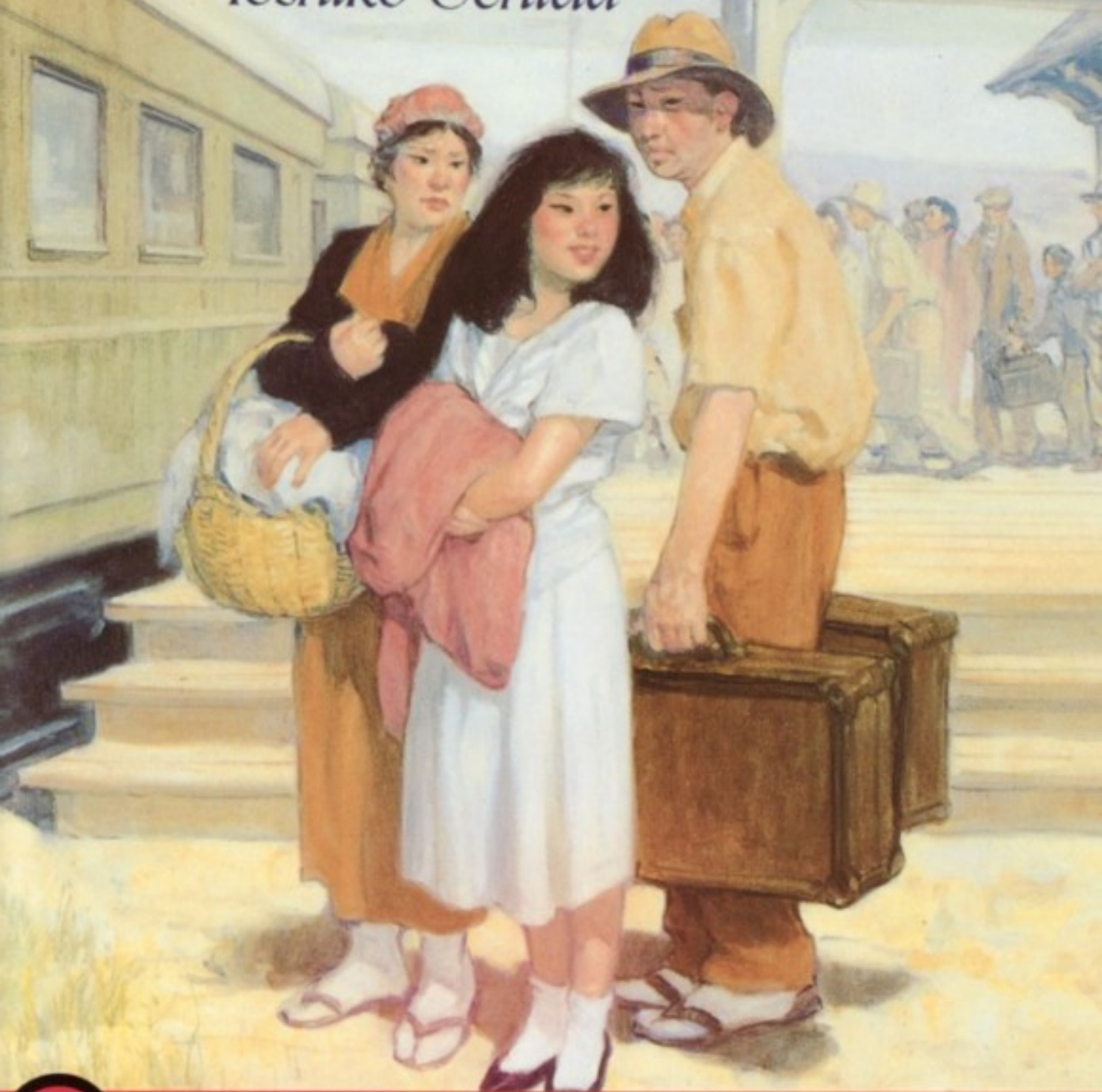


# JOURNEY HOME

*Yoshiko Uchida*

Yuki is free,  
but her struggle  
has just begun.



ALADDIN

HISTORICAL FICTION



## CHAPTER

# 1



I CAN'T SEE, YUKI THOUGHT FRANTICALLY. I CAN'T BREATHE.

The screaming desert wind flung its white powdery sand in her face, stifling her and wrapping her up in a smothering cocoon of sand so fine it was like dust. It blinded her and choked her and made her gag as she opened her mouth to cry out.

The black tar-papered barracks on either side of the road had vanished behind the swirling dust, and Yuki was all alone in an eerie, unreal world where nothing existed except the shrieking wind and the great choking clouds of dust. Yuki stumbled on, doubled over, pushing hard against the wind, gasping as she felt the sting of sand and pebbles against her legs.

Suppose she never got back to her barrack? Sup-



pose the wind simply picked her up and flung her out beyond the barbed wire fence into the desert? Suppose no one ever found her dried, wind-blown body out there in the sagebrush?

A cry of terror swelled up inside her. "Mama! Papa! Help me!"

The sound of her own scream woke her up. Yuki's heart was pounding. Her damp fists were clenched tight. Her face was wet with tears.

For several minutes she couldn't believe it was only a nightmare. It had all seemed so real, she could almost taste the flat, powdery dust in her mouth. She had been back in the Utah desert, living with Mama and Papa and her big brother, Ken, in Topaz, one of the World War II concentration camps where all the Japanese of the West Coast had been sent by the government.

Yuki shuddered and blinked hard, trying to see where she really was. Was she back in the small crowded barrack room where their four army cots were separated by army blankets strung on ropes? Would she have to wake Mama and ask her to bring the flashlight and go out to the latrine with her because she was too scared to go alone? Would she have to rush from toilet to toilet to find one that wasn't filled with filth because the water had stopped running?

Yuki gathered herself up into a small ball and hugged her knees. Gradually, slowly, she left the strange world of dreams and nightmares and knew she was safe in her room in the apartment in Salt Lake City, which the minister of the Japanese church had found for them. And he'd told them not to worry be-



cause the landlady, Mrs. Henley, didn't mind their being Japanese.

For a few moments Yuki remembered again the awful fear that had consumed her those last weeks in Topaz when Papa had been threatened by the small gang of agitators. They had turned their anger at being in camp against anyone who, like Papa, worked with the administration to keep the camp running smoothly. And finally, one night, they had thrown a stink bomb into their barrack room. After that both Mama and Papa knew it was no longer safe to remain in camp, even though they wanted to stay and do whatever they could to help their people.

"Your family has already spent almost a year in camp," the director had said to Papa. "I think it's time now that you left."

He had secured special clearance for them to leave, and they had gone to Salt Lake City as soon as possible. Now they were safe outside the camp, and there was no more barbed wire fence to keep them from going anywhere they wanted to go.

Yuki took a deep breath and wiped her nose with the corner of the sheet. Mama wouldn't like her doing that, but she was still too shaky to get out of bed. She stared into the darkness until she could make out the familiar things in her room: the big, carved-oak chest of drawers that Mrs. Henley's great-grandfather had built, the small, chintz-covered armchair that was Yuki's favorite chair in the whole apartment, and the large gold frame on the wall with the watercolor scene of sailboats in a sunny harbor.

Yes, everything was all there. It was all right. She





World War II is raging. Yuki and her Japanese-American family are forced from their home in California and imprisoned in a U.S. concentration camp called Topaz.

After months of unbearable life in Topaz, Yuki and her family are finally released. They are free, but are left with nothing.

With nowhere to go, and no money to get there, the road to rebuilding their lives seems endless. But in the end, it is their unyielding faith and courage that guide them home, reunited and hopeful.

*Journey Home* is an extraordinary story of one family's struggle to survive one of the most tragic episodes in U.S. history.

"There are many sensitive touches and interesting glimpses into a largely ignored but important historical episode."

—*Booklist*

**YOSHIKO UCHIDO** is best known for her Japanese-American stories, which are based on her own childhood.

She lives in Berkeley, California.

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