

Mochi

By Wendy Gourley

Mochi is an historical fiction about the internment experience of WWII. Miko, a young girl interned at Topaz, Utah, learns of art and life from her art teacher. The events are based from primary accounts of the time and some of the philosophies expressed are those of Hisako Hibi, Chiura Obata, Masao Yabuki and others who taught or were taught at the Topaz Art School. The projected paintings were painted by Hisako Hibi during her internment.

- MIKO** A 13 year old Nissei girl (second-generation Japanese-American); a typical American pre-teen of the early 1940's.
- HISAKO HIBI** An adult Issei woman (first-generation Japanese-American); although she was born and raised in Japan, she has been in the United States for many years. She should still speak English with an accent.
- FATHER** MIKO's dead father. A mute character. Should be dressed in a black dress kimono with fan. Played by a mime/dancer. Could be masked.

MIKO throws her easel to the ground. FATHER turns.

MIKO

I've changed my mind. I don't want Mochi - ever again!

HISAKO enfolds MIKO in her arms and holds her while she speaks through a torrent of anger and tears.

MIKO

Father had cancer - even then the doctors were pretty hopeful that with surgery, he would be alright.

HISAKO

What happened, Miko?

MIKO

So he went in for the surgery and was in the hospital recovering the day of Pearl Harbor.

HISAKO

(with realization, she knows what is coming)

Oh, no.

MIKO

It was Sunday afternoon and Mother and I were driving over to visit him. The news came on all of a sudden and talked about Japan attacking the United States. I knew it was serious, but I honestly didn't know what it had to do with me. I was worried about Father.

HISAKO

By that night, you knew differently, didn't you?

MIKO

Mother started getting phone calls. Mrs. Yamada down the street - her husband was taken; my best friend's dad; Mr. Murata from church. I didn't understand what was going on.

HISAKO

The FBI rounded up many Japanese men from my neighborhood as well.

MIKO

Mother thought because Father was in the hospital, he was probably alright, at least for a while. But then the hospital called, they said they had taken Father.

HISAKO

No! What did the doctors say?

MIKO

They said they tried to stop them; said if they took him it would probably kill him, but they dragged him out anyway.

HISAKO

Did they say why?

MIKO

Just because he and uncle ran a Japanese Language school. They called them enemies of the state! We couldn't see him, we couldn't talk to him!

HISAKO

Where did they send him?

MIKO

To a camp in Montana. We sent him medicine and his fellow prisoners tried to help him.

MIKO grows quiet.

HISAKO

Then what happened?

MIKO

Mother and I got evacuated. The day we entered the gates of Topaz was the day we received the letter telling us father was dead.

HISAKO

When I feel despair - when they won't let me be a citizen although I've been here for twenty years - when they won't let me own land just because I was born in Japan - when we are treated as enemies by those we consider friends - when I can't take another minute of this endless dust and wind - Each time I feel like I am going to break, I pick up my brush.

(HISAKO looks at the brush hovering in her hand - then she paints vigorously as she talks.)

I seek something beautiful with line, color and form, wishing to find - to say - some message of peace. I become suspended in time. Everything melts away... and my spirit is consoled.

(She puts down her brush. She turns to MIKO.)

Life in transitory, Miko. Yesterday's flower is today's dream, but through our own bitter experiences, something beautiful can grow. Look -

(She indicated the painting on the easel. Mother's Day Present is projected. It shows a dark-robed woman holding luminescent yellow flowers to her heart.)

It is in the greatest dark that the light shines brightest. These are the chrysanthemums my children sent me last Mother's Day. My children, they are light; you, little bird, are light.