

Japanese Folk Tales — Once upon a Time —

Issun-boshi (Little One-Inch)

Once upon a time, there lived an old man and his wife. Since the couple had no children, they prayed to their god, and to their surprise, they were one day blessed with a child. The newborn child, however, was no larger than an adult's thumb, and was a mere *issun* (approx. three centimeters) tall. Nevertheless, the old man and his wife were very happy to have a child. They named him Issun-boshi (Little One-Inch) and brought him up with tender love and care.

Issun-boshi remained only *issun* tall, but grew up healthy. One day, he said to his parents, "I shall go to the capital and make a living for myself." The old couple therefore put him in a wooden soup bowl that would serve as a boat, gave him a chopstick as an oar and a needle as a sword, and saw him off. Issun-boshi then rowed down the river toward the capital.

When he reached the capital, Issun-boshi looked for a large, fancy mansion and knocked on the gate, saying "My name is Issun-boshi. Could you please hire me to work here?" The master of the mansion took an immediate liking to Issun-boshi, and agreed to let him work in his mansion.

The master had a beautiful daughter, who one day embarked on a trip to pay her respects at a temple. Issun-boshi may have been small, but since he was full of energy and extremely agile, he accompanied the daughter on her trip as a bodyguard. On the way, however, an ogre appeared and tried to snatch away the beautiful daughter.

Issun-boshi rushed at the ogre with his needle sword, but because he was small, the ogre swallowed him whole. Not to be outdone, however, Issun-boshi jabbed at the insides of the ogre's stomach. "Ouch! Ouch!" the ogre cried in pain, and after spitting out Issun-boshi, fled in terror. "Thank you very much. You saved my life!" the daughter said with deep gratitude.

When the ogre fled, it left behind a magical mallet called *Uchide-no-kozuchi*, which would grant any wish merely by swinging it. Issun-boshi thus swung the mallet, and in no time at all, he grew larger, and even found himself laden with gold and silver treasures. As a vibrant young man, Issun-boshi married the master's daughter, and the two lived happily ever after.



日本の昔話～むかし、むかし～

一寸法師

昔々ある所にお爺さんとお婆さんが住んでいました。2人には子供がいなかったので、神様にお祈りしたところ、なんと子供を授かりました。しかし生まれた子供は指の長さにも満たない大きさで、1寸（約3センチメートル）ほどしかありませんでした。でもお爺さんとお婆さんは大変喜び、子供を「一寸法師」と名付け、大切に育てました。

一寸法師の背丈は1寸のままでしたが、元気に育っていききました。そしてある時、お爺さんとお婆さんに「私は都に行つて身を立てます」と言うので、2人は一寸法師をお椀の舟に乗せ、櫂の代わりに箸を、刀の代わりに針を持たせて見送りました。一寸法師は川を漕いで都へと向かいました。

都に着いた一寸法師は立派な屋敷を探すと、その屋敷の門を叩いて言いました。「私の名前は一寸法師。この家で働かせてくれないか」。すると屋敷の主人は一寸法師を一目で気に入り、この屋敷で働くことを許してくれました。

主人には美しい娘がいましたが、この娘がある時宮参りの旅に出掛けました。体は小さくても元氣一杯で俊敏な一寸法師は、旅の間娘の身を守る役目で、娘に付き添って行くことになりました。ところが道中、美しい娘をさらおうと鬼がやってきました。

一寸法師は針の刀で鬼に向かっていきましたが、体が小さいので鬼に丸呑みにされてしまいました。しかし鬼の腹の中に入ると、一寸法師は負けじと針の刀で腹の中をちくちく突き刺しました。「いたたたたた！」鬼は痛くて一寸法師を吐き出すと、恐れをなして逃げていってしまいました。「ありがとうございます。あなたのお蔭で助かりました」と娘は大変感謝しました。

鬼は逃げる時「打ち出の小槌」という、打ち振れば願った物がなんでも手に入るといふ不思議な小槌を置いていってしまいました。その小槌を振ると、一寸法師はみるみる体が大きくなり、金銀財宝も手にしました。立派な青年となった一寸法師は娘と結婚し、幸せに暮らしましたとき。