

The Legend of Banjo Robinson



This is the story of a cat who was told that he should stick to doing the same old thing in the same old spot every day - and who decided he wanted to do things a little bit differently. This is the story of a cat whose curiosity and bravery took him to places that he'd only ever dreamed of. This is a story of a cat called Banjo Robinson.

When he was born, Banjo had soft grey fur and the fluffiest white tummy for miles around. He grew up on the Robinson farm in beautiful green countryside. There were lots of other cats on the farm too: a tabby called Sukie, a small black cat with white paws known as Geronimo, and a long-haired, serious cat called Oscar with a booming meow and whiskers that looked like a fancy moustache.

Banjo was always a little bit different. He did of course like to sit in warm airing cupboards as much as the next cat (and he couldn't let a ball of wool roll by without chasing it), but there were some things that made Banjo rather unique. Firstly, he was extremely curious about other types of animal; the hairy ones, the scary ones, even the ones who spoke different languages. The other cats usually stuck together, but Banjo was often found playing cards with a sheepdog, talking about far-away places with a sparrow or learning croaks from a local toad. The other thing he loved was profiteroles. Yes, profiteroles! Most cats would be happy with a fish and a saucer of milk but not Banjo - he enjoyed his profiteroles on a proper china plate with a nice cup of tea.

The most unusual thing about Banjo, though, was that he liked to write letters. Every day on the farm, he would sit on a haystack with his dusty old typewriter and write letters to all his neighbours. Once he wrote to a cow to tell her that there was an egret sitting on her back, and once he sent a very long letter to the dogs, explaining why they should stop chasing their own tails. Banjo's letters were famous on the farm and all the animals were excited to receive them.

This particular story begins on a late summer's day with Banjo relaxing halfway up an oak tree. There were four oaks on the farm all within meowing distance of each other. The Robinson cats would gather amongst their leaves and catch up on all the latest news. They'd chat about interesting new mice on the farm, the chances of rain, and all the best windowsills for sitting-and-thinking-about-things.

That afternoon, little Geronimo was daydreaming and wandered off, finding himself on the very highest branches of a nearby fir tree. He called over to his friends, 'Hey! Look at me! I can see the whole of the country from here!' Sukie and Banjo leapt off their oaks and

scrambled up the fir to see. And it was true, the view was fantastic. Only Oscar stayed where he was, licking his paws. Oscar had some very old-fashioned ideas.

'What are you doing up *there*? How ridiculous. You wouldn't catch *me* up a fir tree', he said, 'the only fur I'm interested in, is the stuff that keeps me warm' and then, 'far better to stick to what you know, I always say. Get down, you crazy cats'.

Mostly the cats did what Oscar said. His deep voice and grand whiskers made it seem like he was always right. Sukie and Geronimo climbed sadly down the tree.

But Banjo didn't follow them.

'Wait!' he shouted, from the very top. 'Don't you see? From every treetop, there is a different view. The world is so much bigger than I thought! So much more *mysterious*! I like it here but I'm starting to think that there are places beyond the farm and amazing things waiting to be discovered'.

Sukie and Geronimo looked shocked. What did Banjo mean?

'Nonsense!' boomed Oscar, 'Everything we need is on this farm! What more should a cat want than a shady spot up a familiar oak tree?'

'Actually...' said Sukie quietly, who was looking up at Banjo from beneath where he sat, 'apparently, there are all sorts of trees that we don't have on this farm which are just as good for climbing and getting stuck up.'

Geronimo piped up, '...And I've heard that there are countries so warm and dry that cats don't have to take naps in airing cupboards! They sleep OUTSIDE! Under the stars!'

Banjo gasped. Could this be true? What other wonders was he missing out on?

Oscar's whiskers twitched with irritation. 'Well,' he said, 'you are welcome to those *other* trees and those *other* countries. Nothing can be better than here. If anyone needs me, I'll be in this oak having a perfectly predictable time.' And he then did three tight circles and plumped himself down on his branch with a harrumph.

Banjo's imagination swirled, and he spent a moment thoughtfully grooming himself and staring out at the golden horizon.

Suddenly, he stood, tail up and cleared his throat. 'Friends,' he said, 'I have decided that today is the day. I am going to pack my bags and set off to see the world! I want to meet new animals, sniff new smells and hear new sounds. I want to feel tropical sunshine on my fur and arctic snow on my paws! I want to taste the sorts of cakes that I've only ever dreamed of! There is just too much to explore and I have to get started right away!' Banjo was beaming with delight.

'Please don't go!' the other cats meowed (apart from Oscar who was pretending not to listen).

'I've made up my mind' said Banjo, 'I'm going to board the first train to London where I can find all the things a cat might need for a spectacular international adventure and then - the world is my oyster!'

'Did somebody say oyster?' said Sukie hungrily.

Banjo looked at his trusty friends and smiled. 'Say, here's an idea. I'm going to make sure you can join me on my adventures through the magic of letters! I promise to write to you every month and tell you all about the things I'm doing and the places I visit - it'll be just like having you there with me. I promise.'

Banjo couldn't wait to get started. He bounded elegantly down the fir tree and paused only long enough to pick up his dusty old typewriter, a rucksack and his red tin mug before he trotted off into the sunset.

The other cats watched him from the gate. 'I can't believe he's really going! I'm going to miss him' said Geronimo sadly.

'He said he'd write', said Sukie, 'and he's a cat of his word'.

And so that's how it started. Banjo travelled across the globe climbing trees and meeting all sorts of animals in every place he discovered. Whenever he found a comfy spot, he took out his typewriter and wrote letters to his friends at home so they could share in his adventures too.

This is the story of a cat with a soft grey coat and the fluffiest white tummy for miles around. A cat with courage; a cat with questions; a cat who really enjoys dessert.

This is the story of Banjo Robinson - the greatest global explorer cat the world has ever known.