

Japanese Folk Tales

— Once upon a Time —

Nezumi no Sumo (Mouse Sumo)

Once upon a time, there lived an old man and his wife. One day when the old man went to the mountain to cut firewood, he came across two mice, one fat and one skinny, engaged in a sumo match. “Hakkeyoi, nokotta!” “Hakkeyoi, nokotta!” No matter how many bouts the old man watched, the skinny mouse always lost. He then realized that the skinny mouse was a mouse that lived in his house.



After returning home, the old man told his wife about the mice and their sumo match, and the two of them felt pity for the skinny mouse. Although the old couple was poor, they made mochi rice cakes for the skinny mouse using the mochi rice they kept for the New Year, and placed them in the attic.

The following day, when the old man went to the same place and sneaked a peek, he saw the previous day's mice engaging in a sumo match. The skinny mouse that kept losing the previous day was winning, and this made the old man happy. After a number of bouts, the fat mouse asked the skinny mouse, “What made you suddenly strong?” “I went home yesterday and found mochi cakes in the attic—thank goodness!—and ate them,” the skinny mouse replied. The fat mouse then said, “How lucky you are! My house is rich, but they're so stingy, they've never given me mochi cakes.” “Then why don't you come to my house tonight to eat mochi?” the skinny mouse said. Upon hearing this conversation, the old man hurried home and told his wife. The old couple decided they would use the rest of the mochi rice to make mochi cakes for the two sumo mice. They also made red loin cloths for them in place of sumo thongs and placed them in the attic.

That night, the fat mouse came to the old couple's house, and the two mice delighted at the mochi cakes and loin cloths. As a token of his gratitude, the fat mouse left a gold coin that he brought from his house.

The next day, the two mice wore their red loin cloths and had a sumo match. They each won and lost and were evenly matched, and entertained the old man who became their spectator. And with the gold coin they received, the old man and his wife bought plenty of mochi and rice for the New Year.

日本の昔話～むかし、むかし～

ネズミの相撲

昔々ある所に、お爺さんとお婆さんが住んでいました。ある日お爺さんが山に芝刈りに行くと、太ったネズミと痩せネズミ、2匹のネズミが相撲を取っているではありませんか。お爺さんが見ていると「ハッケヨーイ、ノコッタ！……ハッケヨーイ、ノコッタ！」何度やってもいつも負けるのは痩せネズミです。「あの痩せネズミはうちに住んでいるネズミじゃないか」。

家に帰るとお爺さんはお婆さんにこの話をし、2人は痩せネズミをかわいそうに思いました。お爺さんとお婆さんの家は貧乏でしたが、お正月のために置いておいたもち米をついて痩せネズミに餅を作ってやり、屋根裏に置いておきました。

次の日、お爺さんが昨日と同じようにそっと覗いていると、またネズミの相撲が始まりました。負けてばかりだった痩せネズミが、今日は勝っています。お爺さんは嬉しくなりました。

何度か勝負をすると、太ったネズミが「どうしてそんなに強くなったんだい？」と痩せネズミに訊きました。「昨日帰ったら、ありがたいことに屋根裏にお餅が置いてあり、それを食べたんだ」と痩せネズミが答えると「いいなあ。うちの家はお金持ちなのにケチだからお餅なんかもらったことはないよ」と太ったネズミ。痩せネズミは「それなら、今晚うちに来て、お餅を食べるといいよ」。それを聞いたお爺さんは、急いで家に戻り、お婆さんと相談しました。2人は2匹の相撲取りのために、残りのお餅もついてやることにしました。そしてまわしの代わりとして赤いふんどしも2匹分作って、屋根裏に置いておきました。

その夜、お爺さんとお婆さんの家に太ったネズミがやってきて、2匹はお餅とふんどしに大喜び。太ったネズミはお礼にと家から持ってきた金貨を置いていきました。

次の日から2匹は赤いふんどしを締めて相撲を取り、お互いに勝ったり負けたりいい勝負をして、観客となったお爺さんを楽しませましたとき。そしてお爺さんとお婆さんは金貨で正月の餅や米をたくさん買うことができましたとき。