

Mrs Dog First-Child and Monkey-Mother

Mrs Dog's first-child is clever. From when she is small-small she can stand on her head and catch things with her feet. Her name is Swing-Swing and she can catch a big unhusked coconut with her lovely little dog-child's feet. Lots and lots of difficult acts Swing-Swing-Janey can perform for herself alone, or for a crowd.

Then one day, just before sunset, Monkey-Mother happens to see Swing-Swing-Janey playing alone. Monkey-Mother is going home with her tribe of many children, one child on her back. When she sees Swing-Swing she stops and stands there watching her.

Swing-Swing carries on. She is practising her stick-catching. She tosses up four sticks and catches them. Monkey-Mother is thrilled. Monkey-Mother grins. Monkey-Mother puts down her child and settles down to watch with all her children around her.

Excited to have a crowd watching her, Swing-Swing Janey starts up something different. She tosses her ball up, then falls quick-quick on to her hands, throws her bottom end up, catches the ball with her feet, bends her knees, flicks the ball up again, half spins back onto her feet and catches the ball with her hands.

Seeing Swing-Swing's movements so precise, so perfect, the Monkey family grin and clap. And grinning and clapping Monkey-Mother says:

*"O so right and so sry,
So nippy and so flippy!"*

Swing-Swing-Janey repeats her act and then Swing-Swing does lots of other things. Monkey-Mother is more and more thrilled.

When the sun sets, nobody sees Janey. Swing-Swing has disappeared.

Night comes down. Swing-Swing-Janey is still nowhere to be seen. Mrs Dog stands outside and calls and calls; no answer. No Swing-Swing comes home.

Mrs Dog practically goes off her head with worry.

Mrs Dog walks quickly to every neighbour and asks about Swing-Swing. Nobody has seen her child. Nobody knows to where the child has disappeared.

Then just before bedtime, Mrs Puss calls and says "I hear you lost your child Mrs Dog. I have to say I did see her. Monkey-Mother carried away your child with the rest of her family."

"But where does Monkey-Mother live?" Mrs Dog wants to know.

Mrs Puss has no idea. Nobody knows where Monkey-Mother lives. It is known she roams about, but nobody knows.

Promptly Mrs Dog begins to go about looking for her child.

Mrs Dog sees many strange villages for the first time. She sees tailors making clothes, shoemakers making shoes, tinsmiths making vessels. Each time Mrs Dog asks the people, "Have you seen a dog-child with Monkey-Mother?"

"No," they say.

"Do you know where Monkey-Mother lives?"

"No," they say.

Every person Mrs Dog meets she asks the same questions and gets the same answers. Mrs Dog keeps on going with her travelling and her looking. She comes to an orange grove and sees people picking oranges. She says to the orange pickers,

"Have you seen a dog-child with Monkey-Mother?"

"Yes," they say. "Two days ago. We saw them mango-picking. The dog child

caught the mangoes. Sometimes she caught them with her hands. Sometimes she went down on to her hands, and caught them with her feet.”

Anxiously, Mrs Dog wants to know where the mango trees are. The orange-pickers tell her, but when Mrs Dog finds the mango trees she sees nothing of Swing-Swing or Monkey-Mother.

But Mrs Dog carries on. She comes to a river and sees men in a canoe, river-fishing. She calls out “Have you seen a dog-child with Monkey-Mother?”

“Yes,” they say. “One hour ago they came back from the other side of the river. The dog-child swam and pulled the raft with Monkey-Mother and family.”

Anxiously Mrs Dog asks “Where does she live? Do you know where Monkey-Mother lives?”

“Yes,” the men say. And the men explain in detail where Monkey-Mother lives.

Mrs Dog comes to a rocky barren place. No trees are here. There are only rocks and hills of rocks.

Mrs Dog stands outside a kind of house of rocks.

Monkey-Mother and children come outside, into the yard.

Monkey-Mother waves her arm and says, “She’s not here. She’s not here. Go away. Go away. I tell you.”

Before Monkey-Mother is finished speaking. Swing-Swing comes round some rocks, carrying wood. Monkey-Mother grabs her, pushes her, bundles her round to the back and locks her in.

“I want my child,” Mrs Dog shouts. “I want my child!”

Monkey uncles and aunts and cousins all come out waving their arms about, telling Mrs Dog, “Hop it! Clear off. Get away. And don’t you come back!” Oh, how the Monkey-people are noisy and threatening!

Mrs Dog suddenly feels lonely and bullied and hopeless and can’t help crying. Mrs Dog begins to turn away.

But she needn’t worry. You see, the same fishermen who told Mrs Dog where Monkey-Mother lives, also tell Bro Nancy and Bro Dog. So, they arrive!

Anancy starts talking straightaway, talking like the best friendly visitor.

“To Mrs Monkey-Mother and all, a good-good and abundant afternoon!” he says.

“Good afternoon Mister Anancy,” Monkey-Mother says in a quiet voice.

Anancy notices everybody has gone quiet and goes on. “I know, there is no need to say, that you are respectable strangers, is that not so?”

“We are respectable people, Mister Anancy,” Mother-Monkey says.

“And that’s exactly why none of you can bark? Can any of you bark?”

Anancy asks.

“No sir,” Mother-Monkey says.

Anancy knows the moment has come to let Swing-Swing hear him. At the top of his voice, Anancy shouts, “Well who can bark, let her bark!” Anancy goes on even louder. “Bark now who can bark!”

Swing-Swing-Janey yelps, perhaps forgetting she can bark. Then Swing-Swing begins to bark like wild and crazy, like a terrible hollering in everybody’s ears.

Looking badly shamefaced, Monkey-Mother holds her head down.

“Mrs Monkey-Mother, will you please let out the dog-child and let her come to us?” Anancy commands.

Monkey-Mother says nothing. She only goes slow-slow and shamefaced and lets out Swing-Swing.

Swing-Swing-Janey comes to her mother, Mrs Dog.

Oh, child and mother are happy!

From that time, mothers don't like their children to get too friendly with strangers.