

## YUUKI AND THE TSUNAMI INTRODUCTION

This is a Japanese story about the village people getting ready to celebrate a good rice harvest. But Mother Nature has other plans in store for them. What does one do when this happens ... bow down to the forces or [meander](#) around the situation to find one's way?

A [tsunami](#), pronounced [ soo-NAH-mee], is a series of waves in a water body caused by the displacement of a large volume of water, generally in an ocean or a large lake, and most commonly caused by earthquakes. It is from Japanese, where [nami] means "wave" and [tsu] here means "harbour". In English, the word is pronounced [sunami] rather than [tsunami] since English does not allow syllable-initial [ts]. Note that the English spelling does not even have the [virtue](#), whatever that might be, of preserving the Japanese spelling since Japanese is not written in Roman letters. In the U.S. people incorrectly call tsunami [tidal waves](#) although they have nothing to do with tides. The best way to understand the horrific nature of tsunami is to watch this [National Geographic video](#) of the 2011 tsunami in Sendai Japan.

[Kemari](#) is an athletic game that was popular in Japan during the [Heian period](#). It resembles a game of football (soccer) or hacky sack. **Harvest Festival** ( [Hōnensai](#)) is a fertility festival celebrated every year. The Hōnen festival and ceremony celebrate the blessings of a bountiful harvest and all manner of prosperity and fertility. The name **Yuuki** means *Gentle Hope* and is of Japanese origin.

The story talks about courage in the time of [adversity](#). Are there any incidents from your life where you have exhibited such [resilience](#) in times of need? Physical courage? Mental courage?

How might these proverbs be [synonymous](#) with the tale?

[A good mind possesses a kingdom](#)

[March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers](#)

[All's well that ends well](#)

[Better lose the saddle than the horse](#)

## YUUKI AND THE TSUNAMI

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NARRATOR	VILLAGER 1	VILLAGER 2	GRANDFATHER
YUUKI	YUUKI'S MOTHER	YUUKI'S FATHER	BOY 1
BOY 2	GIRL 1	GIRL 2	

**NARRATOR:** Yuuki's Grandfather was the head of the village - the wealthiest, wisest, and most respected man around. If there was a problem in the village, everyone knew who to see.

**VILLAGER 1:** Your goats keep coming into my field and eating my rice!

**VILLAGER 2:** Oh, so it's **MY** fault that **YOUR** fence is torn?

**VILLAGER 1:** My fence is torn because **YOUR** goats **ATE** it!

**VILLAGER 2:** So don't make your fence out of GRASS!

**GRANDFATHER :** Friends! Please calm down. Sit, let's discuss this over tea.

**VILLAGER 1:** So I'll replace the fence with bamboo.

**VILLAGER 2:** And I'll give you goat cheese every week for a year.

**NARRATOR:** And they all shook hands. Then Grandfather called out to Yuuki,

**GRANDFATHER:** So, you overheard our little drama. Tell me, what did you learn?

**YUUKI:** Umm...don't let your goats eat a hole in your neighbour's fence?

**GRANDFATHER:** Haha, yes. Generally, not a good idea. Yuuki, listen to me. I've been thinking it's time to tell you something important. The truth is, I am old. I will not be around forever.

**YUUKI:** Grandfather, no! Don't say that!

**GRANDFATHER:** Hush! Before you know it, you and your parents will be the ones to cultivate the family's rice crop. You remember what I told you?

**YUUKI:** If you take good care of the rice crop, the rice crop will take good care of you.

**GRANDFATHER:** Excellent! Anything else?

**YUUKI:** Oh, I know! "Fixing right takes thinking right."

**GRANDFATHER:** Yep, it all starts with thinking. Thinking ahead. Well, and then there are times when it's enough with all this thinking. Like now. It's playtime! How about some kemari?

**YUUKI:** Sure!

**NARRATOR:** Sadly, Yuuki's Grandfather passed away not long after. By then, Yuuki was 10 years old. It was time for the annual harvest celebration.

**VILLAGER 2 :** Hey, it's great everyone brought lots of paper lanterns. We don't have anywhere near enough this year.

**MOTHER:** What are we waiting for? Let's get those decorations up!

**NARRATOR:** Everyone started to hang decorations. Yuuki was on the mountain top playing, pretending to be different animals.

**YUUKI:** I'm a super-strong giant wild pig! UUURRG. Going after a mountain lion! ROAR!  
No, I'm a mountain lion - going after a giant wild pig. GROWWL!

**NARRATOR:** As YUUKI "growls", a loud, long rumble is heard .



**YUUKI:** Whoa. I am good! (pause) Hmm, No ! that wasn't me.

**NARRATOR:** Meanwhile, down below.

**MOTHER:** Everyone okay?

**VILLAGER 1:** Just a small earthquake.

**VILLAGER 2:** Not enough to do any damage.

**FATHER:** Alright then, let's get back to work. There's still a lot to do.

**YUUKI:** That had to be an earthquake... but what a squishy feeling to it. Everything looks good down there. I guess all's fine. The sea, though, looks so dark. And why is it pulling away so fast from the shore? Wait a minute. Didn't Grandfather tell me something about that...?

**NARRATOR:** Yuuki recalls...

**GRANDFATHER:** Remember what I told you about when the sea turns dark and rolls back very fast?

**YUUKI:** ... What was that again?

**GRANDFATHER:** It's what my own grandfather had told me. It may only happen once every 100 years. When there's an earthquake, and then the sea pulls back far from the shore, it can mean only one thing – a tsunami is coming!

**YUUKI:** A tsunami! The huge wave that will cover everyone and everything! I must warn them all!

**BOY 1:** Hey, Yuuki! Come on, look at the beach! It's HUGE! I've never seen so many shells!

**GIRL 1:** Look how far we can run around on this beach! This is awesome!

**GIRL 2 :** Some of these I've never seen before. Follow me!

**YUUKI:** No, NO! We all have to get out of here. A tsunami is coming! There isn't much time! Everyone has to clear out!



**BOY 1:** Good one, Yuuki!

**YUUKI:** This is serious. A giant wave is coming any minute!

**BOY 2:** You're talking about that blue sky out there? Yeah, THAT's not happening.

**YUUKI:** Not right this second, but soon!

\*\*\*\***BOY 1, BOY 2, GIRL 1, and GIRL 2 (together):** Whatever.

**NARRATOR:** The children continue to play. **Yuuki recalls...**

**GRANDFATHER:** Yuuki, just remember what "fixing right" takes.

**YUUKI:** "Thinking right." But what does that have to do with...? Wait a minute!

**NARRATOR:** YUUKI enters and runs over to the rice fields. He holds a torch. Yuuki touches one tuft of rice, then another, and then another.

**BOY 1:** What is Yuuki doing with that torch? He'd better be careful.

**YUUKI:** I'd better go tell them.

**NARRATOR:** Yuuki runs up to Villagers.

**YUUKI:** Everyone! The rice fields are on fire!

**VILLAGER 1:** Yuuki, don't go around saying such a thing.

**VILLAGER 2:** People could believe it, and panic.

**YUUKI:** But they really are...!

**VILLAGER 2:** Hey, it does smell like something's burning.

**VILLAGER 1:** Now that you mention it...

**VILLAGER 2:** Look! I see smoke!



Yuuki ran from stack to stack.

**VILLAGER 1:** Oh, no – the rice crop!

**NARRATOR:** ALL look toward the rice fields, in shock.

**VILLAGER 1:** Where are the children?

**VILLAGER 2:** At the beach, last I saw them.

**VILLAGER 1:** Let's go warn them!

**VILLAGER 2:** Kids! The rice fields are on fire!

**VILLAGER 1:** This can spread fast! All of you, up to the mountaintop – quick!

**NARRATOR:** They all started climbing to reach the mountaintop. On "top" they stood there, looking at the rice fields.

**VILLAGER 1:** Look at our fields. The rice crop is ruined!

**VILLAGER 2:** That fire came so fast! That could have been us down there.

**VILLAGER 1:** It was Yuuki who warned us about the fire.

**MOTHER:***(proud)* Yuuki, is that true?

**YUUKI:***(hesitates)* Well...

**BOY 1:** But Yuuki is the one who STARTED the fire!

**VILLAGER 2:** What?

**BOY 1:** I saw him!

**BOY 2:** Yuuki's been acting wild. First, he was running around on the beach talking crazy about some big wave.

**GIRL 1:** We were just playing on the beach and he wouldn't let us alone!

**MOTHER:***(horrified)* Yuuki, you started the fire? Could that be true?

**YUUKI:***(hesitates)* Well...

**FATHER:** (sternly) Why on earth would you do such a thing?

**YUUKI:** It was only because...

**VILLAGER 2:** All the crops are gone!

**VILLAGER 1:** By now, our homes could have caught fire, too!

**MOTHER:** Yuuki, have you lost your mind?

**VILLAGER 1:** Look, everyone! look at the size of that wave!

**VILLAGER 2:** That's not just a wave – it's a... you know... what do you call it?...

**VILLAGER 1:** It's a TSUNAMI. It's going to hit the whole village!

**VILLAGER 2:** What's left of it!

**NARRATOR:** A loud sound of a wave's crashing is heard. Everyone pulls back and huddles together in fear.

**VILLAGER 1:** The sea covered our entire village. I can't even see our rooftops!

**VILLAGER 2:** We would have been drowned!

**VILLAGER 1:**(*realizes*) But we're safe up here.

**MOTHER:** Yuuki, what's going on?

**YUUKI:** I'm sorry I burned the fields...

**FATHER:** Son, you saved us! You saved the whole village. That's why you set fire to the fields, right? To get everyone to run up the mountain to safety.

**YUUKI:** Well... I had to.

**VILLAGER 1:** Three cheers for Yuuki! Three cheers for the boy who saved our lives!

**ALL:** HOORAY!

**FATHER:** Yuuki , that was very smart, what you did. How did you think of that?

**YUUKI:** I'm not sure. "Fixing starts with thinking, right?"

**MOTHER:** Sounds familiar ...

**FATHER:** You know what else your grandfather would say if he was here right now?

**YUUKI:** He'd probably say, "Why is everyone standing around? Let's find something to celebrate!"

**NARRATOR:** And that is the legend of how one boy in Japan years ago saved the lives of 400 people from a tsunami. True story. And now, as they say in Japan, Sayonara !



Wood block print of the [Great Wave off Kanagawa](#) by Katsushika Hokusai (1829-1833)