



Monkey Subdues
the White-Bone Demon

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THIS picture-story book, "Monkey Subdues the White-Bone Demon", is based on an episode from *The Pilgrimage to the West*, a mythological novel by Wu Cheng-en. The novel has had a wide appeal among Chinese readers since its appearance in the 16th century, and its hero, Monkey, has become one of the most popular figures in Chinese literature.

Monkey is a fearless and loyal character with supernatural powers. In defiance of the powers that be, he creates havoc in heaven, and consequently is imprisoned by Buddha under the Mountain of the Five Elements. Five hundred years later he becomes a Buddhist follower and escorts the monk Hsuan-tsang on his pilgrimage to the west to seek the Buddhist scriptures. During the journey he annihilates demons and performs many other feats. In the story of their encounter with the White-Bone Demon, Hsuan-tsang fails to see through the disguise of the White-Bone Demon and moreover claims that even a demon can be made to mend his ways. Only after he has been saved from the man-eating monster's claws by Monkey does he realize that people are not always what they appear to be and that the only way to deal with a demon is resolutely to wipe it out.

The line drawings are in the traditional Chinese style. The operatic costumes in which the characters appear add to the supernatural atmosphere of the story.



The monk Hsuan-tsang, escorted by his disciples Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy, was on his way to the west in search of the Buddhist scriptures. The journey was a hard one, and Monkey was chosen to lead the way.



As they trekked on, the sky suddenly clouded over. Ahead they saw an ominous array of precipices towering into the sky. "Be on your guard, Brothers," warned Monkey. "I'm afraid there are demons around!"



Hsuan-tsang was so alarmed that he could hardly keep his seat in the saddle. Monkey helped him to dismount. "Keep calm, Master!" he said. "As long as I'm with you I'll kill any demons that cross your path." Hsuan-tsang reproached him, saying that it was a sin against Buddhism to indulge in killing.



At this moment a black cloud floated across the sky. Monkey was instantly on the alert. But as he leaped into the air to look closer, it disappeared behind a mountain peak.



When Monkey returned, Pigsy laughed at him. "Brother, you're far too suspicious," he said. Then patting his belly he added, "Let's move on and find something to eat."



Monkey was worried. "This is a barren mountain and there's no sign of human life for miles around. I'd better go ahead and find you some fresh fruit," he said.



With his gold-inlaid staff he traced a magic ring on the ground around the three, telling them to stay where they were and not to accost anybody or eat anything while he was away.



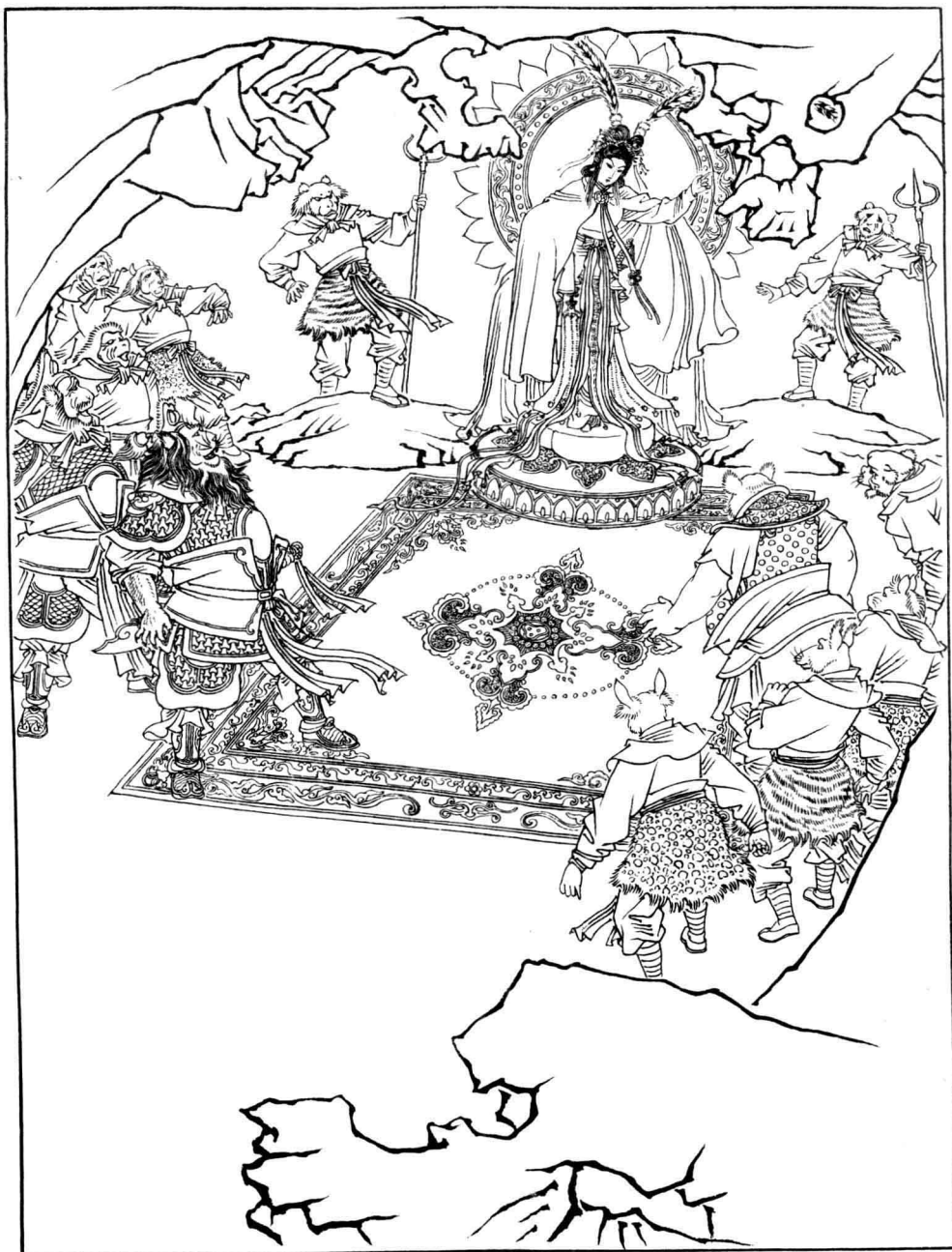
No sooner was Monkey gone than the black cloud re-appeared and hovered over the trio. Riding on the cloud was the Wolf Demon, an inhabitant of the mountain who had come out on patrol.



On this mountain lived the White-Bone Demon with many other demons under her command, such as the Lion, Tiger, Bear and Wolf — all of them man-eating ogres. When the Wolf Demon returned to their cave with his discovery, the demons and imps clamoured to be allowed to go and capture Hsuan-tsang and his disciples.



The Lion King took his weapon and was about to leave with several goblins, when the White-Bone Demon said with a sardonic grin, "Did you know the monk Hsuan-tsang has a disciple called Monkey?"



At the mention of Monkey the goblins turned pale with fright. "No need to panic," sneered the White-Bone Demon. "I have a way to deal with him."



The White-Bone Demon came out and saw Hsuan-tsang, Pigsy and Sandy in the distance. They were sitting deep in meditation with their eyes closed. Monkey was nowhere to be seen.



Congratulating herself on her luck, the White-Bone Demon was about to fling herself upon Hsuan-tsang when numerous golden rays sprang forth from the ring Monkey had drawn on the ground.



"Monkey is certainly far-seeing," she thought, "but I'm no fool either. I'll change myself into another form. Then we'll see them fall into my trap." And with that she disappeared behind a rock.