

The Rabbit in the Moon

An Adaption of a Japanese Folk Tale

By Andy Kreyche

Have you ever seen the rabbit in the moon? Maybe you've seen the man in the moon. But in Japan, children see a rabbit with long ears. Every year Japanese people have a celebration. Families gather to look at the moon. And when children ask how the rabbit got to the moon, their parents tell an ancient tale that goes something like this.

Once upon a time, most animals disagreed with each other, but a monkey, a fox, and a rabbit became the best of friends. The spirit of kindness filled them and they decided to live in peace with each other. Every evening these three friends met in a field to share their dinner and talk about their day. The monkey told of swinging through the treetops, looking for peaches, her favorite fruit. The fox talked about gathering eggs, because they were his favorite. The rabbit spoke very little, but with her big ears, she was a very good listener. The only food she ever found was a few blades of grass. But the three friends shared whatever they had.

One evening, a god looked down from above and saw the animals sharing their meal. "I can't believe this!" said the god. "All of the other animals disagree with each other. Can these animals be so kind? I will test them. Let's see if they will share their food with a stranger."

The next day the god came down to earth dressed like a very poor man in an old ragged cloak. The three animal friends found him in the field. "Help me," said the god. "I am so hungry that I cannot walk another step."

"We will feed you, poor man!" said the monkey, the fox, and the rabbit. The monkey and the fox dashed off right away in search of food. But the bunny stayed behind, thought for a moment, and then asked: "What food will give you the most strength?"

"My favorite food is apples," said the god, "but I will be thankful for whatever you bring." So rabbit hopped off to a nearby orchard to look for apples. But she couldn't climb the trees and the only apples on the ground were rotten. She looked and looked for something else, but found nothing. "Oh, dear," she said. "People don't eat grass." But it was getting dark, so she hopped back to the field with just a few blades of grass, feeling very sad.

When she got back to the field, the moon had risen and she found the others already eating. The monkey had brought peaches and the fox had brought eggs. "Sir," said the rabbit to the poor man. "I'm so sorry. I couldn't find apples for you. I'm sure you will not want to eat grass after eating delicious peaches and eggs, so I will return home.

But before the bunny could move, the god threw off his old ragged cloak and revealed himself, surprising all the animals. "Fox," said the god, "you showed kindness to a poor man by sharing your eggs, and I bless you. Monkey, you gave me the sweetest peaches that you could find, and I bless your kindness, too. But you, rabbit, I bless you most of all. You took extra time to listen and then look for what you knew I would most enjoy. Humans will remember your kindness for as long as they have eyes to see."

So the god lifted the rabbit up, up, up and placed her on the moon. And there she lives today, with her long ears reminding people that sometimes, the greatest gift is to listen.