

A Camp Without Canoes, Trophies or Fireside Songs

*When Shizuye Takashima was twelve, in 1941, she and her family and some twenty-two thousand other Japanese living in British Columbia were stripped of their civil rights and sent to retention camps. The Allied war with Japan, which followed the attack on Pearl Harbor, caused an intense reaction in both the United States and Canada against residents and citizens of Japanese ancestry. Families were uprooted; and businesses, farms and even homes expropriated. Shizuye and her parents and sister were sent to a primitive camp in a beautiful mountain valley. Shizuye is now an established artist. Her recently published book, *A Child in Prison Camp*, recalls the hardships of her imprisonment, but it also recounts her natural twelve-year-old exuberance.**

David sends Yuki and me a wallet each. Mine is made of black leather with a shining zipper which closes all around the wallet. I am so happy, the day I receive it, I put it by my pillow before going to sleep. Father sees me and says, "You're an old woman, taking your gold to bed! . . ." He laughs. I pretend not to hear and put the black treasure under my pillow. Yuki laughs too, "You're so funny. Honestly, my God," she sighs.

Early in the morning while everyone is asleep, I take out my wallet, slowly open it. The small picture of my brother is still there; he had put it in * [Shizuye] Takashima, *A Child in Prison Camp* (Montreal and New York: Tundra Books, 1971), n.p.

before sending it to us. I open the change section. I have forty cents, money mother has given me for helping with chores. Everything is in place. I zip the zipper back in its place, smell the leather. It smells fresh and nice. I whisper, "Thank you, David," and slowly, I feel myself drifting off to another world. My arms and legs seem to grow large, large. They go beyond the room, through the walls, across the road, through the trees beyond the lake and even touch the mountains. I feel as if I am a giant. Then I go very quickly into space and see different coloured spots of light. They are very beautiful. And now my body is gone.

I leave it behind, and I go faster and faster at a great speed. The coloured spots of light are gone, and I am in a pale blue, lovely space, very airy and magiclike! This happens so often, I am used to it now. But when I was younger, I used to get scared and force myself to wake up. Now I love the feeling of flying! And I love the colour dreams, where I see all my old friends, and David. Even my dead grandma comes to see me, or I go to see her. We have tea together. It is fun. She still wears long, black shoes with laces past her ankles, just the way she always did, and narrow, dark dresses.

I tell mother the next day. She had told us that bad dreams should be told to someone immediately and treasured dreams kept, like found money, to oneself. But this one we all feel happy about, to know grandma is well and is looked after.

Paradise Denied

*Alden Nowlan, a poet of the maritime provinces, writes a regular column called "Notebook" for The Atlantic Advocate. Below is an excerpt from one on childhood.**

The myth of childhood as a lost Eden is perpetuated by adults who have blotted their own early years from their minds. . . .

Being a kid is a mug's game even in prosperous and peaceful Canada.

When I was five I experienced a prolonged terror worse than any other I've known.

An idiot somewhere had predicted that the world would end on such and such a date. It must have been reported in the newspapers and

* Alden Nowlan, "Notebook," *The Atlantic Advocate*, vol. 65, no. 5 (Jan. 1975), p. 63.

on the radio. The big kids joked about it, but I was deathly afraid.

And mine was a very practical fear. I asked myself what means God would use to destroy life on earth and decided at last that he would cause the clouds to fall.

I supposed the clouds were made from enormously heavy substance. I don't remember what gave me that idea.

On days when the sky was clear I was calm and even happy. But the moment a cloud appeared I became terrified and if it seemed to be drifting toward me I went almost insane.

How long did that last? Probably only a day or so, but in retrospect it seems that it must have gone on for weeks.