

a breakfast serials story

The Monkey King

Adopted From the Classic Chinese Tale

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Chapter 1 Monkey Is Born

Thousands of years ago in China, in the province of Ao-lai, there stood a towering mountain--the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits. At the very top of this mountain, perfectly balanced on its needle peak, was a rock as big as a castle, half-hidden by a thick and pearly mist.

One night a terrible storm exploded over the mountain. Never had there been such a storm! Bolts of lightning streaked across the sky. Thunder crashed. Winds howled. Torrents of rain pelted the mountainside, and the animals living there cowered in terror.

Suddenly there was an enormous blast.
CRAAAACK!

The huge rock on the mountaintop split in two and fell to pieces thousands of feet below. But balanced perfectly on the needle peak remained a glossy stone egg, about two feet around and blacker than the stormiest night.

Gradually the storm blew away. The air became calm and peaceful. On the mountaintop the egg remained motionless.

Ninety-nine days passed. On the ninety-ninth night a gust of wind in the shape of a dragon descended upon the mountain. WHOOSH! The dragon wind breathed fire onto the stone egg. At once it erupted into flame. Howling and roaring, the fireball grew until it was nine times larger than its original size.

For nine days and nine nights the egg burned. On the tenth day the fire died out. The egg was split. And there--on the very top of the mountain--stood a small stone monkey.

For one more day all was still.

But the next day, a gentle breeze came and tickled the stone monkey. And when it did, the monkey's eyes began to twinkle! Then a soft rain came and washed him, and his stone skin changed to silky, golden fur. The sun came out and shone its warmth upon the monkey, and he began to breathe. Slowly he turned his head from side to side. He stretched his arms and legs and wiggled his fingers and toes. Suddenly he jumped up thirty feet into the air, rolled into a perfect somersault--and landed on his feet!

Then Monkey knelt down and bowed his head to the ground four times: to the East, to the South, to the West, and finally to the North. At last he lifted his head up toward the sky--and laughed! It was a long, hearty

laugh, powerful enough to shake the tall trees to their roots and cause the earth to tremble.

Most wonderful of all, as Monkey laughed, a beam of light shot out from his eyes and went straight up to Heaven.

Now, far above the sky, quite near the North Star, the Jade Emperor, Ruler of Heaven and Earth, sat on his Dragon Throne in the Cloud Palace of the Golden Gates. He was busy meeting with his ministers about the state of the universe when he was rudely interrupted by a shaft of light, which burst out of nowhere and filled the throne room.

Neither the Jade Emperor nor his ministers had ever seen such a thing before, not in Heaven or on Earth. The Jade Emperor did not like mysteries. After all, he was the ruler of the universe! He turned to his two captains, Thousand-League-Eye, who could see as far as a thousand leagues, and Thousand-League-Ear, who could hear anything as far as a thousand leagues.

"Go find out what this strange light is and where it comes from," the Jade Emperor commanded.

The two captains dashed away to the Southern Gate of Heaven, where they could look down on Earth. In less than the blink of an Emperor's eye, they were back.

"Your Majesty," said Thousand-League-Eye, "the light is coming from the tallest mountain in the province

of Ao-lai. And when I looked more closely at it I saw . . . a little monkey."

"A little monkey?" the Jade Emperor exclaimed. "Nonsense! How could a little monkey send a beam of light that reaches all the way to Heaven?"

Thousand-League-Ear bowed. "We can't explain it, Your Majesty," he said. "But when I listened, I could hear that little monkey all the way up here. And he was . . . laughing."

Jade Emperor leaned back into his Dragon Throne and stroked his long gray beard. "Well, well," he said, "if it is only a little monkey, and he's laughing, there is nothing for us to worry about."

Which only goes to show that even the Jade Emperor can be wrong.

Next Week: Monkey Accepts a Challenge

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