

The Legend of Banjo Robinson



This is the story of a fine silver tomcat, a cat of many whiskers, a cat of the world. This is the story of Banjo Robinson, the world's most marvellous global explorer.

When Banjo was a kitten he lived on the Robinson farm. There were lots of other cats on the farm and they spent their days doing proper cat things such as warming themselves in the airing cupboard, running headlong into paper bags, and choosing the best window sills for sitting-and-thinking-about-things.

But Banjo wasn't much like the other cats. Don't get me wrong, he liked a good airing cupboard as much as the next puss, but he also liked rather un-cat-like things such as windy days, riding in the tractor, and dogs. That's right, dogs! And cows, and sheep, and birds, and all the other animals on the farm for that matter. While the other cats rarely strayed more than meowing distance from the farmhouse, Banjo would roam right across the farm land and could often be found playing cards with the sheep dog, telling jokes to the piglets, or learning croaks from a local toad.

At dusk, he'd join the other cats for their nightly prowling and yowling and, as he looked up at the moon, he'd often wonder what lay beyond the farm fence.

'But Banjo, my dear, who cares?' old Oscar would mew, shaking his long whiskers, 'Everything a cat needs is right here: sofas to scratch, mice to annoy, Orla Robinson's homemade profiteroles...' Banjo agreed about the profiteroles, but wasn't there more to life than scratching furniture and bothering mice?

Then one spring morning, the Robinson farm had some unusual visitors. Swooping over the meadow was a flock of blue-winged birds. They were swallows who had flown many miles, all the way from a place called Egypt. Banjo being Banjo, he soon struck up conversation with one of the nifty little creatures. The bird was not much bigger than Banjo's paw but, to his amazement, she had flown half way round the world. She fluttered around Banjo, twittering about all the marvellous adventures she'd had in Egypt. She'd seen one of the longest rivers in the world, the river Nile. She'd almost been swallowed whole by a huge muddy beast called a hippopotamus. She'd learned about an ancient kind of writing called *hieroglyphs*, and had perched on top of a giant stone statue of something called a *sphinx*. A sphinx, Banjo was extremely tickled to learn, was a monster with the head of a person and the body of a cat.

'Don't ask me why', the swallow chirruped, 'but the ancient Egyptians were dotty about cats. You'd love it there! You see a lot of great stuff when you're way up high. Why don't you climb that tree and I'll show you?'

The swallow nodded towards the tallest tree on the farm. But Banjo wasn't sure,

'Oscar says cats shouldn't climb trees', he muttered. 'He says we'll get stuck and won't be able to get back down again'.

The swallow gave a big red-throated laugh. 'What a lot of hooley! Cats go up and down trees all the time. Pumas in Brazil, tigers in India. Believe me, I've seen it myself!'

Banjo felt a bit silly, but he had always fancied himself as a tree-climber and, in any case, what cat worth his whiskers lets a bird get the better of him? So, he stretched his claws, screwed up all his courage, and hurled himself at the tree-trunk. After a lot of scrabbling and clawing and tweets of encouragement, Banjo hauled himself onto the highest branch.

For the first time ever, Banjo saw past the pig-sty and the sheep pen and the chicken coop into the great, bright, busy, beautiful World Beyond.

And that, my friends, was that! By the time the sun had set, Banjo had stuffed his little brown rucksack with as many profiteroles as he could and had promised to write to Oscar and his other farmyard friends.

Since leaving Robinson farm, Banjo has been travelling this marvellous planet, meeting all kinds of excellent creatures (both cats and non-cats) and practising their many languages. Indeed, he is perfectly fluent in Toad, Toucan, and Arctic Fox, as well as human-speak!

And he has kept his promise to write to friends old and new. But if there is one thing he loves more than writing to his friends, it is when his friends write back with jokes, pictures and stories of their own. After all, adventures are so much more fun when you can share them, don't you think?