

Chapter 4 of 'The Monkey King'

Adopted from the classic Chinese tale



STORY SO FAR. Stone Monkey, having led the monkey clan through the waterfall to the Cave of the Water Curtain, becomes Magnificent Monkey King and ponders what to do next.

Year after year, Magnificent Monkey King and his monkey clan enjoyed carefree lives in the Cave of the Water Curtain, spending their days in perfect happiness. And the happiest of all was the Monkey King.

But one day, many years later, there was a birthday party for the king. His subjects brought him beautiful flowers and delicious fruits, especially peaches, his favourite.

Sitting on his jewelled throne, surrounded by his beloved monkeys, Monkey should have had the happiest day of his life. Instead, in the middle of the celebration he burst into tears.

The monkeys were stunned. They had never even seen their king sad. And now he was crying!

It was the curious monkey who stood up and said, "What is wrong, O Magnificent Monkey King?"

Monkey King wiped away his tears. "Dear monkeys, we are happy today, but with each birthday we grow older and older. One day we shall all die and our

joy shall end." He cried even harder.

The monkeys hung their heads and cried too.

Then Old Grandmother monkey stood up. "Magnificent King," she said, "if that is what is making you sad, I have an idea. I learned from my grandmother, who learned from her grandmother's grandmother, that there are three types of beings who can live forever. Why don't you go and learn their secrets?"

Monkey jumped up. "Who are these three beings?"

"First are the sages. They study the secret of life and therefore learn to live almost forever. Second, there are the immortals, like Jade Emperor, Ruler of Heaven and Earth, who know the secret of life and so can live forever. Finally there are the Gods. Since they have achieved complete enlightenment, they live the secret of life."

Monkey King was so excited by this, he did a somersault in the air. "What a brilliant idea, Grandmother. I will seek out a sage and learn the

The Monkey King goes searching

A Breakfast Serials story

secret of life. Then I'll come right back and teach it to all of you, my dear subjects, so we all can live forever."

Monkey was so enthusiastic, he said his good-byes immediately. Before an hour had passed, he had started off in search of a sage who could teach him the secret of life. For hundreds of leagues he travelled, reaching many far-off lands, but not one worthy sage did he find. He was beginning to think he would never find one.

One weary day he wandered into a deep and very dark forest. Here the leaves were so thick, no sunlight came through. No flowers grew upon the ground. No birds sang among the branches. No animals walked upon the earth.

In the middle of this forest he heard a man singing:

*"I choose no glory,
I pursue no coin:
Fame and wealth are like passing clouds to me.
A simple life
prolongs my days.
Those I meet upon my way.
Are all sages
Who, from their caves
Teach me the secrets of life."*

"At last!" cried Monkey. "I have found a sage!" He ran toward the sound of the voice.

A man was cutting wood in a clearing.

"Revered sage," Monkey cried, bowing deeply. "Consider me your student."

At these words the woodcutter looked up, astonished, and dropped his axe. "But I am not a sage, sir," he said. "I'm just a humble woodcutter. You mustn't bow to me."

"If you are not a sage, why did you sing that song?" demanded Monkey.

The woodcutter looked alarmed. "I didn't intend to mislead anyone," he cried. "That song was taught to me by a great sage who lives not far from here."

"What is his name?" "Master Subhodi." "Master Subhodi." Monkey grinned. "Well, well. I command you to show me where this sage lives."

The woodcutter, who was a little frightened of Monkey, led the way along a path in the woods. It grew darker and darker. When it grew too dark to see, the woodcutter stopped. "I can go no further," he said. "Follow this path over nine hills and nine streams, and you will come to Master Subhodi's cave."

Now the forest was pitch black, but Monkey was untroubled. His bright eyes sent out beams of light as he followed the path, just as the woodcutter told him.

After a day of walking, the forest grew a little less dark, and by the second day it was lighter still.

At last Monkey came to a cave with huge stone doors. He tried them, but they were locked.

As Monkey King stood there, a prickling sensation nearly overcame him. Was something strange about to happen? Nervous, he jumped into a tree. The whole forest grew still. The only sound Monkey heard was the beating of his own heart.

Then he heard a noise. CRREEEEAAK! Slowly, very slowly, the great stone doors began to swing open.

(To be continued next week...)

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CHAPTER 4

Activity Guide



Just the Facts

1. What kind of party did the monkeys have?
2. How far did Monkey travel?
3. According to the woodcutter, where did Monkey need to travel to find the sage Master Subhodi?

Between the Lines

4. Why did Monkey cry at his birthday party?
5. According to Old Grandmother monkey, what three types of people lived forever?
6. How did the different groups get to live forever?
7. Why did Monkey think the woodcutter was a sage?

Let's Discuss

8. Why did Monkey want to live forever?
9. Would you want to live on earth forever? Why or why not?
10. What do these words of the song mean: "Fame and wealth are like passing clouds to me?"
11. Make a prediction: What will the sage be like? What will Monkey King want to do next?

In the Real World

Find a news story about someone you think is very knowledgeable. Write a paragraph telling about what you could learn from this individual.

Competition

Hey kids!!! Send in your answers to the Activity Guide for each chapter and win great prizes, with the compliments of Vijitha Yapa Bookshops. The best entry each week will be awarded a book voucher for Rs. 1,000. These weekly entries will also be eligible for lots of exciting prizes at 'The Monkey King' Grand Competition at the end of the serial story. (See page 9 for details)



VOCABULARY

- enlightenment, (noun)**
a spiritual condition where you have no desires and no suffering
- glory, (n)**
fame, being very well known
- humble, (adjective)**
not proud or arrogant
- immortals, (n)**
people who live forever
- mislead, (verb)**
letting someone believe something that isn't true
- revered sage, (adj)**
respected
- sage, (n)**
a wise and respected person
- woodcutter, (n)**
someone who chops down trees for lumber



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