

Borrowing the Plantain Fan



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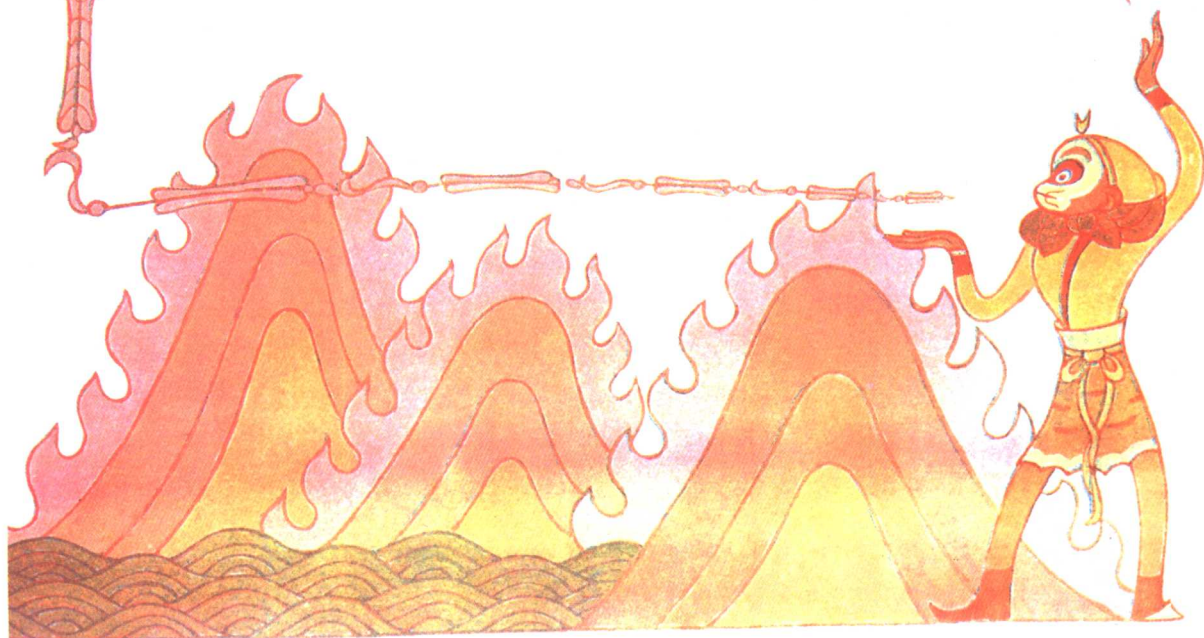
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Borrowing the Plantain Fan, tells of Monkey's three encounters with Raksasi and her husband, the Bull Demon King, in trying to borrow the magic plantain fan to subdue the flames of the Fiery Mountains. With the help of a host of spirits Monkey overcomes them and leads his master and fellow disciples over the Fiery Mountains.



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After Monkey had killed the false Monkey King he escorted the Tang Priest on westwards. The scorching heat of summer was over and they were now in late autumn. As master and disciples pressed ahead they began to feel hotter and hotter. "Disciple," said the Tang Priest, dismounting, "go to that house by the roadside and find out why it's so hot here."



Monkey walked up to the gate and saw an old man come out from inside. Monkey bowed to him and said, "We have been sent by the Great Tang emperor in the East to fetch scriptures from the West and are just passing by. We should very much like to know why it's so hot here."



The old man let them in and told them, "Twenty miles ahead on your way to the West lies the Fiery Mountains. Over there there are about three hundred miles of flames. Not a single blade of grass can possibly grow anywhere around. Even if you had a bronze head and an iron body you would have melted before crossing them." When they heard this, the Tang Priest and his disciples turned pale with horror.



Just then a man was selling cakes outside the door. Monkey went over and asked, "How do you get the flour to make your cakes when it's so hot here?" The man said, "Nearby is a Princess Iron Fan who has a plantain fan. If requested, this fan can put out fire at the first wave, produce a breeze at the second wave, and bring rain at the third wave. That is how we can sow and reap the crops to support ourselves."

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On hearing this Monkey rushed back inside and asked the old man, "Could you tell me where Princess Iron Fan lives?" "She lives in the Plantain Cave on Mount Turquoise Cloud," the old man said. "It is about five hundred miles from here and the journey will take you at least a month." "No problem," said Monkey. "I will be back in no time." And with that he disappeared.



Instantly Monkey arrived at Mount Turquoise Cloud. Seeing a woodcutter, he bounded over and asked about the whereabouts of Princess Iron Fan's Plantain Cave. "It's just east of here," said the woodcutter. "The Iron Fan Immortal is also called Raksasi, and she is the wife of the Bull Demon King." Monkey was shocked by this news. "Another one who's got it in for me," he thought.

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Monkey had just found the Plantain Cave when a girl came out. He addressed her politely, saying, "Would you kindly tell the princess that I'm a monk on my way to the West to fetch the scriptures. I've come to beg her to loan me her plantain fan as we can't get across the Fiery Mountains."



When Princess Iron Fan heard that Monkey had come for the fan she was consumed with anger. "So that damned monkey's here at last!" She put on her armour, grasped her weapons and went out to meet him.

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Monkey and the Bull Demon King were sworn brothers. Seeing Princess Iron Fan come out of the cave Monkey stepped forward and bowed, saying, "Monkey offers his respectful greetings, sister-in-law." "I'm no sister-in-law of yours," she shouted angrily, "and if you have any feeling for your sworn brother why did you have to do that terrible thing to our Red Boy?" "That was to save my master," replied Monkey, "and the Bodhisattva Guanyin has already taken your son as the Page Sudhana."

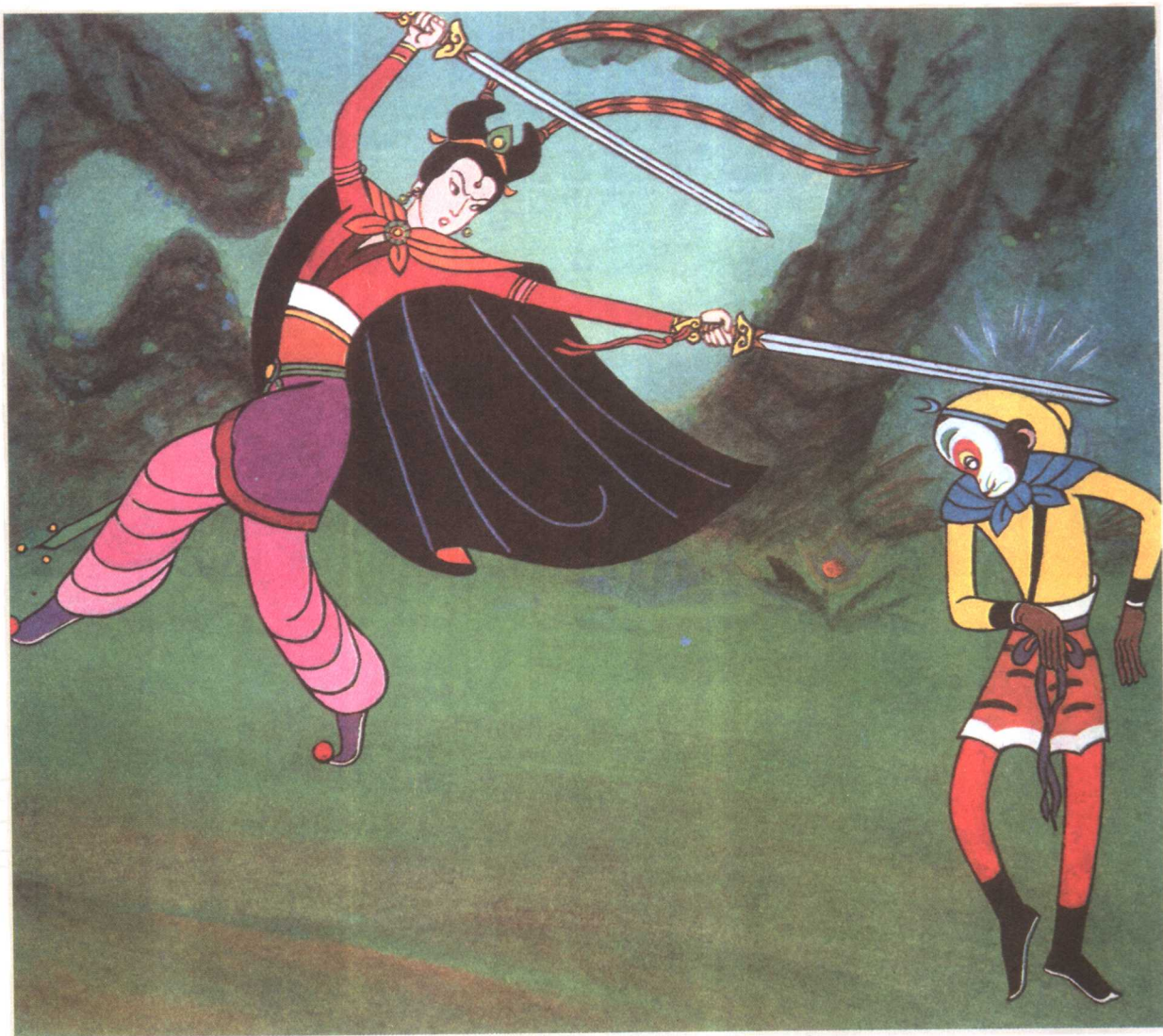


"You smooth-tongued ape," Raksasi snapped back. "My boy may be alive, but when am I going to see him again?" "It'll be easy for you to see your son again," Monkey replied. "Just lend me the fan to put the fires out. Then I'll go to the Bodhisattva and ask him to come here to see you and give your fan back."

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"Shut up, ape fiend!" Raksasi snapped again. "Stick your head out and I'll hack it with my sword. If you can stand the pain I'll lend you the plantain fan. If you can't I'll send you to Hell to see Yama."



"That's fine," Monkey replied, and with that he stuck out his head. Raksasi swung her swords and brought them down a dozen or more times on Monkey's head, but he wasn't bothered at all. "Put a little more muscles into it, sister-in-law!" he suggested.