

I SURVIVED

THE JAPANESE
TSUNAMI, 2011



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CHAPTER 1



MARCH 11, 2011

2:46 P.M.

SHOGAHAMA, JAPAN

At first, the wave was tiny.

It was just a ripple in the huge Pacific Ocean.

But it moved quickly, faster than a jet.

And as it got closer to Japan's coast, it got bigger. It grew and grew, until it was a monstrous

wall of water, dozens of feet high, hundreds of miles long. It destroyed everything in its path.

The wave smashed into crowded cities, knocking down buildings, swallowing factories, chewing up highways and bridges. It washed away beautiful villages, flattening pine forests and turning rice fields into seas of mud and garbage. In quiet fishing towns, boats tumbled like dice into the streets, smashing into shops and homes.

Eleven-year-old Ben Kudo saw the wave coming as he stood on a street in the tiny village of Shogahama. At first, it looked to him as if a cloud of smoke was rising up over the ocean.

Was it a ship on fire?

But then a siren blared.

Terrified voices shouted out.

Ben didn't speak Japanese. But he understood one word.

Tsunami!

Seconds later, the huge, foaming black wave crashed into the shore.

Ben and his family thought they could race away from the wave in a car. But the water caught them. And suddenly, Ben was all by himself. The wave grabbed Ben and sucked him under. The churning water twisted him, tore at him, spun him around like a bird caught in a tornado.

Terror screamed through his body.

He was drowning!

He fought with all his might, but the water wouldn't let him go. It was as though he was in the jaws of a ferocious monster.

And there was no escape.