

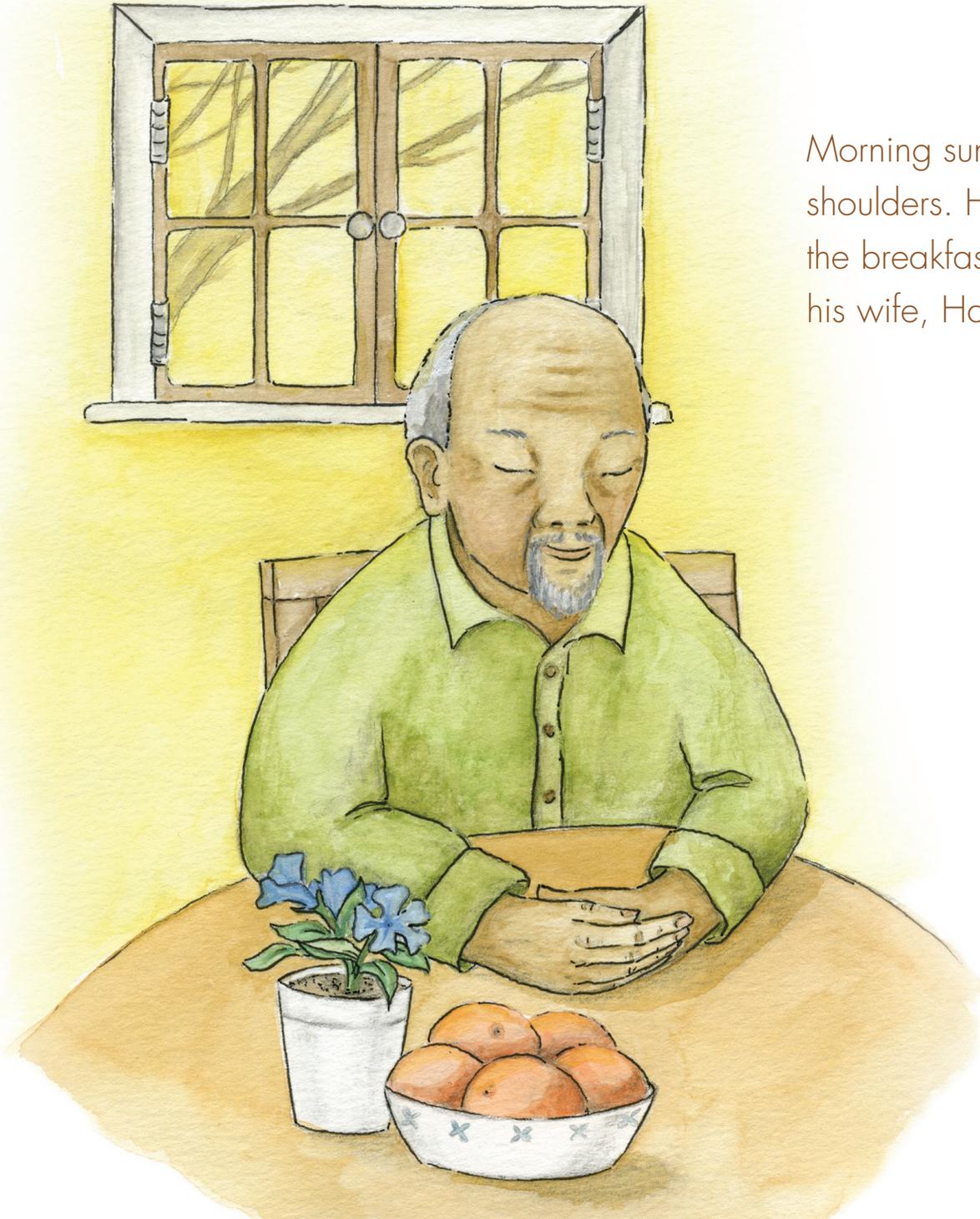


To Jan who told me this story

V.S.C.

To Peter and Pop who taught me to garden

J.S.W.



Morning sun warmed Naoichi's shoulders. He was sitting at the breakfast table waiting for his wife, Hatsumi.

Hatsumi came through the door hiding something behind her back. There was a smile in her eyes.



"Happy birthday!" she said.

A brightly colored package swirled from behind her back. She handed it to Naoichi.

He tore the paper off.

"Just what I've been needing,"
he said.

"My old tool belt is full
of holes."

"Remember," Hatsumi said,
"you're ninety-two.
A respectable age."



Naoichi peeled an orange in one long unbroken spiral with a sharp knife. Then he placed it on a small green plate, cut it in wedges, and handed it to Hatsumi.

“Thank you,” Hatsumi said.

She waited for Naoichi to peel another for himself before she ate her orange.

