

A long, long time ago, there was a young fisherman called Urashima Taro. The fisherman's job was to catch fish. He caught fish every day. And then, he would go to the town to sell the fish he caught. With the little money he made, he lived with his mother. One day, a group of children were hitting a turtle with sticks and stomping it with their feet on the beach.

“What a weird turtle!”

“Go away!”



Urashima stopped the children and said,

“Hey, what a poor turtle. Don’t do this.”

“Shut up!”

“Yeah, don’t get in our way! ”

The children started kicking the turtle again with their feet.

“Then, I will give you some money, so please sell the turtle to me.”

“Wow, it’s money!”

“Okay, sure! Here you go!”

“Bye, Sir! Please buy another turtle from us sometime!”

Once the children received the money, they went away.

After that, Urashima patted the turtle and said,

“Oh dear, that was awful. Now, go back to the ocean as soon as possible. You should not come back to this beach again.”

The turtle slowly walked to the ocean. It looked at Urashima upon entering the water. And then, it slowly swam away.

Several days later, Urashima went fishing out to the ocean with his boat again. When he was fishing diligently, he heard a voice.

“Mr. Urashima, Mr. Urashima.”

“What? Who is calling me? Where are you?”

“It is me. I am the turtle you saved the other day,”

said the turtle, which made Urashima surprised.

“Thank you for the other day. Let me do something to thank you. Mr. Urashima, have you seen a palace called the Palace of the Dragon?”

“The Palace of the Dragon? I have heard about it but never seen it before.”

“Then, I will take you there.”

“I would love to go, but isn’t the Palace at the bottom of the sea? How can we get there? I cannot swim that much.”

“Don’t worry, please get on my back.”

Urashima was a little worried, but he climbed onto the turtle’s back and went deeper and deeper into the ocean.

Under the ocean, the sunlight was shining, and he could see coral in different colours. Also, orange-coloured fish were swimming around the coral.

After a while, he saw the Palace of the Dragon glittering in the ocean.

“That is the Palace of the Dragon. Please come inside.”

“Wow! It is beautiful.”



In the Palace, a beautiful princess was waiting for Urashima.

“Welcome, Mr. Urashima. My name is Oto-hime. Thank you for saving the turtle the other day. Please enjoy a relaxing time at the Palace of the Dragon.”

As Oto-hime said so, ladies-in-waiting carried feasts one after another.

“Please help yourself.”

“Wow, what a feast. Thank you. ... It is delicious! I have never had such a great meal.”

“Please have more.”

And Oto-hime said,

“Fishes, please show us your dance.” Then the fishes started a dance he had never seen before.

“This is such an interesting dance.”

The feast continued the next day. Urashima went to see beautiful places in the ocean and watched dances of squids and octopuses.

One day, he went to an octopus’s house. The octopus’s house had eight doors, and its roof had red eyes.

“Octopus, why does the house have that many doors?”

“It is because I have eight grandchildren.”

“I see!”

Next, Urashima saw the red eyes on the roof, which he found interesting.

“Octopus, what are the eyes for?”

“Oh, it is not eyes. It is a lighthouse. You can see everything under the ocean. Do you want to go and see?”

“Yes, I would love to see them!”

“Then, I will call the turtle, so we'll ride together. Turtle, come here.”

Then the turtle came and brought the octopus and Urashima to the lighthouse.

From the lighthouse, he could see the Palace of the Dragon, the submarine mountains, and rare flowers.

“It is fascinating.”

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After that, they went back to the Palace of the Dragon.

“Now I will show you the scenery of four seasons,”

said Oto-hime. First, she opened the door to the east. He saw spring with beautiful cherry blossoms blooming.

“Wow, it is beautiful. I can also hear the birds singing.”

Next, she opened the door to the south, and he saw summer with sunflowers blooming vigorously. Next, she opened the door to the west, and he saw autumn with red and yellow maple leaves filling like a carpet. Finally, she opened the door to the north, and he saw winter, covered with white snow.

Urashima got startled by everything he saw.

“This is such a fun place. I don’t want to go home just yet.”

“Then, you don’t have to go home. You can stay here forever.”

“...”

Three years had passed in the blink of an eye, with interesting and unusual things happening every day.

Urashima sometimes dreamed about his hometown.

“I wonder how my mother is doing now?”

He started to wonder. Even when he listened to songs or watched dances, he was not fascinated anymore.

Oto-hime worried about him and asked,

“Mr. Urashima, are you okay?”

“Actually, I want to go home... I’m sure my mom is worried about me,”

said Urashima to Oto-hime.

“I see. I am sorry to see you go, but I can’t hold you back then.”

said Oto-hime, and she brought a beautiful box.



“Please bring this farewell gift back home. This is a treasure called Tamate-box; however, you must never open it.”

“Tamate-box?”

“Yes, it contains the most important treasure of all human beings. However, please be sure not to open it.”

“Sure, I understand. Thank you for all your hospitality. Goodbye.”

Urashima thanked them and left the Palace of the Dragon.

The turtle took him to the beach.

“I wonder how my mom is doing. I hope she is well.”

Urashima recalled a conversation with his mother. It was one day when Urashima came home from his fishing work.

“Mom, I only got one fish today. I am sorry.”

“Wow! What a great fish! It should be a great dinner.”

“But I don’t have any fish to sell today.”

“No problem. I’m sure you will catch more tomorrow. So, let’s cook dinner together.”

After Urashima cooked rice and his mother grilled the fish, they had dinner together.

“Yes, it is delicious. Good job, Taro. Thank you as always,”

said his mother, patting Urashima’s head.

“Mom...”

Urashima ran to his house. However, he realized something weird. He could not find anyone he knew. There were houses and shops that he had not seen before.

And then, he arrived where his house should be located. However, he could no longer find his house.

“What happened? I cannot find my house. Where did my mom go?”

Then, one old woman passed by.

“Hello Ma'am, do you know where Urashima Taro's house is?”

“What? Urashima Taro? I have never heard about him before.”

“No way! He lived here!”

The old woman said,

“Urashima's house... I have heard about an old story. A long, long time ago, there was a young fisherman. One day, however, he went to the ocean and never came back. His mother was very, very sad about it, and passed away.”

“What, the mother passed away?”

“Yes. However, it is a story from 300 years ago,” the old woman said and walked away.

“What? 300 years? I thought I had stayed in the Palace of the Dragon only for three years...”

Actually, a year at the Palace was equivalent to 100 years in the real world. Urashima sobbed and went back to the beach.

“No one I know is here. Was I dreaming about the Palace of the Dragon? I might be able to go back to the old days if I open this Tamate-box.”

Urashima forgot about Oto-hime's warning and opened the Tamate-box.

White smoke came out from the box. However, there was nothing inside the box.

Then, he discovered that his hands changed into an old man's hands. His feet and face were all wrinkled. He became an old man with white hair.

What was in the box was the time Urashima spent in the Palace of the Dragon.

