



My Brother, My Sister, and I

By Yoko Kawashima Watkins

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Living in abject poverty in post--World War II Japan with her older sister and brother, thirteen-year-old Yoko bravely bears the taunts of her wealthy classmates. Then the warehouse they call home is destroyed by fire. Yoko's sister, Ko, is injured and must be hospitalized, and the siblings' lives become even more desperate. Bound by ties of love and honor, the family perseveres, never losing faith that they will be reunited with their beloved father. Then Yoko's brother, Hideyo is accused of murder. How can Yoko keep this dreadful secret from Ko, and clear Hideyo's name?

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My Brother, My Sister, and I By Yoko Kawashima Watkins Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #326489 in Books
- Brand: Simon Pulse
- Published on: 1996-04-01
- Released on: 1996-04-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .70" w x 5.50" l, .25 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 224 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

PW's starred review praised this fictionalized memoir of a refugee childhood in post-WWII Japan as "beautifully direct and emotionally honest." Ages 11-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 5 Up-In this moving sequel to *So Far from the Bamboo Grove* (Lothrop, 1986), Yoko Watkins continues her family saga. In extreme poverty, the Kawashimas-13-year-old Yoko, her 17-year-old sister, and her 21-year-old brother-struggle to survive as refugees in post-World War II Japan. After a slow start, this autobiographical novel gains momentum as the young people lose their wretched temporary home and are accused of burning a warehouse and committing a double murder. With the aid of new friends and personal aplomb, they find clues that clear their names and lead to the discovery of the true culprits. Along the way are fascinating details of how they make do and manage to preserve their dignity; the cruelty and humiliation Yoko endures in school; the interesting friendship they share with a Burakumin (outcast) couple; and an emotional reunion with their POW father, during which they must tell him that their mother died six years ago. The style here is a great improvement over the previous book, though some stilted dialogue still intrudes. The author is at her best in narration, skillfully building suspense and getting readers sympathetically involved in Yoko's difficulties and triumphs.

John Philbrook, San Francisco Public Library

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 6-10. In the fictionalized autobiography *So Far from the Bamboo Grove* (1986), Yoko and her Japanese family escape from the Communist takeover in North Korea at the end of World War II and finally reach Kyoto, Japan, only to find themselves unwelcome there. This sequel has the same quiet honesty about ordinary people caught up in terrible times. Yoko's first-person narrative tells of a once secure middle-class child now homeless, hungry, and in danger. Mother is dead; 13-year-old Yoko and her older brother and sister struggle together to survive in Kyoto, scavenging for scraps, working at anything they can find, even cleaning toilets. Father is a prisoner somewhere; the hope of his return is like a heartbeat in everything they do. Driven from their warehouse home by fire, they find themselves accused of arson and murder, and they help the police solve the murder mystery. However, the core of the story is not the big events, but the family drama and the home the young people make together, whether in a shack or a hospital room. Their loving bonds are strong, but they're also irritable and nervy. Yoko hates her sister's bossiness, especially the insistence that Yoko go to school. The school scenes are brutal: the rich students torment Yoko as an outsider; even when she graduates with top honors, they don't want her in the class photo. Yet Watkins doesn't indulge in self-pity. Except for some occasional overwriting ("I sighed sadly"), the violent suffering is treated with restraint, as in the unforgettable vignette of a scarred atom-bomb survivor who dies an outcast. The climax builds to Father's return, and his homecoming is described with the intense understatement that characterizes the best parts of this compelling story. *Hazel Rochman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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