

小猴子学七十二变：把本领拆成每天练一点的方法

山脚下住着一只小猴子，名叫团团。团团最爱听《西游记》，听到孙悟空变成小虫钻进铁扇公主的肚子里，它就拍着巴掌喊：「我也要学七十二变！」第二天一早，团团背着干粮，上山去找老山羊拜师——老山羊是山里最有名的师傅，谁想学本领都找它。团团一开口就说：「师傅，我要学七十二变，今天先学变大，明天学变小，后天学飞！」老山羊捋了捋胡子，问：「你打算练几天？」团团拍拍胸脯：「练到学会为止！」

老山羊没教它变大，也没教它变小，只教了第一招：变成一块石头。规则很简单，站在大青石旁边，一动不动，心里数一百下，数完还不被松鼠当成真石头来坐，就算没学会。团团第一天数到三十就痒得抓耳朵，松鼠没来；第二天数到五十，尾巴自己扫起了灰；第三天它干脆不数了，跑去追蝴蝶。晚上它坐在洞口想：七十二变有七十二招，一天学一招也要学两个月，我连一块石头都变不成，还学什么变？它决定不学了，把干粮袋子往老山羊门口一放，转身就走。

走到半山腰，它看见老山羊正教小野猪练拱土。小野猪拱一下，土只翻起一点点，它拱了整整一个下午，翻出的土堆成了一个小丘。老山羊看见团团，就说了一句：「它今天也没学会拱地，它只是比昨天多拱了一点。」团团愣在原地。它回去把干粮袋子拿了回来，问老山羊：「那我到底该怎么学？」

老山羊给它定了一个办法，就三条。第一条：每天只练一招，这一招学不会，第二天还练它，不许换。第二条：每天只练一个时辰，太阳偏西就收工，不许加练，也不许逃课。第三条：在洞口墙上刻正字，练一天刻一笔，谁也不许擦。团团觉得这办法太慢了，但它还是照做了。第一天刻一笔，练的还是变石头；第五天，松鼠第一次把它当成了真石头，一屁股坐上来，它憋不住笑出了声，松鼠吓得蹦起三尺高。老山羊说：「笑出来就算没学会，明天继续。」

团团在墙上刻了三十多笔，才学会第一招变石头。接着学变树，变树要连根站稳，它练了二十来天。再学变水缸，学变小石头，一招比一招难，墙上的正字一列一列地长。半年过去，团团学会了七招。它离七十二变还差得远，可它已经不再说「我要一天学会」这种话了。有一天，小兔子问它：「你为什么什么都能变一点？」团团指了指洞墙上密密麻麻的正字，说：「不是我厉害，是我每天只练一点，练的日子多。」

后来团团成了山里最耐心的小猴子，谁学本领半途而废，它就领谁去看那面墙。它说：孙悟空的七十二变也是一招一招练出来的，本领要练，坚持才行。墙上的正字不会骗猴子。

The Little Monkey Learns the 72 Transformations: A Method of Practicing a Little Every Day

At the foot of the mountain lived a little monkey named Tuantuan. Tuantuan loved listening to Journey to the West. When the story got to Sun Wukong turning into a bug and slipping into Princess Iron Fan's belly, he clapped and shouted: 'I want to learn the seventy-two transformations too!' Early the next morning, Tuantuan packed dried food and climbed the mountain to apprentice under Old Goat - the most famous teacher

in the hills, whom everyone went to for skills. Tuantuan's first words were: 'Master, I want to learn the seventy-two transformations. Today teach me to grow big, tomorrow to shrink small, the day after to fly!' Old Goat stroked his beard and asked: 'How many days do you plan to practice?' Tuantuan thumped his chest: 'Until I've learned it!'

Old Goat taught him neither growing big nor shrinking small. He taught only the first trick: turning into a stone. The rule was simple – stand beside the big blue boulder without moving, count to one hundred in your head, and if a squirrel still doesn't come and sit on you as if you were a real stone, you haven't learned it. On day one Tuantuan got an itch and scratched his ears at thirty; no squirrel came. On day two he reached fifty when his tail swept up dust by itself. On day three he stopped counting altogether and went chasing butterflies. That night, sitting at the cave mouth, he thought: seventy-two transformations means seventy-two tricks; one trick a day still takes two months, and I can't even become a stone – what am I learning? He decided to quit, left his food bag at Old Goat's door, and turned to go.

Halfway down the slope, he saw Old Goat teaching a little wild boar to root the soil. One push turned up barely any dirt, but the boar rooted the whole afternoon until the turned soil piled into a small mound. Old Goat spotted Tuantuan and said just one thing: 'He didn't master rooting today either. He just rooted a little more than yesterday.' Tuantuan froze on the spot. He went back, fetched his food bag, and asked Old Goat: 'So how exactly should I learn?'

Old Goat set him a method with three rules. Rule one: practice only one trick a day; if you haven't learned it, keep practicing it tomorrow – no switching. Rule two: practice only one shichen a day – quit when the sun tilts west; no extra practice, and no skipping. Rule three: carve tally marks on the wall at the cave mouth, one stroke per practiced day, and nobody may erase them. Tuantuan thought this was far too slow, but he did it anyway. Day one: one stroke, still practicing the stone. On day five, a squirrel mistook him for a real stone and plopped down on him; he couldn't hold back a laugh, and the squirrel jumped three feet high. Old Goat said: 'Laughing means you haven't learned it. Continue tomorrow.'

Tuantuan carved more than thirty strokes before he mastered the first trick, the stone. Next came the tree – becoming a tree means standing rooted, and he practiced twenty-some days. Then the water jar, then the little pebble. Each trick was harder than the last, and the tally marks grew column after column on the wall. Half a year passed, and Tuantuan had learned seven tricks. He was still far from seventy-two, but he never again said things like 'I'll learn it in a day.' One day a little rabbit asked him: 'How come you can turn into a little bit of everything?' Tuantuan pointed at the dense tally marks on the cave wall and said: 'It's not that I'm amazing. It's that I practice only a little each day, and the days add up.'

Later Tuantuan became the most patient little monkey in the hills. Whenever someone gave up halfway on a skill, he took them to see that wall. He said: Sun Wukong's seventy-two transformations were trained one trick at a time too. Skills must be practiced, and persistence is what works. The tally marks on the wall don't lie to monkeys.