

# Happy Jack

By

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*For*

Wayne

Amanda, Ceionna, Kearra & Kyla Raine

*and especially for*

Children of all ages searching for a way home

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## CHAPTER 1

# THE MONKEY PUZZLE TREE

“**H**appy Jack, Happy Jack, run far away. Happy Jack, Happy Jack, don’t you come back,” were the words ringing in his ears.

Mounting the steps two at a time, he yanked open the big front door and ran right smack bang into the belly of Auntie Joyce.

“Oof! Jack! How many times have I told you not to run?”

He skirted around her and continued running up the two flights of stairs, wrenched open the bedroom door and dove onto his bed face down.

“I hate my school. I hate my auntie and uncle. And I hate my home,” cried Jack out loud to whoever cared to hear him.

Jack lived with Auntie Joyce and Uncle Evan. That's what he was told to call them, even though they weren't really his auntie and uncle, and this wasn't really his home. Nothing was real anymore except for his tears. He felt them hot and wet as they rolled down his cheeks, soaking his pillow.

He didn't like crying like a big baby, but he couldn't stop. He sat up, grabbed his Rottweiler and threw him on the floor. He cried louder but he knew no one would come. No one ever came. He was a throwaway—thrown away just like he threw his dog on the floor.

This children's home was bigger than the last one he had lived in, and the kids were meaner. They called him Happy Jack because he never smiled. Happy Jack was the unhappiest boy in the whole world.

His new name followed him to school, and once a label sticks, you're tagged forever, until you move of course. In the last children's home, he was taunted with the label of Sad Sack Jack. He was moved out of that home because one of the older boys punched him in the face, giving him a bloody fat lip. Whenever he was moved to a new home, he always felt like he was being thrown away with his dog Ivanhoe. He was told by the grownups that the kids in this new

home would be nicer and nearer to his age, but they always lied. There were no nine-year-olds here. They were all older than him, and they definitely weren't nice.

He looked down at Ivanhoe who stared right back up at him smiling. That's the thing about dogs: even if you're mean to them, they love you no matter what. As he picked Ivanhoe up off the floor, he saw the stitching coming loose around his ear. "I hope his ear won't fall off like his eye did," he thought to himself as small hiccups replaced his sobs.

He used the back of his dog to wipe away his tears. Perhaps that's why Ivanhoe's fur was all matted, but at least he was still soft. Jack couldn't remember where Ivanhoe had come from, but like a faithful dog, Ivanhoe had followed him wherever he went.

There was a scratch on the window by Jack's bed. He didn't dare look. He knew it was the huge scaly monster trying to get in. Jack got up and walked away from the window. He went past all the other beds, plopped down on the stool in front of the weathered dressing table and started opening and closing the drawers. There was nothing in them that belonged to him. All he had was his dog Ivanhoe and his tears. He looked into the large mirror and found himself staring miserably back. Happy Jack. The name suited him, he thought.

Two years ago, his mom had walked right out of the front door and never came back. His dad, without a word, dropped him off at the police station. His mom and dad had thrown him away. A big

black hole had opened up, and he was living in it—Happy Jack and his dog Ivanhoe.

Jack continued to stare at himself in the mirror. The more he stared at his reflection, the lonelier he felt. So alone. So...nothing. He was nothing but an image. He didn't feel real anymore. He and his image stared at each other. It seemed as if he was frozen in time. He was fading into himself, disappearing into a big black hole called life. He shook himself as if from a bad dream and continued staring at his unsmiling reflection.

After a while, Jack got up and went into the garden with his books to do his homework. Ivanhoe accompanied him as they hid beneath the branches of the huge weeping willow tree that draped across the ground. He liked hiding there so the older kids could do their kid business without involving him. When he had finished his homework, he sat there chatting to his dog until he was called in for dinner.

“Jack,” he heard Auntie Joyce calling. “Time to come in; dinner's ready.”

Once the ordeal of dinner was over, the time came Jack dreaded the most. It was bedtime. In this home, his bedtime was at eight. He had to go to bed before all the older kids. On his way up the stairs, he would start to shrink and drag his feet. His bed was at the front of the house near the window, but no one would swap with him. This was the time the older kids called him, “Scaredy Cat Jack,” followed by a chorus of meows. Scaredy Cat Jack was another label

that had stuck because during the night, he became very scared. He couldn't stop his dreams. He would wake up in the middle of the night crying because a huge scaly monster would chase him in his sleep. He could never remember his dream when the morning came. He only remembered the feeling of being chased.

The huge scaly monster continued its scratching as if sharpening its claws on the window. It scratched louder at night as the dark stretched towards him. After pulling the curtains as tightly as he could, Jack lay in his bed. The curtains would never agree to meet so he could close out the monster. Jack couldn't help but see the searing white eyes looking in through the gaps. The starry, white-hot eyes appeared to be falling towards him, ready to burn.

When Jack woke up crying one night, waking up the other boys in turn, Uncle Evan came to his bed and told him there were no monsters trying to get in, but Jack would have none of it. He could still hear the scratching against the window as the wind moaned outside along with the awoken boys moaning inside. They were quickly shushed as Uncle Evan warned them not to rouse the whole house.

Uncle Evan patiently explained that it was only the tree outside and the wind moving the branches against the window. He assured Jack there were no eyes looking in. It was only the stars twinkling in the night sky. Uncle Evan smiled at him as he explained that the tree was called a *monkey puzzle tree*. It was named that long ago because when a man saw it for the first time growing in his friend's

garden, he remarked that a monkey would be puzzled if it tried to climb it. Jack thought if he were a monkey, he wouldn't want to go near it. No way would he want to climb those sharp, scaly branches.

## CHAPTER 2

### PETUCAN

“**W**ake up! Come on, Jack, wake up!” said a soft voice. As he tossed and turned, his strawberry blond head sank deeper into his pillow.

“Jack, wake up! You’re having another bad dream,” urged the gentle voice.

Jack sat bolt upright in his bed. He could feel his face covered with sweat as he stared at the dark silhouette.

“Jack. Come on, wake up. It’s only another dream.”

He tried to shake off his bad dream and began to focus on the outline near his bed. He thought he was still dreaming. Instinctively, he knew it wasn’t Uncle Evan. As his eyes adjusted, the image began to solidify and then it glowed a little. As it gently brightened, he could make out big ears framing a soft cotton face. He saw a button nose—seriously, it really was a button. There were large purple lips that smiled and a long tail peeking from behind the left side of the woolly body. He looked into dark brown eyes surrounded by long eyelashes and thick eyebrows. He realized he was looking at a monkey.

“What, uh, who’re you?” he trembled as he shook his head, still trying to wake up.

“Hello, Jack. My name is Petucan,” answered the monkey.

Staring, he saw that the monkey wore a long-knitted shirt with one green sleeve and the other orange. The right side was yellow and the left side was red. The shirt had a large blue pocket, and even though he couldn’t see it, Jack was sure the back of the shirt was purple. The monkey’s denim blue jeans spilled over large furry feet. Jack noticed all this in a blink of an eye. He moved back against his pillow. He wasn’t sure if the monkey had climbed down from the monkey puzzle tree and come in through the window, but one thing was sure: there was a monkey standing by his bed. Perhaps he was still asleep in the throes of his nightmare. Jack became very still, afraid to blink, let alone move.

As Jack sat in his bed, he saw small sparkles of light begin to orbit the monkey like fireflies in a busy dance. The sparkles were all colors of the rainbow that managed to escape and melt into the shadows.

Always, since Jack could remember, he would wake in the night crying from bad dreams, and then he would be tired the next morning because he was afraid to go back to sleep. Now he was afraid because he thought he couldn't wake up. It felt like he was awake, but surely it must be a dream.

"It's okay, Jack. You're safe," said Petucan.

"You're not real," Jack accused. "GO AWAY!" he cried out loud, hoping to wake someone else up, not caring if they shouted at him.

"I'm real, Jack, and you're safe from your bad dream. There's nothing to worry about," said Petucan gently.

"But..." he didn't know what to say next to the talking monkey standing head and shoulders above the edge of his bed. It wasn't real, even though he could see it with his own eyes and hear it with his own ears. It couldn't be. He tried to shake his head again to wake himself up. He wanted to push the monkey away from him but didn't dare. He was afraid that somehow, the monkey would grow into the monster of his dreams and start chasing him when he ran. But right now, facing the talking monkey, he didn't have the nerve to run anywhere.

"I'm not your monster, Jack. I'm here to save you from your bad dreams," Petucan said as if he had read his thoughts.

“How?” Jack accused.

“Well, first you need a friend,” answered Petucan.

“You’re not my friend. I don’t know you. Ivanhoe’s my best friend,” said Jack, still wishing the monkey would go away and he would wake up.

Petucan looked at the small stuffed dog, which had slid to the floor as Jack had tossed and turned in his bed. Jack watched as the monkey raised his hand and scattered rainbow dust all around the room, which began to sparkle and glow. None of the other kids stirred. They continued snoring soundly in their beds.

As the rainbow dust settled upon his dog, Ivanhoe began to get bigger and then lift his head. It was the magic rainbow dust that gave Jack’s dog a voice. And with his deep voice, Jack’s very best friend sang, “My master made claim and gave me my name. I thought you should know it is Ivanhoe.”

Jack was astonished. Ivanhoe had never made a sound before. Not even a bark. He had always talked to his dog, especially when he was sad or angry, but Ivanhoe had only listened. Jack looked at Ivanhoe. Ivanhoe looked back with a smile.

“Um...hello, Ivanhoe,” said Jack, sinking deeper into his pillow. He felt his nerves prick his skin. Then he almost shot out of bed when Ivanhoe began to shift towards him and jump up, landing on top of his legs.

Ivanhoe knew it was his job to look after his master. Every night, he had sat at the bottom of the bed and watched Jack fall asleep.

But, nearly every night, Jack would toss and turn when one of his bad dreams visited him, and Ivanhoe would end up on the floor.

Feeling pinned to his bed with Ivanhoe on top and the monkey at his side, Jack had a weird feeling that he had met Petucan before, even though the memory escaped him. Something in the back of his mind also told him it wasn't the first time he had seen Ivanhoe come to life right before his very eyes. It seemed like he had been here before doing the exact same thing, only this time it felt a little different. Something was resting at the edge of his memory, but he couldn't recall what it was. Nervous and frightened, he sat in his bed feeling his palms sweat as he tried to remember. "Perhaps I've been watching too many movies," the thought popped in. He pinched himself so he could wake up. It hadn't been a hard pinch, but he felt it alright. He shook himself as if trying to shake away a dream. He wondered why none of the other kids had woken up. Surely, someone could hear him talking.

"How's this possible?" he silently asked himself. "A big talking monkey by my bed and my dog coming alive?" The remnants of his bad dream began to creep its way back in.

"It's really okay, Jack. I always wake you up when you're having a bad dream. It's just a dream and you're safe," said Petucan, who knew precisely that bad dreams were really good dreams and told Jack so. "I can help you," he continued.

"How's that?" Jack asked trying to settle himself.

Petucan asked Jack about his bad dream so he could explain why it was a good dream.

“I can’t remember what I was dreaming about,” he answered, not really wanting to remember but trying hard to remember whether he had met Petucan before.

“If you cannot remember your dreams, then you cannot find the good things,” explained Petucan.

Talking to Petucan and hearing his gentle voice, Jack began to soften, and he pushed the bad dream away. Instinctively, he knew he was not in any danger. Strange as this dream was, he, Ivanhoe and Petucan talked about happy things while all the other kids slept on. Then they began to monkey around and play games until Jack tired and was ready to settle down for the night.

Jack fell safely back to sleep, and when he woke up the very next morning, he had forgotten all about his bad dream. He forgot about Petucan and the fact that Ivanhoe had sung to him.

After breakfast, Jack went off to school, dragging his feet behind the older kids so he could get some distance. During school, he always stuck close to the teachers, especially at lunch time. After school, he once again hid under the branches of the giant weeping willow tree that hung low in the backyard until he was called in for dinner. He had to sit with all the other kids at dinnertime and listen as they talked about things that didn’t really interest him. Things like football, movies and who had the latest games on their phones.

But it was bedtime now. Jack never really knew why he didn't want to go to bed because he could never remember his bad dreams. As usual, he gave his Auntie Joyce a hard time when it was his turn to go to bed.

"You must get a good night's sleep, Jack," said Auntie Joyce as she patted him goodnight.

Jack's shoulders slumped as he trudged up the stairs. He ran the tap, pretending to wash and brush his teeth. He didn't like washing or brushing his teeth. He thought it was a waste of time, and he got away with it because no one checked on him in this home. As he crossed the room, he sat Ivanhoe at the bottom of his bed and shivered when he heard the sharp scratches on the window. After closing the curtains as best as he could, he climbed into bed and pulled the covers tightly under his chin.

"Wake up! Come on, Jack, wake up!" urged the soft voice.

Once again, Jack's strawberry blond hair was wet with sweat as he tossed and turned in his bed.

"Jack, wake up! You're having another bad dream."

Sitting bolt upright in his bed, Jack rubbed his soft blue eyes. His small freckled face turned towards the soft silhouette standing by his bed. Then he was surprised. He remembered. He remembered Petucan. He realized that Petucan always came to save him from his bad dreams. He'd never remembered before. How was it he remembered now?

“I wanted you to remember me, Jack. That way, you might remember your dreams and then I can help you,” said Petucan to his unasked question.

The monkey raised his hand and scattered rainbow dust all around the room, making it sparkle and glow. As the rainbow dust rested upon Jack’s ever faithful friend, Ivanhoe immediately jumped onto Jack’s bed for a cuddle as he sang in his deep voice, “I’m Ivanhoe, but that you know. It makes me sad that your dreams are so bad.”

“Oh Ivanhoe, don’t worry about me. I have you and Petucan to keep me safe.”

“But it would be great, and it’s not too late, for you to learn why you toss and turn,” sang Ivanhoe.

“It’s true, Jack. If you learn what makes you have bad dreams, you won’t have to toss and turn anymore,” said Petucan in his soft monkey voice.

“I can’t remember what I’ve been dreaming about, and I don’t want to,” huffed Jack.

“You don’t have to remember, because we can go to Dhyāna Land,” replied Petucan with a smile.

“Dhyāna Land? What’s that?”

“Dhyāna Land is a very quiet place. It’s a place where dreams are made,” answered Petucan.

“I don’t wanna go. Dreams scare me,” whimpered Jack.

“But if you go to Dhyāna Land, you can learn to dream of anything you like. Your dreams don’t have to be bad. I can show you,” assured Petucan.

“How?” spouted Jack.

“I can guide you. There’s a very big waterfall in Dhyāna Land. It’s by the waterfall that Satya lives. Satya has the answer to all dreams because Satya is the dreamer of all dreams,” answered Petucan.

“Who’s Satya?” asked Jack. “I’ve never heard that name before.”

“I’ll introduce you. When you meet Satya, you’ll find the answers to your bad dreams,” replied Petucan.

Wanting to trust Petucan and get rid of his bad dreams, Jack asked, “How do we find the waterfall? How do we get to Dhyāna Land?”

“Close your eyes and think about a colorful waterfall. As soon as you imagine what it looks like, you will arrive,” explained Petucan.

Jack thought about this. “Can Ivanhoe come too?”

“Of course,” he answered as Ivanhoe’s tail wagged furiously with delight.

## CHAPTER 3

### DHYĀNA LAND

Jack closed his eyes and pictured a waterfall in his mind. It was as if he could hear a downpour splashing into a pool. He sensed the rushing water falling from a great height. He could feel the fresh, cold, misty spray against his small freckled face. He could feel the sun warming his body as the gentle breeze played with his hair. He felt the small stones moving beneath his slippers as the damp grass caressed his ankles.

When he opened his eyes, Jack looked at Petucan, who was smiling back at him. He looked at Ivanhoe by his side. He knew he was no longer sitting in his bed. Instead, he was standing in front of the waterfall that he had imagined in his mind.

Jack was suddenly afraid. He thought he was about to have another bad dream.

“There’s nothing to be afraid of,” said Petucan as he reassuringly wrapped his soft cotton fingers around Jack’s hand.

“Am I dreaming or are we really here?” asked Jack, wondering why he felt okay holding hands with a cotton monkey.

“Dreams are real dreams,” answered Petucan with a purple smile.

And with that, Ivanhoe sang in his deep voice, “Where are we. it’s easy to see. As quick as a blink, we are where we think.”

“Is Satya here?” asked Jack as he smiled down at Ivanhoe.

As soon as the word Satya was spoken, a soft light appeared in the midst of the waterfall creating the most brilliant rainbow Jack had ever seen. Such beautiful colors played in and out of the ripples and splashes. Jack was drawn to the soft white light like a moth to a flame. It didn’t hurt his eyes as it pulsed gently like a heartbeat, expanding slowly towards him. In fact, Jack could not take his eyes off of it. As if in a trance, he stood and stared. It seemed like the light was calling to him, which is what made him reach out his hand to touch it.

Splash!

Into the waterfall Jack went. He had reached over just a little too far and toppled head first into the sparkling pool.

“Help! Help! I’m drowning!” cried Jack as he thrashed his arms around in panic.

Petucan and Ivanhoe stood on the bank and looked. Neither took a step to help him.

“HELP!” cried Jack at the top of his lungs.

“Stand up, Jack,” urged Petucan.

Jack put down his foot and stood up. When he realized he was only knee-deep, he climbed out of the water feeling very foolish. Standing safely on the bank, he began wringing the water out of his pajamas. He was not happy at all being soaking wet, let alone hurting his pride in front of Petucan and Ivanhoe.

“I could’ve drowned if it’d been deeper,” snapped Jack, trying to be angry at them instead of himself, even though he knew how to swim.

“How deep was the water?” asked Petucan.

Jack thought about this. He was not sure if he had stood on the bottom or not. When he had fallen in, the water had covered his head, but when he had stood up, the water was only knee-deep. He didn’t really know how deep the pool of water was, but somehow, he knew he hadn’t reached the bottom.

“It doesn’t matter how deep it is. You still shouldn’t have stood there looking at me. I would’ve helped you,” spluttered Jack, feeling

very embarrassed at having fallen in, “and Ivanhoe, you’re supposed to protect me,” he continued.

Ivanhoe bowed his head. He was not used to being scolded by his master, and in an even lower voice, he sang, “I’m sorry to laugh at you taking a bath. But as you can see, you’re safe with Petucan and me.”

Jack couldn’t remember ever having been angry with Ivanhoe before. He’d been upset and thrown his stuffed dog on the floor out of frustration but it had never been Ivanhoe’s fault. He had never blamed his dog for anything. Ivanhoe was the only friend he’d ever had.

“I’m sorry I told you off, Ivanhoe. I guess it was about time I took a bath.” When suddenly, “Hey! I’m all dry! How did I get all dry?” he wondered out loud.

“Satya knew you were unhappy being all wet,” explained Petucan. “Satya made you all dry. And whether you fall in or dive in, it’s good to get wet now and again. If you never got wet, you’d never learn how to swim.”

“Where is Satya?” asked Jack as he turned his head from side-to-side.

“Satya is here. You only have to look,” replied Petucan.

Jack looked very hard indeed. He looked all around him. He looked up at the trees and around the big rocks. He looked down into the pool of water, but he only saw his reflection staring back at him.

“I still can’t see Satya,” said Jack.

“Then perhaps you are not ready to see,” Petucan continued. “The quieter you are, the easier it is to see.”

Jack thought about this. He’d spent plenty of time sitting quietly under the weeping willow tree but had never seen Satya. He wanted to meet Satya, the dreamer of all dreams. “Can you help me look?” he asked.

Petucan smiled. “Let’s go and visit Patrick the leprechaun. He can guide you to a very quiet place. Then you can meet Satya.”

“A leprechaun? I’ve never met a leprechaun before. Where does Patrick live?”

“Oh, not very far from here. There’s a sandcastle on the beach about one hundred and eight miles away. That’s where we’ll find Patrick,” he answered smiling at the surprise on Jack’s face.

“A hundred and eight miles!” Jack repeated. “That’s a very long way. How do we get there?” he asked.

“The same way we got to the waterfall,” replied Petucan. “Just think of a sandy beach with a very big sandcastle.”

## CHAPTER 4

# THE GIANT SANDCASTLE

**N**o sooner had the thought popped into his head, Jack found himself face-to-face with a very big sandy door. As he looked around, he could see the foamy waves rolling along the coast. Seagulls played in and out of the surf as turtles scurried for the open sea.

Jack turned back towards the sandcastle. It was completely made of sand from top to bottom.

“Wow, that’s the biggest sandcastle I’ve ever seen,” exclaimed Jack, “but it’s not as big as a regular house.”

“A house is a house,” said Petucan simply.

Upon hearing these words, Ivanhoe stopped running in the sand and began to sing in his deep voice, “Behind a quiet door you’re safe and secure. When you turn your key, you can sit and be.”

Jack patted his best friend and ran his hand over the bumpy brown fur. Before Petucan could stop him, Jack turned around and boldly knocked upon the sandy door. The bold knock rippled throughout the door as the walls started to vibrate from front to back. The roof shook and soon the whole sandcastle was swaying back-and-forth and from side-to-side.

“Quick, run!” cried Petucan.

Jack ran from the shaking sandcastle with Ivanhoe in his wake. Petucan was not far from their side. They all turned their heads just in time to see the whole sandcastle collapse into a big sandy heap. As fast as he could, Jack ran back to the big pile of sand and fell to his knees digging hurriedly with his bare hands.

“QUICK, HELP ME!” shouted Jack.

Petucan and Ivanhoe stood watching Jack as he continued to dig desperately into the sand with both hands.

“What are you doing?” asked Petucan.

“Patrick is buried in the sand. We have to dig him out. Please help,” pleaded Jack.

“How do you know he was home?” asked Petucan with a smile.

Before Jack could even think about it, he heard a very cheerful laughing song coming along the shore. As he squinted his eyes in the sunlight, he could make out a tiny figure jauntily walking towards them.

The song grew louder as the figure got closer.

“Well, well, well. What’er we ‘ere den?” asked the small rounded figure in a strange accent. The strange accent matched the strange clothes the leprechaun wore. Patrick had on bright yellow pants with fat blue suspenders holding them up. The fat blue suspenders lay over a pink and green polka-dot shirt. He wore a black top hat with a large red Christmas bow on the front. Shiny silver buckles graced his brown leather shoes. All in all, he didn’t seem like the typical leprechaun one read about in a children’s book.

Jack looked very afraid as he searched the red-cheeked face for sympathy. After all, it had been an accident. It had never crossed his mind that the sandcastle would fall down when he knocked on the sandy door. Instead of answering, Jack sat down and began to cry. He felt so guilty that he had knocked down the leprechaun’s home.

Ivanhoe licked the salty tears from Jack’s face. He didn’t like to see his master so unhappy. It made him unhappy too.

“I’m s’ s’ sorry,” stuttered Jack through his sobs, blaming himself for the home falling apart.

“Now, now den young man, stop yer cryin’. Ders no real damage dat ‘er done,” said the leprechaun.

With that, Patrick started to laugh. In fact, he laughed so hard, he had to hold on to his large round belly to stop it from shaking. He laughed and laughed. Soon, his whole body quivered with laughter.

The laughing was infectious. Ivanhoe began to snuffle and snort then rolled in the sand barking out laughs. Unable to help himself, Petucan began to titter with laughter, which got louder and louder.

Jack, who normally had a hard time smiling let alone laughing, could not believe his eyes and ears. He stood back up and looked from the leprechaun to Petucan and then to Ivanhoe listening to their chorus of laughter.

“What could be so funny? Are they laughing at me or the knocked-down sandcastle?” he asked himself. “Am I having a good dream or a bad dream?” he asked out loud.

It was a long time before they could all stop laughing and a very long time before Jack’s question was answered.

“We ain’t laughin’ at you, me sonny boy,” said the leprechaun. “Ain’t nice to laugh at nobody,” he continued.

“Then what’s so funny?” asked Jack as he wiped the tears from his face feeling a little better.

“Tis good to laugh. Yer gotta laugh and laugh out loud,” said the leprechaun. “You can cry if you want to but laughin’s better.”

“But your home. It’s fallen down. It’s all gone,” said a confused Jack.

“Dat der ‘ouse ain’t me ‘ome, sonny boy. You’ll ne’r trap me in an ‘ouse. And anyways, what youngen doesn’t like knockin’ down sandcastles? It’s every boy’s dream t’ knock down a giant sandcastle. I ‘av a lot o’ fun buildin’ ‘em and knockin’ ‘em down. If I didn’t knock ‘em down, the tide ‘ll take ‘em. Nothin’ lasts ferever.”

“Then where do you live?” asked Jack very much relieved.

“Me, sonny boy, lives in a very quiet place where de silence is me windows,” answered the leprechaun.

“Oh! Do you mean the quiet place that I’m looking for?” asked Jack. “Petucan told me about it. Is it the same place where Satya lives?”

“Me beloved Satya. So dat’s what yer ‘ere fer. To find Satya,” stated Patrick as if he already knew.

“Can you tell me which way to go to find the quiet place?” asked Jack.

“Course I can. I live dere, don’t I? You don’t ‘ave to go far. All you ‘ave to do is be quiet,” answered the leprechaun simply.

“Be quiet?” thought Jack to himself. “I’m always quiet.”

It was the quietness that helped make Jack invisible so he wasn’t picked on. If the bullies couldn’t hear him, he could become so small they wouldn’t notice him and chase him. It was easy for Jack to be quiet. The quietness was his escape. But Jack had never ever tried to be quiet when the bullies weren’t around. That’s when he would talk to Ivanhoe, out of earshot of the other kids so they wouldn’t think he was dumb. He certainly didn’t need to give them any more

excuses to pick on him. Quietness was his natural defense but sometimes, it was not enough to be quiet. Sometimes, the bullies could see through the quietness and then in one long chant as they chased him, he would hear, “Happy Jack, Happy Jack, run far away. Happy Jack, Happy Jack, don’t you come back.”

Perhaps this was just a silly dream after all, but at least right now, he wasn’t being chased by bullies. Jack decided he had nothing to lose because he had already lost everything. He decided he would be quiet so he could try and find the quiet place.

“How long do I have to be quiet for?” he asked.

“You’ll ‘ave to be quiet fer as long as it takes, sonny boy. If yer can’t be quiet, yer can’t find the quiet place. If yer can’t find the quiet place, yer can’t find Satya,” answered the leprechaun.

Even though he thought this was a silly dream, Jack wanted to find the quiet place, so he could meet Satya, the dreamer of all dreams. He thought he would try anything or go to anyone who could help him put an end to all of his nightmares. So, Jack became very quiet. He never spoke a word.



## CHAPTER 5

### MONKEY MIND

Jack had a hard time listening to the quiet. He could still hear the sea. He could hear the wind. He could hear all the thoughts that came popping into his head. His thoughts began to argue with themselves. One thought said he was stupid and told him to wake up. Another thought told him to stay asleep because then he could avoid the bullies in the real world. Another thought told him this world was as real as any other world, and

another thought told him he should run away from the real world because there was only unhappiness living there.

The harder Jack concentrated on being quiet, the louder his thoughts screamed in his head, bickering and throwing words at each other. Jack thought his head was about to explode.

“STOP,” shouted Jack.

His mind wouldn't shut up. Not for a second. It was like a cacophony of monkeys all screeching at one another inside his head.

“Jack, Jack, it's okay,” assured Petucan as he gently shook him.

Jack hadn't realized he'd closed his eyes, and when he opened them, he was shocked to find himself standing under a great big tree. To his horror, the tree was the same monkey puzzle tree that stood right outside his bedroom window as if barring any escape. Looking up, he saw that the tree had grown. It was over a hundred feet tall, and Jack knew the tree was looking down at him. He looked at the branch right by his face. He saw the thick, tough, scaly leaves. They were fat triangles with sharp-tipped edges aimed at his eyes. The noise in his head hadn't stopped. As Jack looked around, he saw that the tree was surrounded by hundreds of small chattering monkeys. He took a step back and quickly turned away, running as fast as he could run, not caring if he stepped on their tails.

Petucan and Ivanhoe ran after him crying for him to stop. It was only when Jack got a stitch in his side that he collapsed on the jungle floor.

“A jungle?” Jack exclaimed. “I’m in a jungle! This isn’t a quiet place! It’s a JUNGLE!”

Petucan and Ivanhoe caught up and flopped to the ground next to Jack.

“A jungle!” accused Jack as he looked at Petucan. “The monkey puzzle tree!” he cried. “What am I doing here?”

And in his deep voice came the reply, “It’s not such a puzzle when your thoughts are a-muzzle. You had to take flight because you can’t sit and be quiet.”

“Ivanhoe, that’s not fair. There were monkeys fighting in my head and now I’m in a jungle with a monster monkey puzzle tree surrounded by hundreds of screeching monkeys that won’t shut up,” cried Jack. “I bet even those monkeys are afraid to climb that tree,” he finished.

In answer, Ivanhoe sang in his deep voice, “You will see it’s only a tree. Over one thousand years, it’s heard all the tears.”

“What do you mean?” asked Jack.

Petucan explained that the monkey puzzle tree had stood for over a thousand years. Even the thick juicy leaves lasted for over twenty-five years before new growth appeared. The monkeys would gather around the base of the tree because its top was like a big umbrella. The monkeys could sit in the shade and cool down.

“But there are lots of trees in the jungle. Why’d the monkeys pick that one if they can’t climb it?” asked Jack.

“It’s a special tree because it’s a rare puzzle tree,” answered Petucan. “And because the monkeys like to monkey around it,” he continued.

“What’s so special about it? Now I’m puzzled.”

“When the monkeys want to know something, they think about what it is they want to know. They do this while sitting under the monkey puzzle tree, and the tree puzzles out their thoughts. That’s how they learn what to do and how to live. The monkeys call it the ‘Tree of All-Knowing.’”

As Jack looked back in the direction he had ran from, he could see the tree standing tall and proud. It was almost majestic as it towered above the canopy of the jungle. Jack could see the sun as it sparkled between the thick rubbery leaves, even at this distance.

Ivanhoe looked in the same direction and sang in his deep voice, “The tree would be kind and read your mind. Unless it’s no matter if your mind is a-chatter.”

“Of course, it matters, Ivanhoe. If Jack can’t be quiet, especially with his monkey mind all a-chatter, he won’t find the quiet place and can’t meet Satya,” Petucan responded.

“I’m scared,” said Jack. “I’m worried in case the tree wants to hurt me. It’s very big and sharp and it frightens me.”

“The leaves are only sharp so the tree can protect itself. It protects itself from the chattering monkeys. That’s how it’s stood for a thousand years. All of nature protects itself especially from humans who tend to rip into it without thinking of the consequences. Nature

has a way of fighting back. But you don't have to worry, because this particular tree is a very rare puzzle tree. It will help you. It will stand and listen and then help solve the puzzles in your head. Once you tell it your fears and your worries, then your fears won't be so worrisome," explained Petucan.

As Jack looked at the tree once more, it seemed to stand with grandeur just like the toy dinosaurs on his bedside table. He'd often imagined riding on the back of a dinosaur, crashing through a jungle, slashing his sword as the bullies ran out of his way.

"Let's go back to the monkey puzzle tree and find out why your mind can't be quiet," suggested Petucan.

Jack agreed, albeit a little reluctantly, and off the three went, heading back to the circle of chattering monkeys that surrounded the giant tree. Upon closer inspection, the thick bark looked weathered and almost charred. There were long cucumber-shaped cones and other cones that were round and fat. Petucan explained that the tree was like a living fossil and that particular species of tree had been around since the time of the dinosaurs.

"I knew it!" said Jack looking at the reptile scale leaves that wrapped their way around the thick branches. "But what're those?" he asked pointing.

"They're cones that produce seeds, which you can eat. The long ones are male and the round ones are female."

That made Jack giggle, and then he looked down because he thought he was being rude. He could tell Petucan knew what he was smiling at.

“It’s nice to see you smile, Jack,” said Petucan.

Jack couldn’t understand why he suddenly felt he had been caught out. Quickly changing the subject, he asked, “How come the tree has boy cones and girl cones?”

“Sometimes, that happens in nature. Sometimes, a monkey puzzle tree will produce both male and female cones,” answered Petucan.

Jack couldn’t help snickering and voiced some of the words he had learnt in the children’s home.

“Jack,” admonished Petucan, “you know how you feel when people call you names. Nature, by its very name, is natural. Look how tall and proud this tree stands, and that’s not all; it inspires the monkeys to be kind to each other. That’s why they like this tree so much. It teaches them to stop fighting amongst themselves.”

“I guess it’s not a monster after all,” said Jack a little chastised. “It’s a monster of a tree an’ all, but I don’t think it wants to hurt me. It’d hurt a monkey’s hands and feet though if a monkey tried to climb it,” he continued as he looked around at the gaily chattering monkeys.

“Monkeys are smarter than you think. That’s why you don’t see them trying to climb it. Monkeys just want to learn. That’s why they chatter so much. If they don’t understand what they’re learning,

they argue continuously,” explained Petucan. “They come to this tree because it’s so old. They share their thoughts with the monkey puzzle tree until the answers come to them. The tree helps them puzzle out their questions. It’s the oldest tree in the jungle. It’s been around since before the monkeys, so it knows how the monkeys came to exist. It helps the monkeys look back so they can then look forward. If you don’t have a history, then you can’t have a future.”

With these words, the fear started to creep up Jack’s legs. He could feel the fear settle into his body slithering to the tips of his fingers and crawling to the top of his head. The hair at the back of his neck began to stand up. He felt the rays of the sun prick his skin as they darted through the leaves.

“I want to leave now,” complained Jack.

Ivanhoe whined as he smelt the fear emanating from his master. Even though he was ready to fight, his tail curled between his legs.

“Why are you afraid?” asked Petucan.

“I don’t wanna look back,” answered Jack. “That’s where nightmares live.”

“If you can’t see your past, you can’t look to your future,” stated Petucan. “You’ll always be living in limbo. There’s nothing to worry about, Jack. You’re safe with me and Ivanhoe.”

“What makes you so sure?” asked Jack.

“Because the past is in the pages of your memory, and the future hasn’t happened. There is only now, Jack. Just this very moment. Don’t you feel safe right now?”

Doubt began to lodge itself in Jack's head. "You're a liar. Just like everyone else. Everyone says I'm safe and things will get better, but they don't. They only get worse," he accused. "No one tells the truth. No one cares. No one wants me. My mom didn't want me. My dad didn't want me. All the other kids don't wanna play with me. They bully me and call me names. I hate it. I hate it. I hate this jungle. I hate this dream and I HATE MONKEYS!"

The words vomited out of Jack's mouth as he fell to the ground sobbing, hiccupping and gasping for breath. He felt like he was dying. He felt sick. Sick of being afraid. Sick of running. Just sick.

It seemed like eons had passed when Jack raised his head. He felt empty, as if poison had been lanced from his body. The emptiness was almost sweet. His sour words had spewed forth along with his bad memories. The memories hung in the air. Memories of his past. Memories of a door slamming. Memories of a police officer taking him by the hand.

The monkeys looked on without a sound. Even the chattering in his mind had gone. There was just a pleasant quiet calm. It was as if the calm was caressing him from the inside.

As Jack looked at the monkeys, a young one came gingerly towards him, stretched out its hand and offered him a banana. Jack looked into the deep, velvety eyes of the young monkey, and realized he was hungry. He peeled the banana and ate it gratefully, patting the monkey on the head. Then, as banana after banana were offered to him by the other monkeys, he ate another and another. No matter

how many bananas he ate, he still felt hungry. There was something more Jack needed. Something was missing.

“The monkey puzzle tree has absorbed your bad memories. It’s heard your words and read your thoughts. It will keep your memories, just like history is stored with words in a book. The monkey puzzle tree feeds off history good and bad, happy or sad. Trees are record keepers and this particular tree has more records than any other living tree. If trees disappeared, there will be no records to tell that we even existed. There will be no present, no past and therefore no future,” explained Petucan.

Jack felt as if he’d been massaged on the inside with calmness, or was it the bananas sliding down his belly? He took a deep breath and felt the pain leave as he exhaled. He was no longer afraid of the monkey puzzle tree. He wanted to hug it and he did just that. The trunk was so large, his hands didn’t meet. He felt the warmth seeping from the rough bark into his body. He felt as if he had made a friend. He realized then that he was not alone. He had Ivanhoe, Petucan and the monkey puzzle tree. The monkeys, having witnessed another puzzle beginning to unravel, smiled up at him as they gently rose and walked happily back into the foliage of the jungle, disappearing one-by-one.

It was the first time Jack had spoken about his past, albeit in rage, fear and blame. When he looked at Petucan and Ivanhoe, he knew he could trust them. He knew they wouldn’t judge him,

ridicule him and call him names. He knew it with all his heart. And his heart grew warm.

“What do we do now?” asked Jack, looking around. “Can we still find the quiet place?”

“Of course, we can. There’s a cosmic blueprint that lives in all things. That’s how we can find anything we want to, even if it tries to hide from us. We all have a map within us to wherever we want to go. This universal map guides the birds so they know how to fly south. It guides the flowers so they face towards the sun. The rivers of life follow the map so they can become one with the ocean. But, where do you want to go? What is it that you really want, Jack?” asked Petucan.

Jack thought about this. “I don’t want anything,” he replied. “I just... I just wish...”

“What do you wish, Jack?” prompted Petucan.

“I wish my mom and dad hadn’t thrown me away.” There, he said it, but only to himself. Jack had always wished for a family—a normal family with a mom and dad. Maybe even a sister.

“I just wish. That’s all,” he snapped.

“We’re in Dhyāna Land, Jack. You can dream for a wish.”

“Really?” thought Jack. “I can dream for a wish and my wish will come true?” he asked out loud.

“What will come true is exactly what you wish for,” answered Petucan.

Jack was skeptical, and even though he trusted Petucan, he couldn't admit what he truly wished for, especially in this strange place. Anything could happen, and he believed that nothing good would happen. Two years ago, his whole life had been turned upside down. His whole world had fallen apart with the slamming of a door. He secretly wished the door had never slammed. He secretly wished for his mom and dad.

"So, what do you wish for, Jack?" asked Petucan breaking into his thoughts.

Wishing his mom and dad had never left him; he stayed tight lipped. He wanted to hope that what Petucan said was true. He wanted to make a wish. But he also knew deep down that if you told someone your wish, it wouldn't come true. You had to keep a wish to yourself.

"Don't you have a wish?" asked Petucan.

"I might," answered Jack with a sullen voice. Then more forcibly than he meant to, "Yes, I do. I DO have a wish," he said taking them all by surprise.

"Why don't you make your wish now?" prompted Petucan.

Jack's longing for a family overcame his doubt. He closed his eyes picturing his wish, hoping his wish would come true. He tried and he tried, squeezing his eyes hard enough so they began to water. But for all he was worth, he couldn't remember what his mom and dad had looked like. He couldn't remember their faces, no matter

how hard he tried. In fact, the harder he concentrated, the more distant the image became until there was nothing but a teary blur.

A sob caught in his throat as he opened his eyes. He wiped away a tear with the back of his hand before it had a chance to fall. But as he opened his mouth to tell Petucan he couldn't make a wish, he closed it. He found he was no longer standing in a jungle. He stood in a small meadow of bright-colored wildflowers. Petucan and Ivanhoe stood by his side wagging their tails with delight.

"Is this what you wished for?" asked Petucan hopping around. "This is a very nice place."

Jack looked around without answering. There were trees surrounding the edge of the meadow that were of all different shapes and sizes. He'd never seen so many. The grass in the meadow was lush and rippled like waves in the gentle breeze. The sun shone down as clouds drifted blissfully across the day like a paint brush offering shade.

Amazed and a little disoriented, Jack asked, "What's this place?"

"Perhaps you wished to be here," answered Petucan.

"No," he responded. "I wanted a wish, but I don't know where this is. I wanted a wish but couldn't picture it in my head," he said, still not wanting Petucan to know his secret wish.

"Even though you couldn't picture what it is you wanted, you did want a wish. Perhaps this is where you'll find a wish," replied Petucan as if a wish were a thing you could carry around with you.

And in his deep voice, Ivanhoe sang, “You wanted a wish because something’s amiss. A mom and a dad so you won’t be so sad.”

“Well, I guess the dog’s out of the bag now. Now you both know my wish,” said Jack a little peeved. “I do want my mom and dad back so I can have a real home and be like the other kids at school. I don’t want to bounce around anymore. It’s not fair,” admitted Jack turning away as the sadness started to creep back in when, “Oops... Whoa... Ouch.” Jack had landed on all fours. “Dang, what was that?”

Jack sat up and spotted a rusty handle sticking out of the ground. “So, that’s what I tripped over,” he said pointing as he got back to his feet. He drew his foot back to kick it out of the way.

“Stop,” cried Petucan. “It’s a lamp.”

“It’s a rusty teapot. Someone must’ve dropped it. Perhaps they were having a picnic,” said Jack.

“You can’t make a cup of tea in the middle of a meadow. That’s just plain silly,” said Petucan. “I’m sure it’s a lamp. It’s not round like a teapot and its spout is very long.”

Jack picked up the lamp. It was rusty. Really, really rusty.