

THE MONKEY'S TALE

or

How Gods and Men Worked Together To Save The World
From Evil

a play based on the story of Rama and Sita

by

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CAST

in order of appearance

Lookout Monkey
Snake
Cheeky Monkey
Silly Monkey
Clever Monkey
Big Monkey
Little Monkey
Bird
Messenger of the Gods
King Janak
Vishvamitra
Villager 1
Villager 2
Villager 3
Maricha
Subahu
Maricha/Villager
Subahu/Villager
King Dashrat
Sumantra
Rama
Lakshman
Sita
Manthara
Kaikeyi
Jatayu
Bharata
Surpanaka
Rakshasa 1
Rakshasa 2
Ravana
Ravana/Beggar
Hanuman
Indrajit
Giant Bird
Giant Snake

ACT ONE

Scene 1

India. A very long time ago. A place of magic and mystery. The sounds of birds, animals and insects. A Snake climbs into a tree. Enter Lookout Monkey. He climbs to the top of a tree, looks all around and then puts his hands to his mouth and calls.

LOOKOUT MONKEY

Ha-anuma-an!

Enter Cheeky Monkey, Silly Monkey and Clever Monkey. They watch the audience and make fun of any latecomers. Enter Big Monkey and Little Monkey. They sit together, looking at a picture book. Cheeky Monkey makes fun of them and the other monkeys laugh at him. A Bird lands on the branch of a tree, near the Snake. They look at each other.

Ha-anuma-an!

The Bird whistles three notes, imitating Lookout Monkey – ‘Hanuman’.

Ha-anuma-an!

Cheeky Monkey steals something from someone in the audience and shows it to the other Monkeys. Big Monkey takes it from him and returns it to its owner. Cheeky Monkey makes fun of Big Monkey behind his back, but Big Monkey sees him and chases him away before going back to his book.

Ha-anuma-an!

Sound of a baby crying. The Snake, the Bird and the Monkeys look round to see where it is coming from. The sound stops and the Monkeys turn away. Cheeky Monkey, Silly Monkey and Clever Monkey sit down and pick fleas out of each other’s fur.

Ha-anuma-an!

Big Monkey turns the page.

LITTLE MONKEY

Pointing to a picture on the page

Who’s that?

BIG MONKEY King Dashrat.

LITTLE MONKEY Who's King Dashrat?

BIG MONKEY The King of Kosala.

Pointing to another picture

Look. That's Ayodhya, where King Dashrat has his palace.

LITTLE MONKEY It looks nice.

BIG MONKEY It's a beautiful city. King Dashrat is a good king and all the people who live in Ayodhya are good and happy.

LITTLE MONKEY Can we go there?

Sound of crying again. The Snake, the Bird and the Monkeys look round to see where the sound is coming from. They notice a bundle on the ground under the tree. The Snake and the Bird look down. The bundle is moving.

SILLY MONKEY **Hiding behind the others**

It's moving. What is it?

The Snake lowers himself from the branch to investigate. The Bird and the Monkeys watch in silence. The crying continues. The Snake lifts himself back onto the branch.

CHEEKY MONKEY Come on, snake! Tell us who it is! We want to know!

SNAKE Ssssssssssssss...

CLEVER MONKEY Tell us! Who is it?

The Bird whistles three notes, imitating Clever Monkey – 'Who is it?'

SILLY MONKEY Tell us, Snake! Who is it?

SNAKE Ssssssssssssss...

MONKEYS Who is it?

The Bird whistles again – 'Who is it?'

LOOKOUT MONKEY

Look out! Someone's coming!

Monkeys hide. Enter Janak. He walks over to the bundle, picks it up and peeps inside. There is a look of wonder on his face. The crying stops. He goes out, cradling it in his arms. The Monkeys look out from their hiding places. The Bird whistles – 'Who is it?'

SNAKE

Sssssssssssssssssita!

MONKEYS

Sita?

SNAKE

Sssssssssssssssssita!

Monkeys shrug their shoulders and turn away.

LOOKOUT MONKEY

Ha-anuma-an!

LITTLE MONKEY

Show me that place again.

BIG MONKEY

What place?

LITTLE MONKEY

The place where King Dashy-wotsit lives. Cambodia.

BIG MONKEY

Ayodhya.

LITTLE MONKEY

Ayodhya.

BIG MONKEY

King Dashrat.

LITTLE MONKEY

Yes. King Dashrat. Show me the picture again.

Big Monkey opens the book and turns over the pages, while Little Monkey looks at the pictures.

LOOKOUT MONKEY

Ha-anuma-an!

Cheeky Monkey, Clever Monkey and Silly Monkey look over Big Monkey's shoulder as he turns the pages. They act out the pictures in an exaggerated way, as Big Monkey and Little Monkey talk about them.

BIG MONKEY

There he is. King Dashrat. A wise and good king, worshipped by all the people of Ayodhya.

Cheeky Monkey pretends to be King Dashrat and the other Monkeys bow down before him. Big Monkey turns the page.

There he is again, with his Chief Counsellor, Sumantra.

LITTLE MONKEY

He looks sad.

Cheeky Monkey changes his expression.

Why is he sad?

BIG MONKEY

He's sad because he doesn't have a son who can be king of Kosala when he dies.

LITTLE MONKEY

Doesn't he have any daughters?

BIG MONKEY

Yes, but they don't count.

LITTLE MONKEY

Why not?

BIG MONKEY

Turning the page

I don't know.

LITTLE MONKEY

Who are they?

BIG MONKEY

King Dashrat's wives.

Cheeky Monkey, Clever Monkey and Silly Monkey pretend to be King Dashrat's wives.

Kausalya, the eldest.

Cheeky Monkey pretends to be Kausalya.

Sumitra.

Clever Monkey pretends to be Sumitra.

And Kaikeyi, the youngest.

Silly Monkey pretends to be Kaikeyi.

And the most beautiful.

Silly Monkey strikes a pose.

LITTLE MONKEY

Why does he have three wives?

BIG MONKEY

Because he's a king.

LITTLE MONKEY

I thought you said he was a good king.

BIG MONKEY He is.

LITTLE MONKEY Is it good to have three wives?

BIG MONKEY **Turning the page**

I don't know.

LITTLE MONKEY Who's that?

BIG MONKEY That's Sumantra, telling King Dashrat to perform a special sacrifice to the gods.

LITTLE MONKEY Why?

BIG MONKEY **Turning the page**

So the gods will give him a son.

LITTLE MONKEY What's happening now?

BIG MONKEY That's Sumantra with the sacrificial horse and that's King Dashrat, praying to the gods.

LITTLE MONKEY Go on!

BIG MONKEY **Turning the page**

There are the three queens, watching the sacrifice.

The three Monkeys pretend to be the queens again. Big Monkey turns the page. The Monkeys have to hurry to keep up with him.

There's Sumantra sprinkling water over the horse.

Big Monkey turns the page.

LITTLE MONKEY Who are they?

BIG MONKEY They're the gods.

The three Monkeys pretend to be the gods.

Brahma, Vishnu and Indra. They're deciding whether to grant King Dashrat his wish.

LITTLE MONKEY What do they decide to do?

BIG MONKEY

They decide that he is a good king and deserves to have his wish.

There is a loud bang, a flash and a cloud of red smoke. The three Monkeys run away in terror. Through the smoke appears a giant figure, the Messenger of the Gods. He speaks in a booming voice, which seems to come from everywhere.

MESSENGER

King Dashrat! The gods are pleased by your sacrifice. They have sent you this golden cup. Take it and give it to your wives to drink. They will conceive and give you the sons you pray for.

There is another flash and the Messenger disappears. In his place is a golden cup. Cheeky Monkey, Silly Monkey and Clever Monkey come out of hiding and investigate the cup.

LITTLE MONKEY

What happened next?

BIG MONKEY

Turning the page

King Dashrat gave the cup to Kausalya, the eldest queen, and she drank half of it.

Cheeky Monkey pretends to be Kausalya and drinks from the cup.

Then Sumitra drank half of what was left.

Clever Monkey pretends to be Sumitra and drinks from the cup.

Then Kaikeyi drank half of what Sumitra had left.

Silly Monkey pretends to be Kaikeyi and drinks from the cup.

LITTLE MONKEY

That means there was still some left.

The three Monkeys all look into the cup.

BIG MONKEY

There was.

The three Monkeys look up and nod.

LITTLE MONKEY

So what did they do?

BIG MONKEY

Turning the page

King Dashrat gave it to Sumitra.

LITTLE MONKEY

So she had two drinks from the golden cup.

BIG MONKEY

She did.

LITTLE MONKEY

Did it work? Did King Dashrat have a son?

BIG MONKEY

Turning the page

He had four sons.

The Monkeys look surprised.

Kausalya was the first to give birth. Her son was called Rama.

Cheeky Monkey pretends to be holding a baby.

Kaikeyi was the next to give birth. Her son was called Bharata.

Silly Monkey pretends to be holding a baby.

Sumitra was the last to give birth and she had twins.

Clever Monkey pretends to be holding two babies.

LITTLE MONKEY

Because she'd had two drinks from the golden cup!

BIG MONKEY

That's right! And their names were Lakshman and Shatrugna.

Big Monkey turns the page.

LITTLE MONKEY

What's happening now?

BIG MONKEY

Everyone in Ayodhya is celebrating. When King Dashrat told his people that he had four sons to continue his line, they were very happy and there was singing and dancing in the streets of Ayodhya, which went on for weeks and weeks.

The Monkeys start to dance.

LITTLE MONKEY

Joining in the dancing.

And weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks and...

LOOKOUT MONKEY Look out! Someone's coming!
All the Monkeys hide.

Scene 2

Enter Vishvamitra and Villagers.

VILLAGER 1 This is it.
VILLAGER 2 This is the place.
VILLAGER 1 This is where they come.
VILLAGER 2 Please help us, Vishvamitra.
VILLAGER 3 There are two of them.
VILLAGER 1 Demons!
VILLAGER 2 Evil demons!
VILLAGER 3 Rakshasas!
VILLAGER 2 Please help us!
VILLAGER 1 Please!

Maricha and Subahu appear briefly, looking angrily at Vishvamitra and the Villagers. The Snake and the Bird see them, but the others don't.

SNAKE Ssssssssssss!

Maricha and Subahu disappear.

VISHVAMITRA Have you seen them here, these demons?
VILLAGER 3 Yes!
VILLAGER 1 Yes!
VISHVAMITRA Where?
VILLAGER 3 In the forest.
VILLAGER 2 In the trees.
VILLAGER 1 They hide there.

VILLAGER 3 They jump out.

VILLAGER 1 But you can't always tell.

VISHVAMITRA What do you mean?

VILLAGER 1 You can't always tell it's them.

VILLAGER 2 They change their shape.

VILLAGER 3 Disguise themselves.

VILLAGER 1 Grow big.

VILLAGER 2 Or small.

VILLAGER 3 Hide in another body.

**Enter Maricha and Subahu, looking like villagers.
They join the others.**

VILLAGER 1 They can turn themselves into mice.

VILLAGER 2 Or elephants.

VILLAGER 3 Or monkeys.

SUBAHU/VILLAGER Or spiders.

MARICHA/VILLAGER Or birds.

VILLAGER 1 Or fish.

SUBAHU/VILLAGER Or camels.

VILLAGER 2 Or tigers.

MARICHA/VILLAGER Or people.

VILLAGER 3 Yes. Or people. They can make themselves look just like ordinary people.

VILLAGER 1 Just like us.

VILLAGER 2 So you wouldn't recognise them.

VILLAGER 3 You think you're talking to an ordinary person in the street.

SUBAHU/VILLAGER But really it's a demon.

VILLAGER 1 You think you're talking to a friend in the market.

MARICHA/VILLAGER And it turns out to be a devil.

VILLAGER 2 You go to bed with your wife at night.

SUBAHU/VILLAGER And in the morning you wake up.

MARICHA/VILLAGER With a rakshasa by your side.

VILLAGER 1 That happens to me every day.

VILLAGER 3 But in his case it really is his wife.

Pause.

VISHVAMITRA I think I know who these two are.

SUBAHU/VILLAGER Do you?

VISHVAMITRA Yes. They are Subahu and Maricha.

Subahu and Maricha exchange glances.

Two wicked demons, who are always making mischief and insulting the gods.

VILLAGER 1 How can we protect ourselves from them?

VILLAGER 2 Please help us!

VILLAGER 3 How can we get rid of them?

VILLAGER 1 Please! You're a holy man. Ask the gods to help us.

VILLAGER 2 Please!

VILLAGER 3 Please!

VISHVAMITRA I have lived a life of devotion to the gods. My life has been pure and unblemished. I have lived a thousand years through many lives and each life has brought me closer to perfection. But I can't help you.

The Villagers look disappointed. Maricha and Subahu smile, then quickly pretend to look disappointed too.

VILLAGER 2 If you can't help us, who can?

VILLAGER 1 Who can we turn to?

VILLAGER 3 Who will help us?

VISHVAMITRA A boy.

SUBAHU/VILLAGER **Scornfully**
A boy!

MARICHA/VILLAGER **Giving Subahu a warning look**
A boy? What boy? Please, bring him here. We need his help.

VILLAGERS Yes! Bring him!

VISHVAMITRA I will.

VILLAGER 1 Please hurry!

VILLAGER 3 Please!

VISHVAMITRA Gods and men must work together to defeat the forces of evil. This boy will cast off the darkness which is gathering around the world.

VILLAGER 2 Bring him to us, whoever he is. We need him here. Please hurry!

VISHVAMITRA I will.

Exit Vishvamitra

The Villagers watch him go. Maricha/Villager and Subahu/Villager follow him out.

VILLAGER 1 Hurry!

VILLAGER 3 Our lives depend on it.

VILLAGER 2 Bring him soon. We need him.

Maricha and Subahu return. They are demons again.

VILLAGER 1 I wonder who this boy is.

VILLAGER 2 I wonder.

VILLAGER 3 Must be someone very special.

VILLAGER 2 Must be.

VILLAGER 1 We need him, whoever he is.

VILLAGER 3 Who did he say the demons were?

VILLAGER 2 Subicha?

VILLAGER 1 Marihu?

VILLAGER 3 Something like that.

MARICHA Maricha.

SUBAHU Subahu.

VILLAGER 1 That's it.

Villagers turn and see the demons. They scream and run off. Maricha and Subahu laugh.

SUBAHU Scaring these people is just too easy. A rakshasa like me needs more of a challenge. I'm bored here. Let's go somewhere else.

MARICHA I think we should stay here. I want to find out who this boy is.

SUBAHU Why?

MARICHA I'm curious.

SUBAHU You've killed hundreds of children. This one won't taste any different.

MARICHA All the same, I think we should stay. Just in case.

SUBAHU What do you mean, 'just in case'?

MARICHA Vishvamisra has lived a long time. He's no fool.

SUBAHU Hmm... Maybe you're right.

MARICHA Come on! This could be interesting.

Exeunt Subahu and Maricha. The Monkeys come out cautiously from their hiding places.

CLEVER MONKEY Have they gone?

LOOKOUT MONKEY They've gone.

SILLY MONKEY I don't like rakshasas.

CLEVER MONKEY Especially those two.

CHEEKY MONKEY Moocharoo and Banana.

SILLY MONKEY Choomaroo and Bazooka.

CHEEKY MONKEY Barmybum and Munchychew.

SILLY MONKEY Chewmibum and Barmybunch.

CLEVER MONKEY Let's follow the holy man. See where he's going. Let's find out who this boy is.

SILLY MONKEY Yes! Let's go after him! Let's get away from the rakshasas.

CHEEKY MONKEY Yes! Let's go! Follow me!

Exit Cheeky Monkey, followed by Clever Monkey and Silly Monkey.

LOOKOUT MONKEY **Pointing in the opposite direction and calling to the Monkeys.**

He went that way.

Enter Silly Monkey, followed by Clever Monkey and Cheeky Monkey. They run across the stage and off the other way.

LITTLE MONKEY Can we go too?

BIG MONKEY There's no need. It's in the book.

Scene 3

Big Monkey and Little Monkey sit down again. Big Monkey opens the book and shows Little Monkey the picture.

Look! It's King Dashrat in Ayodhya. Vishvamitra's just arriving.