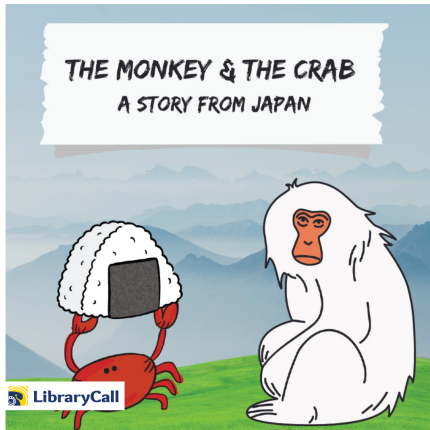


# The Monkey & the Crab



*By Ryan Aoto*

To listen call:

One day, a monkey walked down to the riverbank. There, he saw a crab holding an omusubi, a ball of rice wrapped in seaweed. The monkey's first thought was to run over and steal the omusubi for himself, as he was both hungry and greedy. The crab was smaller than him, so he shouldn't have much trouble.

Just as he was about to run over, he noticed the crab's sharp claws.

"I would not want to be pinched by those," the monkey thought. He was as cowardly as he was greedy. Instead, he decided to go and speak with the crab.

"Hello Crab," the monkey said in his most friendly voice. "Where did you get such a large ball of rice?"

"Someone must have dropped it by the river during a picnic," the crab replied.

"It looks awfully heavy," the monkey said, pretending to care, "maybe I could help you carry it?"

"That is very kind of you," the crab replied, "but I am stronger than I look."

It was true, the crab did not seem to be having any trouble carrying the large omusubi. The monkey was glad he had not tried to steal the ball of rice after all.

"Yes, I can see that. Do you get so strong by eating so much?" the monkey asked.

"Oh no," the crab laughed. "This omusubi isn't for me. I'm taking it back to share with my family!"

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This shocked the monkey. The idea of sharing such a special treat would never have crossed his mind. Just then, he noticed a persimmon seed someone had left on the ground. Suddenly, the monkey had an idea.

“Your family?” he said, as he picked up the seed with his foot. “Is it a large family?”

“Yes,” the crab replied.

“If it is a large family, then even a treat this size won’t last very long.”

“That is true,” the crab replied.

“Well in that case, I suggest a trade.”

“A trade?”

“Yes. If you give me your omusubi, I will give you this seed I was saving for my garden.”

“What good is that seed to me?” the crab asked, confused.

“This is a persimmon seed. If you plant it, a great tree will grow and bear hundreds of big orange fruits. Persimmons are the juiciest, most delicious fruits imaginable.”

“Trees take years to grow,” the crab replied.

“So do families. Plus, the tree won’t just bear fruit once. It will give you persimmons year after year. With a little bit of work, and the small payment of that ball of rice, you and your family will have treats for generations to come.”

What the monkey said was true, but he himself did not believe it. He just wanted to trick the crab out of a treat.

“Crabs are not good climbers. How would we get the fruit?”

“Ha ha,” the monkey laughed. “You drive a hard bargain. You see that tree over there? I live in that tree,” the monkey lied. “I just moved in last week. When your persimmon tree is fully grown, come get me, and I will help you pick the fruit.”

The crab thought for a while.

“It’s a deal,” the crab said. She handed over the omusubi and took the seed.

“Thank you neighbor,” the monkey said with a fake smile. I will come by soon to see how your tree is growing!”

The crab waved goodbye and scuttled back home.

The monkey smiled at his cleverness, laughed at the crab’s foolishness, and shoved the omusubi into his lying mouth.

The crab went home and planted the persimmon seed. In a few years, a mighty tree had grown. When the persimmons were finally ripe, the crab remembered the monkey’s promise to help pick the fruit. She went to the tree where the monkey claimed he lived, but none of the animals had ever heard of him. This confused the crab, and caused her some concern. How was she to reach the ripe persimmons?

It was her children that had the answer. They were very creative crabs who loved to play and build. They tried, and failed, many times to reach the permissions. First, they built a trampoline, but they still could not jump high enough to reach the fruit. Next, they built a catapult, but that had the opposite problem. They kept launching themselves too far over the tree and into the river. The crabs kept at it, never giving up. Soon, they had built a sort of ladder out of reeds they could use to climb the tree and get the ripe, juicy persimmons. The crabs had plenty to eat and

happily shared with their friends and neighbors.

Eventually, on a particularly cold autumn day, the monkey found himself back on that very same riverbank. He overheard some birds talking about how a crab family was preparing for their annual persimmon harvest. At first, the monkey was shocked. That crab with the omusubi had actually planted the seed! And she had managed to grow it into a fruiting tree.

Quickly, the monkey's surprise was replaced by greed. That was his seed the crab had planted! That was his tree! They were eating his persimmons!

The monkey searched the riverbank until he found the tree. He scampered up as quickly as he could and started shoving persimmons into his face. They were so sweet, so juicy, and so delicious.

"Who is that up there?" a voice called out. The monkey looked down and saw the crab below. "Oh, it's you!" she said. "I thought I'd never see you again."

"Hmph," the monkey scoffed. "You mean you wished you'd never see me again. You didn't want to share these persimmons that I gave you."

"What?" the crab said, confused. "I tried to find you many times."

"Liar," the monkey spat, as creatures often accuse others of being what they themselves are. "You just didn't want to share."

"That is not true," the crab said angrily. In this moment, she finally saw the monkey for the selfish creature that he was. "Get out of our tree!"

"Make me," the monkey taunted, and continued to stuff his face with persimmons.

The monkey thought he was safe from the crab's claws up in the tree. He hadn't noticed the reed ladders. So when he saw the crab effortlessly climbing towards him, he panicked. He grabbed some unripe persimmons and began pelting the crab with them. Ripe persimmons are soft and squishy. Unripe persimmons are hard as stones. They cracked the shell of the poor crab and knocked her from the tree.

The monkey grabbed as many persimmons as he could carry and fled.

Moments later, the crab's children found her. It was lucky they got to her when they did, or else she might have died. She told them all that had happened as they carried her back to their home and bandaged her cracked shell. While she rested, the furious children talked about what they would do. Soon, a plan was hatched.

The next day, the crabs got the help of their bird friends to fly through the countryside and find out where the greedy monkey had gone. It did not take them long to locate him in another tree, not far from the riverbank. The crabs then set out to find the items that would help them with their plan. They gathered an egg, some kelp, and some rocks. They also requested some help from their friends, the birds and the bees. Both were happy to help, as the crabs had always been good neighbors to them.

They all gathered quietly at the tree where the monkey was sleeping. The crabs placed the kelp all around the tree and then took their positions in the surrounding hills. The bees assembled on the branches below the sleeping monkey, and the birds waited in a nearby tree.

When everyone was ready, the crabs gave the signal. The birds flew by and dropped the egg right on the monkey's head. The egg cracked and startled the monkey awake. He quickly dropped to the branches below

him, only to find them swarming with bees. He yelped in pain as he was stung over and over. He leapt down in a panic. Instead of finding firm dirt below him, his feet landed on slippery kelp. He tumbled to the ground in a battered and bruised heap.

As soon as the monkey tried to get to his feet, a rock pelted him in the arm, knocking him back down. Looking up, he saw dozens of crabs with rocks in their pincers, aimed right at him.

The eldest daughter walked up to him. “Our mother talked of you often,” she said. “She considered you a friend. We would have gladly shared what we had with you, as we do with all of our friends. Instead, you have made us your enemy with your selfishness and greed. Leave this place, and never return.”

The monkey saw that he could not lie, scheme, or trick his way out of the situation. His greed had almost cost him his life. He scrambled away and never dared return.