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Dear Mr. Jefferson: Letters from a Nantucket Gardener

Laura Simon

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Dear Mr. Jefferson: Letters from a Nantucket Gardener Laura Simon
Laura Simon's garden in Nantucket is extraordinary in its beauty and its abundance. In her first work of nonfiction, she imagines a correspondence with Thomas Jefferson, another gardener extraordinaire.The result is an epistolary adventure with life lessons, history, and personalities amongst the blooms.

Ms. Simon, looking for a way to express the gardening thrall she'd found herself in, wanted to talk shop, to discuss soil tilth and tillage, to compare varieties of carrots, and to analyze the relative merits of manure. One evening, while the author was sitting by her wood stove, feet buried beneath her dog and a stack of seed catalogs by her side, she wondered, "Why isn't there a 'Thomas Jefferson' around I can talk to?" After all, continued her musing, popular history has it that it was Thomas Jefferson who, at the dawn of our republic, convinced his countrymen that tomatoes weren't poisonous. So began the imagined conversations with Thomas Jefferson. Ms. Simon, whose previous books were historical romances, now finds inspiration from her peppers and peas. Dear Mr. Jefferson is a passionate, sometimes whimsical, always fascinating narrative, construed as letters to Thomas Jefferson. In these letters she tells him of the trials and tribulations of growing vegetables and flowers while relaying Jefferson's own gardening stories and passions as if she were having a dialogue with him. The book's charm and humor is heightened with personal anecdotes borne out of the author's attempt to explain the conundrums and advances of modernity to the eighteenth-century renaissance man. Simon weaves personal anecdote with anecdotal history creating an engaging narrative that titillates, educates, and entertains.

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