

Chapter 11 of 'The Monkey King'

Adopted from the classic Chinese tale

Breakfast Serials
Good Books Unbound

STORY SO FAR: After complaints by Dragon King, Jade Emperor invites Monkey to Heaven. To keep Monkey out of trouble, he makes him head of the Celestial Peach Garden.

Early the next morning a very excited Monkey King was escorted to the Celestial Peach Garden by officers of the court. Soon he would be surrounded by peaches! He had hardly slept at the thought, for peaches were what he loved to eat more than anything else.

But when he passed through the high garden gates and saw what lay beyond, even he was astonished. A long path lined with rubies wound through and around the peach trees, leading to eight red pagodas carved with golden dragons. Four dazzling water fountains made the entire garden glisten with a million misty rainbows.

But the most astonishing sight was the peach trees. There were not one, not two, but three different kinds! Some had pink leaves, some had gold, while others had purple leaves with silver veins. And the peaches! They were as big as melons, ivory white, and all but transparent.

Monkey fairly swooned with delight. "How many trees are here?" he asked a gardener.

"Three thousand six hundred," the gardener said proudly. "The first two thousand, the ones with pink leaves, ripen every three thousand years. Whoever eats them becomes joyful and wise. The next thousand trees, the ones with golden leaves, ripen once each six thousand years. Whoever eats them will stay young forever."

Monkey was impressed. "Six thousand years! My goodness! But what about these, the ones with purple leaves and silver veins?"

"Those six hundred are the most precious trees of all," the gardener whispered. "They ripen once in nine thousand years. Whoever eats them will live... forever."

Monkey could hardly contain himself. Live forever! He stared at one of the peaches. It was almost calling him to smell it, touch it... taste it. But Monkey restrained himself. After all, he was supposed to protect the garden.

Sighing, he followed the gardeners, who had gone off to make an inventory of all the trees and all the peaches.

Monkey in the Celestial Peach Garden

A Breakfast Serials story

But Monkey could not concentrate. His mouth was watering. His stomach was growling. The air was ripe with the tempting aroma of peaches.

"This is silly," he told himself. "I am head of this garden! After all, how will I know the difference between a good peach and a bad peach unless I try one? Only one, of course. No one will even miss it."

He called the gardeners. "Attention! Here is my first order as head of this garden. I am very tired. I need to take a nap in that pagoda but I need perfect quiet. Wait outside the garden. As soon as I wake up, I'll call you and you can continue working."

The gardeners bowed and left. As soon as they were gone, Monkey closed the gate and ran to the purple-leaved trees, searching for the largest, ripest, best peach of them all. And at last he found it. My, it was beautiful! Monkey pulled down its branch to smell it better. What sweetness it promised! His stomach would not stop growling. Carefully, Monkey plucked the peach from its stem and cupped it in his paws. It was almost too beautiful to eat, but he could not resist.

Monkey took a tiny bite... and almost fainted. The peach was cool, sweet, and juicy, the most delicious thing he'd ever tasted. He took another bite. And another, until in no time at all Monkey had gobbled up the entire peach! And no sooner had he eaten one than he had to have another!

"Surely just one more peach won't make a difference," he told himself. "There are so many." So Monkey ate a second peach, and then a third... and then more until his belly was almost bursting, it was so full.

Then he went back to the gates and called the gardeners back in. "Time to work," he said severely.

Every day from then on, while he pretended to take a nap, Monkey ate as many purple-leaved peaches as possible. "Let others become immortal by studying," he told himself. "I will become immortal by eating!"

One afternoon Monkey was eating his peaches as usual when he heard the gates open. Someone was coming into the garden! Alarmed, he transformed himself into a tiny caterpillar, hid under a leaf, and waited.

Presently seven fairies entered, carrying baskets.

The fairies went right to the purple-leaved peach trees to gather the fruit. But when they reached up, they found no ripe peaches at all!

Startled, they looked at the pink and gold trees too.

"Where have the peaches gone?" they asked one another.

Monkey kept very, very still.

"It seems to me," one of the fairies said at last, "that someone has been stealing the Jade Emperor's peaches. The Emperor must be informed at once!"

The fairies turned around and began to run toward the gates.

(To be continued next week...)

Text copyright © 2001 Ji-li Jiang
Illustrations copyright © 2001 Hui Hui Su-Kennedy
Reprinted by permission of Breakfast Serials, Inc www.breakfastserials.com.



CHAPTER 11

Activity Guide



Just the Facts

1. What beautiful sights did Monkey see when he went into the Celestial Peach Garden?
2. What did Monkey change into when he heard someone entering the garden?
3. Who went into the garden to gather the peaches?

Between the Lines

4. What were the special qualities of each of the three kinds of peaches?
5. How did Monkey guarantee his privacy in the Celestial Peach Garden?

Let's Discuss

6. Why did Monkey eat so many peaches?
7. Which of the peaches would you have eaten? Why?
8. Make a prediction: How will Monkey keep the Jade Emperor from knowing that he ate all the peaches?



© 2000 Hui Hui Su-Kennedy

VOCABULARY

dazzling water fountains, (adjective) shining brightly
pagodas, (noun) towers with roofs that curve upward at each story
precious trees, (adj) extremely valuable
rubies, (n) a precious gemstone of a deep red colour
 said **severely**, (adverb) in a harsh and serious manner
sighing, (verb) taking a breath in a way that can be heard
swooned with delight, (v) was overcome, almost fainted
tempting aroma, (adj, n) inviting smell



In the Real World

Look in the newspaper for a local restaurant you would like to manage. Explain why you picked that restaurant. Which of your favourite foods will be served at your restaurant?

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)

World Association of Newspapers