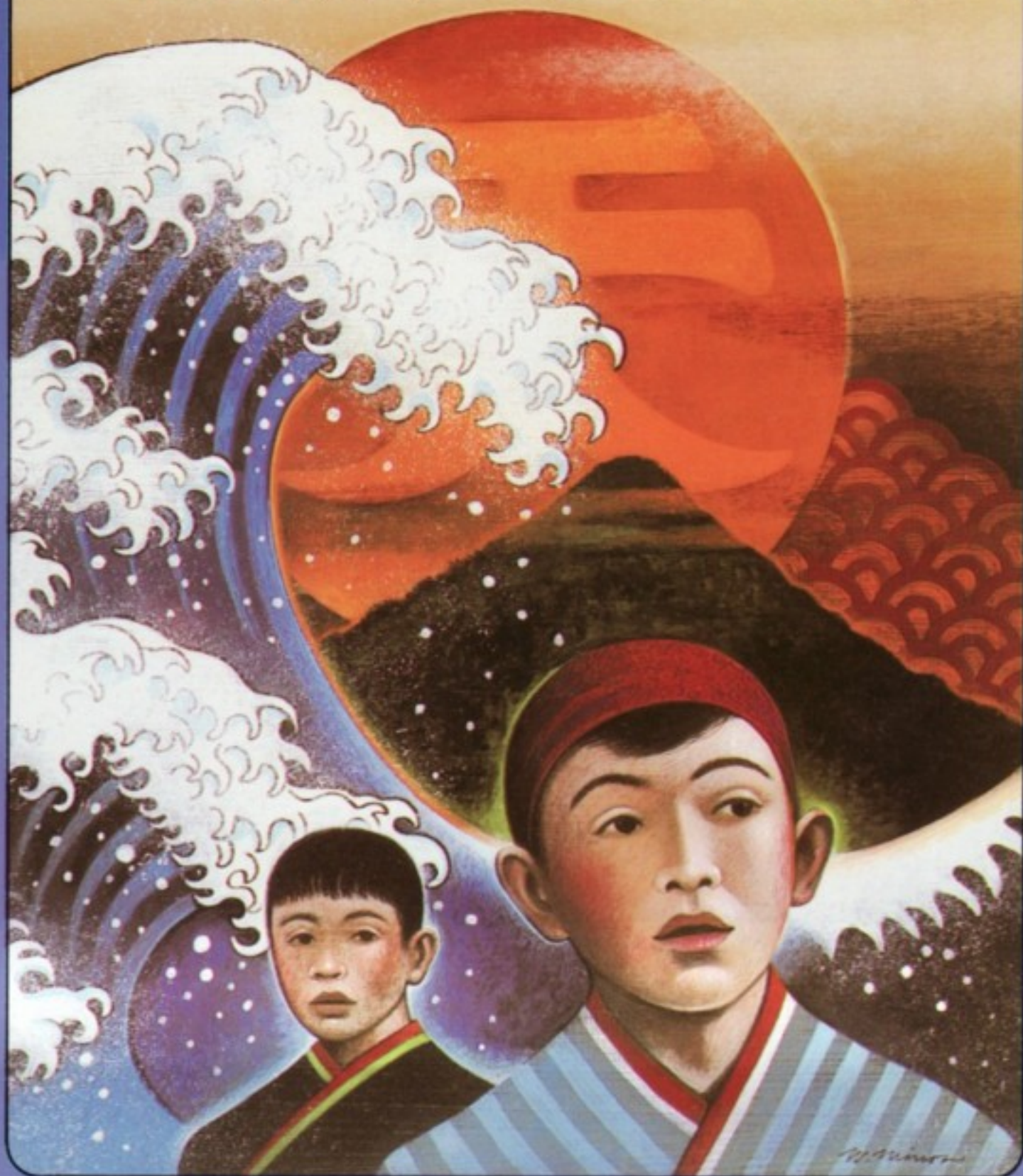


The Big Wave

Pearl S. Buck



KINO LIVED on a farm. The farm lay on the side of a mountain in Japan. The fields were terraced by walls of stone, each one of them like a broad step up the mountain. Centuries ago Kino's ancestors had built the stone walls that held up the fields.

Above all the fields stood the farmhouse that was Kino's home. Sometimes he felt the climb was a hard one, especially when he had been working in the lowest field and he wanted his supper. But after he had eaten at night and in the morning, he was glad that he lived so high up because he could look down on the broad blue ocean at the foot of the mountain.

The mountain rose so steeply out of the ocean that there was only a strip of sandy shore at its foot. Upon this strip was the small fishing village where Kino's father sold his vegetables and rice and bought his fish. From the window of his room Kino looked down upon the few thatched roofs of the village, running in two uneven lines on both sides of a cobbled street. These houses faced one another, and those that stood beside the sea did not have windows toward it. Since he enjoyed looking at the waves, Kino often wondered why the village people did not, but he never knew until he came to know Jiya, whose father was a fisherman.

Jiya lived in the last house in the row of houses toward the ocean, and his 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 only shook his head. "The sea is our enemy," he repeated. "We all know it."

It was very hard to believe this. On hot sunny days, when he had finished his work, Kino ran down the path

that wound through the terraces and met Jiya on the beach. They threw off their clothes and jumped into the clear sea water 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. Sometimes in the evening he came through the castle gate and stood looking out to sea. Then they could see him, leaning on his staff, his white beard blowing in the wind. He lived inside his castle behind a high fence of woven bamboo, on a knoll outside the village. Neither Kino or Jiya had ever been inside the gate, but sometimes when it was left open they had peeped into the garden. It was beautiful beyond anything they could imagine. Instead of grass the ground was covered with deep green moss shaded by pine trees and bamboos, and every day gardeners swept the moss with bamboo brooms until it was like a velvet carpet. They saw Old Gentleman walking under distant trees in a silver-gray robe, his hands clasped behind his back, his white head bent. He had a kind, wrinkled face, but he never saw them.

“I wonder if it is right for us to use his island without asking?” Kino asked today when they reached its beach of smooth white sand.

A Classic Story by the Author of
THE GOOD EARTH

The Big Wave

Ages 8 to 12

Kino lives on a farm on the side of a mountain in Japan. His friend, Jiya, lives in a fishing village below. Everyone, including Kino and Jiya, has heard of the big wave. No one suspects it will wipe out the whole village and Jiya's family, too. As Jiya struggles to overcome his sorrow, he understands it is in the presence of danger that one learns to be brave, and to appreciate how wonderful life can be.

Pearl S. Buck is the author of many distinguished books for children and adults. She won the Child Study Association's Children's Book Award for *THE BIG WAVE*, the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *THE GOOD EARTH*, and in 1938 received the Nobel Prize for literature.

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