

小猴子和它的三个「明天再说」

皮皮是小猴子，看完《西游记》戏台表演后，它逢猴就说要学七十二变。可它嘴里的七十二变，第一天在树上，第二天还在树上，因为练习的事它都推给了明天。它一共说过三次「明天再说」，每一次都连着一「差一点」。

第一次「明天再说」发生在爬树课。猫头鹰师傅教「快爬」：从这棵树换到那棵树，不许落地。皮皮今天爬了三遍，第三遍差一点就接上了，它心想：今天有点累，明天再说，明天肯定能成。第二天它到了树下，发现昨天差一点的那个动作，手该抓哪根枝又忘了，只好从头再来。它这才明白：差一点的时候收手，明天要从「差很多」开始。练本领像烧水，烧到八十度熄火，第二天从冷水重新烧。

第二次「明天再说」发生在搬木头课。师傅让它把一根小木头从东坡搬到西坡，练力气和走直线。皮皮搬了一半，木头压在草坡上，它想：反正明天还要练，先放这儿吧。结果夜里下雨，木头滚进了沟里。第二天它得先捞木头，再搬木头，捞木头比搬木头还累。它明白了：今天的事放一半，明天先赔一半。

第三次「明天再说」发生在认路课。师傅让它闭眼从溪边走回洞口，数清楚过几块石头。皮皮走到一半睁开眼偷看，心想明天再认真闭眼走。结果第二天它数到第七块石头就乱了，因为昨天它根本没记住前六块长什么样。它明白了：偷的懒，明天要双倍补。

三次「差一点」之后，皮皮在戏台底下又看《西游记》。它这次注意到一个细节：孙悟空学艺时，师兄们都在玩，它在灶边劈柴烧火，劈了七年。皮皮问戏班老师傅：「孙悟空没说过明天再说吗？」老师傅说：「台上一场戏，台下七年柴。你只看见七十二变，没看见灶边的七年。」皮皮当晚回去，把三样没练完的事各做了一遍，每样只做五分钟。它发现五分钟比它想的短，做完还想做。第二天它主动提前到树下，第三天也是。它给自己定了个新规矩，不叫「每天练一个时辰」，叫「先做五分钟」——因为「明天再说」的反面不是「明天开始」，是「今天先做五分钟」。

后来皮皮没学会七十二变，它学会了爬树最快、搬木头走直线、闭眼认路。狐狸问它：「你不是要学七十二变吗？」皮皮说：「七十二变是别人的本领，我的本领是我自己一天一天攒的。」它现在劝别的猴子只用一句话：「你昨天说的『明天再说』，今天变成『差一点』了吗？」

The Little Monkey and Its Three 'I'll Do It Tomorrow's

Pipi was a little monkey. After watching the stage play of Journey to the West, he told every monkey he met that he would learn the seventy-two transformations. But his seventy-two transformations stayed in the tree on day one and still in the tree on day two, because he kept putting practice off until tomorrow. He said 'I'll do it tomorrow' three times in total, and each one was followed by a 'so close, yet not quite.'

The first 'tomorrow' happened in tree-climbing class. Master Owl taught 'fast

climb': leap from this tree to that one without touching the ground. Pipi climbed three rounds that day; on the third he almost made the catch. He thought: a bit tired today, I'll do it tomorrow - tomorrow I'll surely make it. Next day he arrived at the tree and found he'd forgotten which branch his hand should grab in that almost-move, so he had to start over. That's when he understood: quit at 'almost,' and tomorrow starts at 'far from it.' Training a skill is like boiling water - kill the flame at eighty degrees, and the next day you start from cold water again.

The second 'tomorrow' happened in log-carrying class. The master told him to carry a small log from the east slope to the west slope, training strength and straight-line walking. Pipi carried half, propped the log on the grassy slope, and thought: I'll practice again tomorrow anyway, leave it here. It rained at night, and the log rolled into the ditch. The next day he had to fish the log out first, then carry it - fishing was harder than carrying. He understood: leave today's work half-done, and tomorrow you pay half back first.

The third 'tomorrow' happened in pathfinding class. The master had him walk from the stream back to the cave mouth with eyes shut, counting how many stones he crossed. Halfway, Pipi opened one eye to peek, thinking he'd walk seriously with eyes shut tomorrow. Next day he lost count at the seventh stone, because yesterday he had never actually memorized what the first six looked like. He understood: laziness stolen today must be repaid double tomorrow.

After three 'so close' moments, Pipi watched Journey to the West again beneath the stage. This time he noticed a detail: when Sun Wukong was apprenticed, while his senior brothers played, he split firewood and tended the stove by the kitchen - seven years of it. Pipi asked the old troupe master: 'Did Sun Wukong ever say I'll do it tomorrow?' The old master said: 'One show on stage, seven years of firewood offstage. You only see the seventy-two transformations; you never saw the seven years by the stove.' That night Pipi went back and finished all three unfinished drills, five minutes each. He found five minutes shorter than he'd feared, and he wanted more when they were done. The next day he arrived at the tree early on his own, and the day after that too. He set himself a new rule, not 'practice one shichen a day' but 'do five minutes first' - because the opposite of 'I'll do it tomorrow' is not 'I'll start tomorrow,' it is 'do five minutes today first.'

Later Pipi never learned the seventy-two transformations. He learned to climb trees fastest, carry logs in a straight line, and find his way with eyes shut. A fox asked him: 'Weren't you going to learn the seventy-two transformations?' Pipi said: 'Seventy-two transformations are someone else's skill. My skills are ones I saved up day by day myself.' Now he persuades other monkeys with just one sentence: 'That "I'll do it tomorrow" you said yesterday - has it become "so close, yet not quite" today?'