

### **Devil of the Last Day of Winter** *setsubun-no oni*

Long ago, there was an old man living alone. No one asked him to go out while there was a festival wishing for good harvest. The old man was so alone, as his wife passed away of an illness, and their son also passed away two years ago. The only pleasure of his days was to visit his wife and son's grave, praying, "My dear wife and son, take me to the heaven where you are."

When the winter came, the old man's house was covered with snow. As he cannot go out for visiting grave, he just stayed in his house, waiting the winter to pass. One day, he felt so alone and decided to see his wife and son at the grave. Their grave was also covered with snow. He took snow away from the grave and gave them hot drinks. It was already dark on his way back home. He heard the voice of children, "Out with the devil, in with good fortune." The voice of children reminded him of his son, throwing soy beans to the old man with a mask of devil on the last day of winter.

When he reached his house, he looked for the devil mask that his son made for him, thought, "There is no lovely son and my wife for me, the good fortune given up on me." He throw soy beans saying "Out with good fortune, in with the devil."

He suddenly heard someone calling him at the door. There were a red devil and a blue devil. "You said 'In with the devil,' here we came." He was so happy even if they were devils, as it had been a long time since someone visited his house. When two devils and an old man were sitting around the sunken hearth, other devils joined them, one after another, and they had a memorable time together. The devils promised to come back next year, leaving various treasure for him. The old man made the old graves of his wife and son beautiful with the treasure of devils, and talked to them in front of the grave, "I will try to continue my life a bit longer, as I promised to invite the devils again next year."