Kino lived on a farm
That lay on the side of a mountain in Japan. The mountain rose so steeply out of
ocean that there was only a strip of sandy shore at its foot. Upon this
strip was a small fishing village where Kino's father sold his vegetables
and rice and bought fish.

Kino often looked down upon the thatched roofs of the village. The village
houses faced one another, and those which stood beside the sea did not
have windows toward it. Since Kino enjoyed looking at the waves, he
often wondered why the village people did not, but he never knew until
he came to know Jiya, whose father was a fisherman. Jiya's house did not
have a window toward the sea either. "Why not?" Kino asked him.

"The sea is beautiful."
"The sea is our enemy," Jiya replied.
"How can you say that?" Kino asked. "Your father catches fish from
the sea and sells them, and that is how you live."
Jiya shook his head. "The sea is our enemy," he repeated.
It was hard to believe this. On hot sunny days Kino and Jiya threw
off their clothes and swam far out toward a small island which they considered their own. Actually it belonged to an old gentleman whom they had never seen except at a distance. Kino longed to sleep on the island some night, but Jiya was never willing. Even when they spent only the afternoon there he looked often out over the sea.

"What are you looking for?" Kino asked one day.
"Only to see that the ocean is not angry," Jiya replied.

But certainly the ocean was not angry now. The sun sparkled deep into the clear water, and the boys swam over the silvery surface of rippling waves. Beneath them the water was miles deep. When Kino dived he went down, down, down, until he struck icy-still water.

Today when he felt the coldness grasp his body he understood why Jiya was afraid, and he darted upward again to the sun. On the beach he threw himself down and was happy again. But Jiya looked often at the sun. When he saw it sinking toward the west he called to Kino: "Come quickly. We must swim home."

-After supper that evening Kino turned to his father. "Why is Jiya afraid of the ocean?" he asked.
"The ocean is very big," Kino's father replied. "We do not understand he ocean."
"I am glad we live on the mountain," Kino went on. "There is nothing to be afraid of on our farm."
"But one can be afraid of the land too," his father replied. "Do you remember the volcano we visited last autumn?"

Kino did remember. They had gone to visit a great volcano twenty miles away Kino had looked down into the yawning mouth of the volcano and he had not liked it. Great curls of yellow smoke were rolling about it, and a white stream of melted rock was crawling slowly from one corner.

"Must we always be afraid of something?" Kino asked.
His father looked back at him. "No," he replied. "I did not mean that. It is true that on any day, an ocean may rise into storm and a
volcano may burst into flame. We must accept this fact, but without fear. We must say, 'Some day I shall die, and does it matter whether it is by ocean or volcano, or whether I grow old' and weak?' "

"I don't want to think about such things," Kino said.

"It is right for you not to think about them," his father said. "Enjoy life and do not fear death. That is the way of a good Japanese."

There was much in life to enjoy. In the winter Kino went to a school in the fishing village, and he and Jiya shared a seat. In the summer Kino worked on the farm, helping his father. Even his little sister, Setsu, and the mother helped when the rice seedlings had to be planted and when the grain was ripe and had to be threshed.

Sometimes if it were not seedtime or harvest Kino went fishing with Jiya and Jiya's father. "I wish my father were a fisherman," he would say. "It is stupid to plow and plant and cut the sheaves, when I could just come out like this and reap fish from the sea."

Jiya shook his head. "But when the storms come, you would wish yourself back upon the earth," he said.

On days when the sky was bright and the winds mild, the ocean lay so calm and blue that it was hard to believe that it could be cruel and angry. But when the deep water moved and stirred, ah, then Kino began to be glad that his father was a farmer and not a fisherman!

And yet it was the earth that brought the big wave. Deep under the deepest part of the ocean, fires raged in the heart of the earth. And at last the fires grew so strong that they forced their way through the mouth of the volcano. That day Kino saw the sky overcast halfway to the zenith. "Look, Father!" he cried. "The volcano is burning again!"

His father gazed anxiously at the sky. "It looks very angry," he said. "I shall not sleep tonight."

All night Kino's father kept watch. When it was dark, the sky was lit with red and the earth trembled under the farmhouse. Down at the fishing village, lights in the little houses showed that other fathers watched too.
When morning came, the sky was red, and even here upon the farm, cinders fell from the volcano.

In the house the mother took down everything from the waists that could fall or be broken. Her few good dishes she packed into straw in a basket and set them outside.

"Shall we have an earthquake, Father?" Kino asked as they ate breakfast.

"I cannot tell, my son," his father replied "Earth and sea are struggling together against the fires inside the earth."

No fishing boats set sail that hot summer morning. The sea lay dead and calm, but when Kino looked at it he felt afraid.

No one stirred from home that day. Kino's father sat at the door, watching the sky and the oily sea, and Kino stayed near him. He did not know what Jiya was doing, but he imagined that Jiya, too, stayed by his father.

Early in the afternoon the sky began to grow black. The air was as hot as though a forest fire were burning. The glow of the volcano glared over the mountaintop, blood-red against the black. All at once a deep toned bell tolled over the hills.

"What is that bell?" Kino asked his father.

"It is the bell in the temple inside the walls of Old Gentleman's Castle," his father replied. "Old Gentleman is calling people to come up out of the village and find shelter within his walls." "Will they come?" Kino asked.

"Not all of them," his father replied. "Parents will try to make their children go, but the children will not want to leave their parents. Mothers will not want to leave fathers, and the fathers will stay by their boats. But some will want to be sure of life."

"I wish Jiya would come up to our farm," Kino said "Do you think he will see me if I stand on the edge of the terrace and wave my girdle cloth?"

"Try it," his father said.
So Kino took off the strip of white cloth which he wore instead of a belt and he waved it high above his head. Far down the hill, Jiya saw the two figures and the waving strip of white. For Jiya was already on his way up the mountain toward Old Gentleman's Castle. He was crying as he climbed, and trying not to cry. He had not wanted to leave, but his father said, "If the ocean yields to the fires, you must live after us."

"I don't want to live alone," Jiya said.
"It is your duty to obey me, as a good Japanese son," his father told him.
So Jiya had run out of the house, crying. Now when he saw Kino, he decided that he would go there instead of to the castle, and he began to hurry up the hill to the farm.

Kino's father put out his hand to help Jiya climb over the stone wall the terrace, and Kino was just about to shout out his welcome, when suddenly a hurricane wind broke out of the ocean. Kino and Jiya clung together and wrapped their arms about the father's waist.

"Look, what is that?" Kino screamed.

The purple rim of the ocean seemed to lift and rise against the clouds. Under the deep waters of the ocean, the earth had yielded at last to the fire. It groaned and split open, and the cold water fell into the middle of the boiling rocks. Steam burst out and lifted the ocean high into the sky in a big wave.

The wave rushed toward the shore, green and solid, frothing into white at its edges.

"I must tell my father!" Jiya screamed. But before Jiya could scream again, the wave reached the village and covered it fathoms deep in swirling wild water. Upon the beach where the village had stood, not a house remained.

Jiya gave a wild cry, and Kino felt him slip to the ground. Jiya was unconscious. What he had seen was too much for him. His family and his home were gone.

Kino's father gathered Jiya into his arms and carried him into the
house. "It is better that he is unconscious," he said gently. “Let him remain so until his own will wakes him. I will sit by him."

"What shall we say to Jiya when he wakes?" Kino asked his father.

"We will not talk," his father replied. "We will give him warm food and let him rest. We will help him to feel he has a home still."

"Here?" Kino asked.

"Yes," his father replied.

"I don't think Jiya can ever be happy again," Kino said sorrowfully.

"Yes, he will be happy some day," his father said. "Life is always stronger than death. Soon now he will open his eyes, and we must be there, you to be his brother, and I to be his father. Call your mother, too, and little Setsu."

So they went back into the house. Jiya's eyes were still closed, but he was sobbing in his sleep. Kino ran to fetch his mother and Setsu, and they all gathered about the bed, kneeling on the floor.

In a few minutes, Jiya's eyelids fluttered and then he opened his eyes. He did not know where he was. He looked from one face to the other as though they were strangers.

None of them said anything for a long time. They continued to kneel about him, waiting. But Setsu could not keep quiet. She clapped her hands and cried, "Jiya has come back"

The sound of her voice made him fully awake. "My father—my mother," he whispered.

Kino's mother took his hand. "I will be your mother now, dear Jiya," she said.

"I will be your father," Kino's father said.

"I am your brother now, Jiya," Kino faltered.

"Jiya will live with us!" Setsu said joyfully.

Then Jiya understood. He got up from the bed and walked to the door. He looked down the hillside to the beach where the fishing village had stood.

Kino's heart ached for his friend-brother. Kino's mother was wiping
her eyes, and even little Setsu looked sad. She stood beside Jiya and took his hand and stroked it. "Jiya, I will give you my pet duck," she said.

But Jiya could not speak. He kept on looking at the ocean.

"We ought all to eat something," Kino's mother said. "I have a fine chicken for dinner."

"I'm hungry," Setsu cried.

"Come my son," Kino's father said to Jiya.

Jiya was not hungry, but when Kino begged him he took up his chopsticks and ate some of the meat and rice. His mind was still unable to think, but his body was young and strong and glad of the food.

When they had all finished, Kino said. "Shall we go up the hillside, Jiya?"

But Jiya shook his head. "I want to go to sleep again," he said.

Each day Jiya - as still tired. He did not want to think or to remember. He only wanted to sleep. One day when the work was over and Jiya still had not waked, Kino and his father sat together on the threshold. "Father, are we not very unfortunate people to live on this island?" he asked.

"Why do you think so?" his father asked in reply.

"Because the volcano is behind our house and the ocean is in front, and when they make the earthquake and the big wave, we are helpless. Often many of us are lost."

"To live in the midst of danger is to know how good life is," his father replied.

"But if we are lost in the danger?" Kino asked anxiously.

"To live in the presence of death makes us brave and strong," Kino's father replied.

"What is death?" Kino asked.

"Death is that great gateway," Kino's father said. His face was not at all sad.

"The gateway - where?" Kino asked again.

Kino's father smiled. "Can you remember when you were born?"
Kino shook his head. "I was too small."

Kino's father laughed. "I remember very well when you were born," he said. "And oh, how hard you thought it was to be born! You cried, and you screamed."

"Didn't I want to be born?" Kino asked.

"No," his father told him, smiling. "You wanted to stay where you were, in the warm dark house of the unborn. But the time came to be born, and the gate of life opened."

"Did I know it was the gate of life?" Kino asked.

"You did not know anything about it, and so you were afraid," his father replied. "But see how foolish you were! Here we were waiting for you, your parents, already loving you and eager to welcome you. And you have been very happy, haven't you?"

"Until the big wave can -" Kino replied. "Now I am afraid again because of the death that the big wave brought."

"You are only afraid because you don't know anything about death," his father replied. "Some day you will wonder why you were afraid, as today you wonder why you feared to be born."

While they were talking the dusk had deepened, and now, coming up the mountainside, they saw a flickering light. "I wonder who comes?" Kino exclaimed.

In a few minutes they saw that their visitor was Old Gentleman coming from the castle. "Is this the house of Uchiyama, the farmer?" Old Gentleman asked.

At this Kino's father stood up, and so did Kino. "Please, Honored Sir," Kino's father said. "What can I do for you?"

Old Gentleman came forward. "Do you have a lad here by the name of Jiya?"

"He lies sleeping inside my house," Kino's father said.

"It is my habit when the big wave comes to care for those who are orphaned," said Old Gentleman. "Three times the wave has come, and three times I have searched out the orphans and widows, and I have fed
them and sheltered them. I have heard of this boy Jiya and I wish to do even more for him. I will make him my own son." "But Jiya is ours!"

Kino cried.

"Hush," his father replied. "We must think of Jiya's good. We are only poor people." Then he said to Old Gentleman, "Sir it is very kind of you to propose this for Jiya. I had planned to take him for my own son, now that he has lost his parents, but I am only a poor farmer and I cannot pretend that my house is as good as yours. Tomorrow when he wakes, I will tell him of your kind offer. He shall decide."

"Very well," Old Gentleman said. "But let him come and tell me himself, so that I know how he feels."

As soon as Kino woke the next morning he remembered Jiya and the choice he had to make. After breakfast Kino went to the field to weed the cabbages, but his father stayed at the house to talk to Jiya.

For a long time Kino stayed in the field, working alone. Then, when the sun was nearing zenith, he heard his father calling. He got up at once and walked along the part between the terraces until he reached the doorway. There his father stood with Jiya.

"I have told Jiya that he must not decide until he has seen all that Old Gentleman can give him for a home," Kino's father said. "Jiya, you know how our house is—these four rooms and the kitchen, this little farm upon which we have to work so hard for our food. We have only what our hands can earn for us."

Then he turned to Kino again. "You are to go with Jiya, and when you see the castle you must persuade him to stay there, for his own sake."

So the two boys went down the mountainside to the castle. The gate was open and the garden was most beautiful. A gardener was sweeping the green moss, but he left his work to lead them to the house. There they took off their shoes and followed the gardener through a great door. Inside this they met a manservant who dismissed the gardener and said to the boys, "Follow me."

So they followed him through a wide passageway. On both sides
of this passageway panels slid back to show beautiful rooms, and in each room were a vase of flowers, an exquisite scroll, a few pieces of dark polished furniture. Neither Jiya nor Kino had ever seen such a house.

Then far in the distance they saw Old Gentleman sitting beside a small table. The table was set in front of the open sliding panel that looked into the garden, and Old Gentleman was writing.

When the two boys came near he looked at Jiya. "Well," he said. "Will you be my son?"

Jiya turned very red. He had not expected to have the question put to him so directly.

Old Gentleman saw he found it hard to speak. "Say yes or no," he told Jiya.

"No," Jiya said. "I thank you, but I have a home-on the farm," he added.

For a moment Kino was filled with pure joy. Then he remembered the small farmhouse, the four little rooms and the old kitchen. "Jiya," he said solemnly, "remember how poor we are."

Old Gentleman was smiling a half-sad little smile. "They are certainly very poor," he said to Jiya. "And here, you know, you would have everything."

Jiya looked about him. Then he shook his head again.

Old Gentleman took up his brush again. "Very well," he said. "I will do without a son."

The manservant motioned to them and they followed, and soon they were out in the garden.

"How foolish you are," the manservant said to Jiya. "You would have everything here."

"Not everything," Jiya replied.

They went out of the gate and across the hillside and back to the farmhouse. Setsu came running to meet them, the sleeves of the bright kimono flying behind her, and her feet clattering in wooden sandals.

"Jiya has come back home!" she cried.
And Jiya, seeing her happy little face, opened his arms and gave her a great hug. For the first time he felt comfort creep into his heart.

Their noonday meal was ready, and Kino's father came in from the field. And when he had washed, they all sat down to eat. "How happy you have made us," he told Jiya.

"Happy indeed," Kino's mother said.

"Now I have my brother," Kino said.

Jiya smiled. Happiness began to live in him again. The good food warmed him, and his body welcomed it. Around him the love of the people who received him glowed like a warm and welcoming fire upon the hearth.