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Why the Bananas Belong to the Monkey

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Perhaps you do not know it, but the monkeys think that all the bananas belong to them. When Brazilian children eat bananas they say, "I am a monkey." I once knew a little boy in Brazil who was very, very fond of bananas. He always said, "I am *very much* a monkey." If you are fond of bananas the Brazilian children would tell you that you are a monkey, too. This is the story they tell to show us how it all came about.

Once upon a time when the world had just been made and there was only one kind of banana, but very many kinds of monkeys, there was a little old woman who had a big garden full of banana trees. It was very difficult for the old woman to gather the bananas herself, so she made a bargain with the largest monkey. She told him that if he would gather the bunches of bananas for her she would give him half of them. The monkey gathered the bananas. When he took his half he gave the little old woman the bananas which grow at the bottom of the bunch and are small and wrinkled. The nice big fat ones he kept for himself and carried them home to let them ripen in the dark.



The little old woman was very angry. She lay awake all night trying to think of some way by which she could get even with the monkey. At last she thought of a trick.

The next morning she made an image of wax which looked just like a little boy. Then she placed a large flat basket on the top of the image's head and in the basket she placed the best ripe bananas she could find. They certainly looked very tempting.

After a little while the biggest monkey passed that way. He saw the image of wax and thought that it was a boy carrying bananas. He had often pushed over these boys, upset their baskets and then had run away with the bananas. This morning he was feeling very good-natured so he thought that he would first try asking politely for the bananas.

"O, hello" he said to him, "please give me a banana." The image of wax answered never a word.

Again the monkey said, this time in a little louder voice, "O, hello, please give me a banana, just one little, ripe little, sweet little banana." The image of wax answered never a word.

Then the monkey called out in his loudest voice, "O, hello, if you don't give me a banana I'll give you such a push that it will upset all of your bananas." The image of wax was silent.

The monkey ran toward the image of wax and struck it hard with his hand. His hand remained firmly embedded in the wax.

"Oh! Let go my hand," the monkey called out. "Let go my hand and give me a banana or else I'll give you a hard, hard blow with my other hand." The image of wax did not let go.

The monkey gave the image a hard, hard blow with his other hand. The other hand remained firmly embedded in the wax.

Then the monkey called out, "Oh! Let go my two hands. Let go my two hands and give me a banana or else I will give you a kick with my foot." The image of wax did not let go.

The monkey gave the image a kick with his foot and his foot remained stuck fast in the wax.

"Oh!" the monkey cried, "let go my foot. Let go my two hands and my foot and give me a banana or else I'll give you a kick with my other foot." The image of wax did not let go.

Then the monkey who was now very angry, gave the image of wax a kick with his foot and his foot remained stuck fast in the wax.

The monkey shouted, "Oh, let go my foot. Let go my two feet and my two hands and give me a banana or else I'll give you a push with my body." The image of wax did not let go.

The monkey gave the image of wax a push with his body. His body remained caught fast in the wax.

"Oh!" the monkey shouted, "let go my body! Let go my body and my two feet



and my two hands or I'll call all the other monkeys to help me!" The image of wax did not let go.

Then the monkey made such an uproar with his cries and shouts that very soon monkeys came running from all directions. There were big monkeys and little monkeys and middle-sized monkeys. A whole army of monkeys had come to the aid of the biggest monkey.

It was the very littlest monkey who thought of a plan to help the biggest monkey out of his plight. The monkeys were to climb up into the biggest tree and pile themselves one on top of another until they made a pyramid of monkeys. The monkey with the very loudest voice of all was to be on top and he was to shout his very loudest to the sun and ask the sun to come and help the biggest monkey out of his dreadful difficulty.



This is what all the big-sized, little-sized, middle-sized monkeys did. The monkey with the loudest voice on top of the pyramid made the sun hear. The sun came at once.

The sun poured his hottest rays down upon the wax. After a while the wax began to melt. The monkey was at last able to pull out one of his hands. The sun poured down more of his hottest rays and soon the monkey was able to pull out his two hands. Then he could pull out one foot, then another, and in a little while his body, too. At last he was free.

When the little old woman saw what had happened she was very much discouraged about raising bananas. She decided to move to another part of the world where she raised cabbages instead of bananas. The monkeys were left in possession of the big garden full of banana trees. From that day to this the monkeys think that they own all the bananas.



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