

Youth Corner



Vivian Chow

A Moon Festival Legend: The Tale of the Jade Rabbit



Many of us know the famous tale of Chang E and how she rose up to the moon, but few know the story of her loyal companion, the Jade Rabbit. Here is a version of the less known but equally fascinating fable.

Long, long ago there lived an old man in a simple cottage at the edge of the woods filled with berry bushes, and he even had his own rice paddy and vegetable garden. He had three loyal friends: Fox, Monkey, and Rabbit. It was a beautiful, fruitful place to call home.

One year, however, a drought spread across the land. All of the old man's rice and vegetables wilted, and none of the berry bushes grew fruit. Little by little, the old man ran out of the food he had stored up. Finally, he only had one pot of rice gruel and a couple dried berries left.

"What will I do? Oh, what will I do?" he moaned. Fox, Monkey, and Rabbit heard the poor old man's cries and came sprinting into the cottage.

"What is the matter? What is wrong?" they asked.

"I have only a bit of food left in this horrible drought, and after it, I'm afraid that I will starve. I'm too old to be fast enough to hunt and the nearest pond is far away from here so I cannot fish. Oh, what will I do?" The old man put his face in his wrinkled hands.

Fox, Monkey, and Rabbit put their heads together and agreed that they would help their friend, the old man, find food during the drought. "Don't worry," they told him, "we will help you find food, so you will not starve."

Off they sprinted in different directions. Fox ran to the pond and caught some fish. Monkey ran into the forest and climbed the tall trees to get some bananas. Both of them ran back to cottage with their gifts. But where was Rabbit? What was taking Rabbit so long?

Rabbit ran everywhere but could not find anything. He could not fish, and he could not climb the trees to get bananas. He looked and looked for berries. He looked and looked for carrots and roots, but he could not find any. Sadly, he turned back towards the old man's cottage.

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Outside the cottage the old man had started a fire to roast and smoke the fresh fish that Fox had brought back. Fox and Monkey sat beside the old man as the old man peeled a banana that Monkey brought back.

“I have nothing,” the Rabbit thought sadly, “I have nothing for my friend, so I will give up myself for him.” Rabbit leaped into the fire to give the old man his own body for food.

Suddenly, just as his body reached the flames, a fairy from the heavens flew down and plucked Rabbit from the fire. The gods in heaven had been so impressed by Rabbit’s bravery and selflessness that they sent a fairy to save him. The fairy flew him up to the moon and made him the immortal Jade Rabbit for his selfless deed. Jade Rabbit also got the job for making the herb medicine to cure different diseases.

There in the Moon Palace, he still remains today with Chang E, an immortal and loyal companion, and perhaps on a clear night, you can look into the bright moon and see the loyal, brave Jade Rabbit hopping around.