

URASHIMA TARO, the Fisherman

(A Japanese folktale)

(Urashima Taro is pronounced "Oo-rah-shee-ma Ta-roe")

Cast:

Narrator(s)

Urashima Taro

His Mother

3 Bullies

Mother Tortoise

2 Swordfish Guards

Sea King

Sea Queen

Sea Princess

Servant Fish

Passer-by(s)

A Very Old Man

NARRATOR: Once upon a time, in a little village looking over the Sea of Japan, there lived a young fisherman named Urashima Taro. His father had passed away several years ago, and he lived alone with his mother. Urashima Taro was very kind and hard working. Every morning he rose before sunrise, and went to the sea to catch fish.

MOTHER: Urashima Taro, I made some rice balls for your lunch.

URASHIMA: Thank you mother. I hope to catch plenty of fish today.

MOTHER: I hope so. We've used up all our savings and we're almost out of rice.

NARRATOR: When he got to his favorite spot, he cast his nets and sat back to watch the sun rise.

URASHIMA: Life will not always be so hard. Some day I will live like a king!

NARRATOR: Urashima Taro dreamed away the day waiting for some fish to get caught in his net. But each time he pulled the net up, it was empty. Finally, he gave up and had to go home empty-handed.

URASHIMA: How will we ever prepare for winter if I don't catch any fish?

NARRATOR: Urashima spread his nets out to dry and began to walk up the shore when he saw three children tormenting a poor baby tortoise they had captured.

BULLY1: See if you can make it stick its head out.

BULLY2: I've got the tail!

BULLY3: May we should try to cook it!

URASHIMA: Hey you children! Leave the poor tortoise alone!

BULLY 1: No! We found it. It's ours!

BULLY 2: Mind your own business!

URASHIMA: I'll buy it from you.

BULLY3: Sure! Let's see your money!

NARRATOR: Urashima took out his last three coins and gave one to each of the children. Then he brought the tortoise back to the sea.

URASHIMA: There, you'll be safe now. Go back to your mother in the sea, and never let yourself caught again!

NARRATOR: That evening, he had to return home with disappointing news.

URASHIMA: I didn't catch any fish today.

MOTHER: Don't worry, you'll do better tomorrow.

NARRATOR: The next day, Urashima went to the shore to get his boat, when suddenly he heard someone call his name.

MOTHER TORTOISE: Urashima Taro! Urashima Taro!

NARRATOR: Urashima looked around, and was surprised to see a big tortoise coming out of the sea.

MOTHER TORTOISE: Urashima Taro, thank you ever so much for saving my son's life.

URASHIMA: You mean, you are the mother of that baby tortoise?

MOTHER TORTOISE: Yes. I was so happy to have him back. I told our Sea King and Sea Queen about you, and they are so grateful that they want to invite you to their palace at the bottom of the sea!

URASHIMA: That's very nice of them, but I can't come. I can't swim like a fish.

MOTHER TORTOISE: Oh, don't worry. You can ride on my back, and I will take you to the Sea Palace.

NARRATOR: Urashima Taro was curious and excited. He climbed on the Mother Tortoise's back, and they traveled deep into the sea.

URASHIMA: Wow! I didn't know I could breathe under water!

MOTHER TORTOISE: Pretty soon we will see all kinds of beautiful things under the sea.

URASHIMA: You are right. I see so many beautiful fish! Forests of sea weeds! Gigantic coral reefs! I never knew the world under the sea is so beautiful!

NARRATOR: Soon Urashima could see the magnificent palace of the Sea King and Sea Queen. There were two swordfish standing guard.

SWORDFISH 1: WHO GOES THERE?!!

TORTOISE: It is I, the tortoise

SWORDFISH 2: You may pass.

NARRATOR: The inside of the castle was as beautiful as the outside.

SEA KING: Welcome to our palace, Urashima Taro, and thank you for saving the baby tortoise.

SEA QUEEN: You can stay here as long as you wish. Our daughter, Sea Princess, will keep you company.

URASHIMA: Thank you.

NARRATOR: Tortoise brought Urashima to the princess' room.

PRINCESS: I'm happy that the tortoise brought you here. I've seen you many times sitting in your fishing boat. Would you like some food and drink?

URASHIMA: Yes please.

PRINCESS: Bring some food for our guest.

SERVANT FISH: Yes your highness.

(The servant fish bring out food. Urashima and Princess eat together.)

URASHIMA: Everything is delicious!

NARRATOR: After they finished eating, Urashima looked around the room. The princess' room had four large windows.

PRINCESS: Each window shows a different season. Please look through. It's very pretty.

NARRATOR: Urashima walked around the room looking through each window. The first one was a scene of spring, with beautiful cherry blossoms. The second was a scene of summer night, with the sky filled with stars. The third was of autumn. The leaves of the trees were all different colors, red, gold, and orange. The final window showed winter. Everything was covered by beautiful white snow.

******** *(This would be the place to insert songs and/or stories that go with each season.)*

NARRATOR: Life in the castle of the Sea King and Sea Queen was everything that Urashima had always dreamed of. The wonderful food and entertainment and the attention of the servants made him feel like a king. And mostly, he enjoyed the company of the beautiful princess. They became such good friends that before he even realized it, he had been there at the castle for three months. When he realized how long it had been, he began to think about his mother and how difficult things must be for her. He decided to go back.

URASHIMA: Princess, I think I should go back home. My poor old mother will hardly survive the winter without me.

PRINCESS: If you must go back to your home on land, I won't try to keep you. But before you go, there is something I must give you.

NARRATOR: The princess gave Urashima a beautiful lacquer box.

PRINCESS: Whatever you do, you must not open this box. Keep it with you at all times, but don't open it.

URASHIMA: I promise.

NARRATOR: Urashima thanked the princess and she called the tortoise to bring Urashima back to the surface of the sea.

URASHIMA: Thank you Tortoise. Goodbye.

TORTOISE: Goodbye.

NARRATOR: Urashima went off towards his home, but soon found that things had changed. He didn't recognize anyone walking down the street. A different house stood where his old home used to be. Urashima was frightened and confused.

URASHIMA: Where is my house!?! Where is my mother!?! (To a Passer-by) Excuse me. Do you know where the Urashima family went?

PASSER-BY: Urashima family? Never heard of them.

NARRATOR: Finally as he was walking back to the shore, he saw an old, old man.

URASHIMA: Have you ever heard of the Urashima family?

OLD MAN: Urashima... Urashima...Yes. Once, long ago, my grandfather told me a story about Urashima the fisherman who went into the sea and never came back. But that was three hundred years ago.

NARRATOR: It was then that Urashima realized that while he was under the sea for three months, three hundred years had passed in his own land.

URASHIMA: Everyone I know has been gone for three hundred years.

NARRATOR: Not knowing what else to do, Urashima sat down by the seashore. He tried to think of some way he could get back to the princess, but he knew no way of reaching the tortoise again. Finally, in despair, he remembered the lacquer box.

URASHIMA: Maybe there will be some clue in this box of how I can get back to the princess or back to where I belong.

NARRATOR: The moment Urashima opened the box, he felt his body growing very tired and weak. His beard began to grow long and all his hair turned white. He was getting older. It was his youth that had been in that box. And now that it was opened, the years were catching up with him. Slowly Urashima grew older and older until at last, he became an ancient tortoise and crawled off into the sea. And all that was left of his long white beard was the white foam floating on the waves.