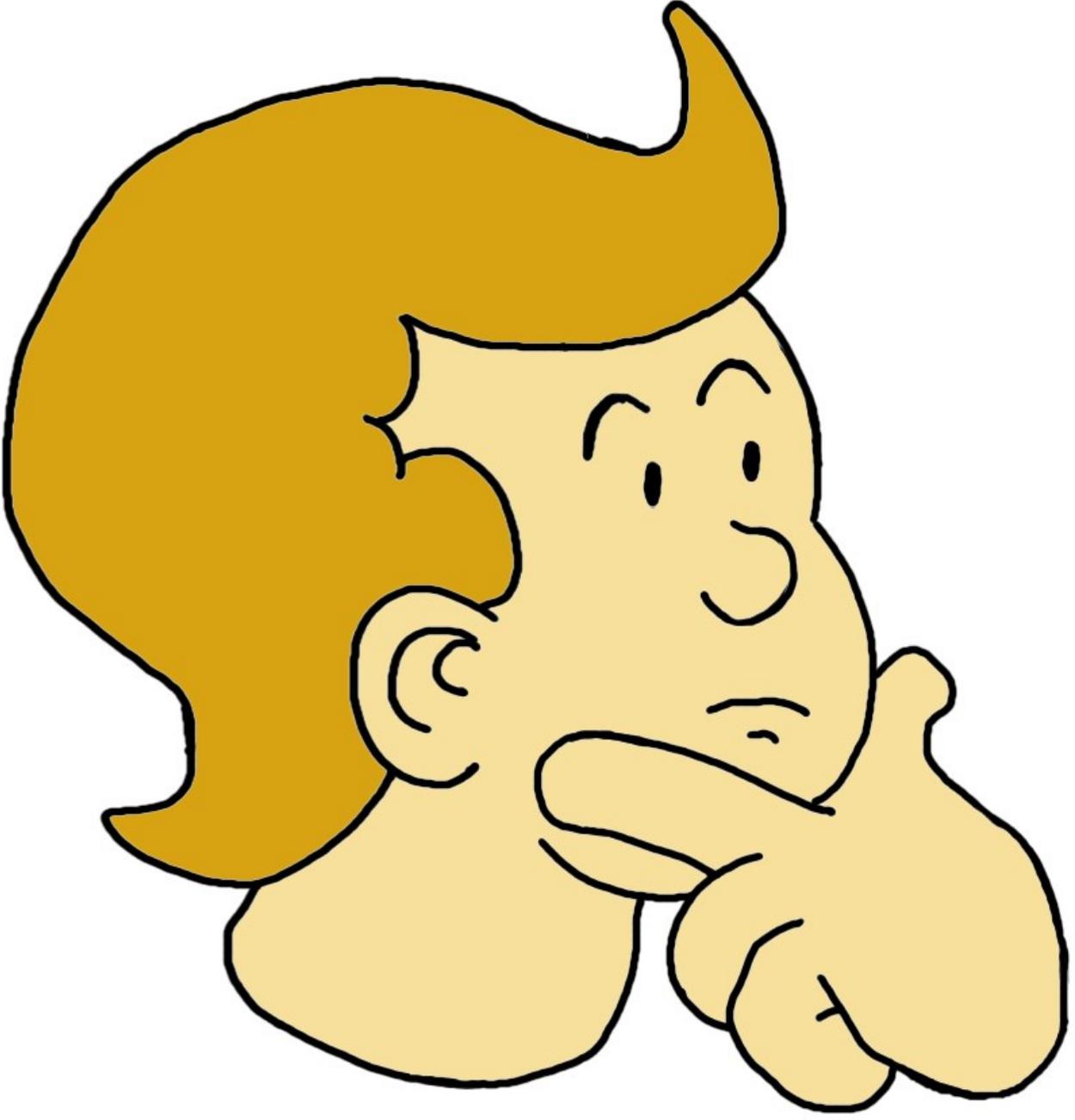
"Just right. Just right," they all said.

"Hay instead of grain," the second one pointed out to the others.

"Just right. Just right," they all said.

"And have you been whipping him?" asked the third.

"Yes," said Carlos.



"Just right. Just right," they all said, looking from one to the other.

But Carlos began to wonder if everything was just right after all.

The three little men in their stovepipe hats and neat and clean little three piece suits were silent for a while, deep in thought.

Then the first funny little man said, "If you are still here when night falls and the robbers come out, you will lose everything. But if you give me one of those sacks of vegetables, I will go and tell the grocer what has happened. Surely he will send help. Then you will lose only one gold coin.

"And I was so kind as to lend you earplugs and blinkers," he reminded Carlos.

The second funny little man pointed to the first funny little man and said, "That funny little man might not tell the grocer. And even if he does, the grocer might not send help. And even if the grocer sends help, he might send it too late. And if you are still here when night falls and the robbers come out, you will lose everything. But if you sell your four sacks of vegetables and that no good old burro to me for two gold coins, then you could walk right home. You will lose only two gold coins.

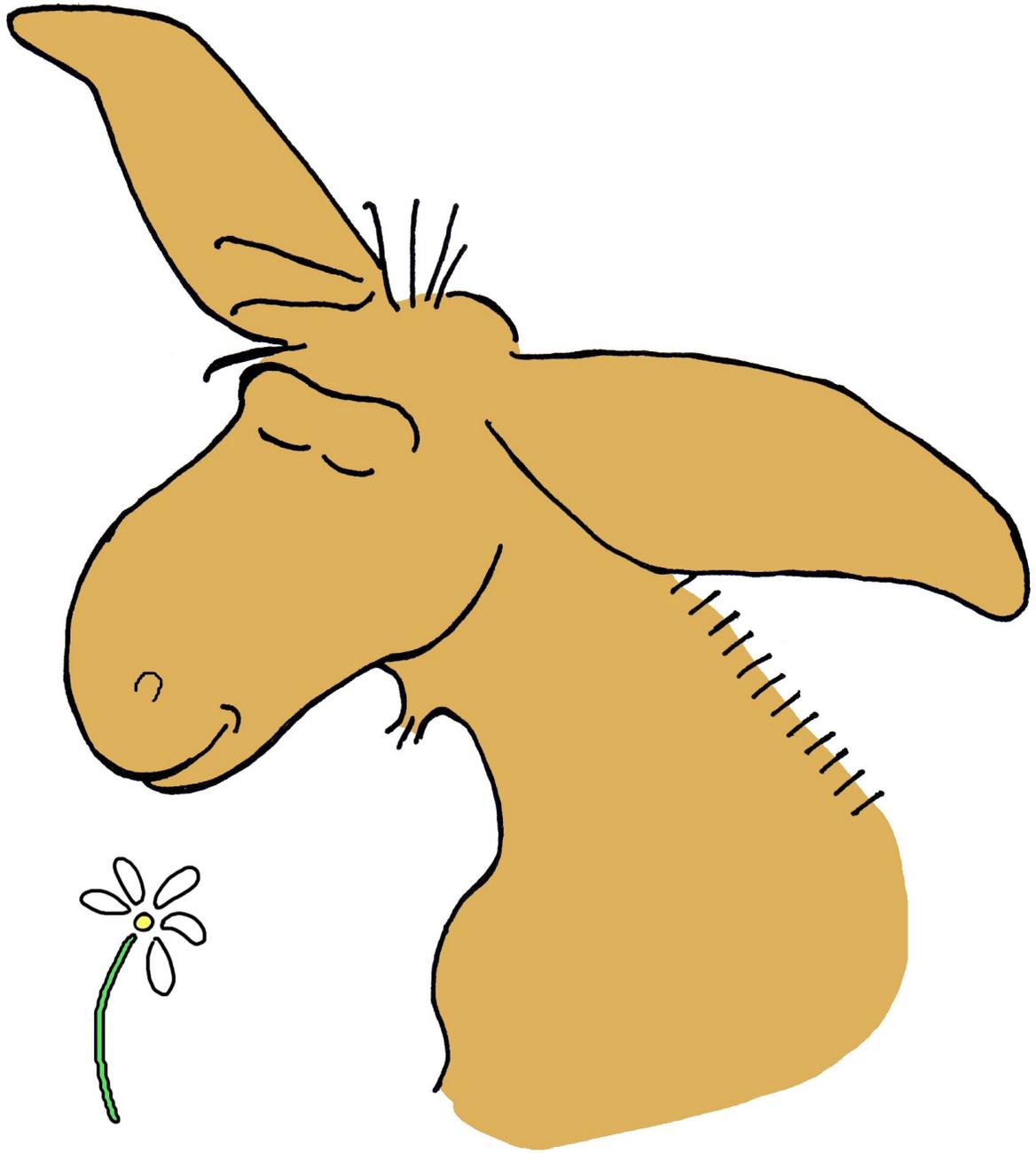
"And I was so kind as to give you hay," he reminded Carlos.



The third little man said, "Selling your burro and vegetables might be of no help. You might be walking home when night falls and the robbers come out, and still lose everything. The old burro should be abandoned. You can always buy another burro later. The four of us should carry the vegetables the last mile, and when we arrive at the town, we will all share equally in the money it brings. One gold coin each. You can walk home tomorrow. That way you will lose only three gold coins and one old burro, but you'll arrive home safe and sound."

"And I was so kind as to give you that hickory stick," he reminded Carlos.

But Carlos was beginning to grow suspicious of the three funny little men in their stovepipe hats and neat and clean little three piece suits. He did not want to give the first funny little man one sack of his father's vegetables. He did not want to sell the vegetables and the burro to the second funny little man for two gold coins. And he did not want to abandon the old burro and share the gold with all three of the funny little men. He wanted to arrive home before dark as his father expected, riding on their old burro, and with four gold coins in his pocket.



"I think we should have a vote," said the first little man.

"I think we should make a deal," said the second funny little man in a stovepipe hat and a neat and clean little three piece suit.

"I think we should form a committee," said the third little man. "And possibly even a subcommittee."

Carlos suddenly remembered what his father had said as he was leaving. "Take good care of that old burro, and he'll take good care of you." Carlos realized he had been so concerned with saving time and making a bit more money that he'd forgotten to take care of the burro.

Carlos gave the blinkers and ear plugs back to the first funny little man. He gave what was left of the hay back to the second funny little man, and filled the feedbag with grain. He gave the hickory stick back to the third funny little man. Then he apologized to his friend, the old burro.

The old burro started walking again. He took Carlos directly to the town, where Carlos sold the vegetables to the grocer for four gold coins. Then the old burro took Carlos back home to the farm again, stopping now and then to look around and listen to the birds sing.

Carlos was home before night fell, and before the robbers, if there were any, came out.

Now Carlos knew he'd really learned something about how to handle burros.

The End.

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