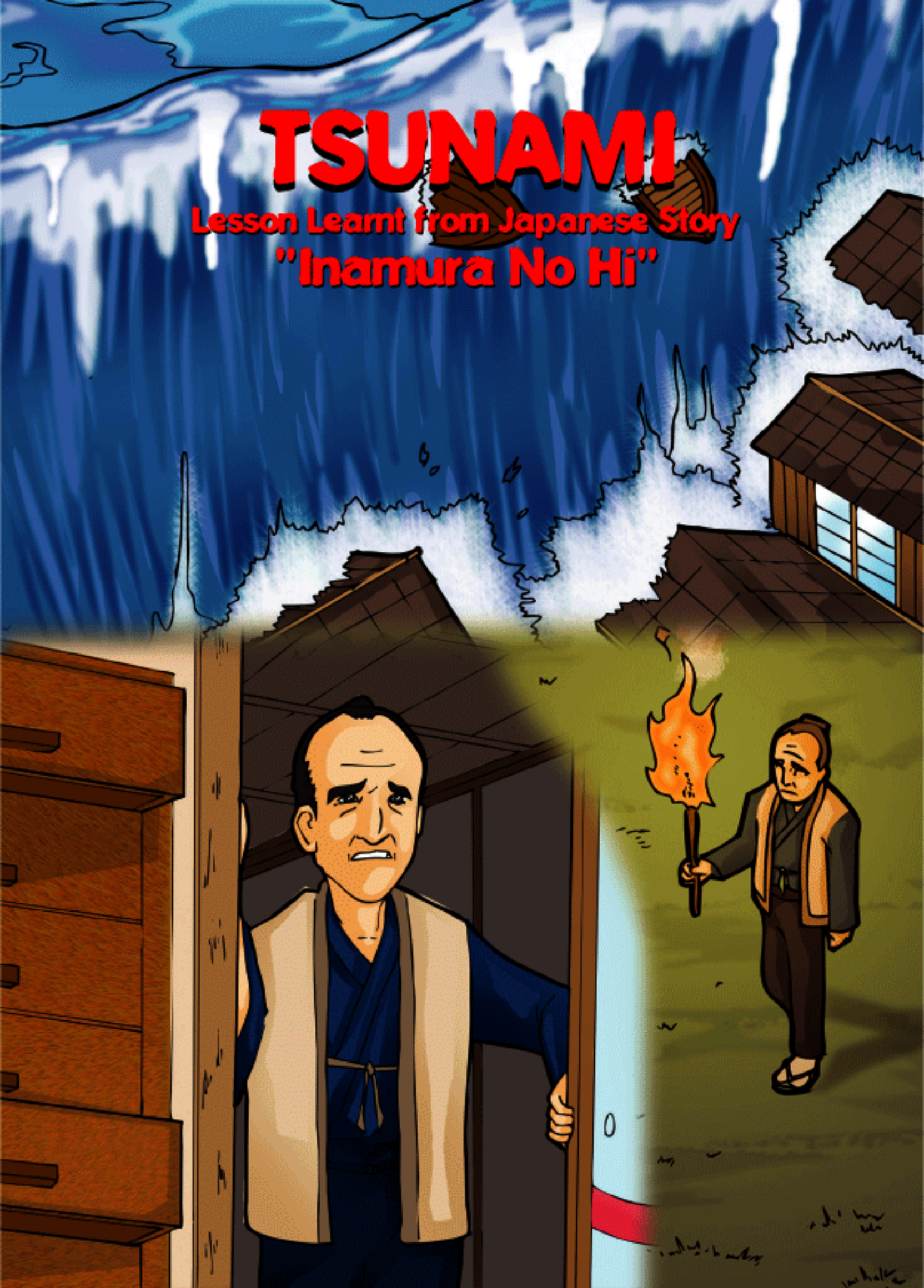


TSUNAMI

Lesson Learnt from Japanese Story
"Inamura No Hi"



Indian Ocean

Tsunami

on 26 December 2004

On December 26 2004, a big Tsunami hit several countries surrounding the Indian Ocean, covering Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and India. The Tsunami killed over 200,000 people, causing huge damages within the countries.



How can we save our lives
from Tsunami?

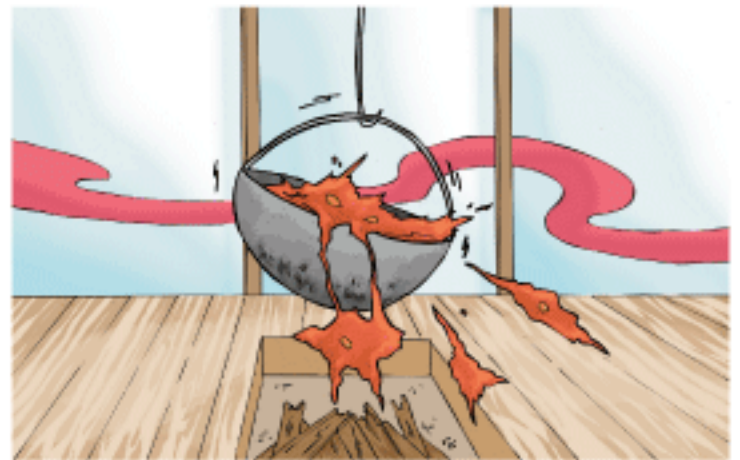
We would like to introduce a Japanese story of a village chief who saved his villagers from a big Tsunami disaster.



The Fire

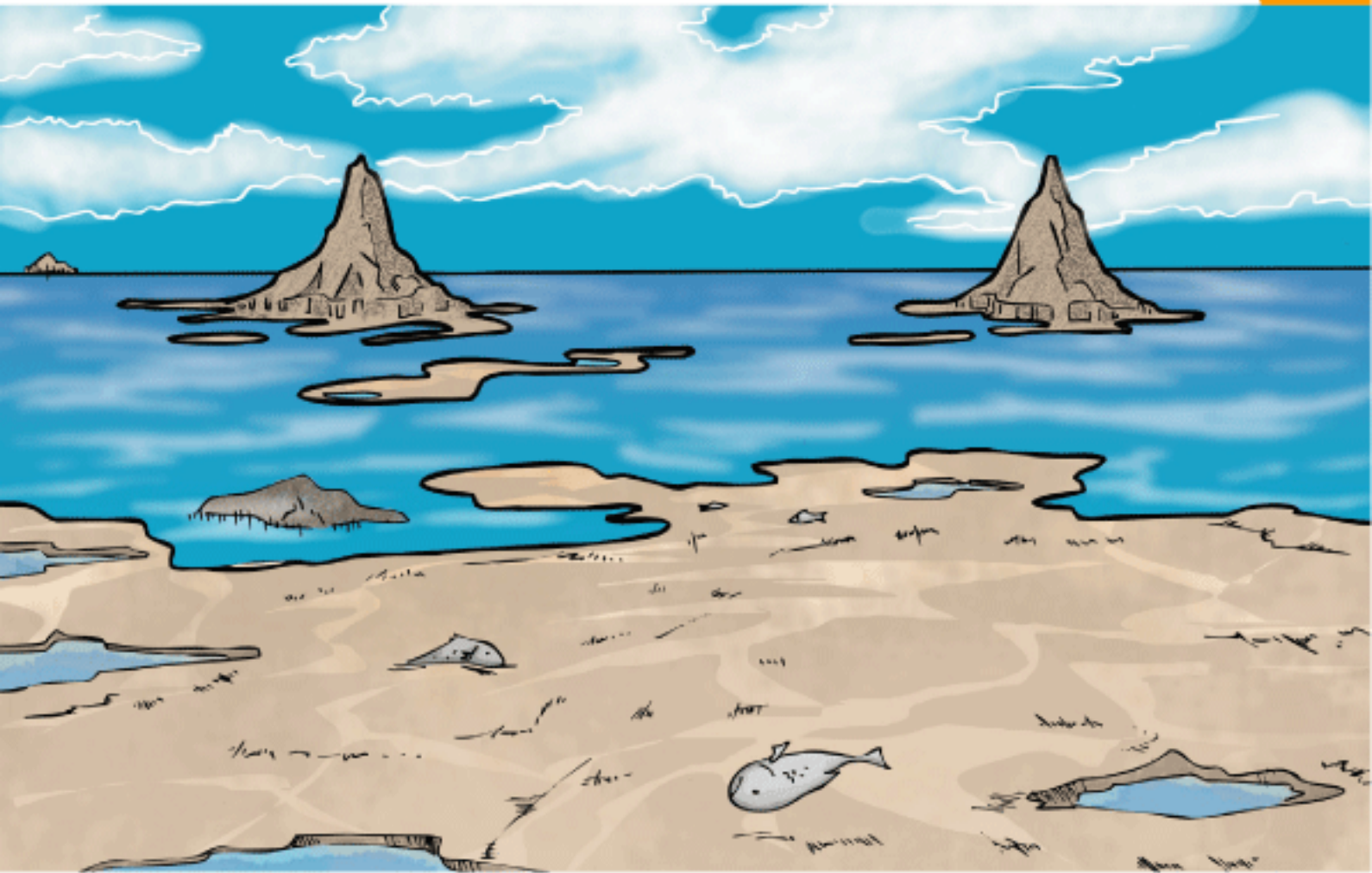
of Inamura (rice sheaves)

"Oh, this is out of the ordinary," said Gohei, coming out of his house on the hill. The earthquake was not so strong, but it was different from what he had experienced before: the quake was long and slow, and the rumbling on the ground was like a roar.





From the garden of his house, Gohei looked down at houses situated along the coast. He was the village chief, and was worried about his villagers. Down on the shore, they were busy preparing for the night festival to celebrate the year's harvest. They did not seem to notice the earthquake.



Gohei shifted his focus from the village to the sea. He was puzzled at the scene there. The wind was blowing from the sea to the coast, but the water was quickly drying out. Soon after, he could see large areas of sand and rocks on the seabed.

"Oh, a tsunami is approaching !" he said to himself. "I should warn the villagers at once, or the lives of 400 people will be lost!"



He rushed into his house, grabbed a large torch, and ran to his rice field. There, he had a lot of rice sheaves which he had just harvested and dried. "The harvest is precious, but I can save the people's lives with it." He set fire on one sheaf with his torch. The fire burned, fanned by the wind from the sea. He ran from one sheaf to another and set them on fire. After he fired all his rice sheaves, he threw away the torch and stood still, looking at the sea.

The sun had already set, and it was getting darker and darker. The fire of the sheaves got brighter. A man on a watch tower located near a temple spotted it, and rang the fire bell. People shouted, "There is fire at the house of the village chief!"



Young men, who could run fast, reached the hill first. Then, all the other people, including women, old men and children, followed them.

Gohei looked at fellow villagers rushing up the hill. To him they seemed to be walking slowly, like ants.



Finally, about 20 young men arrived at Gohei's house. They tried to put out the fire at once. But Gohei exclaimed in a loud voice, "Leave the fire as it is. A disaster is coming. Tell everyone to hurry up the hill!"

More and more villagers made their way up to the hill. Gohei counted the number of people to see if everyone had safely reached the top of the hill. The people were shocked to see the burning sheaves, and turned to look at Gohei. They couldn't understand what was happening.

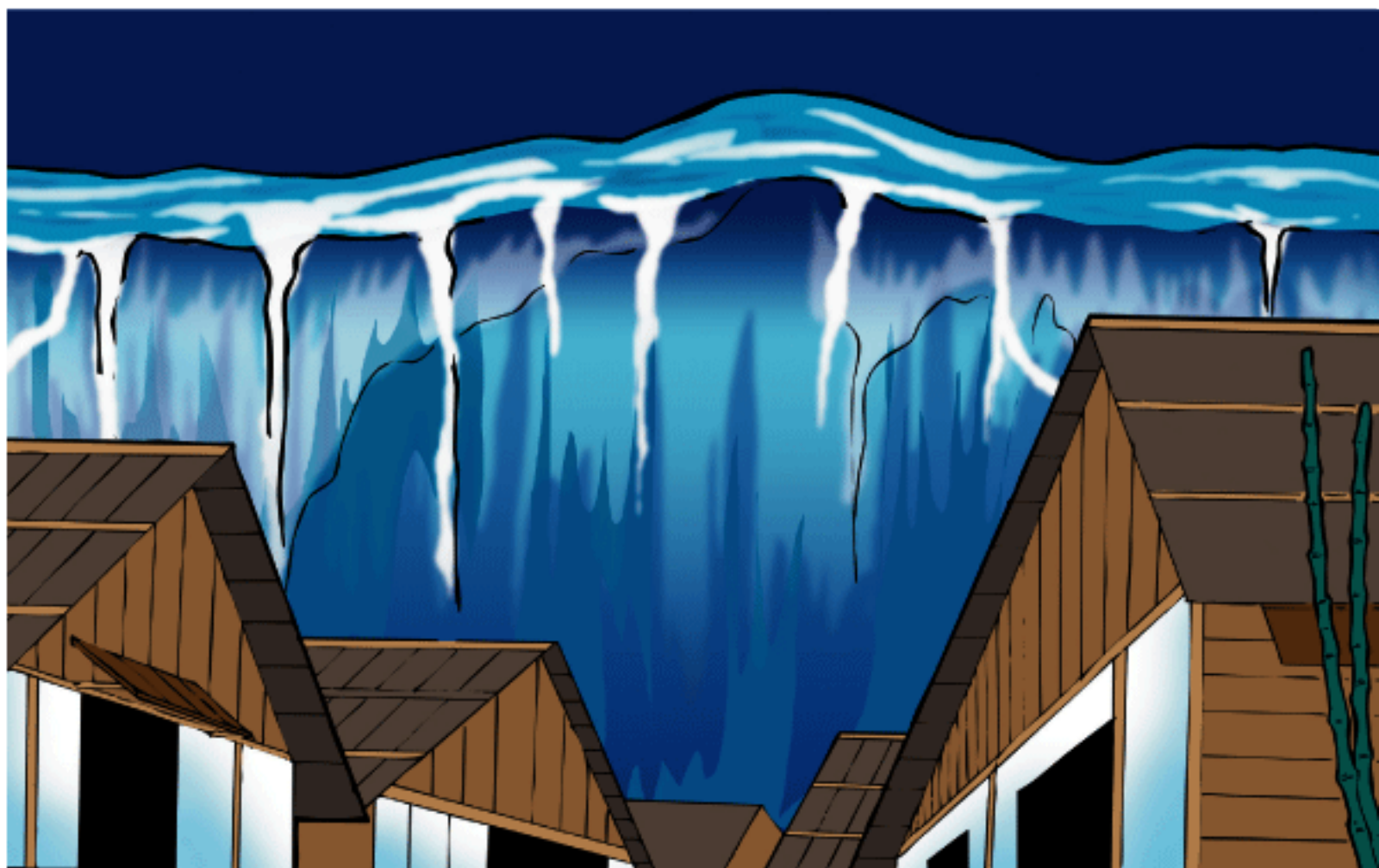




Just then, Gohei pointed out to the sea, and shouted as loud as he could, "Look. It's coming!"

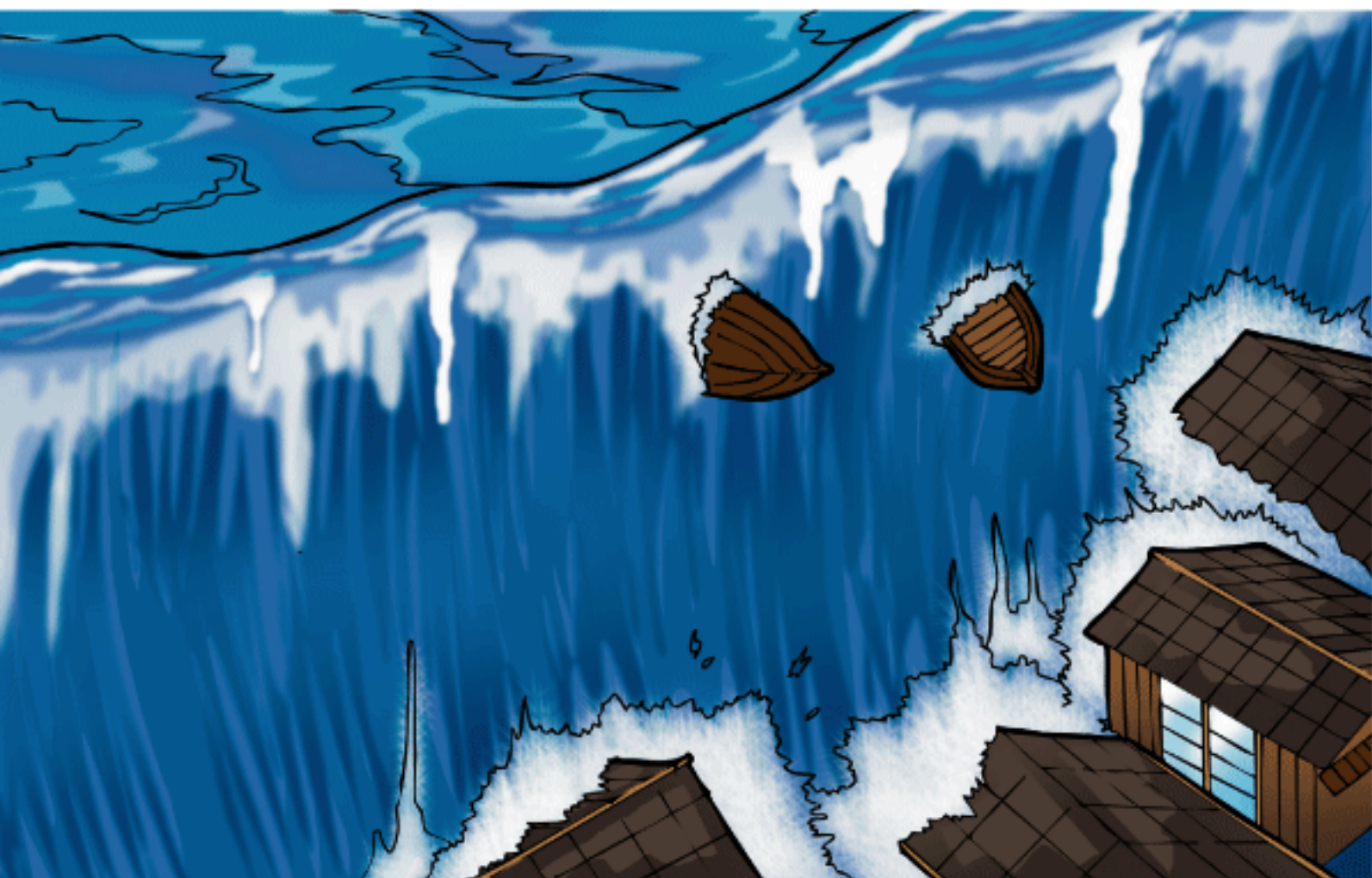
Through the dim light of the twilight, the villagers witnessed the approaching tsunami. They could see a thin dark horizontal line far away. The line quickly became thick and long. At high speeds, it soon approached the coast.

"It's a tsunami!" someone shouted. The sea water stood up like a wall. It hit the land with a heavy force and a thunderous explosion. Everyone on the hill was so stunned. The only thing they could do was to run away from the big wave. As Gohei had expected, the wave did not hit the hill. Instead the people were surrounded by a spray of sea water, which rose up like clouds.



The villagers saw the terrible white water destroying their village. The wave retreated once, but charged up again and again.

On the hill, everyone turned speechless for a while. All they could do was stare at the destruction.



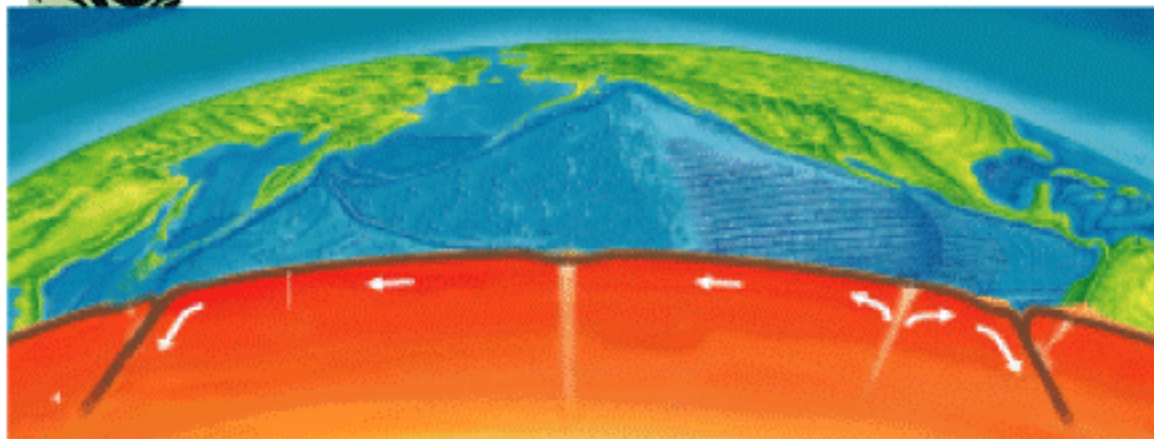
Fanned by the wind, the fire of the sheaves flared up again and lit the hill. Just then, the villagers finally realized the reason behind the fire. They understood that it was the fire that saved them. They could not find the words to thank Gohei. Instead, they knelt down in front of him.



What is Tsunami?



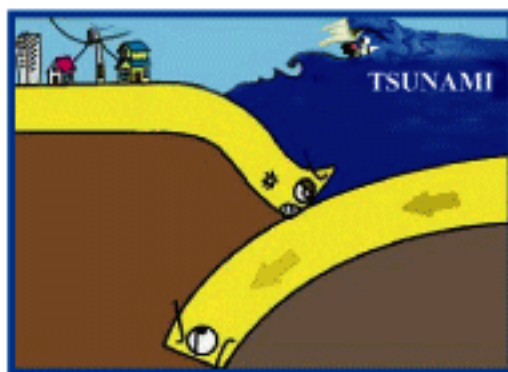
Why does a
TSUNAMI occur?



The surface of the earth is made up of layers of thick plates. Underneath the plates, lies a surface of hot liquid. This surface is constantly in motion, and these movements cause these plates to shift.



When two plates move and meet, they press against each other. After a long period of time, this force will create a pressure.



There are times when the pressure caused by this shift is so strong that a plate would slip out of its previous position. It is this that causes an earthquake, and a tsunami is created when an earthquake occurs under the sea.

Normally the sea recedes just before the occurrence of a tsunami. Nevertheless, there may be instances where the sea may not recede before a tsunami hits the land.



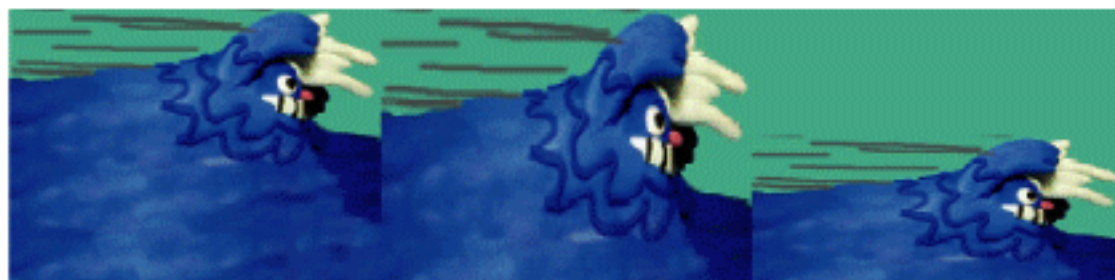
When you feel an earthquake, evacuate and head for higher grounds immediately!!!



BE CAREFUL

If an earthquake occurs far away in the sea, you may not feel the tremor caused by the earthquake. But, the tsunami may still occur!

A tsunami can travel as fast as an airplane!



Usually, there are more than one wave during a tsunami. Remain in the safe area for several hours. The first is usually not the biggest. The second or the third can be even bigger!

Acknowledgement of donors:



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