Chapter 1: THE ARREST

Saturday, November 13, 1943
The general meeting was postponed tonight. The soldiers are going up and down the alleys. The army announced that there will be a community meeting at two o’clock in the afternoon, so I put on my getas (wooden platform slippers) and went to observe the reaction. Nobody was there. I could see armored trucks and jeeps full of soldiers driving up and down. Women and kids were not afraid, just curious. There was a curfew starting at seven o’clock except for using the toilet, washroom, and bathroom. The orders were written as if by a kindergartener. I had to cancel the judo instructor’s meeting due to the curfew.

Our neighbor, Mr. Kokawa, came over while I was reading a book titled, “Sono Ryuki” by Rev. Kagawa. The story describes how the reverend told the northern peasants to plant walnuts since they had no meat. I put the book down when I heard a truck slowing down outside and opened the door. Two soldiers barged in with bayonets, demanding that I identify myself.

I asked, “Are you a commander in the army or WRA?”

They replied, “We have some questions for you so come with us.”

A Caucasian, dressed in a suit, accompanied the soldiers. Due to the military curfew, the area was crawling with soldiers, but Yuriko saw more soldiers than usual when she pulled the curtains back after the commotion made by the men.

The soldiers followed my every motion. When I moved, the soldiers followed, just like a shadow, so I casually dumped my small pocketknife. I asked them to wait a while so I could change my clothes. Yuriko opened the kori (wicker trunk) and looked for my clothes.

One of the soldiers blurted, “What are you looking for?”

Yuriko was calm since she could see that they were nervous. Masako, who was just four-years old, started singing, “You’re in the army now!” She was really happy to see the soldiers in the barrack and innocently tried to strike up a conversation with them. The soldiers forced a smile.

On the other hand, Sayuri, the oldest daughter, suspected something was wrong and acted uneasy.

I asked a soldier, “What’s going on?”

He muttered, “You can find out when you get there.”
Yuriko took out a wool shirt and wool stockings, so I changed. When I was putting on my shoes, I asked for tobacco. Yuriko went and got a stepladder to get the tobacco but even with the stepladder, the tobacco was hard to get to, so I asked the plainclothes man to get the tobacco for me. He made a disgusted face and didn’t move. Finally, Yuriko got the tobacco down. I asked the plainclothes man, “How many tobaccos do you think I should bring?”

He replied, “Two is enough.” I decided to take three.

“Sayuri and Masako go to sleep early,” I said. “Yuriko don’t worry, take care, and spend money if you need to.”

When I went outside, the soldiers were pacing back and forth, and one soldier had started questioning Mr. Kokawa. I asked Mr. Kokawa to please look after my family. Then, the soldiers shoved me towards the vehicles. There were rows of soldiers on both sides of the road, while I rode in an armored truck accompanied by a jeep.

When I jumped into the truck, I noticed that Mr. Uchida was already in the truck with ten others. I thought the situation was over blown. I could see residents of the block, watching from the windows. I surprised myself when the army came. I showed no emotion. I rolled my Durham* as I do every day. Whenever I moved, the soldiers became unsettled and nervous, so I rolled the tobacco very slowly. The armored car went full speed into the darkness. I thought to myself that this is just one of those things that happens during a war.

*(Before and during the war, it was common for people to roll their own cigarettes.)*

When we reached the military block, I was surprised to see so many soldiers. We were surrounded by bayonets when we were sent into a room and asked our names and patted down. They confiscated thirty-three cents from me. There were two or three Japanese in front of me and two or three behind me. It was 8:45 p.m. We entered a room that measured 20’ x 20,’ filled with approximately thirty soldiers, holding rifles and standing guard. Why such tight security? What a laugh.

Then, they took me out into the dark, to a fenced area. The only sound I heard was gachan when they locked the fence behind me in. That sound still rings in my ear.

I was put into one of three Indian-style tents that had a little stove and held six to seven people in each one.

Total number of prisoners in the tent I was placed in: 9

Someone asked from the dark, “Are you Mr. Inouye? How is your family?”

The voice belonged to Mr. Kokawa’s son. No one knew where he had been taken, and there had been no reason for his arrest. It was a coincidence that we met there in the stockade.
“I never thought you would come here. I am relieved,” the voice in the dark said.

We opened a cot for bedding.

Then, a soldier ordered, “Go get firewood and line them up near the army tent.”

There were wood scraps a short distance away. A jeep drove alongside us, so I thought we were going to put the firewood into the jeep. As a result, I tried to carry as much firewood as possible, but no, we had to walk back, carrying the firewood, in the dark with four machine guns pointed at us. We quietly laughed at them for the excessive security.

There were nine youths who had been placed there before us. They were happy to see us newcomers. They tried to start a fire for us but the wood wouldn’t ignite, so we slept without heat, but it was cold, so severely cold that I could not sleep even with my shoes on. The youths kept coming by, one by one, saying how confused and alone they felt.

**Sunday, November 14, 1943**

I cannot describe how cold it was when the last embers flickered out in the little stove. The army, then, supplied us with four blankets each. I got up at 6 o’clock without washing my face. We went to the mess hall together with a large security contingent. There were bayonets staring at us when we went to the bathroom. There were machine guns in the mess hall. It was kind of funny. Why were they scared of us?

Breakfast: three fried eggs, coffee, bread, corn flakes

This was the first time I had such a feast since the forced eviction from my home.

In this fenced area, there were a total of six tents. We talked with the youths who had been placed here before the curfew had been enacted. They told us they had been arrested between November 4th and 6th. One youth had a bandaged head. Another youth’s left arm had been injured with a baseball bat. Another youth, with head bandages, had been clubbed on the back of the head. These boys had survived the crisis of life and death.

Three more were brought in. Suddenly, the place was alive with nineteen people. Everyone shared tobacco and matches.

Lunch: lettuce, raisin, coffee, cake, spareribs, biscuits, bread

Lettuce and raisins - How rare! I forgot when I last ate fresh vegetables. It was so very tasty. I wish I could have given this to my children. I felt tears well up when I thought of my children.

Chief of Police Tsuda was arrested half a day before me and had been interrogated four times already.
Dinner: macaroni, tomato sauce, mashed potatoes, coffee, bread, peaches

Everyone talked so much, it tired them out. We fixed our beds up after things quieted down. Newspaper editor and Japanese school teacher, Mori Hyakutaro, was in the cot next to me.

Every time we wanted to use the latrine, a soldier followed with a bayonet. We laughed but it was very inconvenient. Such tight security! Everyone was followed, as if we were an important national guest, so we came up with a plan! We got an empty can and used that as a communal toilet. We were now also able to operate the stove, and the room was warm. Everyone was enjoying the independence that the can brought. The president of the Yudanshakai (me) and the principal of the Japanese school (Sakamoto) peed in the same can. We laughed at how circumstances have changed. We threw the contents of the cans outside the fence when the guards were not looking.

**Monday, November 15, 1943**

Breakfast: mush, scrambled eggs, bacon, coffee  
Lunch: weenies, sauerkraut, pork and beans, baked tomato, bread, tea  
Dinner: salad (lettuce, celery, bell peppers, cabbage), chocolate pudding, spinach, fried potatoes, beef, bread, coffee

Uchida was questioned by the sergeant when he was caught urinating outside the tent at night. Everyone had a good laugh.

The guards knew something like the can existed because no one was going to the latrine.

Last night, I slept well. It’s getting better now that we know how to use the fire stove. The tent inside was warming up.

I searched for an Indian arrowhead as a souvenir, so I went around the 50’ x 50’ area, looking around and around. I measured the fence by repeating *iku yama kawa (sanka) koe*, (how many mountains, how many rivers crossed….) a Wakayama poem. That fence is equal to chanting it 1 ½ times.

After breakfast, people in the stockade said more Japanese were coming, so I went to take a look. I recognized one boy, about 10-years-old, wearing a headband with a rising sun and “Daitowa Jyuku Takeshita”* written on it. *(This is the name of his school or literally Takeshita of the Daitowa Jyuku.)*

I had met Takeshita once before, so when the newly arrested were going by, I pointed myself out. These newcomers knew where I had been placed. Perhaps somehow Yuriko would have also heard. The soldiers with tight and strict orders pushed the 10-year-old boy (and the young) principal around like characters from a cartoon. It appeared that the boy with the headband was firm. He was strangely not afraid.

I found an empty bullet shell casing, which I kept as a souvenir.
I wrote a letter to Yuriko:

Is everybody healthy? I am getting along ok. I am 100% perfectly safe. Never worry about me. The army is treating me nice. There is nothing to worry about. This morning, I ate three eggs with a lot of bacon. At first, I didn’t feel like eating anything. I know you are eating such a poor food every day; it kind of stopped my appetite. Anyhow, don’t worry about me. I want for you to take care of yourself and watch Sayuri and Masako. If it is possible, send me Durham. If there is a chance, I will write again. Goodbye.

A young lieutenant took my letter, written in broken English.

I have been eating a lot more vegetables since there was no rice at all. My bowel movement here has been great. Today, they took me to a different latrine, and for the first time, I viewed a mirror. My beard was growing long. I decided that while I was in the stockade, I will let it grow. Everyone was doing the same. Interrogation continues daily. I am waiting for my turn.

At one point, we could see that the electricity in camp had been turned off, and the entire camp went dark. The incessant searchlight also stopped. The fire siren was also blaring so we knew something was happening in camp.

We heard the sounds of jeeps and tanks outside but we stayed by the fire since it would be foolish to wander out. My imagination was running wild. If only I could be invisible. If only I had a gun, or maybe if only I could jump out from an airplane. Everyone started to talk bravely, saying such things as if only they could make a skirmish line and trap the troops between the mountains. One warned that a shotgun would not work.

Foggy day in jail
People here always
Talking bad about somebody

Daytime in Stockade
There is always talk
About the result of the war
By Mori Hyakutaro

Early this morning, young Kogawa cried, “Mama!” in his sleep. One 20-year-old responded, “Shut up! Are you a child?” It sounds rough but it was actually said with sympathy. Young Kogawa is 15-years-old. Already three weeks in the stockade. Young men from Hawaii, transferred from Topaz (Central Utah) camp were put into the stockade.

Altogether there are now 120.
The newcomers were assigned to the tents. Today was Thanksgiving. Turkey was our custom. Was turkey on the menu? Our hope was in vain. Across the fence was the army mess hall (same mess we ate in the first three days.). Turkey after turkey was brought in. One soldier held a turkey for all the Japanese in the stockade to see. What a cheap shot by an insensitive soldier. During lunch, we referred to the spaghetti as white meat, laughing; at dinner, we pretended the weenies were dark, red meat. Recently, we’re barely receiving enough food to avoid starvation.

The FBI man showed us a response from the *Spanish Consul, which read, “Your telegram said to come. I already went twice. I cannot come so many times. Some time later I will try to visit when I am able.” Everyone was dumbfounded. *(The Spanish Consul was the neutral party between U.S. and Japan during the war.)*

The FBI man said, “Yamatani lied to the Japanese in camp, to the army, and to us. Because of Yamatani’s statement, both the Japanese and the FBI were put into a compromised position.”

The FBI had recognized that the Japanese had been correct at this time.

The FBI man said, “If the Japanese plan to beat Yamatani up, the Japanese will be on the losing end because the newspapers will say the Japanese are rioting. We’ve all been working hard but if you start fighting amongst each other, all the hard work will be for nothing so please do not cause trouble.”

I sent a letter to Yuriko:

> I am happy to hear everyone is okay. I am fine too. You said you are going to study Japanese, study hard. Please thank Mr. Nakamoto for sending me persimmons. Also thank Mr. Sakuma. I heard Mr. Furuzawa carried the coal for you. Thanks to Mr. Furuzawa. Everyone is sending us gifts, so we feel no shortage of anything. The mother of one of the young boys in the same room sent ohagi (mochi covered with red bean paste). Young Kogawa is the youngest of all and a nice boy so everyone is fond of him. I don’t know when I will return but it’s not too long. Don’t send food because it is prohibited. I wish the day would come when we could eat “sabazushi’ (mackerel sushi) together. Send me “Saikontan,” *(The Unencumbered Spirit)* a writing by Chinese philosopher, and a shirt. Bye.

**Tuesday, November 16, 1943**

Breakfast: hotcakes, bacon, coffee  
Lunch: pork chop (two pieces), salad (tomato, lettuce), string beans, mash potato, peach, coffee, bread, cream sauce  
Dinner: weenie, bread, milk, coffee (We cooked for ourselves for the first time.)

A small guardsman, who resembled a little monkey, would rush us to use the toilet. He held a bayonet and would poke us, saying, “Hurry up, goddamn it.” He was a foolish man who bragged a lot. When I took my time, this guard shouted, “Are you reading a book?”
We started to use the can day and night now. Weak people wouldn’t have known what to do when bothered by a guy like that. We really had a hard time. Finally, we notified a young lieutenant about the latrine situation. When the lieutenant took the bayonet rifle away from this guardsman, the guardsman looked dumbfounded.

Even when we were in the mess hall, they would line us up two rows deep with two soldiers to three men, and the soldiers held rifles with unsheathed bayonets.

Yesterday, Uchida was exercising *goho at-e* (judo move). Today, the security was even tighter than before, with one soldier to one man.

I received a package from Yuriko. She packed Bull Durham cigarettes, matches, razor, soap, towel, *nemaki* (pajamas), handkerchief, comb, underwear, and stockings. Some of the men did not receive anything. I guess my wife was ready before she got my letter. A guy next to me exclaimed, “Gee, she’s a judo man’s wife so she’s prepared. My wife doesn’t care whether I’m home or not. Perhaps she is happy that I’m not home.” Everyone had a good laugh. Yuriko sent a brand new shaver. She probably couldn’t find the old one. I’ll save this one for later.

In the stockade, we have enough to eat, and compared to the food served in camp, it’s better. The food we receive can feed five out of ten Japanese in camp. I get tearful thinking about that. Out loud, I said something like “Here I am, treated like an important national guest of the U.S. government, with guards of a higher power watching over us (or as somebody said honor guards), and this was the reason our food was good.” Roars of laughter broke out.

Questioning continues daily. They ask us, “Who is the mastermind?” We reply, “No one,” but they think there is someone in the background, pulling the strings. They concocted a scenario and tried to fit the story into their narrative. It didn’t matter if it was the truth or not, they were putting all their effort into making things fit the way they wanted it to.

Seven Hawaiian youths were put into the stockade today. These seven did not know why they had been arrested. They appeared as if they’d just been outwitted by a fox and didn’t know what was happening. America appeared to be blindly searching in the dark, picking up individuals here and there like mad, in an attempt to ferret out who was working in the background.

This morning, as these seven youths were passing by us, we thought maybe they were disloyal Japanese Americans, so no one questioned them about who they were or where they came from. As we were discussing this, we found out they were being placed with us. They were not disloyal. They were just Nisei (second generation) Japanese born in Hawaii.
When I was in camp, I didn’t eat breakfast. Now I go to the mess hall. (I think this mess hall was not built for the general Japanese American population. It must’ve been built for the officers.) These days, when I step outside, the frost seems to be getting thicker each day.

After we eat, we are lined up into two rows and escorted back to the stockade at the point of bayonets. That’s been the routine. But today, at 6 o’clock in the evening, there were orders to move into barracks, but three of the men remained in the stockade. (I think they wanted to question us separately so they were detained.)

We were told, “Cook for yourselves. That’s an order.” No pots or pans. Somehow we filled our stomach.

This time, the mess hall is closer. It’s so big, and the latrine and mess hall is nearby. Compared to the tents we had been in, this is more modern and high-toned.

After eating in the dark, we were sent back to the old tents to get our bedding. Then, we boiled some water to wash ourselves and changed into pajamas. It was an indescribably good feeling.

We hadn’t had electricity for so long so when we got it, we felt like a daimyo (lord) for the day. We could see the outline of the barbed wire fence, the searchlights, and although we were restricted by tight security, everyone seemed content. For a few moments, I felt ten years younger, but then thoughts of my family came to mind, and I felt depressed. It is useless to say more.

**Wednesday, November 17, 1943**

Breakfast: scrambled eggs, bread, coffee, fried potatoes, milk
Lunch: two pieces of lamb chops, baked potato, tomato sauce, Jell-O, rice, milk
Dinner: chow mein, *wakame misoshiru* (soup made of bean paste with seaweed), cabbage salad with seaweed, milk, rice, tea

Since we are cooking for ourselves there are limited portions.

The three Japanese left behind earlier were released into the new barracks but were tight-lipped. The reason they were allowed to join us was because the soldiers had gotten into a drunken brawl amongst themselves the night before. Loud footsteps woke me up around 1:30 in the morning. The atmosphere in the barrack was tense. One youth came in with three soldiers. Their flashlights pierced the darkness, blinding me. The soldiers were full of bravado, waving their bayonets around. Then, I saw that the youth had a wound on the left side of his face.

Later, the youth told us he’d been beaten up by someone in authority. He had bruises on his face and had been slugged so hard that the outlines of a ring could be seen etched into his skin.
In the morning, four more Hawaii-born youths were brought in. They did not know what was going on. I found the soldiers’ actions laughable.

I asked the youths about the situation in camp. They said the day after I had been taken away with the other men, the entire camp had started talking about engaging in a hunger strike but the Negotiating Committee went into hiding and nobody knew what was going on.

Thirty-one people are now in the stockade.

The FBI requested that Yoshiyama* return to camp to bring back documents but all the papers had been burned and thrown out earlier. Yoshiyama returned to the stockade from camp with only a geta (wooden elevated shoes) and some luggage but no papers. (*Most likely, Tom S. Yoshiyama, who had been secretary of the Daihyosha-kai or Negotiating Committee.)

Soon the Spanish Counsel will be coming to camp. People are full of anticipation.

We decided to divide our work like cleaning the toilet, cooking, janitorial chores, and managing the boiler room. My job is to be a waiter. It feels strange to wear a white apron.

Our barrack room consists of two stoves and measures 20 x 100 shaku (1 shaku is approximately 30 cm) with five electric light bulbs running across the ceiling. I put a nail on the wall to hang my clothes. After dinner, we sang “Yoneyama Jinku,” an oldie. Nogawa, the kendo man, and Mori made fun of me since I sang off tune. The day ended with our laughter sounding like it was roiling around in a maelstrom.

I sent a letter to Yuriko:

Send geta, paper, and pencil. Is everything secure and in good health, I hope? We are all healthy. We are eating good food. The food in camp is getting better. Next time, when I meet you, you will be surprised. Guess whether I am fatter or skinnier? Singing, exercising, and lots of good food. Just wait and see. Say hello to the neighbors. I know Sayuri and Masako are healthy. Send me geta, slipper, tablet, dictionary, Durham, and pencil. I received the stuff you sent me last time. I could see you were prepared to send it before my letter came. I am proud of you and your calmness. Take care of yourself. I will write again.

Thursday, November 18, 1943
Morning: fried rice, weenies, coffee, miso shiru (soup) (it’s very salty)
Lunch: rice, salad (cabbage and seaweed), nishime (cabbage and lamb), milk, Jell-O
Evening: salad (cabbage), lamb, rice, curry, Jell-O, milk

Yuriko sent me cigars, tobacco, and matches to share with others. Everyone took what he wanted, regardless of his contributions.
Dear Tatsuo Inouye,

November 18, 1943 at 7pm

Everybody is so nice to us. So please don’t worry about us. Man next-door helps us a lot and one lady in this block (Kumamoto Ken) she gave the children shells.

Grandma send Sayuri a lot of funny books, playbook, paper dolls, and magazine.

I am occupying myself with little studying at 2 PM. Masako is getting along just fine playing with Sayuri.

Take good care of yourself. When you are released, the children will be really happy. Whenever possible, I will be waiting.

Love, Yuriko

Every day, after lunch there is roll call. Sometimes there are volunteers to carry the coal back for the stove, but the youths, who still bear innocent faces and are probably around twenty, don’t offer to help. I was disappointed. I was more than disappointed when I thought about them as our future generation, but since these youths don’t lift a finger and act like they don’t care, I volunteered first although I am their elder. Four followed after me. Here again, I thought, these four stood out among their peers. Five soldiers with bayonets took us to the coal mountain. Then, I took a shovel and started to work.