



## Lin Yi's lantern: A Moon Festival tale

"Now, tell me again what you are to buy from the market," said Lin Yi's mother.

Lin Yi counted the items off on his fingers as he repeated the list once more. "Moon cakes, star fruit, rice, yams... and peanuts for Uncle Hui."

"Good boy," said his mother.

"Can I buy a red rabbit lantern for the moon festival — please?" begged Lin Yi.

"Well, that is up to you," said his mother. "I have no more money to spare, but if you bargain well at the market you may have enough left for a red rabbit lantern."

Lin Yi smiled happily. "That won't be a problem, I can bargain better than anyone I know."

He turned to go, reciting the list like a poem as he walked away.

"Moon cakes, star fruit, rice, yams...."

"...and don't forget the peanuts for Uncle Hui. You know how much he likes them," his mother called after him.

As Lin Yi cycled to market, he smiled and waved to people working in the rice paddies.

Very soon he saw Uncle Hui checking the fish drying outside his house.

"Are you well Uncle Hui?" asked Lin Yi.

"Yes, thank you," Uncle Hui answered as he turned the last fish toward the sun.

"I'm off to the market," said Lin Yi, "If I bargain well, mother says I can buy a red rabbit lantern with the change."

"And will you be taking it to the picnic tonight?" asked Uncle Hui.

"Yes. Will you be climbing the mountain with us, Uncle Hui?"

"Of course!" said Uncle Hui. "I may be getting old, but I still enjoy moon cakes and peanuts. Good luck with your bargaining."

Lin Yi grinned happily and hurried on his way.

Lin Yi smiled as he passed under the moon gate. "That will bring me luck in my bargaining at the market" he thought. "And I shall now live for five minutes longer."

In the market Lin Yi stopped to look longingly at the toffee apples.

"Do you want to buy one?" asked the trader.

"No, thank you," said Lin Yi. "I have to buy moon cakes, star fruit rice, yams and... and I mustn't forget the peanuts for Uncle Hui. But if I bargain well, mother says I may buy a red rabbit lantern with the change."

"But my toffee apples are very good," said the trader. "You could buy one of these and still have money to spare."

"They look delicious," said Lin Yi, "but I really want a red rabbit lantern for the festival tonight."

"Good-bye then," said the trader, smiling. "Maybe you will change your mind later on."

Lin Yi knew he wouldn't change his mind. He really, really wanted a red rabbit lantern, even more than a toffee apple.

"How much is two pounds of whole grain rice please?" Lin Yi asked the rice trader.

"How much money do you have?" asked the trader.

Lin Yi showed him.

"Why, you are rich!" said the trader. "You could buy my finest fragrant rice with that money."

"No, thank you," said Lin Yi. "I have to buy moon cakes, star fruit, rice, yams and... and I mustn't forget the peanuts for Uncle Hui. But if I bargain well, mother says I may buy a red rabbit lantern with the change and I really want a red rabbit lantern for the festival tonight."



"Then I shall bargain with you!" the man laughed, and he started with a very high price.



Lin Yi laughed, too. "That is far too much. I will give you a quarter of that amount."

"Too little!" said the rice trader. "Do you think I am a fool?"

They bargained and bargained until eventually Lin Yi agreed to a sensible price, one he knew his mother would approve of.

Lin Yi was feeling very pleased with himself after buying the rice for such a good price. He was beginning to enjoy his shopping. So when he bought the star fruit he bargained hard, and once more he did very well.

At the next stand, he paused to look at a little dough figure. He wanted to buy one to play with. But then he reminded himself that he would need to keep all the money he could if he wanted to get a red rabbit lantern, so he moved on to buy some yams.

Again he bargained well and put the yams into his basket with the star fruit and the rice.

"Now," Lin Yi thought, "I have only the moon cakes and the peanuts for Uncle Hui to buy."

But on the way to buy the moon cakes, the lantern stall caught Lin Yi's eye. He couldn't resist stopping to take a look.

"Would you like to buy one of my red rabbit lanterns for the festival tonight?" asked the lantern seller.

Lin Yi stared. He loved the large red rabbit lanterns that were decorated with gold, but he knew they would be far too expensive.



"No, I must wait," he said, shaking his head. "I still have to buy the moon cakes. Then I'll come straight back for one of your small red rabbit lanterns."

"But there are lots of people buying moon cakes today. By the time you return, I may have sold both the small lanterns."

"Please wait! Please!" he begged. "I really want a red rabbit lantern! Promise me you'll keep one for me."

"I'm sorry," said the lantern seller. "I have a wife and children to feed, so if someone wants the last red rabbit lantern, then I must sell it to them. After all, you may not bargain well enough, and then you will not have enough money for a lantern."

Lin Yi hurried away to buy the moon cakes.

"At last" he thought, arranging the moon cakes in his basket. "Now I am ready to buy the red rabbit lantern."

Just then a woman walked past munching peanuts, and he suddenly remembered Uncle Hui.

"Oh no," he thought "I forgot to buy the peanuts!"

He counted his money carefully. Even if he bargained well he knew he would not have enough to buy peanuts and a lantern. His heart sank right down to his sandals. He had tried so hard, and now it seemed that his dream was over.

He stood still for a while, trying to decide what to do. He so wanted the lantern, but he also knew how much Uncle Hui loved peanuts.

Biting his lip and wiping away his tears, Lin Yi turned firmly away from the lanterns and went to buy Uncle Hui's peanuts.

Sadly, Lin Yi pedaled home without his red rabbit lantern.

"You are a good boy, Lin Yi," said his mother. "You have bought everything we need for our picnic. We have beautiful moon cakes, decorated with the Jade Hare and the Moon Fairy. We have the star fruit and they will be delicious. You must have bargained well — especially for the rice and yams. But Lin Yi, what about your red rabbit lantern? Didn't you manage to buy even a small one?"

"No," said Lin Yi bravely, trying not to cry. "But there will be others I can see at the festival tonight. It doesn't matter."

But of course, in his heart it did matter. It mattered very much.

Still Lin Yi tried not to show it. Instead, he took the peanuts and gave them to Uncle Hui with a big smile.

"Thank you, Lin Yi," said Uncle Hui. "Now, I have a present for you."

Lin Yi was speechless as he saw the red rabbit lantern.







"Oh, thank you! Thank you, Uncle Hui!" he exclaimed. "It is beautiful! Far better than any lantern I dreamed of having!" And he beamed with happiness. "How did you know that I didn't have enough money left to buy one?" he asked.

"Well," said Uncle Hui with a twinkle in his eye, "let's just say that during the Moon Festival time, many special things can happen, especially if you pass through the moon gate. We don't ask the reason, we are just happy."

And side by side they climbed the moonlit mountain, Uncle Hui munching his peanuts as Lin Yi proudly carried his glowing red rabbit lantern.



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