

# MO'S MISCHIEF

Pesky Monkeys  
Hongying Yang





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# **THE BIG BLACK CAT AND THE BIG WHITE CAT**

Mo Shen Ma was on his way to Grandma and Grandpa's house for the summer holidays. Mo's grandparents lived at the foot of a big mountain in the countryside that was also a Nature Reserve. Loads of rare and protected species lived on the mountain. Grandma always shut the garden gate as soon as it got dark. She said there were wild tigers on the mountain



that liked to carry away small children in their mouths and eat them in their mountain lairs.

Mo thought Grandma was only trying to frighten him, because he'd never seen a wild tiger, and he had explored all around Grandma and Grandpa's house, whenever he went there to visit.

As soon as Mo's dad's car stopped, an old white goose came over, swaying from side to side, and honking as if to greet them.

When Mo and his dad got out of the car, they heard someone shouting, "We have guests!" But Mo didn't recognise the voice. Who was it?

Grandpa and Grandma hurried out to greet them.

"Guests?!" Grandma said, looking up. "This is my son and my grandson. They're not guests! They're family!"

Mo looked up too, wondering who Grandma was talking to. There was a birdcage hung in the porch of the house, and in it was a brown, yellow-beaked bird.

"That's Grackle," said Grandma. "He always speaks when he sees people. Don't you, Grackle? He's *much* better than a parrot."

"Thank you! Thank you!" said Grackle, nodding vigorously.



They went into the garden. Mo's dad sat and talked for a while then drove away. He had to go back to work in the city.

After Mo's dad had left, the old white goose came into the garden, swaying and honking.

"Go!" Grandpa patted the old white goose on its head. "Some guard-goose you are. Go and guard the gate! What are you following us for?"

Mo thought this was strange. "Grandma," he said. "Didn't you used to have a big yellow guard dog? Why don't you let the dog guard the gate, instead of the goose?"

"Good question," said Grandpa. "Where's the dog, Grandma?"

"It's sleeping. It's tired out from catching mice last night!"

*What kind of a dog catches mice?* thought Mo. Cats were supposed to catch mice, not dogs! So what was the cat up to? Mo was sure there had been a big black cat last time he'd visited.

"Where's the big black cat, Grandma?" he asked.

"The big black cat? Ah! It's a very sad story, Little Jumper."

"Did it die?"





"I would feel happier if it had died," Grandma sighed. "But it's up in the tree."

"Well that's all right then!" said Mo. "Cats like playing in trees."

His Grandma looked at him. "Well, Little Jumper, this one has been in the tree for three months, come rain or hard weather."

"It must be starving," said Mo.

"We send it three meals a day," said Grandpa. "Actually, I'm just about to take its dinner along. Would you like to come with me?" Mo nodded enthusiastically. Grandpa put a bowl of pork and rice and a long rope in a basket, then they walked to the tree, which was at the far end of the garden. Grandma and Grandpa's garden was so big that it was a five minute walk to the tree.

Mo looked up and saw the big black cat. It was lying on a branch, staring at a spot behind Mo and Grandpa, a distressed expression on its face.

"Come down and eat your meal, big black cat!" shouted Mo.

"It won't come down! We have to send the meal up to it," said Grandpa.

Mo looked up at the tree. It was very tall. And even



though he could jump very high, Mo didn't think he could reach the cat. How was Grandpa going to get the food up there?

Grandpa took the long rope out of the basket, tied one end of it to the handle of the basket, then threw the other end up into the tree. The rope was now looped over the branch next to the cat.

As Grandpa pulled on the rope, the basket lifted into the air, closer and closer to the cat. The big black cat jumped gently into the basket, and Mo heard small slurping noises as it ate its food.

After a while, the big black cat jumped out of the basket and lay down on the branch again, staring at the same place, with an even more distressed expression than before.

"Why does the big black cat stare like that, Grandpa?"

Grandpa turned and pointed at the house opposite. "The big black cat likes the big white cat that lives over there. But the big white cat's owner doesn't like our cat, so he keeps the big white cat tied up at home. And our cat misses the big white cat so much that it climbed up into this tree, so that it could look at the white cat every day. From up there, it can see through the window."



"And it won't ever come down?"

"We've tried everything," Grandpa said. "Once there was a storm that lasted a day and a night. The big black cat was shivering with cold, but he still wouldn't come down."

*What a stubborn cat!* But Mo was stubborn too, and he was sure he could get the cat down if he tried.

"Come on, let's go home," Grandpa said. "We need to take Hurricane Hog back for his dinner."

"Who's Hurricane Hog?"

"He's our pig."

"Why is he called *Hurricane Hog*?"

"Because he runs like the wind."

*A pig that can run like the wind?* Mo wanted to see that at once! "Let's go and find him!" he said.

"You can't find him. He never lets people know where he is."

"Then how do you get him, to give him his dinner?"

Grandpa laughed. "I have my ways."

When they got home, Grandpa took out a horn and began to blow it, standing at the garden gate. Though Grandpa blew the horn for a long time, the pig was nowhere to be seen.

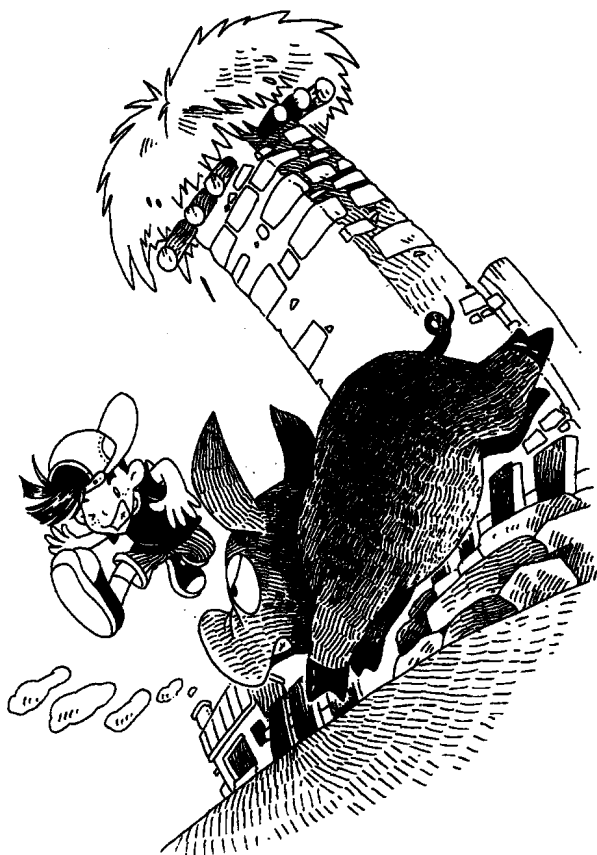
"Let's go in and wait. He'll come."



Just as he went into the house, Mo saw the old white goose standing at the garden gate, flapping its wings angrily.

"Hurricane Hog," said Grandma with a smile. "The old white goose always does that when she sees him coming."

And then, like a hurricane, the pig rushed through the door!



Mo looked at the pig: it had a very small belly but a pair of very large eyes. And it had very special ears. Usually, pigs had floppy ears. But this pig's ears stood up straight.

Mo pressed the pig's ears down. Straightaway, they bounced back up. He tried again. They bounced back again. The pig grunted, then nuzzled Mo!

"He likes you, Little Jumper," smiled Grandma.

Mo thought Grandpa and Grandma's animals were very strange: a cat who lives in a tree, a dog who likes catching mice, a goose who guards the gate, and a pig who runs like the wind – whatever next?!



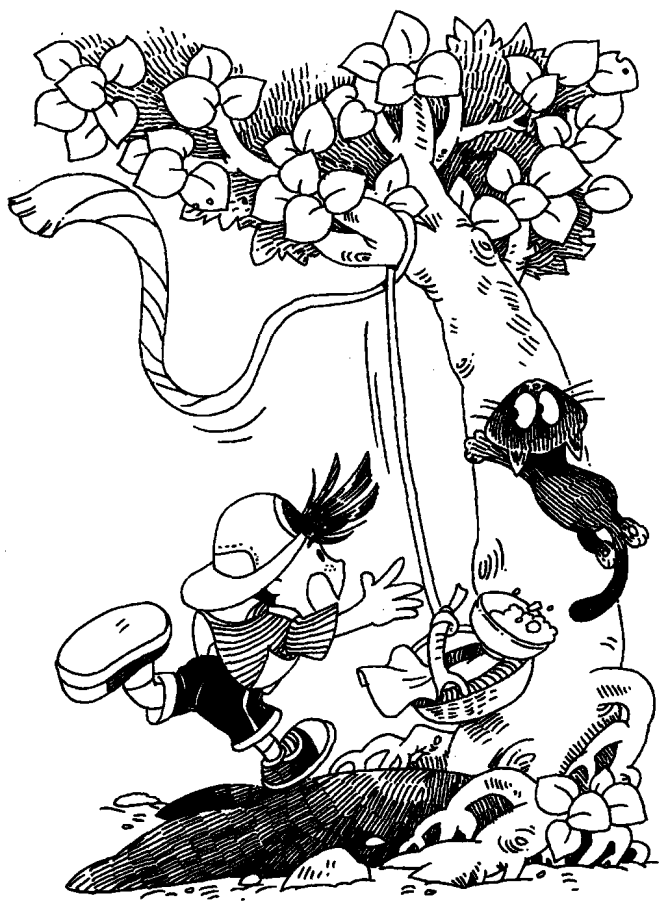
Mo took over feeding the cat from Grandpa. He wanted to work out a way to get the cat down from the tree, and bring it home.

Mo also learned how to make cat meals: cutting spiced pork liver into pieces and then mixing them with rice. Today he placed the meal in the basket and headed for the tree. He tied one end of the rope to the handle of the basket, then threw the other end into the tree, as his Grandpa had done. Mo pulled the rope and the basket lifted up.



When the big black cat smelled the meal, he jumped into the basket.

Mo suddenly let go of the rope. The basket began to drop, clattering down the tree trunk.



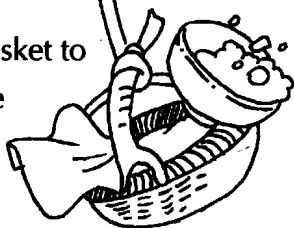
Just before the basket hit the ground, the big black cat jumped out and gripped on to the trunk of the tree. Then it climbed back up to its branch.

Mo giggled.

The cat hissed at him.



The next time Mo delivered the basket to the cat, it turned its head to one side and ignored him. It wasn't going to be fooled again.



"Fine!" said Mo. He pulled the basket down again. "Starve yourself. See if I care."

Mo carried the meal back to Grandma's. Grackle, who was standing on the roof, cried joyfully, "Mo is back! Mo is back!"

Grandma looked in the basket. "Why didn't the cat eat its meal?" she asked Mo. "Did you make it angry?"

"It didn't eat this meal, but it *will* eat the next one."

"Oho!" said Grandma. "Little Jumper, you don't know that cat! It has a temper like you wouldn't believe! It's more stubborn than a billy-goat."



And Grandma was right! Mo sent the cat meals after meal, but it refused to eat them all.

Two days went by. The big black cat ate nothing, crouching on the branch of the tree. It looked ill.

"Eat some food, please!" Mo pleaded.

The big black cat closed its eyes, pretending not to hear.

"You'll starve to death if you don't eat, you silly big black cat."

The big black cat opened its eyes but didn't move. It was determined not to be fooled by Mo again.

"I'll go and get a fish for you!"

Mo went home, fetched his Grandpa's fishing rod and then ran to the vegetable plot. He dug up some earthworms as fish bait. Then he went to the pond and quickly caught a small fish.

Mo ran back to the tree with the fish flapping in his hand.

"I'm back with a fish, big black cat!"

The big black cat didn't even blink.

Mo lifted the fish on the rope. The small fish flipped near the cat's face, but the cat ignored it.

"Big black cat! Come on! Eat the fish!" Mo shouted.

Just then, a boy ran out of the house opposite the





tree. He was about Mo's age.

"What's all the racket?" the boy asked.

"The big black cat is starving itself to death. And it's all my fault," cried Mo.

"No. It's not your fault. It misses my white cat. That's why it's sad."

Mo looked at the boy. He had big round eyes and hairy ears like a bat.

"I'm Bat Ears," said the boy.

"I'm Mo Shen Ma," said Mo, "but my family call me Little Jumper because when I was a baby I used to jump very high!"

Bat Ears had watched Mo sending the meals up to the cat three times a day. He wanted to make friends with this boy from the city, but his mum and dad wouldn't let him because Mo was part of the family with the big black cat. Bat Ears' parents *hated* the big black cat.

"I don't want the big black cat to die, Bat Ears," said Mo.

Bat Ears looked up at the cat. "I don't want it to die, either," he said.

Suddenly, Mo had an idea! "Bat Ears, you said just now that the big black cat misses your big white cat.

