

a breakfast serials story

The Monkey King

Adopted From the Classic Chinese Tale

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Chapter 2 Monkey Accepts a Challenge

The story so far: In China, thousands of years ago, amidst a terrible storm, Stone Monkey is created. The Jade Emperor, Ruler of the Universe, learns of him but is not worried.

On the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits lived a great clan of monkeys. For many years they had enjoyed a carefree life, swinging from the trees and playing in the streams. Whenever they were hungry, they gathered delicious fruit from the trees. When they were thirsty, they drank crystal water from the streams. Life was perfectly easy and wonderful.

But one day a strange and terrible storm came and destroyed all the trees on the mountain. Now, day after day, the monkeys crept among the broken trees, searching for something to eat. There was very little.

One hot and steamy morning the monkeys were sitting forlornly by a stream. "I wonder," said one monkey, who was more curious than the rest, "what would happen if we followed this stream up the

mountain. We might find a place that would be better than this one."

"Yes, yes," the other monkeys agreed. "It certainly can't be worse."

So they followed the stream as it wound through valleys and up steep cliffs. By late afternoon they had neared the top of the mountain and were feeling very tired indeed. But they pushed on, past one more bend in the stream--and found themselves at the bottom of a gigantic waterfall, an immense white curtain of rushing water casting down billions of water pearls, each one glittering in the sunlight.

"Ohhhh, how lovely," the monkeys cried, clapping their hands in delight.

"If this waterfall is so lovely on this side," the curious monkey wondered, "what do you think might lie on the other side?"

But the waterfall was so high that they could not see the top, so wide that all the monkeys holding hands could not reach from side to side, so dense that not even the sharpest-eyed monkey could see through it.

"Who will dare to go and look?" asked the curious monkey.

"How could you?" answered another. "You'd get soaked!"

"You'd be crushed by the water!"

"Worse! You'd drown and be swept away by the mighty current!"

No one wanted to do anything.

Then the curious monkey leaped upon a tree and shouted out, "I have an idea. Whoever is brave enough to go through the waterfall and discover what is on the other side will become our king! What do you say to that?"

"Very good," said an old gray monkey who was grandmother to the clan. "But I don't think there is anybody foolish enough to accept the dare."

"Who will dare? Who will dare?" the monkeys jabbered. Though they pushed and shoved each other, no one had the courage to step forward.

Suddenly a loud voice boomed, "I will go!"

Standing upon a rock hundreds of feet away was a monkey the clan had never seen before. He was small; his fur was silky and golden in color. And his eyes were shining with an odd light.

"Who are you? And where do you come from?" asked the curious monkey.

"I am Stone Monkey, born of Heaven and Earth. I'm so brave I'll do anything."

"Bragging! Bragging!" the other monkeys jeered, making faces at this new monkey.

Monkey did not say a word. First he laughed. Then he jumped higher than the highest tree in the forest, somersaulted, and landed on his feet right in front of the astonished monkeys.

"Did you say I was bragging?" he asked. "Well then, if I go through the waterfall, will you truly make me your king?"

Grandmother Monkey walked out of the crowd and looked into Monkey's eyes, which shone with a fierce

bright light. They were the strangest eyes she had ever seen. "Are you really so foolish as to try?" she asked.

Monkey craned his neck, pretending to search among the crowd. "Well, I don't see anyone else." He stretched out his arm and bowed deeply. "But if any one of you is brave enough, please be my guest."

"Oh, you boastful monkey," several monkeys cried. "Shame on you!"

"Monkey, you're full of arrogance," cried others.

"Silence!" ordered Old Grandmother monkey. She turned back to Monkey. "Very well," she said. "Let's see if you really are as brave as you say."

"If I succeed, don't forget what you have promised." Monkey winked at the curious monkey.

"Go! Go!" the monkeys cried. "You'll see. You'll never come out alive!"

Monkey scampered through the crowd until he reached the edge of the waterfall. The rushing water made a noise like thunder. Very slowly he stretched out his legs and his arms and waved his tail.

In awed silence the monkey clan watched from behind.

Monkey crouched down, closed his eyes, took a deep breath and leaped straight into the waterfall--and vanished.

Next Week: Monkey Behind the Waterfall

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