



XI

OUR TEACHER MANAGES NAUGHTY MONKEYS

The yellow balloon took Our Teacher and MD over the Aegean Sea. It sailed across Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and several of the *stan* countries.

"I can never remember the full names of those countries," Our Teacher said to his dog.

"Ruff! Ruff!" went MD.

Over northern India, a passenger jet flew close by the balloon. People in the plane waved to them through the small round windows.

"Ruff! Ruff!" the beagle went again.

All too soon, the yellow balloon landed on a grassy lawn in front of a magnificent white building with a bulb-shaped top.

"The Taj Mahal, MD!" Our Teacher said. "It's one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. Look at it. All white. Perfectly symmetrical."

The moment the pair leaped from the gondola, the balloon flew off. While MD sniffed the grass, Our Teacher stood to admire the famous structure.

"The Taj Mahal was built around 1640 by a Mughal emperor to house the remains

of his wife," he said. "So actually, the Taj Mahal is a tomb."

Loud chattering interrupted his talk. He turned to find four monkeys sitting on the grass behind him. Their chatter grew louder.

"Quiet, please," Our Teacher said. "That's annoying."

The monkeys ignored him. Still jabbering, they leaped toward the boy. They ran around his legs, wrestling with each other, and waving their long arms.

Here are the four Naughty Monkeys Our Teacher saw:



"Stop," Our Teacher said. "Settle down. Enough of that!"

Still, the monkeys kept monkeying around. One monkey ran up Our Teacher's right leg and one ran up his left leg. One monkey leaped onto his back and one leaped onto his front. He appeared to be covered with monkeys.

"Get down! Get off me! Quit it! That's enough!"

When the four monkeys still ignored Our Teacher, he clapped his hands. In a stern voice, he called, "Monkeys, stop!"

That did it. The monkeys leaped off Our Teacher and sat in a row by his feet. MD walked over and sniffed each one.

"Better," Our Teacher said. "Now, please tell me your names."

The monkey on the right scratched his armpit. "My name is Pan," he said.

"I'm Pen," said the next monkey.

"Call me Pin," said the third.

"And I'm Pun," said the last.

"Pan, Pen, Pin, and Pun. Please to meet you," said Our Teacher. "MD and I came to India to find something. It's called the Thinking Cap. It's black and square with a silver

tassel."

The monkeys started chattering again.

"Quiet please," Our Teacher said, and when he regained control of the furry quartet, he asked, "Now, have any of you monkeys seen this Thinking Cap?"

"Not us," said Pan.

"We see lots of turbans, cricket caps, and hard hats," said Pen. "But no Thinking Cap."

"However," said Pin. He paused to pick a flea from his fur. "We can help you find it."

"For a reward," said Pun.

Our Teacher frowned. "So, what do you want in exchange for a little help?"

"Snacks," said Pan.

"We love snacks," said Pen.

"People give us lots of snacks," Pin said.

"Popcorn, chips, and ice cream cone tips," said Pun. "Any kind of snack."

"OK, I'll give you each a bag of peanuts if we find the Thinking Cap," Our Teacher said. "But you must behave yourselves, and follow my rules. No more monkeyshines. Agreed?"

The four monkeys nodded.

"*Ruff! Ruff!*" went MD.

"First, we must get organized. We need a plan," Our Teacher said. "A cuckoo bird told me the Thinking Cap might be in Agra, near the Taj Mahal. That means it could be somewhere near here."

Our Teacher studied the four monkeys at his feet. He was pleased to have their full attention.

"Here's what we'll do," he said. "Pan, you search to the north and Pen you search to the south. Pin, go east, and Pun, go west. MD and I will search inside the Taj Mahal and the area around it. Now does everyone understand their job?"

The four monkeys nodded.

"All right," said Our Teacher. "We'll meet back here in a half hour."

Pan, Pen, Pin, and Pun scampered away. Our Teacher and MD headed up a cement path toward the white marble building. After a quick look inside the tomb, they explored the marble terrace surrounding it. Almost at once, they heard the chatter of monkeys. There, in the far corner, Pan, Pen, Pin, and Pun sat before a man wearing an orange turban and playing a sitar.

The musician smiled as Our Teacher approached. Before him lay a black square hat with a silver tassel. The man was using the hat to collect coins tossed by listeners to his music.

Here is the Sitar Player Our teacher saw:



"We found it," Pan called out.

"This is the hat you were looking for," called Pen.

"It's the Thinking Cap," said Pin.

"Snacks for us," said Pun.

"Good work, monkeys," Our Teacher said. "That shows what teamwork can do. A bag of nuts for each of you."

The sitar player laughed. "These four monkeys brought the hat here a short while ago. They gave it to me in exchange for some snacks."

Our Teacher folded his arms across his chest. "So, you monkeys knew where the Thinking Cap here the whole time."

"We were guarding it for you," said Pan.

"We took it from a man in a porkpie hat," said Pen.

"We made sure you found it," Pin said.

"Do we still get snacks?" asked Pun.

Our Teacher laughed. "Yes, you'll get your peanuts as soon as I put on the Thinking Cap."

He waited for the sitar player to finish his song before asking, "Could I borrow your hat for a minute? I want to put it on."

"Certainly," the musician said. "But please tell me. What is special about this hat, this mortarboard?"

"It's called the Thinking Cap," Our Teacher said. "When you put it on, you learn your calling. What you're supposed to do in your life."

The man nodded. "That sounds like a good thing. By all means, put on this Thinking Cap."

The sitar player picked up the hat and dumped the coins in his pocket. "How I wish I had known my calling when I was your age," he said. "When I was young, I only wished to make lots of money. That's why I became a businessman. I spent many unhappy years running a computer business in New Delhi. I was miserable."

"Now you play the sitar," said Our Teacher. "And you play it very well."

"All those years, I had a secret desire. I longed to play music," said the man. "But I had a family, so quitting my job to follow my bliss wasn't wise. When my children left for college, I bought this sitar and learned to play it. I'm an older man but a happy one, sitting here each day, playing music by the Taj Mahal."

"And your music brings joy to many people," Our Teacher said.

The musician handed Our Teacher the Thinking Cap. "Here, my friend, discover your purpose. I admired how you managed these mischievous monkeys. They can be wild. Maybe the Thinking Cap will say you were meant to be a city mayor."

"A politician?" Our Teacher said. "I don't think so. But who knows? Here goes."

Holding the Thinking Cap with both hands Our Teacher raised it above his head. As he did, a gust of wind swept across the veranda and whisked the cap from his grip. Up it sailed high above the Taj Mahal.

MD barked and ran after the hat. But the wind kept blowing and sent it far across a river that flowed below the veranda.

"There it goes, MD," Our Teacher said. "Again, the Thinking Cap is gone. Again, I

was so close to putting it on. The wind could have blown the hat anywhere. I have no idea where it will land."

"In China," said the sitar player. "The East Wind blows through Agra each summer. It carries things eastward, far across Asia. China, that's where you can find the hat."

"Now I must go all the way to China? But how? There's no Express Train or balloon or ferry to take me there. What should I do now?"

"Give us snacks," Pan, Pen, Pin, and Pun said together.

Our Teacher smiled. "Right, let's go find you naughty monkeys some snacks."