

For Anais , my little princess....

Full Moon Rabbit

In Japan, tradition has it that when the full moon comes round, you can see a rabbit hiding in its whiteness.

- Look. Can't you see him?

- Yes, I can. There he is.

Look carefully at the full moon's shadows. You will see a rabbit. Slowly but surely he will appear. You will see his eyes shining!

But what is he looking at?

Deep in the moon, the rabbit's eyes are watching the children and their world, their tears, their laughter.

Their games, their shouts of joy and sadness.

Propped up by teddy bears and Barbie dolls, some children sleep peacefully.

One child watches the telly.

- "When I am a big boy, like Superman I shall learn to fly."

One child smiles and listens to her mother sing a lullaby.

Another mother cannot put up with her baby's crying, and leaves it alone to do her own thing.

In the distance, a long way away, the poet is seated on the crescent moon and hums this tune:

"Pierrot in the starry heights above bids you all adieu,
Oh world too old by far,
Oh world, rotten through and through."

No, a thousand times no ! The poet is wrong.

When an upset child looks up to the full moon and meets the rabbit's gaze, there is magic in the air.

Listen.

There was a family and it lived right in the middle of the town. It was like most other families. The father and mother worked. There were three children : Lucile, the eldest, Nikki, the number two and Little Sister.

That evening, mother and father were going out again. But Lucile was a big girl now and could look after the others.

On the doorstep the parents told her what to do time and time again.

- « Lucile, finish your homework ! Put your brother to bed immediately after his bath. And make sure your sister brushes her teeth properly. You've got school tomorrow. No television and we mean that. We'll be late, so don't worry.

Lucile nods her head. She knows she is big for her age and yet she doesn't like seeing her parents leave in the dark.

What a lot to do before going to bed. First of all soap and water, then pyjamas. Little Sister hates water and does not want to get washed :

- "Who's in charge? Not you ! You're not mother ! I shall do what I like !"

- "What's the point of pyjamas? We only have to get dressed again tomorrow, asked Nikki, and any way I want to watch the baddies on telly."

But Lucile is the ship's captain and she is the one who decides.

The bath tub is full. She turns the hot water taps off, puts her baby brother in the bath, spreads three-coloured toothpaste on the brush and hands it to her sister. Little Sister smothers her gums with the paste in front of the mirror and then her tongue, with her pigtails swinging to and fro.

- "Stop! Your hair is getting covered !" shouted Lucile.

Copying her mother's hurried gestures, she rubs her brother's skinny body with the foam-filled flannel. He struggles free. Lucy shouts that she's had enough. Nikki laughs.

In the bath, Nikki plays at pirates. He huffs and puffs, he splutters, he

splashes and drowns the enemy captains.

He is exhausted by the struggle but satisfied to have been victorious in his naval battles. He stands up and sticks his tummy out.

- "Luce, come here. I want to get out."

Little Sister is wriggling in front of the mirror with Ophelia her doll. The doll refuses to sit upright and Little Sister looks hard at her and tells her off.

- « You can see I'm in a hurry. I'm going to be late because of you».

She pouts and decides that Ophelia must be punished. She grabs her by the hair and threatens to cut it off. But where are the scissors? Two fingers would have done but she gets the scissors and the doll is without its head of hair.

Lucile pushes her pirate brother, wrapped in a towel, into the bedroom. Little Sister is getting on her nerves and so she is ordered to follow suit.

- "Luce, tell me a story", cries Little Sister.

She hops up and down holding the bald head of the punished Ophelia in her hand. Punishment is meted out by children as well !

- "A story. I want a story!"

- "I want a story about Ninjas !"

Nikki has to go one better and he puts in his request with his eyes wide open.

- "No ! A story about Sailor Moon, that's what I want !", insists Little Sister, as she taps Ophelia's tummy with her tiny hand.

"No stories - says Lucy - it's bed time. And I've got my homework to do."

Lucile is all alone in her room. She looks out of window and into the darkness. The night is strangely quiet and she feels so lonely.

How she would have liked to have, in turn, a big brother and a big sister all to herself. Lucile is just ten years old. She's a big girl now.

In the drowsy house, a film of clear water springs from the basement. It

spreads itself over the stairs. It trickles over the grey marble, stealthily like a giant ray. It strokes the ground floor and, bit by bit, covers the walls and climbs higher still.

Everyone is asleep.

Except Lucile.

She is seated at her desk, trying to remember by heart her recitation by mumbling the verses:

- "The Seine flows under the bridge called Mirimbo/ Must I remember...?"

She looks through the window at the pale moon which is poking a hole through the sky "like a dot on an i".

- "...there is never pain without joy..."

Unwittingly her long doleful look has just met the rabbit's gaze.

- You know, the rabbit in the full moon

The rabbit's eyes begin to shine and glow. The flash provokes a trail of heavenly pearls which flows down to the earth.

Ping. Pong.

The rabbit has just jumped out of its heavenly globe and slips down a light beam as though it were on a sledge. But immediately a huge red cloth is unfurled which makes a curtsy.

Suddenly a beautiful princess appears in a long red cloak. Her hair is jet black and her face is as smooth as a pearl's kiss. Her black eyes are highlighted by a moonbeam.

- Well then. Have you noticed that the rabbit is no longer in the moon?
What has happened to him?

In the staircase, the water is noiselessly spreading to the second floor. Nikki's mattress is carried away by the current, it drifts peacefully by. Little Sister's bald doll has fallen in and the children suck their thumbs as they are lulled by the eddying water.

They are fast asleep.

Lucile is aware of a presence somewhere. She turns round. Her heart races.

The door has just opened and the water flows into her bedroom.

She is paralysed. She looks questioningly and there is no answer.

In a flash, she jumps down from her chair and wades through the water. She is helped by her long spindly arms.

And there she is, in front of a beautiful princess wearing a dress with a long red cloak. Lucile mutters a few inaudible words and stands motionless. She is struck by her regal bearing and forgets her wet feet. Her eyes catch the movement of the long red cloak. She is amazed to find Nikki and Little Sister asleep on it.

The princess smiles at her. Her voice is sweet and all-embracing.

She is invited to join them.

Dreamlike, she tiptoes towards the children. As though hypnotised, she sits with them on the silk cloth. The princess seems to be floating on the water. Her shiny hair is streaming in the wind. And yet there is no wind, notes Lucile. She allows herself to be carried along on the cloak as though on a conveyor belt. She is dazzled by the light waves which envelop them all. When her gaze meets that of the kindly princess, she feels a warm glow on her skin.

What about the water? *It continues inexorably to rise.*

How are they going to get out? It is blocking all the openings and exits.

- *What strange water! thinks Lucile. It is neither solid nor liquid....*

She finds herself observing the wonderful universe around her without feeling frightened to death, as before. The house has been completely transformed into an underground cave. Familiar objects have been taken from their usual place to mark time in the water with the waltz of silence.

- « We'll have to get out through the chimney - says the Princess - It is the only way out ! »

- « There it is. On the left. In mother and father's room » replies Lucile.

If they're not quick, they are going to drown.

- « Don't be afraid! All will be well. We shall slide out through the chimney. You are going to feel a strong draught. No doubt the children will wake up. Take your sister in your arms and hold Nikki close to you. They'll not be frightened, if they wake up. Are you ready?"

Lucile is worried. Her heart is beating very fast.

She is ready. She, her brother and sister are one.

The princess swivels carefully into the chimney. Her trusty, majestic cloak follows her. And on it are coiled all the children.

Lucile is suddenly projected like a flash of lightening out of the seething mass. Nikki and Little Sister are woken up by their entry into the freshness of the night air. They both hold their breath.

They are amazed to find themselves gliding over their house.

Down there, what a commotion!

The firemen are getting ready for action.

Spotlights are directed at the house. People lose their heads and make comments on the reasons for their actions: a neighbour/walking his dog/ has suddenly seen/ the door of the house/ give way / under the pressure of the water/ and has immediately/ sounded the alert for the authorities.

Lucile's parents finally arrive. They are panic-stricken by the alert and put questions to the firemen. The mother fires off her questions: where? who? what? how? why?

- "We must get them out. My little ones can barely swim ! Have you seen Lucile? How did it happen? No doubt a tap was not turned off."

Deep down the parents are sorry for their absence: we should have been there! They are still very small!

Buried in their thoughts and worries, they suddenly hear a shout :

"Over there. Look. Something is shining!"

The princess with the long red cloak has just skimmed the ground.

At that very moment the children get off the cloak. They are frightened by the crowd of people and desperately look for their parents. The father spots them and runs towards them. The mother watches them and calls out.

The children leap into their arms. They are relieved. Their emotion is so visible. The mother keeps on asking the same questions :

- "Where have you been? How did you get out ?"

But what answers to give ? Lucile is not able to put any order to the thoughts running through her head.

Did she forget to turn off the bath taps?

The firemen thinks so.

She looks down and says between her teeth :

- "No. It is not true !"

Is she totally responsible for the flood ? Is there any going back on that ? She cannot forgive herself. Was she to blame?

She looks up to the moon beseechingly, as if in its clear light the wrong could be righted.

The princess with the long red cloak, invisible to all but the children, gives her a signal by twitching her chin.

"The cellar." shouts out Lucile. "The water might be coming from there.

The crowd of people carefully go down the steps under the direction of the father and the fireman.

They all continue to paddle in the streams of warm water and wonder where they could have sprung from.

The father has some difficulty opening the door. But in the end he manages to twist the handle and it gives way.

A disgusting smell arises from the gaping aperture...

but a smell from a long way away.

Through a skylight, the light of the round, white moon lights up an amorphous shadow. It is nameless. They all become silent and listen to the imperceptible sound of hiccupping.

They then recognized the breath of childhood. And its own familiar rhythm.

There before them

Lies

A sob.

It has become so large and it has coughed so much that all its water is flowing away. Waves of salt water reach as far as the different stories.

Now the sob has collapsed and is visibly shrinking, like a soft, wrinkled blister.

The parents are stupefied. They cannot open their mouths.

The princess with the long red cloak watches the family through the walls of the house.

Her mission is accomplished. She must leave. And leave at dawn between night and day.

She trains her lunar eyes on the immovable celestial globe. And she is immediately snatched away by a trail of flashing particles.....

Ping Pong

At that very moment, Lucile feels something leave her.

She rushes to the skylight : a trail of light was leaving the ground like a milky way. The moon is encircled by a halo of delicate colours.

- The princess ! Lucile says to herself.

She calls out :

- "Nikki, Little Sister, look ! A rabbit is sitting in the moon. There".

- « Do you think he can see us ? », they both ask together.

Lucile opens the skylight and breathes in through her nostrils the night air, night just before the coming day breaks.

- What about you, have seen a rabbit?

- Yes ! There he is.
He's watching over us ...