



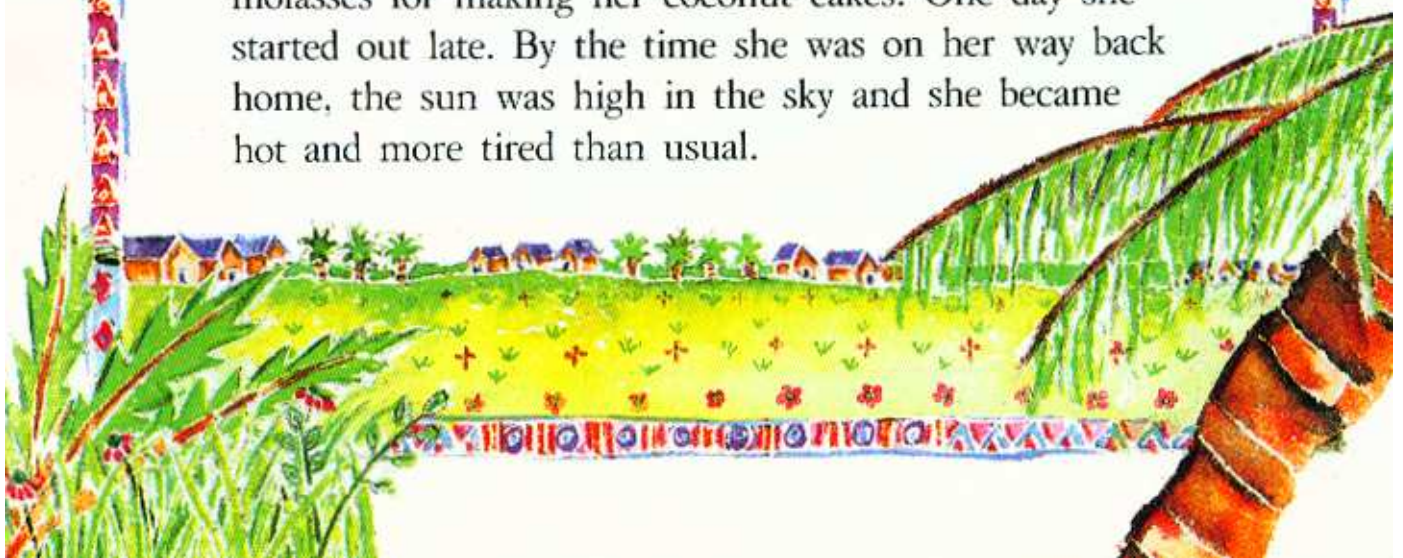
# How Trouble Made the Monkey Eat Pepper

*as told by Rita Cox  
Illustrated by Farida Zaman*

*Crick, crack.  
Monkey break me back.*

Ma Minnie lived in a tiny village in Trinidad, on the Islands. All the children around knew Ma Minnie, for she made her living selling the most delicious cakes and sweets, which she made herself. Oh, the smells that came from Ma Minnie's backyard where she baked and cooked all the day long!

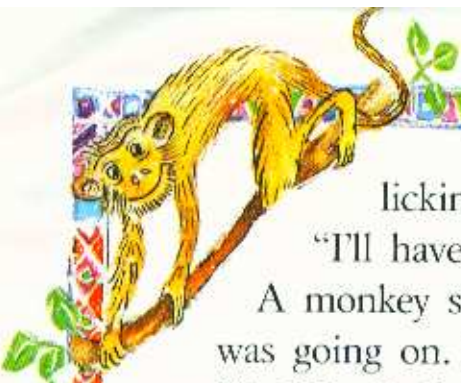
Once a week this old lady went to market to buy molasses for making her coconut cakes. One day she started out late. By the time she was on her way back home, the sun was high in the sky and she became hot and more tired than usual.





So there Ma Minnie was, walking through the tall trees with a gourd of molasses on her head. She stubbed her foot against a stone, and the gourd fell crashing to the ground with the molasses spreading out all over.

Poor Ma Minnie! She picked up a piece of the gourd to scoop up the thick, sweet syrup. She wailed: "Ah me, what trouble! Look at my trouble!"—all the while



licking her fingers. Then she continued sadly:  
“I’ll have to go right back to market. Ah me!”

A monkey sitting on a tree limb above observed what was going on. He was curious, especially when he saw Ma Minnie licking her fingers. When Ma Minnie had left, he scurried down and tasted the molasses. “If this is trouble, then trouble is sweet. I’d like to have some myself. I think I’ll go into town and buy some.”

So Brer Monkey dressed himself in his scissors-tail coat and his fine top hat, and he set out for the market. He stopped at the first shop. The shopkeeper was having a lively conversation with some friends when Brer Monkey said: “I’ve come to buy some trouble.”





Silence.

“Trouble? Do you know what trouble is?” asked the shopkeeper.

“Yes man, I know what trouble is and I want to buy all you have.”

“All right,” replied the shopkeeper. “Remember, you asked for it,” and he went to the back of the shop while his customers giggled.

Brer Monkey glared at them all.

The shopkeeper returned with a big bag. “Here is your trouble, sir. Now will you pay me, please?”

Brer Monkey paid the shopkeeper, took the bag, and left.

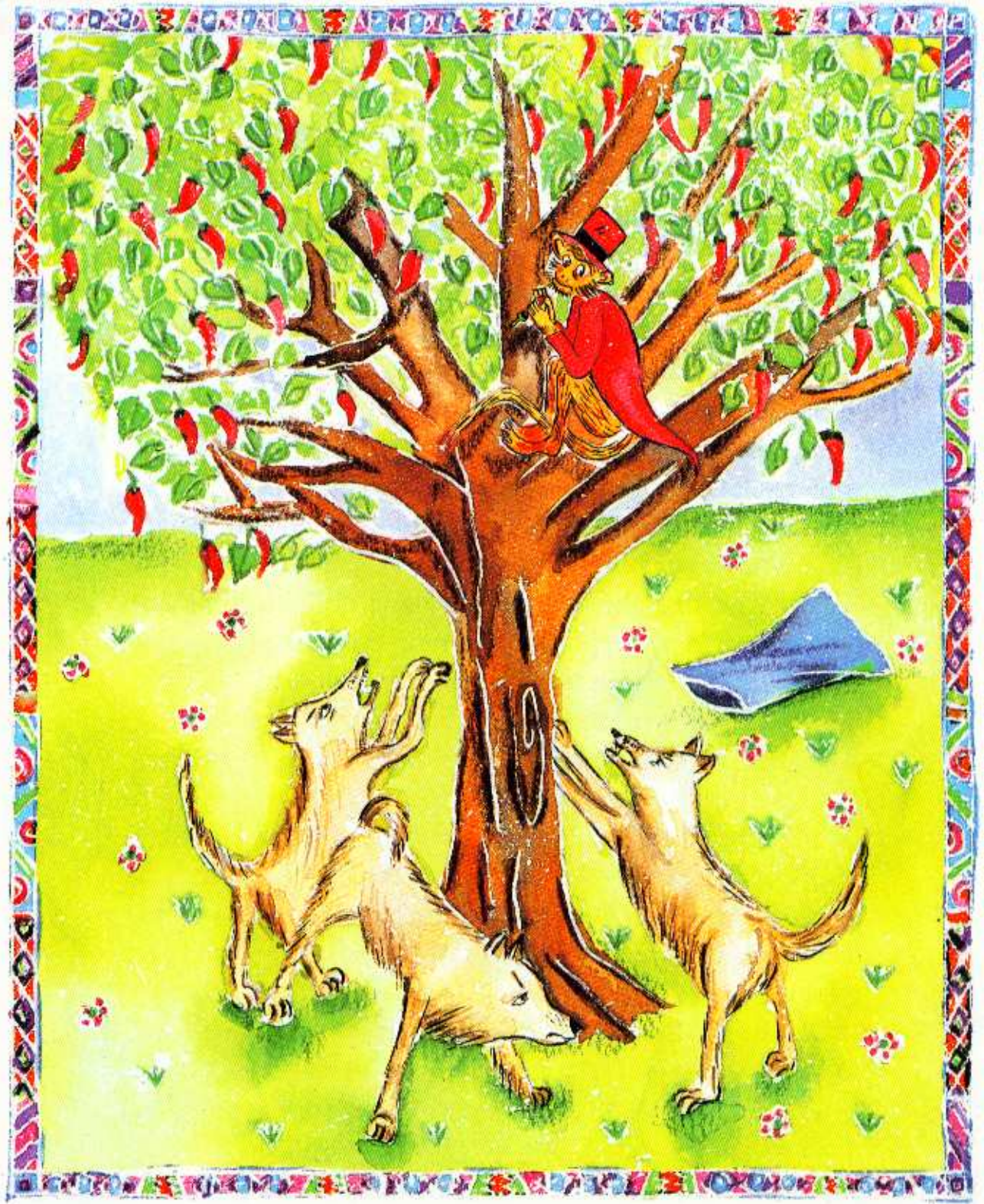
“Oh,” he thought as he went along, “this trouble is heavier than I thought. What strange sounds are coming from this bag, and it is so hot. I can’t wait to find a quiet place to stop and enjoy some of this trouble.”

At last he came to a clearing under some trees. He put his bag down, removed his hat, and licked his lips in anticipation. Then he sat down and untied the bag.

Out rushed three fierce, hungry dogs. Poor Brer Monkey! He rushed up the nearest tree to escape from the attackers, who stayed at the bottom barking and yelping.

Oh, Brer Monkey was so hot in his fine clothes—and so hungry, for he had eaten nothing all that day.

The dogs stayed beneath the tree for a long time, and



Brer Monkey grew hungrier and hungrier. The dogs didn't go away.

Finally, in desperation, Brer Monkey leaned over and picked a fruit from an overhanging branch and hungrily stuffed it into his mouth. How could he know it was a hot pepper tree?

Oh, did it burn! Oh, did it hurt! How Brer Monkey suffered!

At last, the dogs went away and Brer Monkey rushed down and threw himself, fine clothes and all, into a nearby stream.

And that is how trouble made the monkey eat pepper.

*I jumped on the wire and the wire bend,  
And that's the way the story end.*

