## A Dirty Boy

Long, long ago there lived a poor man in a village, who earned his living by selling flowers in his garden, saying "Flower, flower, beautiful flower."

However beautiful the flowers might be, he sometimes couldn't sell all flowers.

On that occasion, he threw them away into the sea, saying,

"Princess of Ryugu(Dragon castle under the sea). I'll present you beautiful flowers."

One day when he was standing on the beach, a big turtle came to him.

"Mr. Flower-vendor. I'll take you to Ryugu. Ride on me." said the turtle.

"But it is said that in ancient time a young man called 'Urashima Taro' went there and spent three days and when he came home, thirty years had passed. I'd like not to be old." said the man.

"It is an old story. Don't be nervous. Our princess would like to say 'Thank you' to you because you gave her many flowers so many times."

At last he agreed to go to Ryugu, where many water animals such as bream, flatfish, shrimp, octopus, jellyfish and so on were waiting for him at the entrance.

"Welcome to Ryugu." they said at the same time, introducing him to the Princess.

"Mr. Flower-vendor. I would like to express to you my deepest gratitude for giving me many flowers so many times. I would like to present one boy in return for flowers. Take him with you to your home and take care of him, and you'll have a lucky life forever." said the Princess to the man.

He looked at the dirty boy, whose nose was sniveling and whose mouth was watering.

Anyway he came home with the dirty boy on the turtle's back and named him 'Toho(AT A LOSS).'

"Toho. My house is small. Can you do anything?" said the man to the boy.

"Please close your eyes until I say 'OK'." said the boy, clapping his hands three times.

"Ok,"

Opening his eyes, the man found himself sitting in a huge house. He wanted new goods one after another, like a new carpet, drawers, new clothes and much money. He got whatever he wanted from the lucky boy. There was no need for him to work anymore.

A few years had passed. Now he was a millionaire and spent every day playing with young ladies, gambling and drinking.

The trouble was that the dirty boy had always been staying with him and never parted from him.

"Toho. Why don't you blow your nose?" said the man to the boy.

"No. I never blow my nose." answered the boy.

"Toho. Why don't you clean the water of your mouth?"

"No. I never clean the water of my mouth."

"If so, go back to Ryugu at once. I don't need you anymore."

"I understand." said the boy.

As soon as the boy went out of the house, everything changed into what it used to be. The house, his clothes turned into very old ones as if he had a dream. He didn't know what happened. He was AT A LOSS(Toho).

○どうして花売りは「途方」に暮れたのでしょう。

## 洟たれ小僧

花がどんなにきれいでも、時々花が残ってしまいました。

そんな時、こう言って、花を海に投げ捨てました。

「竜宮のお姫さま、お花をあげます。」

ある日のことです。浜辺に立っていると、大きなカメが男の所にやってきま した。

「花売りさん、竜宮に連れて行くよ。さあ乗って。」

「でも、むかし、浦島太郎と言う者が、そこに行って三日過ごしただけなのに、帰ってきたら三十年経っていたと言う話を聞いたことがある。年は取りたくねえだ。」

「あれは、昔の話さ。心配しないで。お姫さまが、お花のお礼を言いたいんだって。」 男は、竜宮に行くことにしました。入り口では、鯛や平目や海老や蛸やくらげや、色々な生き物 が迎えてくれました。

「竜宮へようこそ。」と一斉に言うと、お姫さまの所に案内してくれました。

「花売りさん、何回もお花を頂き、本当にありがとうございます。お礼に子供を一人さしあげたいと思います。どうか家に連れて行ってかわいがって下さい。幸せになることでしょう。」 男は、その汚い子供を見ました。鼻水が出て、口からはよだれを垂らしていました。 とにかく、男は、かめの背中に乗り、子供と一緒に家に戻ると、その子を「トホウ」と名づけました。

「トホウ。俺の家は狭いけど、何ができるんだ。」

「僕が、いいよ、言うまで目を閉じてて。」と子供は言うと、手を三回叩きました。

「いいよ。」

目を開けると、男は大きな家に座っていました。男は、新しい敷物や、引き出しや、着物や、お 金や、欲しい物何でも手に入りました。もう働く必要はありません。

数年が過ぎました。男は、長者になり、女、賭け事、酒の日々を送っていました。

目障りなことは、洟垂れ小僧がいつも一緒にくっ付いていることでした。

「トホウ。鼻をかんだらどうだ。」

「鼻はかまないよ。」

「トホウ。よだれをふいたらどうだ。」

「よだれはふかないよ。」

「じゃ。竜宮にすぐ帰れ。もうお前など要らん。」

「わかった。」

小僧が家を出た途端、全てが昔のままになってしまいました。家も、着物も、夢だったかのよう に、元の姿に戻ってしまいました。

男は、どうしたらよいかわかりませんでした。途方(トホウ)に暮れていました。

