



Heart of a Champion

Ellen Schwartz

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Ten-year-old Kenny (Kenji in Japanese) worships his older brother, Mickey (Mitsuo), a baseball hero whose outstanding performance on the Asahi baseball team has given him fame and popularity. Despite Kenny's suspected heart condition, he is determined to practice secretly with Mickey so he, too, can one day try out for the Asahi. But world events soon overtake life in this quiet community. When Japan attacks Pearl Harbor in 1941, everything for Kenny and his family spirals out of control: schools are closed, businesses are confiscated, fathers are arrested and sent to work camps in the BC interior and mothers and children are relocated to internment camps. When Mickey is arrested for a small act of violence, Kenny manages to keep his family's spirits up, despite the deplorable conditions in camp. Coming across a "vacant" field covered with scrap wood, broken shakes and torn tar paper, Kenny gets permission to clear it and convert it into a baseball field. One by one, the boys in the camp pitch in, and the work gives purpose to their long days. Kenny's persistence, hard work and big dreams shape the teen he is to become in this story of happiness found despite all odds.

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