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Secret Harvests:

A Hidden Story of Separation, Silence, Shame, and the Resilience of a Family Farm

A MEMOIR BY

David Mas Masumoto

WITH ARTWORK BY

Patricia Wakida

Secret Harvests: Separation, Silence, Shame, and Resilience of a Family Farm

A family separated by racism against Japanese Americans and the discrimination of people with developmental disabilities—reunited seventy years later, returning to their roots on a farm and bound by family secrets.

ADVANCE PRAISE

Mas Masumoto masterfully weaves dramatic history with domestic tragedy into a coherent, revealing whole. This "secret" merits serious pursuit.

—Lawson Fusao Inada

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Mas Masumoto is an organic farmer, author, and activist. His book *Epitaph for a Peach* won the Julia Child Cookbook award and was a finalist for a James Beard award. His writing has been awarded a Commonwealth Club of California silver medal and the Independent Publisher Books bronze medal. He has been honored by Rodale Institute as an "Organic Pioneer." He has served on the boards of the James Irvine Foundation, Public Policy Institute of California, Cal Humanities, and the National Council on the Arts with nomination by President Obama. He farms with his wife Marcy and two adult children, Nikiko and Koro. They reside in a hundred-year-old farmhouse surrounded by their eighty-acre organic peach, nectarine, apricot, and raisin farm outside of Fresno, California.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Linoleum block and letterpress artist **Patricia Miye Wakida** grew up in Fresno, California. In addition to maintaining her own linoleum block and letterpress studio under the wasabi press imprint, she frequently writes about Japanese American history and culture. She is a Yonsei (fourth-generation Japanese American), whose parents were incarcerated as children in the Jerome (Arkansas) and Gila River (Arizona) World War II Japanese American concentration camps. She lives in Oakland, California with her husband and son, cats, and chickens. Her website: www.wasabipress.com

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MORE PRAISE FOR *SECRET HARVESTS*

“Mas is truly a poet–farmer—he writes stories like he tends to his peaches, each memory cared for and brought to life in such beautiful, thoughtful detail. This book is an immigrant story both very personal to Mas and resonant with so many others around the world, inspiring and heartbreaking, a story of family, history, memory, and lifetimes of resilience.”

—**José Andrés**, chef–activist and founder of World Central Kitchen

“Secrets carry the heavy weight of shame but they are also waiting to be liberated. *Secret Harvests* by David “Mas” Masumoto sheds light on an important chapter in Japanese American disability history by unearthing his intergenerational family story. Society can try to bury the ugliness of certain truths but they have a way of reaching toward the light.”

—**Alice Wong**, disability rights activist, writer and founder of Disability Visibility Project

“Exquisite and haunting. Masumoto investigates the life of a long-lost aunt and, in the process, unearths a painful chapter from his own family’s history. ‘Secret Harvests’ is a deeply affecting meditation on loss and resilience and what we owe to those we have forgotten. A heartbreaking memoir, written with clarity and grace, about how even the ‘least’ of us leaves behind an indelible mark on the world.”

—**Julie Otsuka**, writer and author of *The Buddha in the Attic*

FROM *SECRET HARVESTS*

from Preface:

I farm with ghosts. They live in our fields. Each peach tree has pruning scars from the generations who worked these orchards. Every vine has been shaped by the hands of workers who returned each year to add their touch to the sculpture. People and their families have etched their marks on my farm, and I, too, hope to leave behind a simple signature on this seemingly ordinary landscape.

Ghosts inhabit our family history; their collective voices contribute to a perspective that shaped my upbringing. They pass on lessons I struggle to understand, sometimes rejecting, other times surrendering to their value, but never ignoring them because they haunt my memories: a worn shovel, a bent peach limb, the twisted trunk of an old grapevine, a family photo, a Buddhist altar—all trigger a rush of stories that can overwhelm.

One of the ghosts who inhabit our farm is Shizuko, an aunt with an intellectual disability whom we only recently reconnected with when, seventy years ago, she was separated from the family during the World War II internment of Japanese Americans. Like a grapevine’s wandering canes and tendrils that twist and curl, searching for attachment and support yet reaching for sunlight to strengthen and extend their growth, her story unfolds as an evolving tale buried in the history of immigrants, the saga of racism and discrimination, the deplorable treatment of people with disabilities, and the shroud of family hidden stories, all the while working the earth and trying to plant and extend our roots in American soil.

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