

Shobha Mehta  
Age 15  
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Richmond Hill, Ontario

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Dear Daisuke,

My dear brother, I cannot tell you what a joy it was to receive your last letter. Mama and I have been so worried since you were sent to your training camp. Although you have not been sent overseas, we still feel as if you are fighting on the front lines. We have been through so many emotions in these past few months. First, we received your letter about the Canadians' success at Vimy Ridge. Then we received your very worrisome letter about the newly started battle at Passchendaele. Your account of the battlefield was so horrid; I could not bear to even imagine it. We try to get as much information as we can, but it is hard because Port Coquitlam is such an isolated town.

Living here without you is hard, but do not trouble yourself about us because our needs are few and our sisters, Hairuki and Midori have begun to work with us. We are now sewing uniforms for the troops. The hours are long, but our hardships are nothing compared to those overseas. Mama and I have made many friends working here. I have often found that in times of struggle, people forget their differences and come together for strength. We are grateful for the support we find at home and I can only hope that you are experiencing a similar bond with your brothers-at-arms. Our community has helped me and Mama countless times when our courage has failed and I pray yours does the same for you.

Look now, I have wasted so much paper telling you about our unimportant problems. I want to hear about what you are experiencing at your camp. In your last letter, the stories of the returning soldiers were very grim. Mama had to stop reading once you started describing the rats. When I hear these stories, I worry so much for you. I hope you are guarding your health. It is so hard being separated from you. There is so much uncertainty.

Oh, there I go saying things that ought not be said. I have heard so much about the soldiers and the war. I have heard that Japanese men are not being treated as equals in the training camps. I hope this is not true and I hope you have not had any such behaviour at your camp. You must tell me because I have a secret I must reveal to you.

Mother does not know this, but I hope to volunteer as a nurse and join our troops overseas. I fear this will be impossible because I am Japanese. The women who came to our town looking for volunteers only took a handful of girls. They said they wanted only white "Canadian" girls for service in the war. I am so sad that even in the midst of our struggle people cannot accept us as important contributors to the war effort. But, with new battles starting overseas, doctors and nurses are in short supply, so I may yet be called upon to serve.

Sadly, my dear brother, I must end this letter. It is quite late and work starts so early in the morning. Make sure you keep strong for all our sakes. Of course, Mama, Hairuki and Midori all send their love to you. I want you to know, and you are not to forget, that you have all our love and support, especially mine. With any luck, this war will be over soon and we will have you back with us. Please write back to us as soon as you can; we will be waiting to hear from you.

Your ever loving sister,

Arisu Yamagata