

BOOK SPIRITS 1

Save The Monkey King



Story and Illustration by Irene Chen

*For all kids who enjoy an adventure with
books.*

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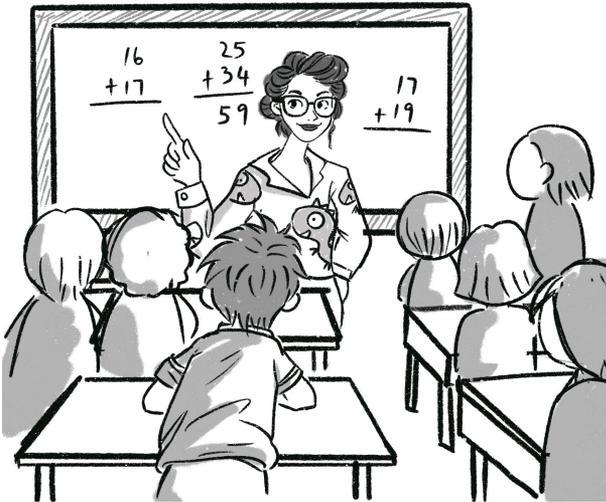
Chapter 14 World Bureau

CHAPTER 1 MONKEY DRAWING

It was the very last class of the day.

“...Now let’s find out what sixteen plus seventeen equals. Let’s start with the ones place...”

It was math time. Ms. Vera stood at the front of the room, teaching the second graders how to add and subtract two-digit numbers. Her voice was loud and clear, making sure everyone kept their eyes on the board.



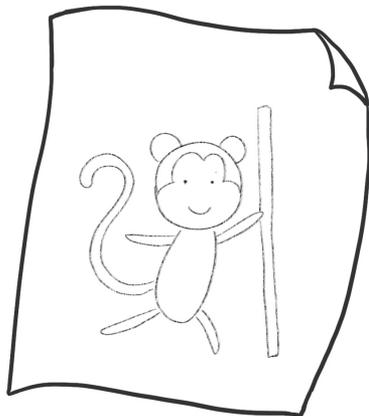
Eddy sat in the back row, but he wasn't looking at Ms. Vera. He gripped his pencil tightly, busy drawing a monkey on a piece of paper.

"What's seven plus six? Who knows?" Ms. Vera's voice floated across the room.

Eddy was not listening. He drew a circle for the monkey's head. On top of the circle, he added two tiny half-circles—yes, those would be the ears.

Then came the oval-shaped body, with skinny arms and legs. And of course, a long, curly tail. A monkey should have a long, curly tail.

"...And he needs a stick," Eddy thought. He drew a long, straight stick in the monkey's hand. A small smile appeared on his face.



Suddenly—*swish!* The paper was snatched right out from under his pencil.



Eddy's smile froze. He looked up.

Right in front of him was Ms. Vera's favorite shirt—the dark green one with a bright yellow dinosaur printed on it. The dinosaur had round eyes like lightbulbs and a wide, silly grin.

"What did I say? No drawing in math class!" Ms. Vera bent down to look at Eddy's sketch in her hand.

Eddy's eyes met hers behind her glasses, but he quickly looked away, feeling a little scared.

"What's this? A monkey?" Ms. Vera asked, frowning.

"...Not just a monkey. It's Sun Wukong." Eddy whispered.

It was Sun Wukong! Eddy's favorite hero from *Journey to the West*. He had gotten the book from the school library and read it every single day. This monkey was not an ordinary monkey.



Sun Wukong was born from a stone. He could change shape—into a tree, a bird, even a tiny fly. He could dive under the sea or leap into the sky... he was such an amazing monkey!

"Sun... Wukong?" Ms. Vera repeated. She looked puzzled.

"Never heard of him," she said flatly.

"What? That's impossible..." Eddy's eyes opened wide.

Ms. Vera gave Eddy a very serious look. Eddy immediately closed his mouth. He knew arguing would only make things worse.

Ms. Vera marched back to the board. She folded the monkey drawing and slid it under a pile of math books. She started writing numbers again.

A chubby boy named Tom sat in front of Eddy. He leaned over to another boy and whispered in a silly voice: "He's not~an~ordinary~monkey~"



The other boy shook with laughter and copied his tone. “He’s a Sun... what was it again?”

“Who knows? Eddy just made it up. So dumb.”

The two of them burst into giggles, their shoulders and hair shaking as they laughed.

Eddy bit his lip. He turned away from Tom’s shaking blond hair and forced himself to stare at the numbers on the board. Tom was annoying, but he didn't need to mind Tom. This was math time. He should pay attention.

But still...something felt very wrong.



Ms. Vera said she had never heard of Sun Wukong. It didn't look like Ms. Vera was joking—she wasn't the kind of teacher who joked in class.

But the book—*Journey to the West*—it was Ms. Vera who had pulled it from the library shelf for him. She had recommended it to him! So why did she say she had never heard of Sun Wukong?

CHAPTER 2 DORMITORY

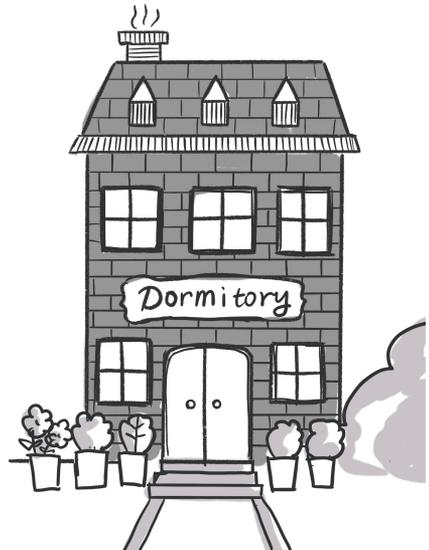
Eddy sat in class, trying to listen to Ms. Vera talk about adding and subtracting big numbers, but his mind was far away.

Ms. Vera was the person who had taken the *Journey to the West* book from the library shelf. She gave it to Eddy with a smile when she said, “*You kids will love this story!*”

So how could she not know who Sun Wukong was?

Finally, Ms. Vera said class was over. Eddy grabbed his backpack and dashed out the door.

Most kids ran to the yellow school buses waiting outside. But not Eddy. He ran the other way, toward a small, two-story building made of red brick. That was the dormitory.



Eddy's mom and dad were too busy with their jobs. Eddy wasn't quite sure what they did. All he knew was that they worked late and didn't come home until the weekends. So Eddy had to stay at school and live in the dormitory from Monday to Friday.

In the dorm, girls slept on the first floor and boys slept on the second. Eddy ran up the creaky stairs, and pushed open the door to his room.



It was a small room at the end of the hall. There were only three beds inside because only three second-grade boys lived there. One was

Eddy. Another was Tom, who was always mean to Eddy.

Tom was already there, lying on his bed with a comic book in one hand and a bag of chips in the other. He heard the door swing open and lifted his head. A smile spread across his face.

“Monkey boy!” he shouted.

Eddy thought Tom was annoying. Very annoying. But Eddy stayed quiet. Fighting would only get him in trouble.

He turned away and went to his bed. His book, *Journey to the West*, was hidden under his pillow.

He wanted to take it to Ms. Vera, ask her whether she remembered the story, and also get his monkey drawing back. He liked that drawing.

“Boys! Here’s your clean laundry!”

The door swung open. A large man stepped inside—Mr. Benjamin, the dorm manager. He was so wide he almost filled the doorway. His head was shiny and pink in the middle, with

yellow hairs poking out on the sides like little paintbrushes.

Every time Eddy saw Mr. Benjamin, he sneaked a look at Tom. He thought, *That's what Tom would look like when he grew up.* And it made sense—Mr. Benjamin was Tom's dad.



“Thanks, Dad!” Tom said. He took a neat pile of clean shirts from Benjamin's hands. Then he

quickly stuffed his crumpled chip bag into his dad's hand.

“See? Such a good boy. Never leaves trash lying around,” Benjamin said cheerfully. He didn't notice the balls of paper under Tom's desk, or maybe he just pretended not to.

Then Mr. Benjamin turned to Eddy. He threw a pile of messy and wrinkled clothes onto Eddy's bed. “Here you go, kid. Fold them yourself. Everyone should take care of their own things.”



Eddy looked at Tom's pile of shirts—clean, smooth, smelling nice. Then he looked at his

own pile—wrinkled, messy, like crumpled rags. It felt unfair.

“So, boys, what fun things happened today?” Benjamin asked with a laugh.

“Today—” Eddy started.

But Tom cut him off loudly. “Today Eddy drew a super dumb monkey in math class!” he yelled.

It was rude to cut people off, but Mr. Benjamin didn't seem to mind. He smiled at Tom. “And then?”

“And then he gave the monkey a weird name. Sun...something!” Tom nudged Eddy hard with his elbow. It hurt.



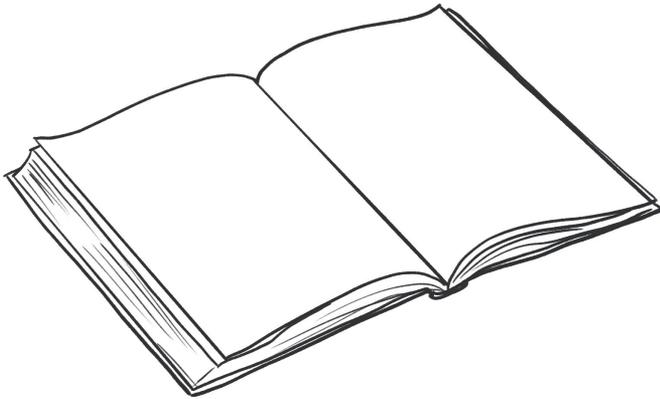
“Sun Wukong,” Eddy mumbled.

“Sun...what?” Benjamin scratched his head.

“Strange name for a monkey. If you ask me, monkeys should be called *ChiChi* or *ChaCha*, or something like that.”

“I didn’t make it up!” Eddy said crossly. He reached under his pillow. He wanted to show them the book *Journey to the West*.

His fingers touched the soft paper. It felt familiar. He had read that book so many times. Yes, this had to be it.



He pulled it out and lifted it up.

And then—he froze.

It wasn't *Journey to the West*.

It was just a plain, blank notebook. No title. No words. No pictures. Nothing at all.

Journey to the West was gone.

Sun Wukong was gone.

CHAPTER 3 GREEN SNAKE

“What... what happened?”

Eddy froze. Every single page in his book was blank.

But this was supposed to be *Journey to the West!* In that book, Sun Wukong broke free from a stone, fought dragons under the sea, swung his magic golden staff, and battled in the sky... But now, there was nothing left.

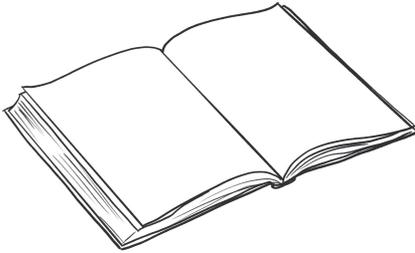


Eddy flipped the cover over. There was a round water stain, the one he had made when he spilled lemonade. His hands shook as he turned

the pages. One page, two pages, three pages... still blank.

He rushed to page seventy. He remembered folding the corner there just yesterday—that was the page where Sun Wukong got his magic golden staff!

The folded corner was still there, but the story was gone. Not a single word was left. It looked as if a giant eraser had wiped away every single word.



Eddy whispered, “No... It can’t be the wrong book. This is the one. It has to be.”

He frantically dug under his pillow. It was empty. There was no second book.

Mr. Benjamin muttered from the doorway, “If you want to draw, kid, use that blank notebook.”

Tom laughed. “He only knows how to draw monkeys!”

“Fine, monkeys, apes, baboons—whatever,” Mr. Benjamin said. “Come on, Tom. Time for football.”

Eddy didn't hear the rest. His mind had gone as blank as the book in his hands.

Behind him, Tom complained that he wanted to stay inside and read comics. But Mr. Benjamin insisted that boys needed fresh water and sunshine. Their voices grew louder and louder until Mr. Benjamin dragged his son out.



The door slammed shut with a loud *BANG*.
The room fell silent.

Eddy sat on his bed, staring at the book. His chest felt tight. Maybe he had imagined it all. Maybe the story had never existed. Maybe Sun Wukong was only in his dreams.

He flipped through the blank pages again. Then —on the very last page—something caught his eye.

A sticker.

The letters on the sticker were clear:

“Forest School Library. From: Ms. Vera.”



“Right!” Eddy’s eyes shone. “The book is from the library! I didn’t make it up!”

Eddy jumped from the bed and ran to the door. He had to find Ms. Vera! She always stayed in the library when she wasn't in class. He had to ask Ms. Vera what had happened to this book. Did Ms. Vera still remember the story? Did she still remember Sun Wukong?

But—*click!* The handle wouldn't turn.



“What—?” Eddy shook the handle as hard as he could, but it was useless—the wooden door wouldn't open. It was locked! It had happened again!

The old dormitory doors sometimes locked by accident if you slammed them too hard. Mr. Benjamin usually opened them in time, but he was gone with Tom. No one else had the key. Maybe Eddy had to stay in the room until dinner. Maybe even later.

Eddy banged on the door with all his strength, but no one was outside. His knocking grew weaker and weaker. At last, he turned around helplessly, leaned against the door, and slid down to the floor, burying his head in his knees.



It was always like this. No one ever cared. Mr. Benjamin didn't care. Ms. Vera probably wouldn't care either. Maybe he shouldn't bother Ms. Vera. Maybe she didn't even want to hear his weird story about the vanishing Monkey King.

Then—footsteps.

Eddy heard footsteps in the hallway—the sharp click of leather shoes striking the wooden floor. The sound was clean and sharp, and strangely familiar.



Tock, tock, tock.

The footsteps stopped right outside.

“Eddy?” Someone knocked on the door. The voice was firm but gentle.

Eddy lifted his head. His heart jumped. “Ms. Vera?”

“Yes. May I come in?”

“No—I’m not saying you can’t, I mean, I can’t open the door! It’s locked!” Eddy blurted out.

“Locked?” Ms. Vera’s voice grew sharp. Eddy could picture her frown and the displeasure on her face.

“I’ll have a word with Mr. Benjamin. The door must be fixed.”

Her voice was strict, but it was clear she wasn’t angry with Eddy. Strangely, Eddy felt safe hearing Ms. Vera’s voice.

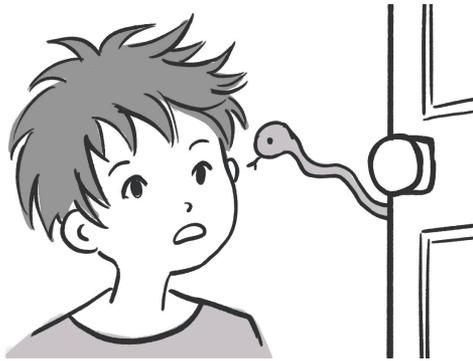
“I can open it!” another voice chirped. It was a girl’s voice, bright and playful.

Eddy blinked. Someone else was with Ms. Vera?

“You mustn’t break the door. And don’t let anyone see your...” Ms. Vera’s voice dropped. The last word was soft, almost hidden. Eddy wasn’t sure. Had she said *book*? Or *bead*?

“It’s fine!” the girl laughed. “Remember? Ordinary people can’t see *it*.”

At that very moment, something—bright green, thin like a chopstick—slipped in through the crack at the side of the door. It almost poked right at Eddy’s nose.



Eddy’s eyes went wide. The 'chopstick' had two tiny black pearl-like eyes staring straight at him. Then, it flicked out a little bright-red tongue.

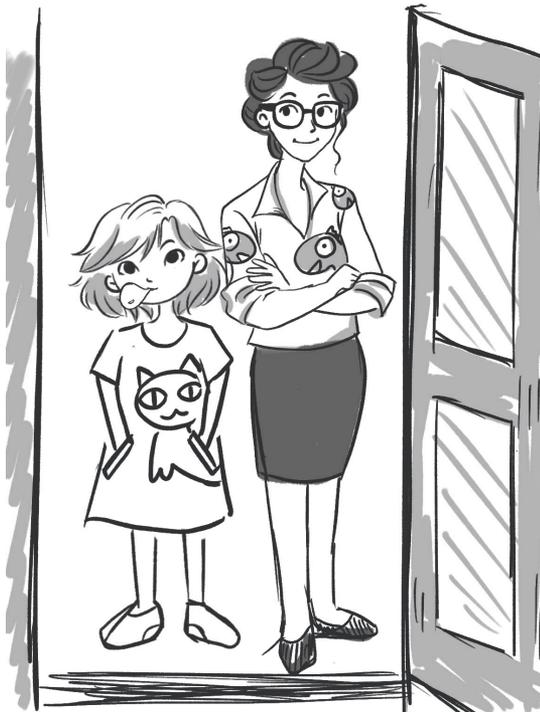
It was a snake.

A small, bright green snake.

Eddy had never seen such a beautiful snake. Its whole body was bright green, with scales like tiny emeralds that caught the light and sparkled. Eddy was almost certain that this little green snake wouldn't bite him.

The green snake stared at him for a second, then curled the tip of its tail at the keyhole. *Click!* The lock spring popped open.

The door swung open. In the doorway stood Ms. Vera, wearing her green dinosaur shirt.



Next to her was a girl with short hair, blowing a pink bubble of gum.

Eddy knew the girl's name: Tina. They were in the same class, but had never talked before.

Tina stood with her hands tucked into the pockets of her dress, which had a giant grinning cartoon cat on the front. She smiled as if she had just won a game.

“Told you,” Tina grinned to Ms. Vera. “Easy. Door's not broken. No one saw a thing.”

She wiggled two fingers at Eddy and asked, “How many can you see?”



Eddy glanced at Ms. Vera. She looked like she wanted to scold Tina, but also couldn't help smiling a little.

Eddy turned back to Tina. Around her fingers, the little green snake curled and blinked at him.

He answered honestly, his voice small but clear:

“Two fingers... and one little green snake.”

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