Once there was a doll made of the finest wood. He was a Japanese kokeshi doll. He had a simple wooden body and head and his face was painted. However, his kimono was made from the softest silk. It was black as night on the outside and white as clouds on the inside. The kokeshi doll was very proud of his kimono since no one had clothes like his.
The kokeshi doll was a gift from the king to his son, the prince. The prince was close to finishing school and his father wanted to reward him. The prince would take the kokeshi doll down from the shelf to admire the silk kimono. He would unwrap the black kimono to look at the white kimono inside. The white silk was as thin and delicate as rice paper and very long.
Of course the kokeshi doll was happy when the prince kept the kimono all wrapped up and safe. However, on the last day of school, the prince took the kokeshi doll with him. Immediately the prince’s friends wanted to play with it. The prince slowly and carefully unwrapped the black kimono to show the white kimono inside. Then the prince let each friend write on the white kimono.
The kokeshi was shocked and hurt. He thought, how could the prince do this to my beautiful kimono? After the last friend wrote, the prince carefully wrapped up the kokeshi doll’s kimono and returned home.
The kokeshi was sad. The prince stopped taking him down from the shelf and the kokeshi knew why. He was no longer special or something to admire. He was ugly with marks all over his kimono.
Then one day, the prince did take the kokeshi down and slowly unrolled the black kimono. The kokeshi could not even look because he was so sad, but he did anyway. Instead of ugly marks, there were words of love, good wishes, happy faces, and goodbyes. His kimono was even more special than before! From then on, the kokeshi doll was proud to show his beautiful kimono, inside and out.