

One night, I was talking with my friend about some urban legends. He said, "Slit mouth woman will appear," "There is a station called "Kisaragi Station" that leads to another world." "Cities sink before a major earthquake." I laughed at these stories because they sounded ridiculous but gradually I wondered, "what if one of them came true?"

Our daily lives are very peaceful and ordinary. For example, going to school, chatting with friends, playing video games, enjoying delicious meals, and so on. However, disasters destroy these regular routines abruptly. The Great East Japan Earthquake and the Eastern Iburi Earthquake are good

examples. As you know, earthquakes happen unexpectedly. There was no advance notice. When a disaster comes, many people panic and can't decide what to do, as their minds go blank.

My father is from the coastal area of Iwate Prefecture. I visited there once after the disaster when I was very young. It looked calm and peaceful. That calmness, however, vanished in a flash. Because of the tsunami, lots of buildings, cars, and people were swept away. Every year, when March 11th comes, my father says quietly, "That town with lots of memories is no longer there."

Whenever I hear his whisper, I feel a heart-wrenching sadness even though that place is not my hometown.

When I was five, the Iburi Eastern Earthquake struck. I remember being startled by powerful tremors, not really understanding what was happening, and feeling scared. After the quake, all of Hokkaido lost electricity. It was completely dark and I felt frightened. That night my mother and I prepared our emergency backpacks. I tried putting mine on, but it was too heavy to stand up. The worst thing was that we couldn't even take a bath since the power was still out. That's when I learned how important it is to prepare for disasters.

But still, many people don't. Why not? Because it's troublesome? Because it's not happening yet? I know how you guys feel. That is why urban legends are often treated like someone else's problem. In fact, urban legends are not just rumors. They are warnings that help us act before it's too late.

Recently, a comic book called "The Future That I Saw" became a hot topic. The writer, Ryo Tatsuki, predicted that a huge disaster would come on July 5th, 2025. However, on that day, nothing happened. I was very relieved. Then I wondered what everyone was doing at that time. Maybe playing video games? Or sleeping because it was Saturday? One of my friends answered she was scared, and another one answered he was disappointed, though no disaster occurred. I still don't think that was a good reaction. If we just laugh and do nothing, it means we won't prepare for the next disaster. An earthquake could happen tomorrow, or a tsunami could come tonight. We never know when they'll occur. To prepare for disasters is not something special. It should become a habit in our daily lives.

One morning on July 31st, a massive earthquake struck the Kamchatka Peninsula. A tsunami reached Nemuro, where my grandparents live. I called them right away, but it wasn't until around noon that I finally got through. They were playing park golf, and after I urged them to evacuate, my grandfather simply said, "It's okay". I was confused by the answer. I realized that the pain and memories of past disasters were fading. I worry that Japanese people might forget those experiences. That night, I stayed glued to the news until late, feeling that this was more than just a disaster-something we should learn from.

Urban legends are scary, strange, or even mysterious. Although that's true, they help us imagine "What if ...?" So, don't just laugh at the stories. I believe being prepared together is the first step to save our lives. Please check your disaster prevention supplies. Maybe what urban legends teach us is "Only people who prepare will survive."

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Urban Legends Are Not Just Rumors