



The Legend of Momotaro

ONCE upon a time there lived an old man and woman. The old man went up into the mountains to gather firewood, while the old woman went down to the river to wash their clothes. One day, as the woman was doing the wash, a giant peach came bobbing along in the current.

She pulled the giant peach out and carried it back home. When her husband came back, they began to cut the peach open for dinner. To their surprise, there was a healthy young baby boy inside!

The couple had no children, so they were overjoyed to have a baby to call their own. They named him Momotaro, which means “Peach Boy.” Momotaro quickly grew up into a strong young lad.

Around that time, some nasty ogres started harassing the village. One day,

Momotaro told his parents he would go to the ogres’ island and get rid of them for good. His mother fixed him some tasty millet dumplings, called *kibi-dango*, for his journey.

Along the way, Momotaro met a dog.

“Momotaro, where are you going?”

“I’m going to the ogres’ island, to stop them for good.”

“What’s that tied to your belt?”

“It’s a pouch full of the finest dumplings in Japan.”

“Please give me one. I’ll help you on your quest.”

The dog received a dumpling and accompanied Momotaro.

Before long, the pair met a monkey.

“Momotaro, where are you going?”

“I’m going to the ogres’ island, to stop them for good.”

“What’s that tied to your belt?”

“It’s a pouch full of the finest dumplings in Japan.”

“Please give me one. I’ll help you on your quest.”

And so he did.

Then they met a pheasant.

“Momotaro, where are you going?”

“I’m going to the ogres’ island, to stop them for good.”

“What’s that tied to your belt?”



“It’s a pouch full of the finest dumplings in Japan.”

“Please give me one. I’ll help you on your quest.”

The pheasant gratefully received a dumpling and joined the group.

With dog, monkey and pheasant companions at his side, Momotaro finally reached the ogres’ island.

The ogres were in the middle of merrymaking. They had piled up the food and treasures they stole from nearby villages and were having a party.

“Attack the fiends!” Momotaro shouted.

The dog bit the ogres’ bottoms, the monkey jumped onto their backs and scratched, and the pheasant pecked at their eyes. Momotaro, brandishing his sword, charged into the lot. Finally the ogre chief threw up his hands and said, “Enough, enough! We give up!”

Momotaro, the dog, the monkey and the pheasant collected the treasures and returned triumphantly to the village.

His mother and father were delighted to see that Momotaro had returned safely. The three lived happily ever after. 

THE HOME OF THE MOMOTARO LEGEND

Okayama Prefecture in western Honshu is well known as the birthplace of the Momotaro legend. Kibitsu Shrine and Kibitsu Shrine are dedicated to Kibitsu-hiko-no-mikoto, a legendary prince on whom Momotaro is supposedly based. The millet dumplings (*kibidango*) that Momotaro brought on his quest are sold everywhere in Okayama as a regional specialty. A statue of Momotaro and his companions stands proudly in front of Okayama Station, so why not pretend you’re one of his traveling companions and snap a photo with them?