

Kintaro



Legend tells the story of a young boy dressed in red who was stronger than a dozen men. Raised by his mother in a remote forest on Mount Ashigara, he grew up to become one of the most successful warriors that Japan has ever seen: **Sakata no Kintoki**.

Kintaro sat on the edge of the ring with his eyes on the action. When the animals had suggested a sumo competition, he wasn't expecting it to be this good. Only two animals remained and this bout would determine the victor. The boar and the bear circled the ring, ready to do battle. Kintaro and the other animals cheered as the mighty animals pushed and shoved. Within moments, the bear was the only one left in the ring. It stood on its hind legs and roared its victory.



"Hang on!" shouted Kintaro over the racket. "You can't be the victor if you haven't defeated everyone. It's my turn." He stepped into the ring and stared fearlessly at the enormous bear. To everyone's surprise, after just a few minutes, the boy was the only one left in the ring. The animals cheered; they were amazed that a small boy could defeat a fully grown bear.

Later that day, the animals were relaxing in a nearby pond. When Kintaro jumped into the cooling water, a voice echoed from beneath the surface, "So, you're the famous Kintaro that I've been hearing so much about. I think it's about time that I test your strength. This time, though, we'll be under the water."

Kintaro dived and found himself face to face with a large carp. "If you can catch me," the fish explained, "I may begin to believe the tales after all."

Immediately, Kintaro kicked his legs and began to swim. Despite the fish's speed and agility, the boy was able to keep up with ease. Eventually, he pushed out his arms and claimed victory by wrapping himself around the carp's back. Impressed by the boy's courage and strength, the carp accepted the defeat and promised to believe the tales of Kintaro, who was often hailed as the golden boy in the mountains.



Several weeks later, while Kintaro and his mother slept, a storm raged through the mountains. By the next morning, several animals had become trapped on a ledge above a ravine. With quick thinking, Kintaro chopped down a nearby tree - creating a sturdy bridge. To celebrate the bravery of their friend, the animals gathered to meet with Kintaro that evening beneath a red sky.

At the same time, a warrior named Minamoto no Yorimitsu was walking on the mountain accompanied by three of his finest soldiers. Noticing the strange, red sky in the distance, the four made their way towards the unusual sight. When they arrived, they stopped and stared in awe.



In front of them, a young boy was wrestling with a large bear. Eventually, the young boy won the bout and Yorimitsu stepped forward.

"That was very impressive," he said to Kintaro, "but I bet you can't beat my soldiers." One by one, the soldiers met Kintaro in the ring and, each time, Kintaro was victorious.

When the third soldier had been defeated, Yorimitsu offered Kintaro a place to train with him as a warrior. Not wanting to leave his mother, Kintaro reluctantly refused. However, Yorimitsu wasn't ready to give in and he insisted that he accompany Kintaro back to his house. As soon as Kintaro's mother saw Yorimitsu, a smile spread across her face.



"Oh, Kintaro!" she exclaimed. "From the day that you were born, I knew that this would be your destiny. You will be one of the finest warriors that Japan has ever seen. Even your father wants you to go; that red sky was him talking to you."

With his mother's blessing, Kintaro waved goodbye and set off for his next adventure.