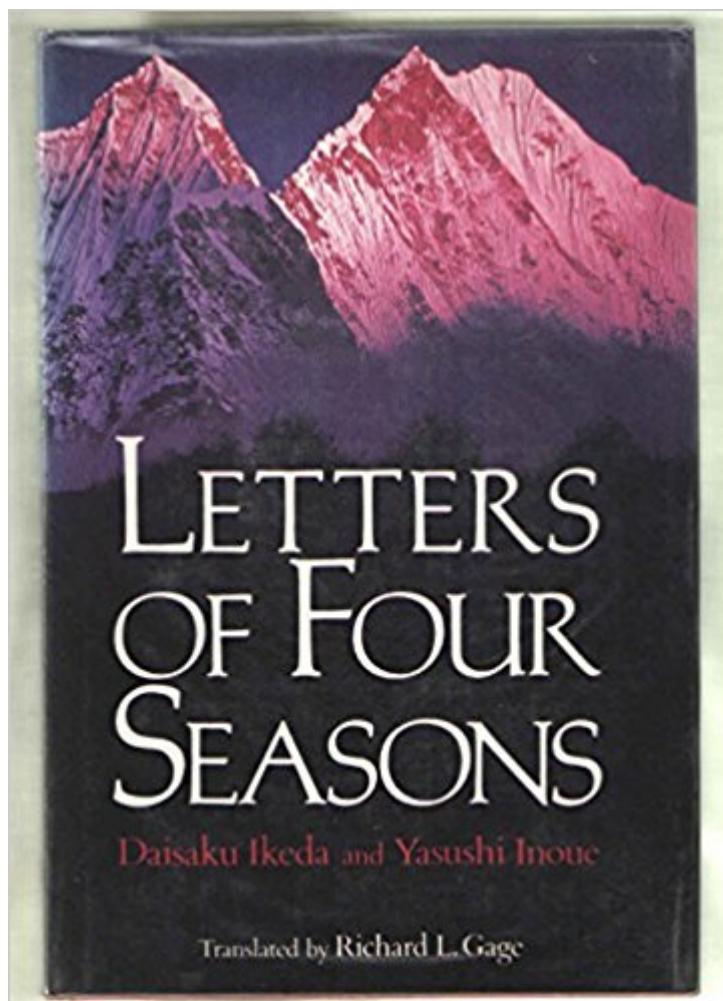


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Letters Of Four Seasons



Synopsis

Book by Yasushi Inoue, Daisaku Ikeda, Richard L. Gage

Book Information

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In this exchange of letters over one year beginning April 1975, the authors tell of their travels and work, of close friends, of writers, artists and public figures they have known, of seasons and places, impressions and reflections. Both authors are people with wide-ranging experience. Daisaku Ikeda has visited China a number of times, contributing much to the restoration of friendly relations between China and Japan. Yasushi Inoue, a former newspaper reporter, is an award-winning author of historical short stories and novels, many of them set in China, a country he has visited several times. As they reach out to each other through correspondence they reveal not only much of themselves but of Japanese society as well. In a foreword, Burton Watson, an authority on East Asian languages and cultures, writes, ". . . whatever range of topics may be touched on within it, the real subject of a letter is in the end the writer himself. And we who read the letter do so not so much because we care about what it says as because we care about the person who wrote it. . . . These, in sum, are thoughtful and gracefully phrased letters exchanged by men of creative spirit who are leaders in their respective fields of endeavor." In his first letter, Inoue writes, "Sitting in my study, where I enjoy the cool breezes of May, I have spent a refreshing hour reading your letter, learning about your health and sharing some of your impressions of your trip to China. I read in the

newspaper of your meeting in Beijing with Prince Sihanouk. I was impressed, but not surprised, to learn that you are the first Japanese citizen to meet him after the liberation of Phnom Penh. I feel certain that, standing at this historic crossroads, at the conclusion of the long internal war that has torn his nation asunder, this bold Cambodian leader found the thoughts of a freethinker like yourself, who values individual human contacts, most trustworthy and appealing."In a response, Ikeda expresses his awe over Inoue's description of burial mounds of the Han dynasty emperor Wu and his general Huo Qubing, remarking that although he has not yet had the fortune of visiting Xi'an, Inoue's writing provided him a vivid imagery. He goes on, "Tacitly historical ruins inspire a deep sense of significance. Your perspicacious eye for history has brought new life to the drama of affection between the emperor and his warrior. Throughout life, we have many opportunities to meet many different persons, but the friends who stay by our sides in the darkest, as well as the brightest, hours are most valuable. I can fully believe in what you describe as the strong love the elderly emperor felt for the young general who, after serving him well, died an untimely death. Your personal comments on the loss of your dear friend inspired profound sympathy in me."In an earlier letter you remarked on a fondness for the month of May. I share your fondness, and for some reason, many of my trips to Europe take place at that time of the year. This year, too, I enjoyed the fresh budding May greenery in Paris, London and Moscow. . ."Like all good letters, these focus on life itself: life and death, health and sickness, aging contrasted with the vitality of youth, teaching and learning, the past, the present and the future--all seen through the eyes of these two perceptive writers and individuals of action.

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