

# The Japanese Lover: A Novel

By Isabel Allende

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Named one of the most anticipated novels of the year by *New York Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Huffington Post*, and more. From *New York Times* and internationally bestselling author Isabel Allende, an exquisitely crafted love story and multigenerational epic that sweeps from San Francisco in the present-day to Poland and the United States during the Second World War.

In 1939, as Poland falls under the shadow of the Nazis, young Alma Belasco's parents send her away to live in safety with an aunt and uncle in their opulent mansion in San Francisco. There, as the rest of the world goes to war, she encounters Ichimei Fukuda, the quiet and gentle son of the family's Japanese gardener. Unnoticed by those around them, a tender love affair begins to blossom. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the two are cruelly pulled apart as Ichimei and his family—like thousands of other Japanese Americans—are declared enemies and forcibly relocated to internment camps run by the United States government. Throughout their lifetimes, Alma and Ichimei reunite again and again, but theirs is a love that they are forever forced to hide from the world.

Decades later, Alma is nearing the end of her long and eventful life. Irina Bazili, a care worker struggling to come to terms with her own troubled past, meets the elderly woman and her grandson, Seth, at San Francisco's charmingly eccentric Lark House nursing home. As Irina and Seth forge a friendship, they become intrigued by a series of mysterious gifts and letters sent to Alma, eventually learning about Ichimei and this extraordinary secret passion that has endured for nearly seventy years.

Sweeping through time and spanning generations and continents, *The Japanese Lover* explores questions of identity, abandonment, redemption, and the unknowable impact of fate on our lives. Written with the same attention to historical detail and keen understanding of her characters that Isabel Allende has been known for since her landmark first novel *The House of the Spirits*, *The Japanese Lover* is a profoundly moving tribute to the constancy of the human heart in a world of unceasing change.

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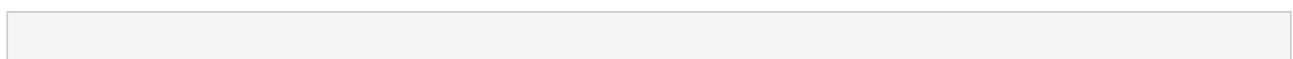
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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"*The Japanese Lover* is animated by the same lush spirit that has sold 65 million copies of her books around the world... a novel that's a pleasure to recommend." (*The Washington Post*)

"Poignant, powerful ...a timeless world without 'tomorrow or yesterday.'" (*Boston Globe*)

"Monumental...A multi-generational epic of fate, war, and enduring love." (*Harper's Bazaar*)

"[A] fairy tale of a novel...As in all of Allende's fiction, we find a large, colorful cast of characters..." (*New York Times Book Review*)

"[Allende] is a dazzling storyteller, with a wry, sometimes dark, wit and a great eye for society's changing fashions. She may be writing a fairy tale for adults, but like the best of the genre, it's almost irresistible." (*Associated Press*)

"Like the incomparable storyteller she is, Isabel Allende does not release us from the novel's spell until the last pages, with a brief but bittersweet hint of her famed magical realism." (*Miami Herald*)

"[An] epic novel from a master of the form." (*Elle*)

"With *The Japanese Lover*, Allende reminds us that, while not everyone has a true love, we all have loves that are true. Whether they be passionate, familial, unrequited or timeless, the one constant in our lives is love. And Isabel Allende celebrates them all, beautifully." (*USA Today*)

"Allende's engrossing narrative spans 70 years of tumultuous world history, but the powerful message you'll take away is that love -- all kinds of love -- will take root and endure under the most harrowing conditions." (*People Magazine, Book of the Week*)

"With her engaging new novel, 'The Japanese Lover,' Allende brings us a tale at once global and rooted deeply in Bay Area history, sweeping through time and across continents to explore the inner lives of two very different women in contemporary California." (*San Francisco Chronicle*)

"Allende's magical and sweeping tale focuses on two survivors of separation and loss...Befitting the unapologetically romantic soul bared here—the poignant letters to Alma from Ichimei are interspersed throughout—love is what endures." (*Publishers Weekly, starred review*)

"*The Japanese Lover* is a poetic and profound meditation on the power of love: a common theme, sure, but in Allende's capable hands this trope is made utterly new." (*Bustle*)

"Themes of lasting passion, friendship, reflections in old age, and how people react to challenging circumstances all feature in Allende's newest saga, which moves from modern San Francisco back to the traumatic WWII years. As always, her lively storytelling pulls readers into her characters' lives immediately... the story has many heart felt moments, and readers will be lining up for it." (*Booklist*)

"Allende, as always, gives progress and hopeful spirits their due." (*Kirkus*)

"Isabel Allende's oeuvre ranges widely...but *The Japanese Lover*, her lushly detailed new work, may be her most expansive yet..." (*Library Journal*)

"Allende...delivers a poignant story of race and aging, loss and reconciliation." (*San Jose Mercury News*)

"[A] lovely, easy-to-read novel...Like a perfect onion, the book slowly reveals the secrets of Alma's past, which primarily revolves around a secret, decades-long affair with a Japanese gardener." (*Goop*)

"The latest from the writer who's been called Gabriel Garcia Marquez's successor. It's a love story that covers a lot of ground, from Nazi-occupied Poland to present-day San Francisco. You won't want to put it down." (*theSkimm*)

"...if you're a [Gabriel Garcia Marquez] fan, this one's for you." (*Lauren Conrad's Top 10 Fall Reading List*)

"...rich with lyrical prose and compelling plot turns. This is Allende at her very best." (*Purewow.com*)

"[Allende] is a dazzling storyteller, with a wry, sometimes dark, wit and a great eye for society's changing fashions. She may be writing a fairy tale for adults, but like the best of the genre, it's almost irresistible." (*Times Union*)

"*The Japanese Lover*" erects two thematic pillars of love and prejudice to produce a story that strikes a masterful emotional balance. More importantly, the novel crafts characters that are profoundly compelling in their complex struggle to value love despite forces—youth and age, proximity and distance, society and self—beyond their control." (*Harvard Crimson*)

"She is a dazzling storyteller, with a wry, sometimes dark, wit and a great eye for society's changing fashions" (*The National*)

"The spectre of the war and the illicit treatment of Japanese-Americans are never lost on the reader, although Allende is too subtle a writer to do any real proselytizing. It is a beautiful and significant love story that she tells, although I was so much more interested in her than in Ichimei as a character." (*Book Reporter*)

With end-of-life issues looming over Alma, "The Japanese Lover" can't be called lighthearted. But it's often wryly funny, and always an absorbing argument for the power of love. (*St. Louis Post Dispatch*)

"'Pretty brilliant,' I said once I closed the cover — literary fiction at its best." (*The Missourian*)

#### About the Author

Born in Peru and raised in Chile, Isabel Allende is the author of a number of bestselling and critically acclaimed books, including *The House of the Spirits*, *Eva Luna*, *Stories of Eva Luna*, *Of Love and Shadows*, and *Paula*. Her latest novel is *The Japanese Lover*. Her books have been translated into more than thirty-five languages and have sold more than 65 million copies worldwide. She lives in California. Her website is [IsabelAllende.com](http://IsabelAllende.com).

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## THE POLISH GIRL

To satisfy Irina and Seth's curiosity, Alma began by telling them, with the lucidity that preserves crucial moments for us, of the first time she saw Ichimei Fukuda. She met him in the splendid garden at the Sea Cliff mansion in spring 1939. In those days she was a girl with less appetite than a canary, who went around silent by day and tearful by night, hiding in the depths of the three-mirrored wardrobe in the bedroom her aunt and uncle had prepared for her. The room was a symphony in blue: the drapes were blue, and so too the curtains around the four-poster bed, the Flemish carpet, the birds on the wallpaper, and the Renoir reproductions in their gilt frames; blue also were the sky and the sea she could view from her window whenever the fog lifted. Alma Mendel was weeping for everything she had lost forever, even though her aunt and uncle insisted so vehemently that the separation from her parents and brother was only temporary that they would have convinced any girl less intuitive than her. The very last image she had of her parents was that of a man of mature years, bearded and stern looking, dressed entirely in black with a heavy overcoat and hat, standing next to a much younger woman, who was sobbing disconsolately. They were on the quay at the port of Danzig, waving good-bye to her with white handkerchiefs. They grew smaller and smaller, more and more indistinct, as the boat set out on its journey toward London with a mournful blast from its foghorn and she, clutching the railing, found it impossible to return their farewell wave. Shivering in her travel clothes, lost among the crowd of passengers gathered at the stern to watch their native land disappear in the distance, Alma tried to maintain the composure her parents had instilled in her from birth. As the ship moved off, she could sense their despair, and this reinforced her premonition that she would never see them again. With a gesture that was rare in him, her father had put his arm around her mother's shoulders, as if to prevent her from throwing herself into the water. She meanwhile was holding down her hat with one hand to prevent the wind from blowing it off as she frantically waved the handkerchief with her other.

Three months earlier, Alma had been with them on this same quay to wave good-bye to her brother, Samuel, who was ten years older than her. Her mother shed many tears before accepting her husband's decision to send him to England as a precaution just in case the rumors of war became real. He would be safe there from being recruited into the army or being tempted to volunteer. The Mendel family could never have imagined that two years later Samuel would be in the Royal Air Force fighting Germany. When she saw her brother embark with the swagger of someone off on his first adventure, Alma had a foretaste of the threat hanging over her family. Her brother had been like a beacon to her: shedding light on her darkest moments and driving off her fears with his triumphant laugh, his friendly teasing, and the songs he sang at the piano. For his part, Samuel had been delighted with Alma from the moment he held her as a newborn baby, a pink bundle smelling of talcum powder and mewling like a kitten. This passion for his sister had done nothing but grow over the following seven years, until they were forced apart. When she learned that Samuel was leaving, Alma had her first ever tantrum. It began with crying and screaming, followed by her writhing in agony on the floor, and only ended when her mother and governess plunged her ruthlessly into a tub of icy water. Samuel's departure left her both sad and on edge, as she suspected it was the prologue to even more drastic changes. Alma had heard her parents talk about Lillian, one of her mother's sisters who lived in the United States and was married to Isaac Belasco—someone important, as they never failed to add whenever they mentioned his name. Before this, she had been unaware of the existence of this distant aunt and the important man, and so she was very surprised when her parents obliged her to write them postcards in her best handwriting. She also saw it as an ill omen that her governess suddenly incorporated the orange-colored blotch of California into her history and geography lessons. Her parents waited until after the end-of-year

celebrations before announcing that she too would be going to study abroad for a while. Unlike her brother, however, she would remain within the family, and go to live in San Francisco with her aunt Lillian, her uncle Isaac, and her three cousins.

The entire journey from Danzig to London, and then to Southampton, where they boarded a transatlantic liner to San Francisco, took seventeen days. The Mendels had given Miss Honeycomb, her English governess, the responsibility of delivering Alma safe and sound to the Belasco home. Miss Honeycomb was a spinster with a pretentious accent, prim manners, and a snooty expression. She treated those she regarded as her social inferiors with disdain, while displaying a cloying servility toward her superiors, and yet in the eighteen months she had worked for the Mendels she had won their trust. No one liked her, least of all Alma, but the girl's opinion counted for nothing in the choice of the governesses and tutors who educated her at home in her early years. To sweeten Miss Honeycomb, her employers had promised her a substantial bonus in San Francisco, once Alma was safely installed with her relatives. The two of them traveled in one of the best cabins on the ship; initially they were seasick, and then bored. The Englishwoman did not fit in with the first-class passengers and would rather have thrown herself overboard than mingle with people of her own social class. As a result, she spent more than a fortnight without speaking to anyone apart from her young ward. Although there were other children on board, Alma wasn't interested in any of the planned children's activities and made no friends. She was in a sulk with her governess and sobbed in secret because this was the first time she had been away from her mother. She spent the voyage reading fairy tales and writing melodramatic letters she handed directly to the captain for him to post in some port or other, because she was scared that if she gave them to Miss Honeycomb they would end up being fed to the fishes. The only memorable moments of the slow crossing were the passage through the Panama Canal and a fancy-dress party when someone costumed as an Apache Indian pushed her governess, dressed up in a sheet to represent a Grecian vestal virgin, into the swimming pool.

The Belasco uncle, aunt, and cousins were all waiting for Alma on the dock at San Francisco, which was teeming with such a dense throng of Asian stevedores that Miss Honeycomb feared they had docked at Shanghai by mistake. Aunt Lillian, dressed in a gray Persian lamb coat and Turkish turban, clasped her niece in a suffocating embrace, while Isaac Belasco and the chauffeur tried to gather up the travelers' fourteen trunks and bundles. The two female cousins, Martha and Sarah, greeted the new arrival with a cold peck on the cheek, then forgot she existed—not out of malice, but because they were of an age to be looking for boyfriends, and this blinded them to the rest of the world. Despite the Belasco family's wealth and prestige, it wasn't going to be easy for them to land these much-sought-after husbands, as the two girls had inherited their father's nose and their mother's ample outline, but little of the former's intelligence or the latter's kindness. Her cousin Nathaniel, the only male, born six years after his sister Sarah, was edging into puberty with the gawkiness of a heron. He was pale, skinny, lanky, ill at ease in a body that seemed to have too many elbows and knees, but with the sad, thoughtful eyes of a big dog. He kept his eyes fixed firmly on the ground when he held out his hand and muttered the welcome his parents had insisted on. Alma clung so steadfastly to his hand like a life vest that his efforts to free himself proved fruitless.

So began Alma's stay in the grand house at Sea Cliff, where she was to spend seventy largely uninterrupted years. She almost completely exhausted her stock of tears in her first months there in 1939, and from then on wept only rarely. She learned to bear her troubles alone and with dignity, convinced no one was interested in other people's problems, and that pain borne in silence eventually evaporated. She had assimilated her father's philosophy: he was a man of rigid and unshakable principles, proud of having done everything for himself and owing nothing to anyone, which was not exactly true. The simple recipe for success that Mendel had instilled in his children from the cradle on consisted in never complaining, never asking for anything, striving to be the best in everything you do, and never trusting anyone. Alma had to carry this heavy weight on her back for several decades, until love helped her shed some of it. Her stoic attitude contributed to the air of mystery surrounding her, long before she had any secrets to keep.

During the Great Depression, Isaac Belasco not only had managed to avoid the worst effects of the crisis but had increased his fortune. While others were losing everything, he worked eighteen hours a day at his law



firm and invested in commercial ventures that seemed risky at the time but in the long run turned out to have been extremely shrewd. He was formal, a man of few words, but with a soft heart. He saw this softness as a character weakness and tried to give an impression of harsh authority, but one had only to deal with him once or twice to become aware of his underlying generosity. He acquired a reputation for compassion that eventually became a drawback to his legal career. Later on, when he ran for judge in the Californian supreme court, he lost the election because his adversaries accused him of showing too much clemency, to the detriment of justice and public safety.

Although Isaac gave Alma a warm welcome, he was soon unnerved by the little girl's nocturnal crying. Her sobs were muffled and barely audible through the thick carved mahogany doors of her wardrobe, but they reached his bedroom on the far side of the hallway, where he would be trying to read. He assumed that, like animals, children possess a natural ability to adapt, and that the girl would soon get used to the separation from her parents, or that they would emigrate to America. He felt incapable of helping her, restrained by the awkwardness he felt whenever it came to female matters. He found it hard to understand his wife and daughters' usual reactions, so what chance did he have with this Polish girl who was not yet eight? Gradually he found himself overtaken by the superstitious feeling that his niece's tears were heralding some great catastrophe. The scars of the Great War were still visible in Europe: the land disfigured by trenches, the millions of dead, the widows and orphans, the rotting corpses of mutilated horses, the lethal gases, the flies and hunger were all still fresh in the memory. Nobody wanted another conflict like that, but Hitler had already annexed Austria and was in control of part of Czechoslovakia, and his inflammatory calls for the establishment of the empire of the super race could not be dismissed as the ravings of a madman. At the end of that January, Hitler had spoken of his intention to rid the world of the Jewish menace. Some children possess psychic powers, thought Isaac Belasco, and so it would not be so odd if Alma glimpsed something dreadful in her nightmares and was suffering from a terrible premonitory grief. Why were his in-laws waiting to leave Poland? For a year now he had been unsuccessfully pressing them to flee Europe, as so many other Jews were doing. He had offered them his hospitality, although the Mendels had ample means and did not need financial help from him. Baruj Mendel responded that Poland's sovereignty was guaranteed by England and France. He thought he was safe, protected by his money and his business connections, so the only concession he made to the relentless assault of Nazi propaganda was to send his children abroad to weather the storm. Isaac Belasco did not know Mendel, but it was obvious from his letters and cables that his sister-in-law's husband was as arrogant and unlikable as he was stubborn.

Almost a month was to go by before Isaac finally decided to intervene in Alma's drama, and even then he could not bring himself to do so personally, as he felt the problem lay within his wife's domain. At night, only a constantly half-open door separated the spouses, but Lillian was hard of hearing and took tincture of opium to get to sleep, and so would never have learned of the sobbing in the wardrobe had her husband not pointed it out to her. By this time, Miss Honeycomb was no longer with them. On reaching San Francisco she had been paid the promised bonus, and twelve days later she returned to her native land, disgusted she said by the rude manners, incomprehensible accent, and democracy of the Americans, without considering how offensive these remarks were to the Belascos, a refined family who had treated her with great consideration. When Lillian, alerted by a delayed letter from her sister, unpicked the lining of Alma's travel coat, she found that the diamonds spoken of in the letter were missing. The Mendels had put them in this classic hiding place more out of a sense of tradition than to protect their daughter against the vicissitudes of fortune, because the stones were not particularly valuable. Suspicion immediately fell on Miss Honeycomb, and Lillian suggested sending one of the investigators from her husband's practice after the Englishwoman so that they could confront her wherever she was and recuperate what she had stolen. Isaac however determined that it was not worth the trouble. The world and their family were already in enough turmoil as it was to have to go chasing governesses across seas and continents; a few diamonds more or less did not weigh much in the balance of Alma's life.

"My bridge companions tell me there's a wonderful child psychologist in San Francisco," Lillian said to her husband when she learned of her niece's suffering.

"And what might that be?" asked the patriarch, raising his eyes from his newspaper for an instant.

"The name says it all, Isaac, don't pretend you don't understand."

"Do any of your friends know anyone with a child so disturbed they've had to turn to a psychologist?"

"No doubt they do, Isaac, but they'd never in their lives admit it."

"Childhood is a naturally unhappy period of our existence, Lillian. It was Walt Disney who invented the notion that it has to be happy, simply to make money."

"You're so stubborn! We can't let Alma sob her heart out forever. We have to do something."

"All right, Lillian. We'll resort to that extreme if all else fails. For now, you could give Alma a few drops of your mixture at night."

"I'm not sure, Isaac. That's a double-edged sword. We don't want to turn the girl into an opium addict so early in her life." They were still debating the relative merits of the psychologist and opium when they realized that for three nights now there had been no sound from the wardrobe. They listened for another couple of nights and were able to confirm that for some unknown reason the girl had calmed down, and not only slept the whole night but had begun to eat like any normal child. Alma had not forgotten her parents or her brother, and still wanted the family to be reunited as soon as possible, but she was running out of tears and was starting to enjoy her burgeoning friendship with the two people who were to become her life's only loves: Nathaniel Belasco and Ichimei Fukuda. Nathaniel was about to turn thirteen and was the Belascos' youngest child. Like her, Ichimei was almost eight, and he was the gardener's youngest son.

The Belascos' two daughters, Martha and Sarah, lived in such a different world from Alma, concerned only with fashion, parties, and potential boyfriends, that whenever they bumped into her in the nooks and crannies of the Sea Cliff mansion or during the rare formal dinners in the dining room, they were startled, as if unable to recall who this little girl was or what she was doing there. Nathaniel on the other hand could not ignore her, because Alma followed him around from the very first day, determined to replace her beloved brother, Samuel, with this shy cousin. Even though he was five years older, he was the closest to her in age of the Belasco clan, and the most approachable due to his gentle disposition. In Nathaniel she aroused a mixture of fascination and dread. To him she seemed to have stepped out of an old-fashioned photograph, with her grave demeanor and the pretentious British accent she had learned from her devious governess. She was as stiff and angular as a board, smelled of the mothballs from her traveling trunks, and had a defiant white lock that fell over her forehead and contrasted strongly with the rest of her black hair and her olive complexion. At first, Nathaniel tried to escape, but when nothing managed to deter Alma's clumsy attempts to become friends, he surrendered. He had inherited his father's kind heart and could intuit his cousin's secret pain, which she proudly concealed. Still, he found a variety of excuses to avoid helping her. She was a little brat, she wasn't a close relative, she was only in San Francisco for a while, and it would be a waste of time to become friends with her. After three weeks had gone by with no sign that his cousin's visit might be coming to an end, his excuses were wearing thin, and so Nathaniel went to ask his mother if they were thinking of adopting her. "I hope it doesn't come to that," Lillian replied with a shudder. The news from Europe was very disturbing, and the possibility that her niece might become an orphan was gradually taking shape in her mind. From the tone of his mother's reply, Nathaniel concluded that Alma would be there indefinitely, and so he yielded to his instinct to care for her. He slept in another wing of the mansion and no one had told him that Alma was whimpering in the wardrobe, but he somehow found this out and on many nights tiptoed there to be with her.

It was Nathaniel who introduced the Fukuda family to Alma. She had seen them through the windows but didn't go out to explore the garden until later in the spring, when the weather improved. One Saturday, Nathaniel blindfolded her and told her he had a surprise for her. Then he led her through the kitchen and laundry and out into the garden. When he removed the blindfold and she looked up, she found she was standing beneath a cherry tree in blossom, a cloud of pink cotton. Next to the tree was a short, broad-

shouldered Asian man in overalls and a straw hat, leaning on a spade. His face was weathered, and in a halting English difficult to follow, he told Alma that this moment was beautiful, but that it would last only a few days before the blooms fell like rain to the ground; much better was the memory of the cherry tree in bloom, because that would last all year, until the following spring. He was Takao Fukuda, the Japanese gardener who had worked at Sea Cliff for years, and the only person Isaac Belasco doffed his hat to as a mark of respect.

Nathaniel went back inside, leaving his cousin with Takao, who showed her around the rest of the garden. He took her to the different terraces built into the side of the hill, from the summit where the house stood all the way down to the beach. He walked with her along narrow paths between classical statues stained green with damp and among fountains, exotic trees, and succulents, explaining where each one came from and the kind of care it needed, until they reached a pergola covered in climbing roses with a panoramic view of the ocean, the entrance to the bay on the left, and the Golden Gate Bridge, inaugurated a couple of years earlier, on the right. Colonies of sea lions were visible resting on the rocks, and scanning the horizon, he told her that with patience and luck you could sometimes see whales coming from the north to have their young in Californian waters. Then Takao showed her the greenhouse, a miniature replica of a classic Victorian railway station, all wrought iron and glass. Inside, thanks to the filtered light, the moist warmth of the heating, and the humidifiers, the delicate plants began their lives on trays, each one labeled by name and the date when it was to be transplanted. Between two long rough wooden tables, Alma saw a boy bent over some seedlings. When he heard them come in, he dropped his pair of pruning shears and stood stiffly to attention. Going over to him, Takao whispered something in a language Alma could not understand and ruffled his hair. "My youngest son," he said. Alma stared wideeyed at father and son as if they were from another species: they were nothing like the Chinese she had seen in the illustrations in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

The boy greeted her with a bow and kept his head down while he introduced himself.

"I am Ichimei, the fourth child of Takao and Heideko Fukuda. It is an honor to meet you, miss."

"I am Alma, the niece of Isaac and Lillian Belasco. An honor to meet you, sir," she replied, taken aback but amused.

This initial formality, which as time went on became tinged with humor, set the tone for their lifelong relation. Alma was taller and more robust, and so looked older than him. Ichimei's slender frame was deceptive, because he could pick up heavy bags of soil effortlessly and push a laden wheelbarrow uphill. His head was large compared to his body; he had a honey-colored complexion, black eyes set wide apart, and thick, unruly hair. His adult teeth were still emerging, and when he smiled his eyes seemed to disappear. For the rest of that morning, Alma followed Ichimei around as he planted the seedlings in the holes his father had dug and pointed out the secret life of the garden to her, the roots beneath the surface, the near-invisible insects, the tiny shoots that in a week would be several inches tall. He explained about the chrysanthemums he was taking out of the greenhouse, and how they were transplanted in spring to flower at the start of autumn so that they could provide color and life to the garden after all the summer flowers had withered. He showed her some rosebushes still in bud and revealed how you had to remove most of them so that the remaining ones gave big, healthy blooms. He told her about the difference between plants coming from seed and those growing from bulbs, the ones that preferred sun or shade, the native ones and those brought from elsewhere. Takao Fukuda, who was keeping his eye on them, came up and proudly announced that it was Ichimei who carried out the most delicate tasks, because he had been born with a green thumb. The boy blushed at this praise.

From that day on, Alma waited impatiently for the gardeners to arrive, as they did punctually each weekend. Takao Fukuda always brought Ichimei and occasionally, if there was extra work to do, he was also accompanied by Charles and James, his older boys, or by Megumi, his only daughter. Several years older than Ichimei, she was only interested in science and detested getting her hands dirty with soil. Ichimei remained patient and disciplined, carrying out his tasks without being distracted by Alma, trusting his father to give him half an hour off at the end of the day to play with her.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Pauline Stern:**

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