



The Moon Bride

Sarah Bruce

Fable

Every night the moon rose in hope of catching a glance at what only the sun saw. He was jealous of his sister who could spend her day watching their people. She saw all the ways the rice fields were harvested, who traveled to the shrines to worship them and how grand the great funeral procession of the previous lord had been.

The moon god saw none of this. He saw the way his light reflected off the lake and the darkness that took the place of his sister's light but he never saw their people for they slept under his watchful gaze.

Until one winter's night when a brave young woman ventured out into the darkness with tears in her eyes.

For five days the snows had fallen obscuring both the sun and the moon's view of their world. Neither knew that in those days the new, young lord had chosen his bride from the most beautiful women in the town. He had begun to court one of his samurai's daughters, Sayuri.

Had it not been for the snow, the sun would have seen that during the day he was charming and kind to her, the perfect image of a man in love. Had it not been for the snow, the moon might have seen that he was wretched to her in the night. He threatened her family if she spoke of her dislike for him, and cut long strands of her glossy black hair. He told her that she could not cry out in pain if he hurt her and promised that as soon as they were married, there would be nothing she could do to be free of him.

The moon knew none of this, all he knew was that his silver light flickered down her cheeks, reflecting in her

steady tears. She looked to be in so much pain he longed to reach out for her and take her in his arms but she was so far away and unaware of him. Her shoulders shook as she sobbed and raced from the castle where she'd been ordered to live with the court ladies. She stumbled through the deep snow but this did not stop her. She had a plan, a foolish plan, but a plan nonetheless.

On the lake was the smallest of islands, so low to the water's edge that in rainy season it sometimes disappeared altogether. Only the ancient twisted pines stretching up to the sky were any indication that it was there at all. The townspeople called it 'the floating island.'

Sayuri thought if she could make it there she would be safe. There would be plenty of fresh water and fish to eat and then she'd be free of the terrible lord who would marry her tomorrow. The night was cold without the protection of the clouds and tugged at her silk kimono. She clutched her slender arms around her and made for the lake for tonight a boat would be unnecessary. The waters were frozen.

Hesitantly she took her first step onto the ice. It creaked only a little in the still night but held. She could wait no longer to escape her terrible fate and raced across the frozen waves to the island. The wind picked up and masked the sound of the creaking ice and her trembling body disguised the shaking of the ground beneath her sandals. She did not know the ice was breaking until it was too late. She plunged into the cold water, her kimono tangling around her thrashing limbs and her hair weighing her down. She cried out for salvation but no one could hear her. She was too close to the middle of the lake, too close to the island for anyone to help her. Anyone but the moon.

The moon could not save her for it was he who had broken the ice.

'Sayuri,' he whispered to her as she fought the icy waters. 'I can offer you a new life if you choose.'

'Any life is a life greater than this one,' Sayuri cried back to him, no longer struggling with the same enthusiasm. The waters were welcoming her now and had become warm around her.

'Then marry me Sayuri. Choose me instead and I will always love you.'

She gave in.

From that day on the townspeople no longer called it 'the floating island' they called it 'the island of the young

wife.' They blamed the cold frozen waters and the moon's protection for the loss of a young girl's life. They always warned young bride's that if they did not behave the moon god would snatch them up.

Only the moon god and his bride knew the truth. He had saved her. Even though the nights were long and lonely and the people slept, the moon and his wife had each other.

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com