

The Story of Peach Boy

Many hundred years ago there lived an honest old woodcutter and his wife. One fine morning the old man went off to the hills with his basket, to gather a batch of sticks, while his wife went down to the river to wash the dirty clothes. When she came to the river, she saw a peach floating down the stream; so she picked it up, and carried it home with her, thinking to give it to her husband to eat when he should come in.

The old man soon came down from the hills, and the good wife set the peach before him, when, just as she was inviting him to eat it, the fruit split in two, and a little baby was born into the world. So the old couple took the babe, and brought it up as their own; and, because it had been born in a peach, they called it *Momotaro*, or Little Peachling.

By degrees Little Peachling grew up to be strong and brave, and at last one day he said to his old foster parents: "I am going to the ogres' island to carry off the riches that they have stored up there. Pray, then, make me some millet dumplings for my journey."

So the old folks ground the millet, and made the dumplings for him; and Little Peachling, after taking an affectionate leave of them, cheerfully set out on his travels.

As he was journeying on, he fell in with a monkey, who gibbered at him, and said: "Kia! kia! kia! where are you off to, Little Peachling?"

"I'm going to the ogres' island, to carry off their treasure," answered Little Peachling.

"What are you carrying at your girdle?"

"I'm carrying the very best millet dumplings in all Japan."

"If you'll give me one, I will go with you," said the monkey.

So Little Peachling gave one of his dumplings to the monkey, who received it and followed him. When he had gone a little further, he heard a pheasant calling: "Ken! ken! ken! where are you off to, Master Peachling?"

Little Peachling answered as before; and the pheasant, having begged and obtained a millet dumpling, entered his service, and followed him.

A little while after this, they met a dog, who cried: "Bow! wow! wow! whither away, Master Peachling?"

"I'm going off to the ogres' island, to carry off their treasure."

"If you will give me one of those nice millet dumplings of yours, I will go with you," said the dog.

"With all my heart," said Little Peachling. So he went on his way, with the monkey, the pheasant, and the dog following after him.

When they got to the ogres' island, the pheasant flew over the castle gate, and the monkey clambered over the castle wall, while Little Peachling, leading the dog, forced in the gate, and got into the castle. Then they did battle with the ogres, and put them to flight, and took their king prisoner. So all the ogres paid respect to Little Peachling, and brought out the treasures which they had laid up. There were caps and coats that made their wearers invisible, jewels which governed the ebb and flow of the tide, coral, musk, emeralds, amber, and tortoise shell, besides gold and silver. All these were laid before Little Peachling by the conquered ogres.

So Little Peachling went home laden with riches, and maintained his foster parents in peace and plenty for the remainder of their lives.