

Issun Boshi

Long, long ago in a village far away, there was a married couple who had no children. Every day they prayed to God to give them a child.

Finally, one day, a baby boy was born. The child was only about an inch tall so they named him Issun Boshi, meaning 'One-Inch Monk'. The couple were very pleased and took good care of Issun Boshi.



Issun Boshi never did get much taller. Even after several years had passed, he was still about the size of a person's thumb. Still he was as healthy as any normal boy, full of energy.

One day, Issun Boshi said to his parents, "I thank you very much for raising me with love and care. But now I must go to the capital to see the big wide world. I want to be a strong samurai warrior."

His mother and father tried hard to make him change his mind, but he was so determined. Finally they gave in.

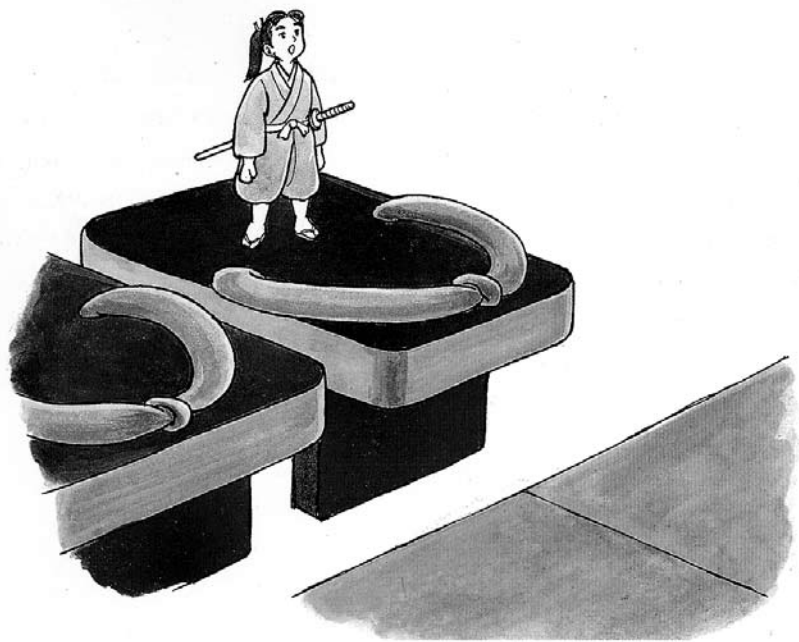


Next morning, they all went to the river. Issun Boshi got in his tiny rice bowl boat and waved goodbye to his parents. Then he went down the river paddling with a chopstick. He had a needle-sword around his waist.

Along the way, his tiny boat slammed into rocks, dropped over waterfalls, and got tossed around in raging streams. But



Issun Boshi never gave up. His dream grew bigger and his ambition greater as he overcame hardships.



Many days went by before Issun Boshi at last caught sight of his destination. There the capital was glaring before this tiny but brave boy.

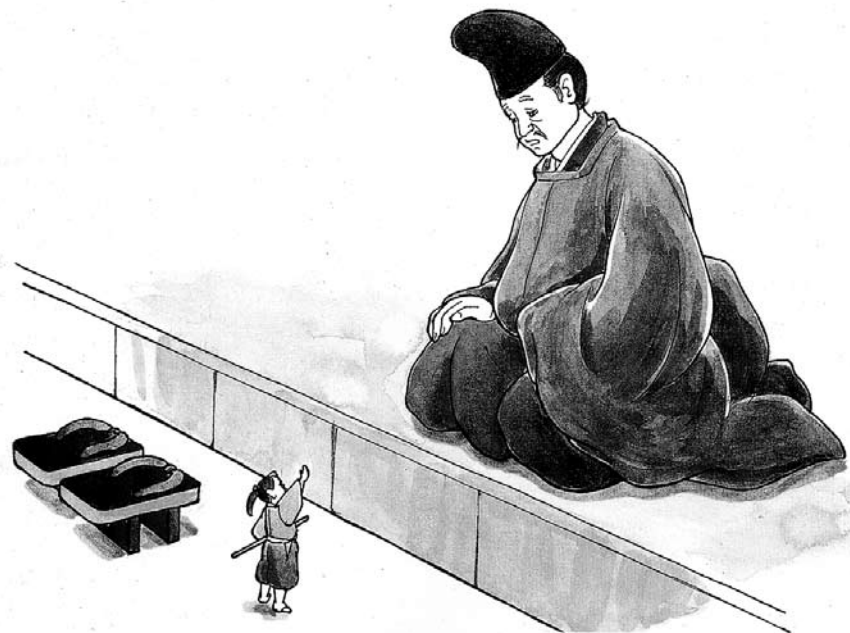
As he walked down the street, Issun Boshi saw a grand house that must belong to a wealthy lord. He walked to the front door and called out. A servant came to the door, but he didn't see anyone.

Then the lord came to the door himself.

"Here I am, down here," shouted Issun Boshi.

The lord looked down. There he found a tiny boy standing by a pair of wooden sandals. The boy was much smaller than the sandals. Issun Boshi said to the lord, "I've come all the way to see the world. Please let me serve you as one of your guards. I may be very small but I am very strong and full of courage."

"All right, you may stay here and be a playmate for my daughter, the princess," said the lord amused by this tiny boy.





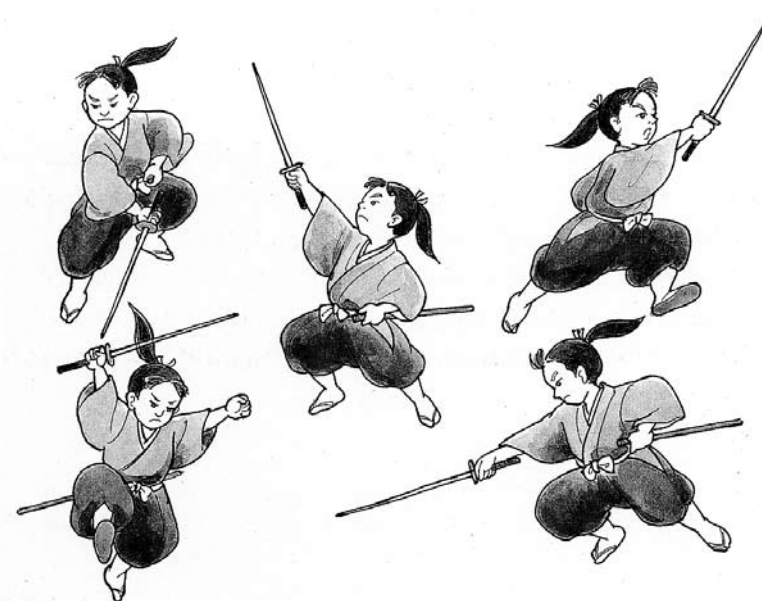
Soon Issun Boshi and the princess became best friends. They spent time together reading, writing, and playing music. And while he passed his time in this way, he did not forget to train himself to become a strong warrior.

One spring day, the princess and Issun Boshi visited a temple near the lord's house. On their way home, a terrible demon suddenly appeared with a magic hammer and started trying to catch the princess.



"I won't let you touch the princess, you ugly demon," shouted Issun Boshi drawing his sword.

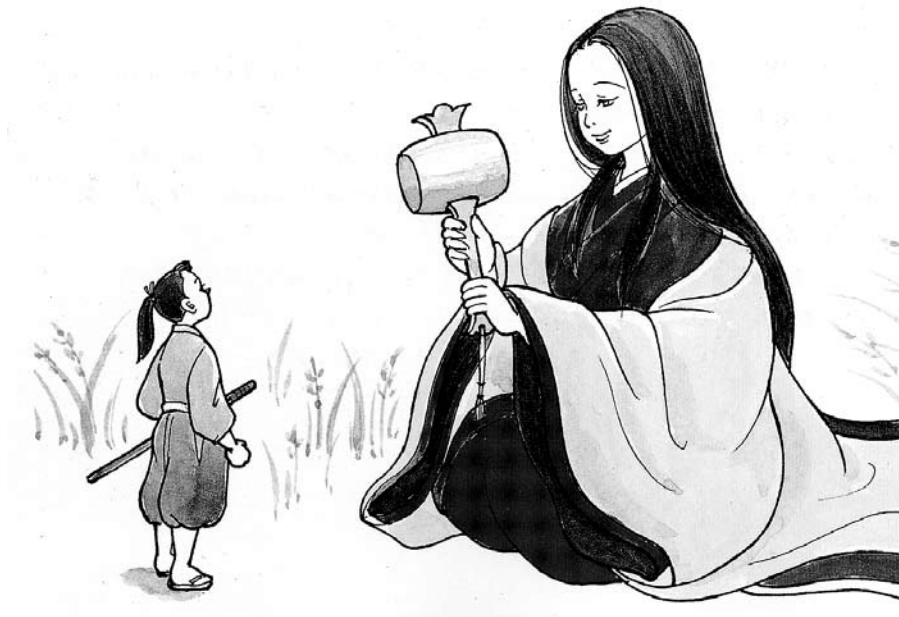
"Ah-ha-ha-ha! You small thing. I am going to eat you up," said the demon and picked Issun Boshi up and threw the boy into his mouth. Gulp!



Inside the demon's belly, Issun Boshi began slashing and stabbing with his needle-sword. "Ouch! That hurts!" The demon fell down on the ground writhing and clutching his stomach. "Stop it! I won't ever be bad again. So please stop it!" cried the demon.

"Open your mouth and let me out!" shouted Issun Boshi from inside the demon's stomach.

The demon fled in tears as soon as he spit out Issun Boshi.



When the princess thanked Issun Boshi, she found something the demon had left behind. "It's a magic hammer!" she exclaimed. "Now we can make a wish." Then she shook the hammer and said, "Please let Issun Boshi grow taller." Each time the princess shook the hammer Issun Boshi grew one inch taller.

Finally he became a handsome young man as tall as the princess. Issun Boshi and the princess were overjoyed.

A few years passed. Issun Boshi and the princess were married. Issun Boshi sent for his mother and father who came to stay with the newly wed couple, and they all lived happily ever after.

