

**Villager 1**

This is a village by the seaside.

This story took place one early evening in the beginning of November, at the end of the Edo Period.

In Hiromura-village, Kishu-Wakayama, the autumn harvest was over, and there, many, many stacks of rice sheaves were piled up in the fields.

**"We've got plenty of rice crop, and we also have lots of fine straw. We should be grateful for this blessing."**

With such words, the villagers expressed their joy.

The straw that remains after reaping the rice plants is to be used for an important purpose, so it is tied into bundles, which are then piled up high one on top of the other. This is what is known as "*inamura*" (rice sheaves).

And the villagers were gradually starting preparations to welcome in the winter.

(a short pause)

(pulling the card out)

**Boom Boom Booom!!!**

- Hiromura, Kishu-Wakayama: present-day Hirogawa-town in Wakayama Prefecture

- The sound of the earth rumbling

The ground was rumbling, and Mother Earth and the houses all shook ever so strongly.

(shaking the screen up and down)

**Villager 1**

**"Oh, it's an earthquake! A huge earthquake!"**

The villagers ran out of their homes.

- Simulating an earthquake

**Child 1**

**"Oh, no!"**

- In a surprised tone

**Child 2**

**"I'm scared!"**

The children clung to their parents.

(a short pause)

The walls crumbled, the houses tilted and clouds of dust rose up like smoke.

(pulling the card out quickly)

- Screaming

Gihee[gihe:], who was popular with the villagers as the *Shoya* governing Hiromura, also rushed out of his house with his family.

**Gihee**

**“Our house is undamaged, but are the villagers safe?”**

In the sky, a mixture of black and white clouds spread ominously, and a sharp light flashed across, as if tearing the distant clouds apart.

What’s more, from far beyond the distant sea, one could hear a roaring sound like a cannon.

**Boom Boom Booom!!!**

**Gihee**

**“Oh no, something terrible is about to happen...”**

(pulling the card 1/3 out)

Gihee instructed his family,

**Gihee**

**“You must, without delay, rush to the top of the hill, and through the solitary pine tree, escape to the Hiro-Hachiman Shrine.”**

(pulling the entire card out)

Having said that, he went inside the house.

- *Shoya*: A village headman, assigned with the responsibility governing the village by order of the feudal lord in the Edo Period

- Signs of a tsunami
- Muttering anxiously

**Gihee's wife**

**"What on earth are you going to do?"**

- In a firm tone

Lighting up a pine torch, he replied,

**Gihee**

**"A tsunami!**

**A tsunami will be coming very soon.**

- In a perplexed tone

**There's no time to go around on foot telling everyone in the village of the imminent danger.**

**So, I'm going to send a signal by setting fire to the *inamura* rice-stacks in the fields."**

(pulling the card out quickly)

Gihee ran.

He set fire to one of the *inamura* rice-stacks.

The rice-stack, which was well-dried, burst into flames at once.

(pulling the card out halfway)

And to other rice fields, one after the other,

Gihee ran and ran...

**Gihee**

**“Hurry, everybody! Gather together quickly! • As if murmuring  
You must escape to the hill.”**

(pulling the entire card out)

**Villager 1**

**"Look! The *Shoya's* house is on fire."**

- In a panic

**Villager 2**

**"What if something should happen to our *Shoya!*"**

**Villager 3**

**"Hurry up! We must go and put out the fire at once!"**

In no time, the villagers gathered.

In this village there was the custom at such times of emergency, of all villagers going and helping put out the fire together.

(pulling the card out)

**Youths**

**"Mr. *Shoya!!*"**

- Shouting

Just as the youths, who had arrived there first, were about to put out the fire, Gihee stopped them.

- |               |  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
| <b>Gihee</b>  | <b>"A tsunami is coming! Don't put out the <i>inamura</i> fire."</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Desperately restraining the youths</li></ul> |
| <b>Youths</b> | <b>"What do you mean? Why won't you let us put out the fire?"</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unable to grasp the situation</li></ul>      |
| <b>Gihee</b>  | <b>"A tsunami! A tsunami is coming! Check whether everyone in the village has assembled here. And make sure that, through the solitary pine tree, everyone escapes to the Hiro-Hachiman Shrine."</b> |  |
| <b>Youths</b> | <b>"Yes, sir!"</b><br>(pulling the card out little by little)<br>Once the villagers had fled to the hill as ordered by Gihee, he cried out,  |  |
| <b>Gihee</b>  | <b>"Look over there!"</b><br>(pulling the card out quickly)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At the top of his voice</li></ul>            |

**Villagers**

Gihee pointed far beyond the sea.

**“What on earth is that?”**

The villagers saw a dreadful sight.

There, off the coast where it was already getting dark, a blackish line was becoming thicker and wider, and quickly heading in the direction of Gihee and the villagers.

- Normally tsunami looks white, but sometimes it seems black in the back light of the evening sun.

**Boom Boom Booom!!!**

- The roaring sound of a huge tsunami approaching

**Villager 1**

**“A tsunami!”**

**Villager 2**

**“A tsunami is coming!”**

(pulling the card out)

**Swash!! Bang!! Boom!!**

- Shouting
- The sound of the village being swallowed up by the waves



The people shuddered in spite of themselves.

The seaside village was struck by a tsunami, accompanied by clouds of spray.

Swallowed up in the turbulent billows, all things in the village lost their former shapes.

(a short pause)

The villagers realized that, just until a few minutes ago, they had been in that very place, totally unaware that a tsunami was about to come.

**"Oh, how terrible..."**

• Frightened

Before long, the tsunami struck for a second time, and once again for a third time.

(pulling the card out)

**Villagers**

The villagers, kneeling down in a row, bowed their heads before Gihee.

**Villager 1**

**"You saved our lives, sir."**

- With gratitude

**Villager 2**

**"Mr. *Shoya*, thank you so very much."**

Nodding, Gihee said,

**Gihee**

**"In our Hamaguchi family, a saying has been passed down that a big earthquake is followed by a tsunami.**

- Explaining slowly

**And this suddenly came back to me.**

**This is all thanks to the words of our ancestors."**

(pulling the card out)

Gihee, accompanied by young men and women, went to the neighboring village and borrowed their stock of rice.

And the wives cooked the rice and prepared rice balls.

**Gihee**

**“Here, eat these rice balls, and cheer up.”**

• In a tone of encouragement

Gihee took the lead and handed out the rice balls to all the villagers.

(pulling the card out)

Later on, while aftershocks still continued, many temporary huts were built in the demolished village.

The villagers were taking the first step to recover from this disaster.

Yet, one villager, who had lost everything due to the tsunami, told Gihee,

**Villager 1**

**"I can no longer live in Hiramura.  
I'm thinking of moving to another village to look for a job."**

• In a gloomy tone

**Villager 2**

Another villager came to Gihee in tears,  
**"When I think that we will be struck by another tsunami again, I'm just so scared.  
I'm going to move to a safer place."**  
(pulling the card out)

Gihee was gazing at the waves lapping the beach.

This beach was called by the beautiful name of Tensugahama. (it means beach of heaven)

Gihee

**"We should construct a dike here to prevent tsunami damage.**

**If the villagers participate in this project, this will provide work for them.**

**And it will also lead to the revival of our hometown."**

Gihee nodded to himself.

Since long ago, the Hamaguchi family had produced soy sauce in Choshi town, and had been doing big business in Edo City.

Gihee

**"A large sum of money will be needed to pay the wages of the laborers and cover all expenses involved in the construction of such a dike. Even so, we must finish this project right to the end at all costs,"**

he resolved firmly.  
(pulling the card out)

• In a resolute tone

• Choshi: present-day Choshi City in Chiba Prefecture

Soon afterwards, the construction work began.

Gihee conducted a survey, and found out that Hiromura village had been struck by gigantic tsunamis almost every hundred years during the past five hundred years.

Based on data of past tsunamis and the tsunami this time, it was Gihee who designed the dike and directed the construction work.

The villagers worked very hard.

**Villager 1**

**"Let's work hard to protect our village."**

• In a happy tone

**Villager 2**

**"Whether male or female, if we work, we get paid immediately.**

**How fortunate we are! We should be grateful."**

**Villager 3**

**"I heard that construction might have to be suspended when we get busy with our field work."**

**Villager 4**

**"What a rewarding job this is!"**

(pulling the card out)

The magnificent dike was completed at great expense after four years due to the efforts of many people.

(a short pause)

Ninety-two years after the tsunami caused by the Ansei Nankai Earthquake, when the *inamura* was burned, the Showa Nankai Earthquake struck accompanied by a huge tsunami, just as had been predicted.

Yet, the dike stood firm, protecting the people from the tsunami.

(pulling the card out)

Every year in November, the Tsunami Festival is held by the dike at Hirogawa-town, Wakayama Prefecture.

**Child 1**

**"We will never forget the *inamura* fire."**

- In a clear and brisk voice

**Child 2**

**"We are grateful the dike was built."**

Each child prays while carrying a bag full of earth and piling it up on the dike.

**Child 3**

**"We will all do our best to protect our hometown."**

In this manner, the inhabitants of this town are reminded once again of the importance of disaster prevention.

(The End)



A tsunami is coming! Don't put out the *inamura* fire

(inamura:stacks of just-harvested rice crops).

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In 1854, the village of Hiromura in Kishu-Wakayama (present-day Hirogawa-town, Wakayama Prefecture, Japan) was struck by a huge tsunami resulting from an earthquake. Hamaguchi Goryo (who was called Gihee at that time) saved countless lives by setting fire to his stacks of rice (*inamura*) and guiding the villagers to a hill at night. Later on, he spent his personal fortune on constructing a dike together with the villagers.

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