

# Hachikazuki-hime

or

## *The Princess Who Had a Bowl on Her Head*

Japan  
Asia



COMMISSIONED ART CREATED BY ROWAN NORTH  
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**STORY OF THE MONTH - MAY 2023 - STORY CROSSROADS - STORYCROSSROADS.ORG**

Out in Kawachi Province, a mother of noble blood prayed to Hase Kannon, the Goddess of Mercy. She wished for a child. A baby girl was born. This mother prayed again and worried about the future of her daughter the princess who had turned 13. A son would have an easier life. After this prayer, the mother had a dream. She heard a voice, "Your daughter must wear a bowl on her head."

When the mother awoke, she ordered a bowl to be brought. She explained to the princess that this was an important bowl and needed to always be on her head. When the mother died a few days later, the princess wished to honor those words. Many times, the father wished for the princess to take the bowl off her head. The princess refused. The father ignored this and grabbed the bowl. It would not move.

Eventually, the father wished to marry again. The new wife had eyes for the father, but those same eyes widened when seeing the princess for the first time. The wife felt humiliated. She vocalized her wish for the princess to be gone.

Not waiting for guards or soldiers to take her away, the princess quietly left for the forest. While walking, she gazed at a flowing river. The water rushed so fast that the princess thought, "I am tired. So tired. I could jump in and see my mother again."

She jumped. Her head stayed above water. She swam back to shore. She jumped again. Still, her head stayed above water. She jumped repeatedly, but the same results. Due to the bowl on her head, she could not get the water to go above her neck.

As much time had passed with all of her attempted jumps, a samurai watched and then ran to her. Seeing she was drenched and tired, he offered for the princess to go to his home. He was so focused that he barely noticed the bowl on her head. She agreed. When looking inside the samurai's home, she noticed a koto. She remembered hearing tunes on this Japanese harp when her mother was still alive. She played a tune and felt as if her mother listened from afar.

The samurai finally saw the princess smile. He asked what caused her to smile, and she told of her mother.

Time passed. The samurai and the princess fell in love. He told his parents that he would only marry the princess who wore a bowl on her head. His parents were confused and questioned if such an act. The father, the longer he thought about this marriage, the more his temper flared. Then, the father took his sword, swung it around, and struck the princess on the head. The princess still stood.

Yet, the bowl shattered. Underneath the bowl, jewels and gold sat on her head. These precious items could come off easily. This caused the father to laugh and forget about his recent action. The marriage took place.

At times, when the princess wished to think of her mother, she placed a bowl on her head, played the koto, or shared memories with the samurai, her husband. She was at peace.

For some versions of this story, it is the father who prays rather than the mother.

Other variations are when a lord and not a samurai finds the princess. The mother is not impressed with the bowl-wearing princess and declares a contest. Yet, the princess is smart enough to satisfy the requirements. This is a classic tale in Japan and statues and other art work can be found that depicts this story.

