



XII

OUR Teacher FLIES ON a CARPET

Our Teacher walked with the four monkeys through an outdoor market. He bought four bags of peanuts from a woman in a colorful sari.

“There you go, Pan, Pen, Pin, and Pun,” he said, handing each monkey a bag. “Thank you for helping me find the Thinking Cap. Although it’s probably in China by now.”

After the monkeys scampered off, Our Teacher sat on a bench to consider his next move. Cows strolled by in the street. Our Teacher knew cows were sacred to the Hindi people and were allowed to roam freely throughout the city. He was surprised, however, when one white cow walked up to him.

Here is the White Cow Our Teacher saw:



"Bad luck losing the Thinking Cap again," the cow said.

News travels fast among Earth's creatures, Our Teacher reminded himself.

"It was blown all the way to China," he said.

"Then, of course, that is where you wish to go," the White Cow said.

Our Teacher brightened. "Yes, I do. Do you know a quick way to get to China?"

"Follow me."

The White Cow started walking down the middle of the street. Our Teacher and MD ran after it. No cars honked. Motorcycles veered around it. No one shouted. No doubt the sacred cow had privileges.

The cow stopped in front of a shop selling carpets. MD sniffed a finely-patterned silk rug hanging outside.

The White Cow talked in Hindi to a man standing in the doorway.

The man smiled at Our Teacher. In English, he said, "Come inside, my friend. This bovine tells me you wish to get to China quickly."

The carpet shop was full of colorful carpets. Silk carpets covered the floor. Large wool carpets hung from the walls. MD sniffed each one.

The shopkeeper led Our Teacher to a stack of rolled up rugs in back.

"Let's see, where is it?" he said, searching the pile. "We have hand-stitched carpets....tufted-woolen carpets....velvet carpets...ah, here it is."

From the bottom of the stack, he pulled a small rolled up rug. He slapped it with his hand to beat out the dust.

"This ancient carpet belonged to the Sultan of the Indies," the shopkeeper said. "We must take it outside."

The man unrolled the rug on the sidewalk in front of his shop. It was silk with diamond patterns of blue, green and yellow. A fringe of red threads ran around the edges.

"This carpet will take you where you want to go," the shopkeeper said.

Our Teacher studied the small rectangle of wool. "I don't understand," he said.

"Have you read *One Thousand and One Nights*?" the shopkeeper asked

Our Teacher, who enjoyed reading books of folk tales and legends, nodded.

"Then you know the tale about Prince Husain's flying carpet?" said the man.

"Yes, the prince rode his magic carpet to far off places," said Our Teacher.

The shopkeeper smiled. "This is that very carpet," he said. "It's been on that shelf in my shop for many years waiting for the right rider to come along. Please have a seat."

Our Teacher had seen too many remarkable things this day to doubt the man's words. He sat pretzel-style on the colorful rug. He pulled MD onto his lap.

"Now what do I do?" he asked.

"The commands are simple," the shopkeeper said. "Say *rise* if you want to go up, *forward* to start moving, and *land* when you want to go down. To steer, simply lean in the direction you want to fly."

"And hold on tight," said the White Cow. "The carpet has no seat belts."

Our Teacher grabbed the carpet's fringy sides. "But China is a large country. Where can I find the Thinking Cap?"

"Follow the Great Wall," said the cow. "The Thinking Cap lies at the eastern end."

Our Teacher nodded and made sure MD was secure in his lap. "OK, carpet. Rise!"

At once, the carpet rose above the street. MD howled. The rug hovered there until Our Teacher said, "OK, carpet, forward!"

The carpet shot westward. Our Teacher rolled backward but tightened his grip to keep from falling off. Below, the India countryside raced by. For miles, they followed the sacred Ganges River. After that, they rose and flew over the Himalayan Mountains with its many snowy peaks.

Our Teacher pointed to the tallest peak. "That's Mt. Everest, MD. The highest mountain in the world Let's go over for a closer look."



(Listen to [Flying II](#))



Leaning to the right, Our Teacher guided the flying carpet toward the glacier-covered mountain. Near its 26,000-foot-high summit, a string of climbers was trudging up an ice field.

MD barked at the man in the lead who wore a red parka and oxygen mask.

"Hello, there! Hello!" Our Teacher called. "I'm out to find the Thinking Cap."

The man waved his ice ax, as the carpet flew past him.

Shortly afterward, the magic carpet flew over Tibet and the flat expanse of western China. Our Teacher kept a lookout for the Great Wall. MD barked at something to the left, and there it was! Like a long brick ribbon, the wall wound up and down the hills and valleys below.

"The Great Wall of China is over 5500 miles long, MD," Our Teacher said. "So, we have a long ride to reach the eastern end. How many kids can say they flew along the Great Wall end to end?"

The flight was splendid. The Great Wall, always in view, snaked across deserts, over mountain ranges, past large cities and small villages.

For many miles, a golden eagle flew alongside the carpet.

Here is the Golden Eagle Our Teacher saw:



"Greetings," the bird called out. "Great day for flying, is it not?"

"Ruff! Ruff!" went MD.

"This is wonderful," Our Teacher said. "You're lucky. You get to fly all the time."

"Perhaps you will, too," the eagle said. "Perhaps when you find the Thinking Cap it will say you are meant to become an airline pilot."

Our Teacher laughed. "Yes, maybe it will." he said. "It would be fun having a job flying jumbo jets."

Finally, the Pacific Ocean came into view. Near the end of the Great Wall, Our Teacher called out, "OK, carpet, *land!*"

The rug dropped from the sky and skidded to a stop along the top of the twenty-foot-wide wall.

MD ran off the carpet and began sniffing the ancient bricks.

Our Teacher stood. "Here we are in China, MD. This beats everything. Can you believe we're standing on the Great Wall of China?"