

## Secret Harvests: A Hidden Story of Separation and the Resilience of a Family Farm

**David Mas Masumoto**

**Patricia Miye Wakida, Illustrator**

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David Mas Masumoto's *Secret Harvests* shares the troubled history of two families alongside the extraordinary discovery of a long-lost relative.

Soon after the Pearl Harbor attack, Masumoto's grandparents and their children became part of the mass evacuation of Japanese Californians. Their lives as rural fruit farmers were disrupted as they were sent to the bleak confines of an Arizona internment camp. Masumoto's aunt, Shizuko Sugimoto, suffered brain damage following a bout with meningitis in her childhood. In 1942, Shizuko was separated from her parents and siblings to become a ward of the state. The family members returned to California after internment, but they were unable to find Shizuko or verify her well-being.

When ninety-year-old Shizuko had a stroke in 2012, concerted efforts were made to locate her next of kin. Shocked to learn that she was still alive, Shizuko's relatives hurried to her hospice bedside. While she remained weak and often unresponsive, the family discovered happier facts about Shizuko from her caregivers. She loved music, had a mischievous streak, and wore tiny size two sneakers during her energetic trips around the nursing home.

*Secret Harvests* details how Shizuko's impersonal relocation intensified her family's displacement. The psychological effects of internment are conveyed, along with the wartime era's prevailing racial hostilities. The book further addresses America's longstanding attitude toward disabled people and its seeming tendency to keep such individuals hidden.

Throughout her life, Shizuko was transferred from institution to institution; though her true experiences are unknown, Masumoto praises the likely underpaid and overworked "invisible army" who cared for his aunt, providing her with decades of "empathy and engagement."

Paired with artist Patricia Wakida's haunting illustrations, the book's rich, lyrical language evokes both cultural eloquence and California's seasonal beauty. Poignant and reflective, *Secret Harvests* is a family saga of quiet endurance and bittersweet triumphs.

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