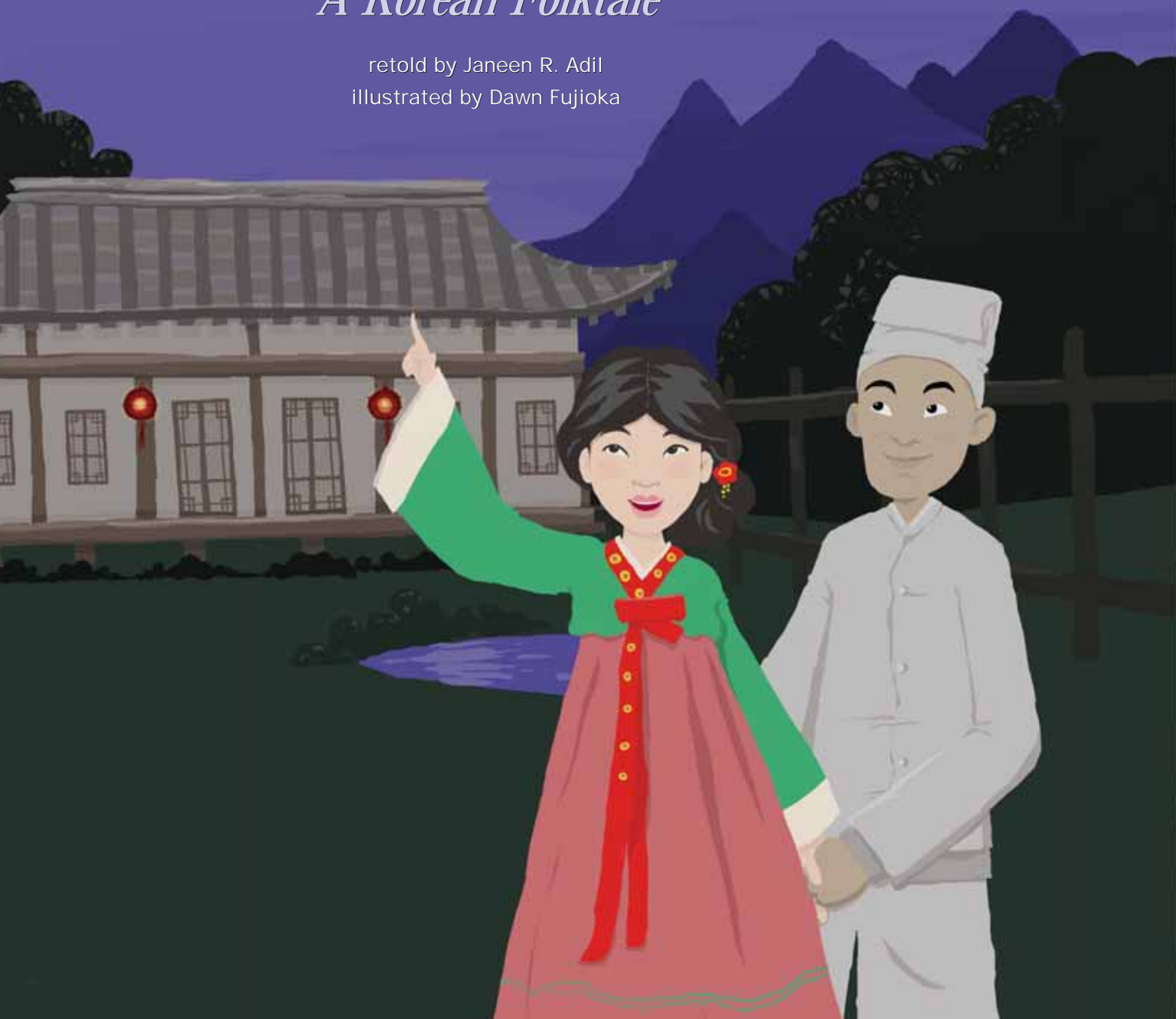


# *The* MURROR

*A Korean Folktale*

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Long ago, a young farmer married the daughter of a wealthy family. One day, he was called away to a far city to conduct important business.

"What may I bring you?" he asked his wife.

"A comb," she replied at once, thinking how lovely it would look in her long black hair. As soon as she had said this, however, the young woman became sad. She knew that her husband was most forgetful. How could he possibly remember to buy her a comb?

Then she looked up and saw that the new moon had risen high in the night sky. Its silvery crescent was exactly the shape of the comb she wanted.

"Look there, Husband," she said. "If you forget what I asked for, you must look up at the moon. The curve of its crescent will remind you of my comb." This the young man promised to remember.

Once in the great city, the farmer found that his business dealings were more complicated than he had imagined. Many days passed before at last he could think about returning home. Just as his wife had feared, he had forgotten about her gift.

Then he looked up and saw that the full moon had risen high in the night sky. Its shining sphere recalled his wife's request. "I am to bring her something shaped like the moon," the young man thought. "What is it?"



The poor fellow racked his brain, but it was hopeless. He simply could not remember. Finally, in desperation, he decided to go to a nearby shop. Thinking that perhaps the shopkeeper could help, he explained, "I am to buy a gift for my wife that looks like the moon."

Although the shopkeeper thought this odd, he began to search his shop. At last he held up a hand mirror and exclaimed triumphantly, "Here! This must be what she wants. It's round and silver, just like the moon."

The young farmer had never seen a mirror before, as they were most rare at the time. But since his wife was from a rich family, she would undoubtedly know what it was, and so he made his purchase.

No sooner had the farmer arrived home than his wife asked for her gift. Imagine her surprise when instead of a comb, he handed her this unusual object. Looking into the mirror's smooth, shiny glass, she was further astonished to see the face of a lovely young woman.

"What is this, Husband?" she cried. "I ask for a comb, and instead you bring home a pretty girl!" In a fit of anger, the young woman ran to her mother.

"See here, Mother!" she said. "My husband hasn't brought me a comb at all, only a strange young girl."

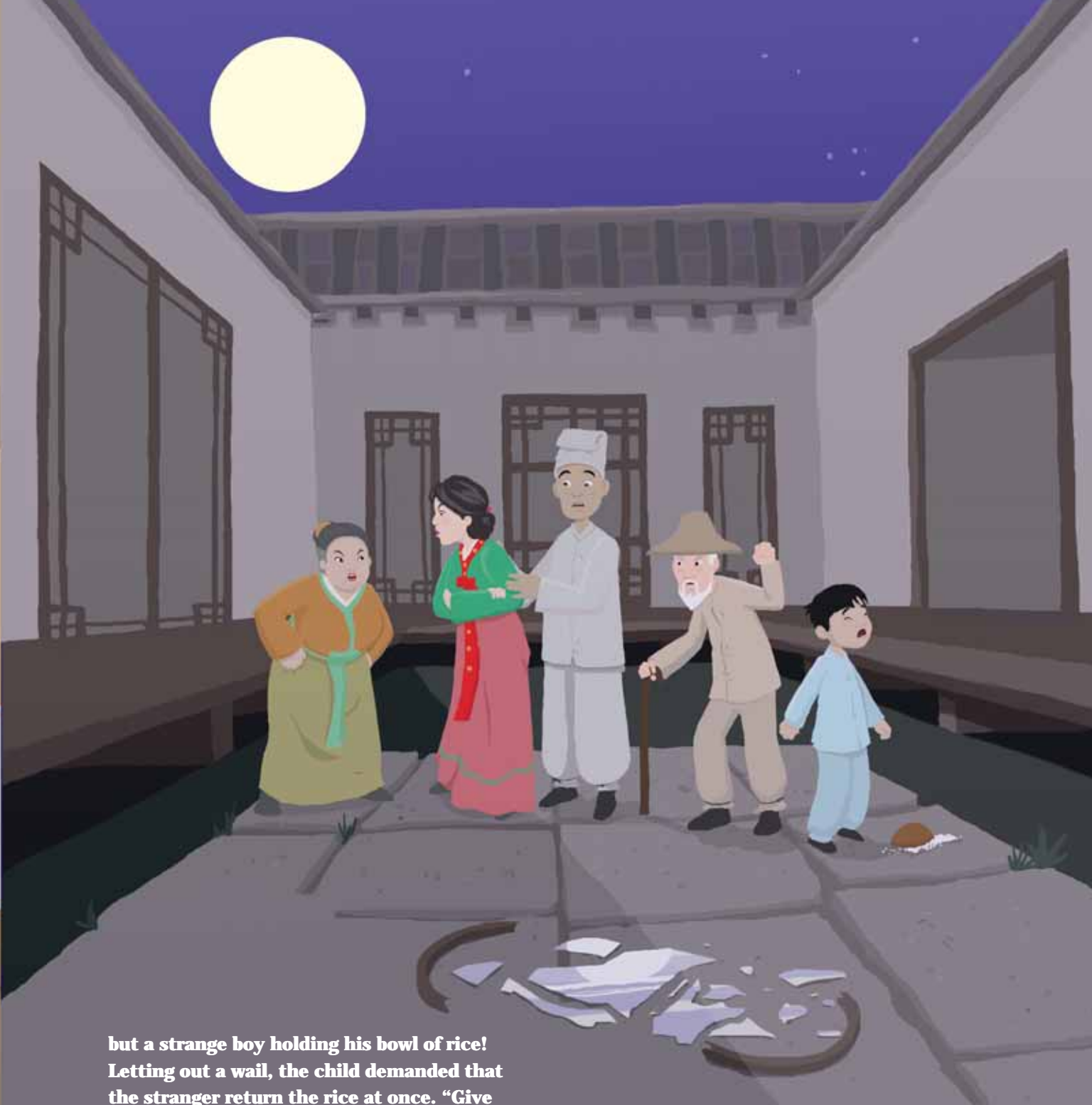
Her mother snatched the mirror and gazed into it. "Why, Daughter, that's not a girl. It's a wrinkled old woman." She, of course, was looking at her own reflection.

At that, the wife began to insist that she saw a pretty young girl. The mother was equally firm in her belief that she saw an old woman. The two began quarreling loudly.

Hearing the commotion, the farmer's young son hurried over, a bowl of rice in his hand. The child picked up the mirror and looked curiously at the glass. What should he see







but a strange boy holding his bowl of rice! Letting out a wail, the child demanded that the stranger return the rice at once. "Give it back!" he shouted.

A neighbor, likewise hearing the noise, intervened. "Show me the bully who has stolen your rice," the old man said, "and I will take care of him." He peered into the mirror, only to see an angry grandfather staring back. "Why, you terrible old man! Taking food from a child!" And the neighbor

pushed back his sleeve, preparing to deliver a mighty blow. He had no sooner raised his fist than the mirror slipped from his hand and fell to the floor, shattering into a hundred bits of glass.

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