

# GRAHAM SALISBURY



YEARLING

## UNDER THE BLOOD-RED SUN

AWARD-WINNING COMPANION TO *EYES OF THE EMPEROR*





## *The Flag*

**It all started** the day Grampa Joji decided to wash his precious flag of Japan and hang it out on the clothesline for the whole world to see. It was almost as big as the canvas tarp Papa used on his boat when it rained.

It was early September, 1941, just three weeks before the Yankees and the Dodgers started the World Series. A Sunday. Mama's day off. No breeze. The clouds, like giant white coral heads, hovered out over the ocean far beyond Honolulu harbor. In that kind of weather you stayed in the shade, at least if you were as smart as my dog Lucky, who lounged in the cool, weedless dirt under the house.

But anyway, Grampa scrubbed that flag clean. Usually, my friend Billy Davis and I thought it was pretty funny when he did something strange like that—like wash a flag, or take a bath in the stream, or laugh hysteri-

cally at Laurel and Hardy movies. Once, we got thrown out of a theater because Grampa kept on laughing, laughing, laughing, even when everyone else was quiet. Billy and I were nearly crying, Grampa was so funny. Grampa got mad and chased us. He was pretty tough about showing respect for your elders.

But a Japanese flag hanging out in the open like that was nothing to laugh about.

"Hey, Grampa," I yelled as I came up the dirt path through the trees. "Take that thing down. What if somebody *sees* it?"

Billy was with me. We'd just gotten off the bus from a trip downtown to play baseball. I threw my catcher's mitt on the ground and started walking faster. Grampa stood in front of his flag like a fisherman showing off a big one.

The white flag had a red ball in the center, with red rays like searchlights shooting out from it. Grampa waved his hand toward the clothesline. "Hey, busta, good, nah? Confonnit!"

"No! Not good! How many times do we have to tell you? This place is American, not Japanese. *American*. Didn't you hear what Papa said? Too many Japanese around here, that's what a lot of people think. . . . They don't need to see that flag to remind them."

I brushed past him and pulled the wet flag down. It soaked my shirt. Grampa's eyes got big, like he was so surprised he didn't know what to do.

"Papa's worried enough about what the Hawaiians think of us, and what the *haoles* think of us," I said. "We don't need anyone to think we're anti-*American* too. There's a war going on, you know. And Japan isn't mak-

ing any friends around here. Papa told you that already. Don't you remember?"

Grampa narrowed his eyes and clenched his fists. His face turned red and his lips bridged into a fish-sowl. "You Japanee!" he said. "Japanee!"

"American," I said. I took a step back and shoved the flag up onto the porch. "No good, Grampa. No good at all!"

Grampa's face grew redder. He shook his fist at me. "Whatchoo think you? You Japanee. Japanee inside. Like me, like Papa."

"Criminy," I said, walking a wide path around him. "This isn't Wakayama, you know. This isn't Japan. This is America, and you're going to get us in a lot of trouble with that stupid flag."

Just then Mama came out of the house. She didn't look too happy to be bothered on her only day off, the day she used to mend everybody's clothes. "*Nani-yo?* Whassamatta out here, Tomi? What you doing?"

"Grampa got the flag out again."

"*Ojii-chan*. He is *ojii-chan*."

"Same thing," I mumbled.

Mama frowned at me, then at Grampa. My little sister, Kimi, peeked around Mama's apron, then inched back out of sight when she saw Billy. She was afraid of him because he was so tall. He was only thirteen, like me, but almost a head taller. And he was white, a *haole*. But most of all, Billy was *kimpatsu*—with yellow hair. Grampa said in Japan it was a freak of nature to have yellow hair, but I never told Billy that.

In Japanese, Mama said, "Can't you listen to your

# HAWAII, DECEMBER 7, 1941.

## TOMIKAZU'S WORLD VANISHES IN AN HOUR.

Tomi was born in Hawaii. His grandfather and parents were born in Japan and came to America to escape poverty. "This is a good place," says Papa, a fisherman, and Tomi knows he is right.

World War II seems far away from Tomi and his friends, even though the harbor is full of warships. They're busy playing ball on their eighth-grade team, the Rats.

But then Pearl Harbor is attacked by the Japanese, and the United States declares war on Japan. Japanese men are rounded up. Tomi's father and grandfather are arrested. Taken away. Tomi must be the man of his family and help his mother and little sister survive. It's a terrifying time to be Japanese in America. But one thing doesn't change: the loyalty of Tomi's buddies, the Rats.

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