

Kiko: The Revelation of the Hidden Gems

(Part 1)

Long before the sun rose, the village of Aoyama was already awake.

Mist drifted between the wooden houses like a living thing, curling around doorways and climbing the stone steps that led towards the mountain shrine. The bells of the temple had not yet rung, but the village breathed with quiet purpose — fires were lit, water was drawn, and the air hummed with expectation.

Kiko stood at the highest edge of the training circle, her bare feet steady on the cold earth. A wooden sword rested in her hands, worn smooth by years of practice. She lifted it, exhaled, and moved.

Strike.

Turn.

Block.

Each movement flowed into the next like a sentence she had memorised long ago. Her muscles ached, but she ignored the pain. Pain was a teacher. It reminded her she was alive.

Behind her, her grandfather watched in silence.

He had trained her since the day she could walk. When her parents were taken by the storm that shattered the mountain pass, grief had tried to swallow her whole. Her grandfather had not allowed it. He had replaced tears with discipline, fear with strength, and questions with training.

“Again,” he said, his voice calm but unyielding.

Kiko obeyed. The wooden blade sliced through the mist, cutting a path through the morning air. Her braid swung against her back as she spun, finished, and froze.

Only then did her grandfather nod.

“You are ready,” he said.

Kiko lowered the sword. Her chest rose and fell quickly. “Ready for what?”

Her grandfather did not answer. He turned and began to walk towards the shrine path that climbed higher into the mountain. After a moment’s hesitation, Kiko followed.

The shrine was older than the village itself. Moss covered its stones, and the wood of its gates had darkened with age. Kiko had been forbidden to enter — until today.

Her grandfather knelt and pressed his palm to the floor. The stone shifted. A hidden compartment opened with a sound like a sigh.

Inside lay a cloth bundle.

When he unfolded it, the world seemed to change.

The gem was no larger than a plum, yet it glowed with a quiet, steady light — not bright, not blinding, but deep and ancient, like something that remembered the beginning of time. The air around it felt warm, heavy, alive.

Kiko's breath caught. "What is it?"

Her grandfather's voice was low. "One of the Five."

"Five what?"

"Five gems," he said, "forged when the mountains were young. They hold the balance of our land — of more than our land. When they are together, the world is stable. When they are broken apart... the world begins to crack."

Kiko reached out, but stopped herself. "Why are you showing me now?"

"Because the hiding is over."

The gem pulsed — once, twice — and then the ground trembled beneath them.

From the forest below came a sound that did not belong to any animal. It was deep and grinding, like stone being dragged across stone. Birds burst from the trees, screaming into the sky.

Her grandfather closed his hand around the gem. "They have awakened."

"Who?" Kiko whispered.

Before he could answer, the gem went dark. The warmth vanished. The light died.

And far below, the village bells began to ring.

Not the gentle bells of morning.

The warning bells.

Her grandfather's face hardened. "You must run."

Kiko's heart slammed against her ribs. "Run where?"

"To the forest. To the old paths. They will not expect you to go *towards* them."

A shadow moved at the edge of the trees.

Then another.

Kiko tightened her grip on the wooden sword, though she knew it would not be enough.

As the first scream rose from the village below, her grandfather pushed the gem into her hands.

“Find the others,” he said. “Before they do.”

The forest exploded with movement.

And Kiko ran — carrying the fate of the gems, the village, and her own past — straight into the darkness.

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Comprehension Questions

1. What does the description of the mist suggest about the village?

- A) It is abandoned
- B) It is mysterious and ancient
- C) It is dangerous
- D) It is hidden from the world

2. What has replaced grief in Kiko's life?

- A) Anger
- B) Training and discipline
- C) Forgetfulness
- D) Fear

3. Why is the shrine important in the story?

- A) It hides something powerful
- B) It is a place of worship only
- C) It protects the village
- D) It is where Kiko trains

4. What does the gem's glow symbolise?

- A) Danger
- B) Wealth
- C) Balance and ancient power
- D) Beauty

5. Why does the grandfather finally reveal the gem?

- A) Kiko asks him to
- B) The village is under attack
- C) The gem is broken
- D) The training is complete

6. What does the sound from the forest foreshadow?

- A) A storm
- B) A celebration
- C) An approaching threat
- D) The end of the village

7. Why do the warning bells ring?

- A) To gather the villagers
- B) To announce sunrise
- C) To mark a ceremony
- D) To signal danger

8. Why is Kiko told to run towards the forest?

- A) It is safer
- B) She knows the paths
- C) It is unexpected
- D) The village is blocked

9. Which word best describes Kiko at the end of the story?

- A) Terrified
- B) Determined
- C) Confused
- D) Lonely

10. Why is the ending an effective cliffhanger?

- A) It explains everything
- B) It introduces the enemy
- C) It ends with action and uncertainty
- D) It resolves the conflict

Answers

1. **B**
2. **B**
3. **A**
4. **C**
5. **D**
6. **C**
7. **D**
8. **C**
9. **B**
10. **C**