

UPROOTED

## Preface

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, a third generation Japanese girl in the second grade went home and solemnly told her mother, "Miss Anderson told us in class today that we must be kind to the Japanese children." I hope that I have caught some of this same lack of self-consciousness in my character, Alice, because Alice might very well be the ~~third~~<sup>second</sup> grader I have just mentioned.

The author

"Mummy, I don't like Japan; why can't we go back to America?" a black-haired, bright-eyed, seven-year-old asked.

"Hush, child, we are in America."

"No, Mummy; look at the funny houses; we never had funny houses like these in America; and here, we have only one little room in the whole house while people we didn't know before live in the other rooms."

"But, honey, Japan is across the ocean; we didn't cross any ocean did we; we just moved here on bus."

"No, Mummy, you're trying to fool me; maybe we crossed the ocean while I was sleeping. See, there are only Japanese here; I saw an American man just once; he smiled at me and gave me a piece of candy. I want to go back to America so I can go over to Judy's house and play house with her. And I want to go to school and see Miss Johnson again; I like her lots, Mummy, even if she does scold sometimes."

"You go to school here, don't you? And you have a lot of

nice little boys and girls to play with don't you?"

"Yes, but it isn't like school in America; we don't have any nice big brick buildings; only little buildings like our funny-looking house; we sing and play games like we used to, but all the pupils have black hair just like mine; no one has pretty yellow hair like Judy's. I want to go back to America so I can play house with Judy again."

"But, honey, we are in America."

"Oh, no, you're just saying that; if we're in America, where's Bowser? He always used to bark so glad-like when I came home from school, and then we'd go over to Judy's place together. Here they don't have one dog; they don't even have any cats.

"Look, Alice, this is America; I'll--"

"No, Mummy, we had sidewalks and stores in America. And when we ate, just you and Daddy and Bowser and I ate at a little table, and sometimes Judy came over to eat too. You don't even make those nice sugar cookies for me anymore and you never give me slices of bread with butter and jam since we came here. Now we eat in a big building with a lot of other people and we stand in line for such a long time. You just say we're in America, but you can't fool me.

Alice, darling, I am not fooling you; we are in America; come here with me to the fence. See, there is a car on the road just like <sup>Daddy</sup> ~~daddy~~ used to have, and there are regular Americans riding in them."

"But how do I know they're Americans? I can't see that

far."

"And see over there on the other side of the road? There are houses just like the one we used to live in before we came here."

"Oh, yes, I see now, Mummy; and there's a little girl with yellow hair just like Judy's. Let's go over there right now, Mummy; maybe she'll play with me."

"We can't go on the other side of the fence, darling."

"Why?"

"Listen, Alice, and I'll tell you why we're here."

"Why we're in Japan?"

"No, we're not in Japan, but we're away from home, and I'll tell you why if you'll listen like a good girl."

"All right, Mummy; I'll be a good girl."

"Alice, the United States and Japan are at war with each other."

"What means 'war', Mummy?"

"It means that the two countries are mad at each other and that they are fighting."

"Just like Uncle Bill and Uncle John do?"

"No, it's much worse; Japan has lots of soldiers, and America has lots of soldiers, and they try to kill each other."

"When we left home there were a lot of soldiers, but they weren't trying to kill anyone. Why do they do things like that, Mummy?"

"America is fighting because it was attacked by the Japanese last December; that's why Santa Claus didn't bring you so

many things for Christmas."

"Then Japan is bad, isn't it, Mummy?"

"Yes, some people think that Japan is going to try to rule the world; America is trying to make the world free for everybody."

"What means 'free,' Mummy?"

"It means that everyone will be able to worship what he wants to, say what he wants to, go wherever he wants to--"

"Then why can't we go over there and play with that girl with the yellow hair?"

"We're not like other Americans, Alice; we look like Japanese, and there are some bad people among us so they have to put us all in camp like this with a fence around it; then the bad ones won't be able to do anything bad."

"But I'm not bad, Mummy, and you're not bad and Daddy's not bad and Uncle Bill and Uncle John aren't bad even if they always fight, and I know lots and lots of kids who aren't bad."

"Yes, child, but there are a few who are bad so they have to treat us this way; it may seem unfair, but you must remember that it would be worse if we were in Japan."

"Are all Japanese in Japan bad?"

"No, I don't think so; Grandma and Grandpa came from Japan, you know."

"Will we go back home again, Mummy?"

"Yes, as soon as the war is over."

"When will that be?"

"I don't know, but we must all pray that it will be soon."

Do you understand now that we're not in Japan?"

"I think so...but--"

"Yes?"

"But why do we look like Japanese, Mummy?"

"I'll tell you some other time, dear; here comes little Masako; why don't you go play with her?"

"Yes, Mummy."

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English 211  
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A Touching little  
sketch, Mr. Ishikawa

Dear