

### **Water Lily Fairytale: A Narrative Derived from Mary Cassatt's *The Bath***

The day dawned as if heaven fell on Japan as the sun leaked its crisp, golden glow, shining on her like a spotlight for the entire world to see. Ren Satu, as she came to be called, stepped into my life, changing it for eternity.

As I awoke on the crisp, embryonic morning during the Year of the Sheep, the only thing that swam through my mind pondered the idea that I was to be an *okaasan*. This morning cavorted unlike the rest. I shot out of bed like a rocket that had just been launched into space for a mystifying journey. My journey, however, was no trip to space; it was a voyage to everlasting love for a baby I was soon to meet. Walking down the halls of the hospital, I clinched my teeth and fists like wrenches gripping a steel bar. My body shook, heart pounded, eyes fluttered. Pushing the ice-cold elevator button, I began to realize I sauntered just a few stepping-stones



away from delivering the person I came to love without even meeting.

When I saw her for the first time, the brackish waters of my world settled into a pool of awe. There she floated like a water lily. It was this moment that I decided to name her Ren, the Japanese name for *water lily*.

The next thing I knew she delineated a butterfly emerging from her cocoon. My eyes focused but said nothing. There she lay, in my arms, for the first time, an angel cradled between my limbs. The intense smell of baby's breath gently filled my nose like the scent of a rose a princess receives in fairy tales. However, this was no fantasy, it was indeed reality. "Am I awake? Is this just a dream?" I pinched myself, demanding that I wake up from this state of veneration. But to my surprise, I was awake the entire time, enduring the most priceless

moment of my life. My emotions congealed into a solidified state of shock when it hit me...this gem belonged to me.

Peering down upon her, like a dove to her babies, a wave of emotions crashed over my body, undulating through my veins. Her tiny hand grasped mine, shedding immense love and gratification. Her precious brown, twinkling eyes seized mine where I stood, with buckling knees, cherishing every moment. A tear of joy meandered its way across my blushing cheek. I squeezed her tight, extracting a purr from her tiny chest. I never felt so emotionally attached to someone until I was graced with her innocence. She was the final link to my chain, the one that secured my purposed for survival.

My mind flooded with foreshadows and presaged how I would one day see her take her first step, say her first word, gallop to school like a jubilant pony, and one day get married to the man she holds so dear to her heart. Although seemingly trivial, I dreamt of days when I would cleanse her in the tub my mother used to wash me in, an old family tradition. I envisioned it as if I was watching it occur in front of my face. Me holding my baby in one arm, her waiting patiently for bodily purification. I place her gently into the bath where she floats on the surface like her name. She is a water lily.

When her knight in shining armor drives a lance through her heart, I will mend the wound and lend her a shoulder to cry on. When things trickle down the drain with all hope lost, I will be the first to put her back on her feet. When she is the target of diatribe, I will allay her fears. And when she obliges the dire need of someone to talk to, share her most intimate secrets with, it will be me, lending her my ear. As I recall those halcyon days of her entrance into my world, it is as if my face turns into a canvas, where an invisible artist paints happiness upon my face. There she was, Ren Situ, my *musume*, my fairytale, my soul mate for life.

Artwork by Mary Cassatt (1891), taken from the [National Museum of Women in the Arts, DC.](#)