

MONKEY

A Journey to the West

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*A retelling of the Chinese folk novel
by Wu Cheng-en*



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Books by David Kherdian

Poetry

On the Death of My Father and Other Poems
Homage to Adana
Looking Over Hills
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The Farm
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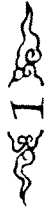
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It Started with Old Man Bean
Beyond Two Rivers
Finding Home
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The Mystery of the Diamond in the Wood
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The Pearl: Hymn to the Robe of Glory
Pigs Never See the Stars: Proverbs from the Armenian
Monkey: A Journey to the West



Stone Monkey King

HIGH atop a mountain, surrounded by favored earth that nourished magic fungi and wild orchids, there came to be a magic stone of immortal dimensions and properties. It was fructified by the seeds of Heaven and Earth, and by the essences of the sun and moon, until one day it was impregnated by divine inspiration, and became pregnant with a divine embryo. The embryo continued to develop in secret, until one day it burst open to reveal a stone egg. Once the egg was exposed to the elements, the wind soon transformed it into a stone monkey, complete in every way and in all aspects of its being.

With his first breath, Monkey began to run and climb, and as he bowed to the four quarters his steely eyes shot two beams of golden light toward the Palace of the Pole Star. Those twin shafts of light startled the Celestial Jade Emperor, who was sitting with his divine ministers in the Miraculous Mist of the Cloud Palace of Golden Arches. He immediately ordered Thousand-League Eye and Wind-Knowing Ears to open the Southern Gate of Heaven and look out.

The two captains hurried to the gate, and after looking with sharpened eyes and ever-keen ears, they returned to the Holy Chamber to make their report. "Your Majesty, the light you have seen comes from the borders of the country Ao-lai, east of the Exalted Continent, from the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, where a magic stone gave birth to an egg that was transformed by the wind into a stone monkey who just now bowed to the four quarters, shooting beams of golden light

toward the Palace of the Pole Star. But now he is eating, and the light is growing dim."

"It is nothing surprising," the Jade Emperor said. "These creatures from the world below are composed of the essences of Heaven and Earth, and therefore anything can happen."

Monkey was soon climbing trees and picking flowers and fruit, cavorting among the sandy hollows and building sand pagodas, chasing dragonflies and catching small lizards, tearing off creepers and weaving mats, and making new friends with tigers, wolves, leopards, and bears—and, of course, with apes and monkeys like himself.

All day long, Monkey and his cohorts played through the pine forest and washed themselves beside the green stream.

One morning all the monkeys followed the stream up to its source. It wasn't long before they came to a great waterfall. "Look! Look!" Monkey shouted. "A white rainbow arcing toward the heavens! A thousand strands of hurling waves, impenetrable by wind, their breath so cold it divides the green ranges! See how the noble cascade is suspended like a hanging curtain."

"Marvelous water, marvelous water," the monkeys chanted. "Why, it must travel all the way to the bottom of the mountain and extend as far as the sea!" After stretching their eyes to the edge of the horizon, they turned and said, "Why, if one among us could penetrate that curtain of water, discover its source, and return to us unharmed, we would make him our king."

"Yes! Yes!" they chanted, sending the challenge out again and again. Finally, after the third call, the stone monkey jumped forward and exclaimed, "I'll go!" Without another word, he crouched, screwed up his eyes, and leapt through the waterfall.

When Monkey opened his eyes again, to his great sur-

prise he saw neither water nor waves, but a long, gleaming bridge. The only water to be seen came spilling under the long archway and flowed through a crack in the rock.

Walking toward the bridge, Monkey looked around at the magical scene. Through a glittering haze of mist and smoke he could see clouds like drifting jade that framed a quiet house with windows: flowers were growing over a marble bench, and dragon pearls hung in the archway. Multicolored flowers surrounded the entrance, and inside could be seen oval-shaped stone tables and chairs and beds, as well as stone pots and bowls and pans.

When Monkey arrived at the middle of the bridge, he noticed a stone tablet that read: "This Water Curtain Cave, in the Blessed Land of Flower Mountain, Leads to Heaven." Monkey was beside himself with joy. He crouched, squinted, and jumped back through the waterfall. "A great stroke of luck," he shouted, "a great stroke of luck!" All the other monkeys began screeching and jumping up and down. "What's it like on the other side?" they shouted. "How deep is the water?"

"No water at all," Monkey said. "There's an iron bridge, and off to one side a stone house . . ."

"But, but . . ." sputtered the monkeys, "whatever do you mean? A stone house, a bridge, and no water?"

"It's all true," Monkey replied. "A stone house, with stone ovens, stone chairs and beds, stone couches and utensils. It has surely been sent from Heaven, and there is room there for all of us. It is called the Water Curtain Cave of the Blessed Land of Flower Mountain. Think of it, a retreat from the wind, with shelter from the rain, and no thunder and lightning. No frost or snow. The mist is warmed by a halo of holy light, and the pines are forever green, with rare flowers that blossom anew every day."

"Lead the way!" they shouted in unison. "Lead the way!"

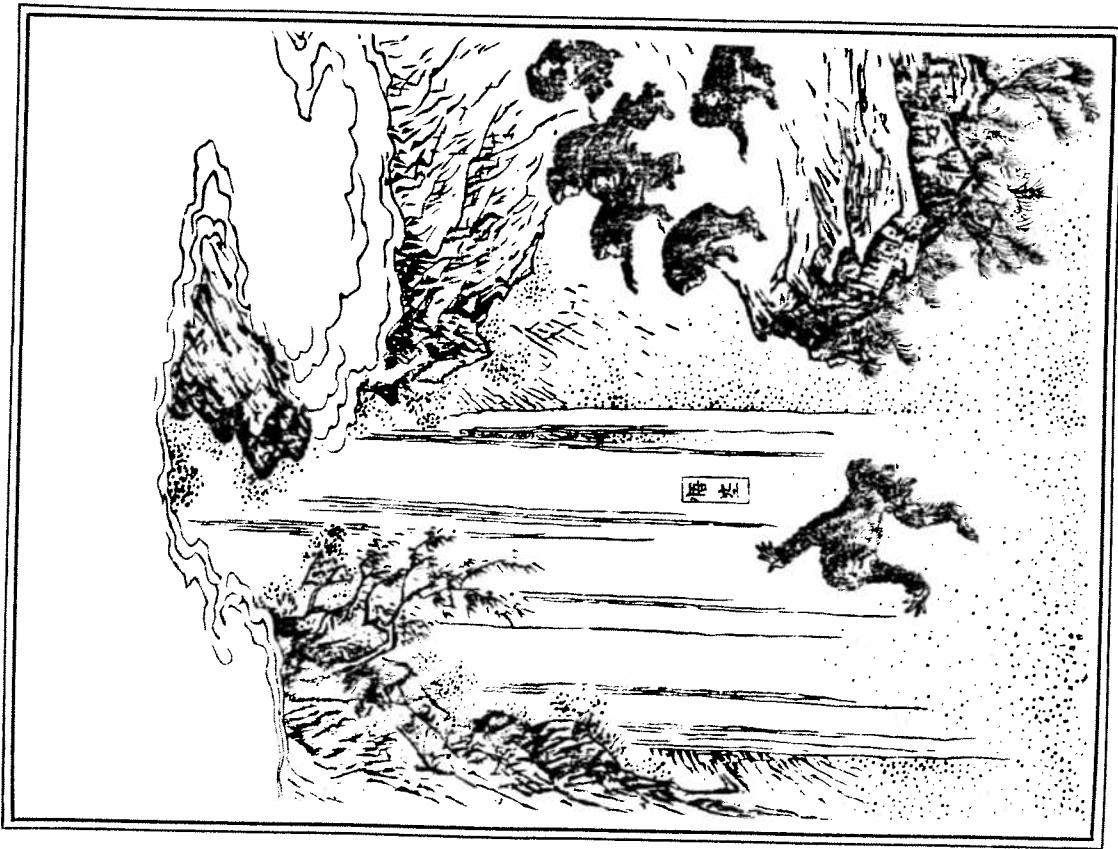
Monkey jumped again to the other side, and at once called out, "Jump at once—hurry, hurry!" The boldest monkeys jumped immediately, but those who were timid stretched their necks this way and that and then drew them back, while they scratched their ears and rubbed their cheeks, all the while shrieking among themselves, until at last they jumped across in a single body.

They were all as puzzled as Monkey had been, and just as incredulous. But after they had crossed the bridge they entered the house, where they began at once to fight over the beds, hurling dishes about, dragging the couches from one room to another, and for all the world behaving just like monkeys, until at last they wore themselves out and fell in a heap upon the floor.

Monkey took a seat above them and raised his voice in a commanding tone. "A being is only as good as his word. Didn't you say that the one clever enough and brave enough to jump through the water curtain would be your king? Well then, I have done just that. And I found a cave heaven and put all of you in the position of good householders. What could be more enviable! What more could one want? Now you must bow to me as your king."

The monkeys immediately prostrated themselves before the stone monkey, after which they lined up in order of age to pay their homage. "Great King, forever our lord," they intoned, their paws pressed together in reverence.

At once outlawing the word *stone*, Monkey took the name Handsome Monkey King, and he quickly assigned cabinet posts to the various monkeys, gibbons, and baboons. Now that they were ensconced in Paradise, they spent their days roaming the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, in the evenings



The Water Curtain Cave, in the Blessed Land of Flower Mountain, Leading to Heaven

they would return to the Water Curtain Cave. Keeping to themselves, never mingling with other beasts or birds, they went on living this way in perfect sympathy and accord.

Several hundred years went by in this fashion, until one day Monkey became depressed in the midst of a banquet and began to weep. "What is wrong, Your Majesty?" the monkeys asked, gathering about their king. "Why are you so sad?"

"I have just now been brooding over my future," Monkey replied. "What will be the outcome of me—of all of us—once our lives have been spent?"

"How can you think of such things!" the other monkeys exclaimed. "Do we not have daily banquets, here on this blessed mountain that provides for all our needs? We are neither under the rule of unicorns, nor are we controlled by the phoenixes."

"What you say is true," Monkey replied. "No human king can restrain us, nor are we terrorized by any bird or beast. But the day will come when I will grow old and weak, and Yama, the King of the Underworld of Death, will destroy my existence. What then will I have to look forward to, but to be born again on Earth, and to live again in vain?"

All the monkeys were suddenly brought face to face with the prospect of their own death; covering their faces, they began to weep. To everyone's surprise, a gibbon jumped up and exclaimed, "If this is what troubles Your Majesty, it proves you are inclined toward higher matters. Such thoughts as these must lead to enlightenment. Of the five divisions of living beings, only three are free of the King of Death."

"Do you know what they are?" Monkey asked.

"They are the buddhas, the immortals, and the holy sages. Only these are free of the wheel of reincarnation. They are as eternal as Heaven and Earth, as the mountains and rivers, as the sun and moon."

"Where are they to be found?" Monkey asked.

"In the human world," the gibbon replied, "in ancient caves, and on the holy mountains."

"In that case, I shall leave tomorrow and descend the mountain. If I have to wander to the corners of the Earth and to the edge of Heaven, I will find these immortals and learn their secret. In this way I will escape the clutches of King Yama and be free of the wheel of reincarnation."



Monkey traveled for nearly ten years, crossing continents and oceans, traveling by raft and by foot.

Monkey crossed the Eastern Ocean to the land of Jambudvīpa, where he learned human ways and took on their dress and manners. He wandered through the Eastern Continent for several years, but everywhere he went he saw the same thing: people preoccupied with fame and fortune, none giving a thought to the end that awaited each and every one of them. After traveling from city to city, he came at last to the Western Ocean. Surely, he thought, immortals must reside somewhere beyond this place.

Having crossed the Western Ocean, he came to the Western Continent, where he could see in the distance a great mountain. After he had climbed halfway up the eastern slope, he heard, to his great surprise, a human voice reciting a song.

Happy and without woes of any kind,
With ax in hand along my simple way,
Singing through the marketplace,
I barter wood for three pints of rice.
Free of scheming and plotting and with
Simplicity my life's intention,

I meet immortals everywhere I go
Expounding the Yellow Court.

"At last I have found the immortals," Monkey thought. But when he leaped out of the woods he was startled to find an ordinary-looking woodsman cutting branches from a dead tree. Monkey braced himself and said, "Old immortal, your disciple stands before you."

The woodsman dropped his ax in astonishment. "Why do you address me as an immortal? I am nothing but a poor, hungry woodcutter."

"If you are not an immortal, why do you talk like one?"

"What have I said to give you such an idea?"

"When I came to the edge of the woods I heard you singing. I meet immortals everywhere I go, expounding the Yellow Court. The Yellow Court is a secret Taoist text, anyone who would utter those words must be an immortal."

"Anything but," sputtered the woodsman, "anything but! However, I must tell you that my neighbor is an immortal, and it is he who taught me that verse. He gave me this song to sing to lighten my cares, for he knows how hard I work and how little I earn. I was anxious just now and so I sang my song. It never occurred to me that I would be overheard."

"But if the immortal lives close by, why don't you become his disciple and learn the formula of eternal youth?"

"I've had a hard life," the woodsman answered. "My father died when I was still a boy, and my mother remained a widow. Since I have no brothers or sisters, the care of my mother, who is now aged, fell to me. Our land is unfit for farming, and so there is nothing for me to do but to cut bundles of firewood in exchange for a few pennies with which to buy our rice and tea. As you can see, I have no time for austerities and magic."

8

"From what you say I can see that you are a devoted son, and I am sure your piety will be rewarded one day. I ask no more of you than to show me where the immortal lives, for I am in search of the Way."

"He lives not far from here," the woodcutter said. "The mountain we are on is called Mind Heart Mountain, and the immortal you seek lives in the Cave of the Slanting Moon and Three Stars. His name is Patriarch Subodhi. He has produced his share of disciples, and at the moment he has thirty or forty students. If you will take this narrow path before us you will come to his cave, just two or three miles from here."

Monkey found the cave without any trouble, but as the door was tightly shut he was afraid to knock. Instead, he jumped into a pine tree and began eating seeds and jumping about from branch to branch. Suddenly the door creaked open and a young boy stepped out of the dark chamber entrance. Monkey was instantly aware that this was no ordinary boy. He could tell from his impeccable dress and outward calm that he was a disciple of the immortal. The boy did not see Monkey in the tree and called out, "Who is making all the commotion?"

Monkey scrambled down from the tree and bowed to the boy. "I have come to study with the Patriarch. The last thing I would wish to do is to make a disturbance."

The boy looked Monkey up and down and smiled to himself. "So you are a seeker on the Way. My master is about to give a lecture, but before announcing the theme he asked me to check at the door to see if anyone had come along seeking instruction. I suppose he meant you."

"Of course he meant me," Monkey said, suddenly emboldened.

"Come with me, then," the boy replied.

Monkey brushed the dust from his sleeves and straight-

9

ened his trousers before following the boy into the secret chambers of the cave. They passed row upon row of lofty towers, with huge alcoves containing cloisters and retreats, followed by meditation chambers and contemplative cells. At last they came to a green jade platform, where the Patriarch Subodhi was solemnly seated, with thirty-six lesser immortals assembled beneath him.

Monkey approached without hesitation and, kowtowing before the Master, began to bang his head against the floor, saying, "Master, Master, my deepest obeisance."

"Where are you from?" the Patriarch asked. "Tell me your country and name before paying further respects."

"I come from the Water Curtain Cave, of the Flower Mountain, in the country of Ao-lai."

"Get rid of him," the Patriarch roared. "He is full of duplicity and mischief. Even with right conduct he could not get anywhere."

"I am telling the truth!" Monkey exclaimed, banging his head once more against the floor. "I beseech you to believe me."

"If you are telling the truth, then how can you say you come from the country of Ao-lai? We are separated by two oceans and the Southern Continent."

"For ten years and more I have been traveling in search of the teaching. I have crossed oceans, wandered over frontiers, and traveled across many lands."

"So you have come by stages. Very well, then. Now tell me of your family."

"I have no family," Monkey replied.

"Then you must have been born in a tree."

"Not exactly," Monkey answered. "I came out of a magic stone. When the time was right, it burst open and there I was."



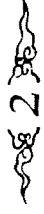
The Taoist Patriarch Subodhi, in the Cave of the Slanting Moon and Three Stars at Mind Heart Mountain

"I see," the Patriarch said, for he was pleased. "In other words, you were born of Heaven and Earth. Now stand up and walk around so I can see all sides of you. I will need to give you a name. There is a word I use for each division and year of my teaching, which consists of twelve words in all."

"What are the twelve words?" Monkey asked.

"They are Wide, Great, Wise, Sharp, True, Conforming, Nature, Ocean, Quick, Aware, Complete, Awakened. Since you fall in the tenth generation of my teaching, your name must include the word *aware*. Your religious name, therefore, will be Aware-of-Vacuity."

"Marvelous!" Monkey exclaimed, clapping his hands, "from now on I will be called Aware-of-Vacuity."



The Search for Immortality

FOR his first lesson Monkey was taught deportment: how to ask questions properly and with courtesy, how to sit and stand and go through doors. His daily routine consisted of the study of language and etiquette, scriptures and doctrine; in addition to discussions of the Way, he practiced writing calligraphy and burning incense. During breaks in his study, Monkey would sweep the grounds and hoe the garden, where he assisted in planting flowers and pruning trees. He also gathered firewood, lit fires, fetched water, and served drinks. With all his needs provided for, and with his days occupied in study and chores, the years slipped by.

One day the Patriarch, while seated on his dais, began a lecture on the Way. Monkey sat entranced. It was as if jewels were falling from the Patriarch's mouth, echoing like thunder and shaking the Nine Heavens, revealing to each disciple the understanding of his true nature, and how to avoid the wheel of recurrence. Agitated with delight, Monkey began pulling at his ears and rubbing his cheeks. He was soon waving his arms and stamping his feet.

Suddenly the Patriarch fell silent; then, looking down at Monkey and fixing him with his gaze, he shouted, "What's the sense of your being here, when instead of listening you jump up and down like a madman?"

"I couldn't help myself," Monkey answered. "What you said brought such joy to my heart that I couldn't control my emotions. Please forgive me."

"So you have comprehended the true spirit of the Way. Tell me how long you have been with us."

"I have not counted the time, Master. I only know that in getting firewood I sometimes find myself in a grove of peach trees. I have had my fill of those peaches seven times."

"The slope where those peaches are found is called Succulent Peach Hill. If you have eaten of those peaches seven times, it must mean that you have been here seven years. What method of the Way would you like to learn from me?"

"That's up to you," Monkey said.

"There are three hundred and sixty divisions," the Patriarch said, "and all of them lead to illumination. Which division would you like to follow?"

"Whichever you think best," Monkey said. "I am your obedient pupil."

"How about the Magic Arts?" the Patriarch asked. "Would you like me to teach you that?"

"Of what do the Magic Arts consist?" Monkey asked.

"They consist of summoning the immortals and rising with the phoenix, shuffling yarrow sticks, pursuing good fortune and avoiding evil."

"Does this way lead to immortality?"

"Impossible," the Patriarch replied.

"Then it's not for me," Monkey said.

"In that case, how would you like to learn the Way of the Ways?"

"How does that go?"

"Why, it means studying the methods of Confucius, the Buddha, the Tao, the Dualists, the Mohists, and the Physicians, as well as chanting and reciting prayers. You will be able to conjure up saints and priests and suchlike."

"And will I be able to live forever?"

"Of course not!" the Patriarch shouted. "The Way of the Ways is no better than a pillar inside a wall."

"Master, I am a simple fellow," Monkey declared. "Skip the jargon and tell me what you mean."

"A pillar in this instance represents a main support in the building of a house, but one day the house falls into ruin, the pillar rots, and everything collapses."

"Doesn't sound like life unending to me," Monkey exclaimed. "Let's skip it."

"How about the Way of Silence, then?" the Patriarch said. "In the Way of Silence we must refrain from eating meat products. There is also fasting, walking, sitting and standing meditation, restraint, inactivity, quiescence, trance states, and, finally, being immured in a self-imposed wall of silence."

"Can all these activities and inactivities bring about immortality?" Monkey asked.

"The results of such quietism," the Patriarch said, "are no better than unfired clay in a kiln."

"You're getting technical again," Monkey said. "You'll have to keep it simple if you want Monkey to understand."

"It is not enough to shape the clay," the Patriarch said. "The elements of earth and water must be fired, or one day the rains will come and the clay will crumble and dissolve."

"No future in that," Monkey said. "Not interested."

"How would you like to learn the Way of Action?" the Patriarch asked.

"What are the activities in the Way of Action?"

"Well," the Patriarch began, "gathering the ying and soothing the yang, drawing the bow and driving the arrow, and rubbing the navel to assist the subtle flow of life, are some of the ways. There are also alchemical practices, which involve burning bushes and forging cauldrons, taking Red Mercury,

purifying Autumn Stone, drinking Bride's Milk, and other such things."

"Would I then live forever?"

"It would be as possible to live forever from doing such things as it would be to fish the moon out of a pool of water."

"There you go again talking mumbo jumbo. I told you I'm a simpleton and can't make head or tail of this kind of talk."

"It simply means," the Patriarch said, growing impatient, "that the moon is in the sky, only its reflection is in the water. To believe the moon can be scooped from water is to suffer from illusion."

"In other words, nothing. Skip it! Skip it! Not interested."

The Patriarch leapt from the dais and, pointing at Monkey with his ruler, cried, "You execrable ape! You won't learn this and you won't learn that, so what good is your being here?" He struck Monkey three times on the head and marched out of the room with his arms folded behind his back. Turning briefly to dismiss all his pupils, he then locked the door behind him.

The moment he was out of sight all the other disciples turned on Monkey. "You miserable ape!" they shouted. "You ungrateful, unmannerly, unteachable blockhead! The Master was willing to teach you anything you liked—what an opportunity!—but instead you find fault with this and find fault with that, until you have finally exasperated the Patriarch, and now we don't know when we'll see him again."

But even as Monkey was being berated he felt an inward joy, because he knew something none of the other disciples knew. He might not have understood the jargon of the Way, but he understood the language of secret signs. When the Master had aimed three blows at Monkey's head, he was giv-

ing him an appointment at the third watch, and by folding his arms behind his back and then locking the door, he meant that Monkey was to come in by the back door, where he would receive the Master's instruction in secret.

Monkey spent the rest of the afternoon together with the other disciples in front of the cave, but while the others frolicked, he impatiently waited for evening to fall. After retiring with the others, Monkey waited for everyone to fall asleep. Since there are no guardians in the mountains to beat out the watch and call the hours, there was no ordinary way for Monkey to learn the time, but by calculating his breath with each inhalation and exhalation he was able to determine the hour of the Rat. Quietly he rose from his pallet, slipped into his clothes, and tiptoed out of the cave.

The moon shone brightly on the clear, cool dew. In the stillness the gurgling brook could be heard in the glen. Fireflies glowed in the gathering dark, while wings of the columned geese beat through the clouds. It was the precise hour of the third watch: time to seek the Perfect Way of Truth.

Monkey found the rear door of the Patriarch's chamber ajar. He slipped quietly inside and made his way into the inner chamber. The Master lay on his bed, facing the wall, with his body curled up in a posture of sleep. Monkey knelt beside the bed and waited. Presently the Patriarch awoke and began murmuring to himself.

Hard! Hard! Hard!

The Way is most obscure.

The Golden Elixir must be secret and sacred.

To teach the dark mysteries to the imperfect man

Is to confound the jaw, confuse the tongue,

And tire the brain.

Monkey collected himself, took a deep breath, and spoke. "Master, I've been kneeling here for some time, waiting for you to instruct me in the way of immortal life."

The Patriarch sat bolt upright. Turning sharply, he drew his legs underneath him and sat facing his intruder. "Audacious Monkey!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing in my chambers? Why aren't you with the other disciples?"

"After you spoke to us today," Monkey said, "I understood you to tell me that I was to come to you at the third watch, by way of the rear entrance, in order to receive your instructions in private."

The Patriarch was very pleased and could not conceal his smile. He thought to himself, "This wretched monkey must surely be the product of Heaven and Earth. How else could he have read my signs?"

"We are all alone," Monkey said. "Take pity on your humble disciple and teach me the way of immortality."

"It is clear that you are one who has been predestined," the Patriarch said. "Come close and listen carefully, and I will reveal to you the secret of long life."

Monkey was beside himself. He beat his head on the floor in gratitude, cleaned out his ears, and leaned forward in a kneeling position.

The Patriarch recited:

This is the formula, sacred and true,
Tend and spare the vital forces, this alone you
must do.
In spirit, essence, and breath, the sacred powers
reside,
Guard and protect these, let no others be aware.
Keep to the Way, and the Way will keep you still.
Learn the formulas, remember the spells,

Moon holds Jade Rabbit, the sun a Golden Crow,
Tortoise and Snake tightly held forever in secret
embrace.

Tightly intertwined, the inner and outer forces
grow strong.

Grasp the Five Elements, transpose, transform,
transcend.

When this has been attained, you will Be—

Whether buddha or immortal, it is up to you.

Monkey was overcome. The teaching had reached to his inner core. He had carefully memorized the Patriarch's words, possessing the formula and divining the spell.



Three years passed as swiftly as a storm-driven cloud. Once again the disciples were gathered around their Patriarch, who was discoursing on parables and scholastic deliberations. Suddenly he cast his eyes down and asked, "Where is the disciple Aware-of-Vacuity?"

Monkey came forward and, after kowtowing, knelt before the Patriarch. "What has been the result of your stay with us?" the Patriarch asked. "Tell me which of the arts you have been practicing lately."

"The foundation of my understanding has grown," Monkey said, "and I am beginning to see the One in the All."
"If you have apprehended the dharma-nature, and have seen the origin of things, then you have entered within the divine substance. You must therefore be aware of the Three Calamities."

"There must be some mistake," Monkey rejoined. "Isn't it true that once the Way has been mastered, one might live

forever, free of illness and protected from fire and water? What do you mean by the Three Calamities?"

"You have mixed the elixir and defied the gods and demons, invading the dark mysteries of the sun and moon," said the Patriarch. "Although you may keep your youthful appearance and have extended the length of your life, after five hundred years Heaven will send down the Calamity of Thunder and strike you on the spot unless you have found the way to protect yourself ahead of time. If you succeed in avoiding it, your age will indeed approach that of Heaven, otherwise you will be struck dead.

"After another five hundred years," the Patriarch continued, "Heaven will send down the Calamity of Fire to destroy you. This is no common fire but, being hidden, rises up through the soles of your feet to the top of your head, reducing your limbs and organs to ashes, and your one thousand years of self-perfecting will have been a waste of time.

"If you escape this calamity, in another five hundred years the Calamity of Wind will come. It is not the wind of the east, south, west, or north, nor of the four seasons. It is neither the Flower Wind, or the Willow Wind, or the Pine or Bamboo Wind. It is the Monster Wind. It enters through the skull, down through the six entrails and nine orifices, until your bones dissolve and your body disintegrates.

"You must avoid each of these Three Calamities if you are to be immortal."

Monkey's hair stood on end. He kowtowed reverently until at last he was able to collect himself and speak. "I implore you, Master, teach me the remedies to ward off the disaster of the Three Calamities, and I will always be in your debt."

"That would not be difficult," the Patriarch said, "if it weren't for your peculiarities."

Monkey objected, "I have a round head pointing to the Heavens, and square feet for stomping over the earth. Similarly, I have nine orifices and four limbs, organs and entrails and cavities. How am I different from other people?"

"It is true, in many ways you are just the same, but you have much less jawl. Further, you have sunken cheeks and a pointy chin."

"The Master doesn't see that I provide my own balance. If I have less cheek, then I have more paunch."

For some reason, the Patriarch was mollified. "Very well, then," he said, "there are but two methods of escape. You must decide which one you would like to learn. There is the Art of the Heavenly Ladle, which numbers thirty-six transformations, and there is the Art of the Earthly Multitude, which numbers seventy-two transformations."

"Seventy-two!" Monkey shouted. "If everything else is equal, I'll take the Art of the Earthly Multitude."

"Step forward, then," the Patriarch said, "and I will whisper the formula in your ear."

Now, Monkey was no ordinary mortal. Because he had long ago trained himself to do one thing well, he could now perfect anything he set his mind to. He immediately memorized the oral formulas, and by practicing them in secret he soon mastered all seventy-two transformations.

One day the Patriarch and a number of his pupils were admiring the evening view in front of Three Stars Cave. The Master turned to Monkey and asked, "How are you getting along with the special work I gave you?"

"Thanks to your kindness, Master, I have attained near-perfection. I am already able to soar above the clouds."

"Let us see you fly," the Patriarch commanded.

Monkey put his feet together and somersaulted more than fifty feet into the air; after walking over the clouds for

several miles, he dropped down in front of the Patriarch. Folding his arms across his chest, he said, "Master, that's what I call flying and soaring in the clouds."

The Patriarch laughed. "I don't call that cloud-soaring, I call that cloud-crawling. We have a saying, 'The immortal travels to the Northern Ocean in the morning, and by evening is in Ts'ang-wu.'"

"What is meant by that saying?" Monkey asked.

"Real cloud-soarers start from the Northern Ocean in the morning, and from there they journey through the Eastern Ocean, the Western Ocean, the Southern Ocean, and then return to Ts'ang-wu, which is another name for Ling-ling in the Northern Ocean. To travel all four seas in one day, that's true cloud-soaring."

"Sounds difficult," Monkey said.

"Nothing in this world is difficult, but thinking makes it seem so. Where there is true will, there is always a way."

"Master, you may as well complete the work you started. Please be so kind as to teach me true cloud-soaring. I will remain forever grateful."

The Patriarch said, "When true immortals want to soar to the clouds, they merely stamp their feet and rise straight up from that position. I noticed that you had to pull yourself up by jumping. I will teach you the cloud somersault in accordance with your form."

Monkey kowtowed before the Patriarch, who bent over and whispered the magic formula in his ear. "Now," the Patriarch said, straightening himself, "you must make the magic pass, recite the spell, clench your fists tightly, shake yourself, and with one somersault you will be able to fly 108,000 miles."

When the others heard about this they said, "Lucky Monkey! Lucky Monkey! If he can learn this trick he can

become a sky courier, and by delivering official letters and reports he'll always be able to make a living."

By now it was dark, and the Master and his disciples went back to their quarters. But Monkey practiced throughout the night until he had perfected the cloud trapeze. Now at last he had achieved immortality and perfect bliss.



One day early in the summer the disciples, having taken a break from their work, were gathered at the edge of the pine forest, discussing the Way and its methods among themselves. They turned to Monkey and asked, "What did you do in a former incarnation to merit the formula for avoiding the Three Calamities? Have you mastered all the exercises and transformations the Master gave you?"

"It goes without saying that I am indebted to the Master," Monkey said, "but it is also true that I have worked day and night to perfect myself. There isn't a single transformation I have not mastered."

"What better time for a demonstration?" they said. "How about showing us?"

This was all the encouragement Monkey needed, for he was more than willing to display his magic powers. "What kind of transformation would you like to see?" he asked.

"Turn yourself into a pine tree," one of them said. Monkey made the magic pass, recited the spell, clenched his fists, shook himself, and changed into a pine tree.

The disciples looked at the tree in amazement. It was a pine tree, to be sure, but straighter, truer, and higher than all the others, with a nobility of bearing that was unmistakable. They began to cheer and clap their hands. "Bravo! Bravo! Marvelous Monkey!" they cried.

The Patriarch heard the uproar and came charging in their direction, staff in hand. "Who is causing all this racket!" he bellowed. The disciples quickly recovered themselves and, standing meekly before their Master, began stuttering so that they were unable to complete a word among themselves. Monkey quickly resumed his true form and shouted from the woods, "There is no one here but us, Master. We were having a heated discussion, that is all."

"I heard yelling and screaming. This is no way for those who are cultivating right conduct to behave. Don't you know by now that when you open your mouths the vital forces dissipate, and that the wagging of tongues always leads to trouble?"

The disciples had never seen their Master this angry. They were so frightened that they confessed to the truth at once. "Monkey did a transformation for us. We asked him to change into a pine tree and he did it so perfectly that we couldn't help but applaud. We beg your forgiveness."

"Go away, all of you! All except Monkey." When the others had left and Monkey stepped forward, the Patriarch asked, "Is this the way you use your spiritual powers? Turning into—what was it—a pine tree? Do you suppose I taught you those transformations so you could show off? Don't you realize that by turning tricks you will encourage others to wish to do the same? And have you considered what will happen if you withhold your secrets? Why, they will punish you! Thanks to your wickedness you have put yourself in grave danger."

"Please forgive me," Monkey pleaded.

"I won't punish you," the Patriarch said, "but you can no longer stay here."

Monkey began to cry. "Where am I to go?"

"Back where you came from, I suppose."



The Taoist disciples look on in amazement as Monkey transforms himself into a pine tree.

"Do you mean that I should return to the Water Curtain Cave on the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, in the country of Ao-lai?"

"Why not?" the Patriarch said. "If you return at once you will be able to preserve your life. One thing is certain, you cannot stay here."

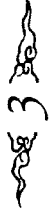
"Although I have not thought of home in all the twenty years I have been away, to tell you the truth I now find that there is something in me that longs to return. But how can I depart from my Master without repaying his many kindnesses to me?"

"Your leaving is kindness enough. Just see to it that any troubles you get into do not reflect on me. That is all I ask in the way of kindness from you. Now be off!"

Monkey could see there was no use in arguing. After taking leave of the other disciples, he came before his Master and bowed one final time. The Patriarch remained unbending.

"I am convinced that no good will come of you. The trouble you are bound to cause I can do nothing about, but I forbid you ever to say that you have been my disciple. If you utter my name even once I will know of it, and I assure you I will skin you alive, break all your bones, and banish your soul to the Place of Ninefold Darkness, from where it will not be released for ten thousand aeons."

"I'll not utter a single letter of your name," Monkey said. "I will say that I learned everything by myself." Thanking the Patriarch one last time, Monkey turned, made the magic pass, and rode off on a cloud to the Eastern Ocean.



Demon King of Havoc

It took Monkey less than an hour to reach the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit. He lowered his cloud and began to hear in the distance the call of cranes and the cries of monkeys. "Little ones," he called out, "I have returned."

From the crannies in the cliffs, from the woods and out of the trees, from among the flowers and the bushes, monkeys large and small by the tens of thousands came rushing forward to meet Handsome Monkey King. They kowtowed all around him, shouting, "Long live the Monkey King!" When they had calmed down, one of the gibbons asked, "Why did you abandon us for such a long time? We have been desperate without you. For some time now we have been brutally abused by a monster who has robbed us of our possessions and taken over our Water Cave, whence he has carried many of our children. You have returned just in time. In another year we would have lost everything in our mountain home: our cave, our children—everything!"

Monkey became furious. "Who is this lawless monster who has invaded our territory and outraged my subjects?"

"Your Majesty, he calls himself the Demon King of Havoc, and he lives north of here. That is all we know. He comes like a cloud and leaves like the mist, as unpredictable as the wind and the rain, the thunder and the lightning. We have no idea where he lives."

"In that case," Monkey said, "go on with your games, and don't be afraid. I will go and find him myself." Monkey