



Drowned by Corn (Kindle Single)

Erika Hayasaki

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One morning in 2010, four teenage boys in a small Illinois town went to work in a grain bin—one of those towering silver cylinders that contain corn and dominate the midwestern landscape. But something went terribly wrong. By day's end, some would be alive. Others would not. A close-knit community would be devastated, forced to endure. This gripping true story centers on what happened to one courageous and flawed young man who survived, and how his life quickly spiraled out of control in the next two years. It is a story about love, unbreakable friendship, and "king" corn. "There are some forty-five thousand items in the average American supermarket and more than a quarter of them now contain corn," writes Michael Pollan in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. But as international dependence on the highly subsidized crop for cattle feed, corn syrup and ethanol has surged—so have deaths by corn.

Based on three years of reporting and interviews with the people involved and thousands of pages of court documents, transcripts, police reports, journalist Erika Hayasaki brings to life (in narrative nonfiction-style) this world of people who risk and sometimes lose their lives for this powerful commodity. Hayasaki, a former national correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, is the author of *The Death Class: A True Story About Life* (Simon & Schuster 2014), as well as the Kindle Single, *Dead or Alive* (2012). She is an assistant professor in the Literary Journalism Program at the University of California, Irvine, and a regular contributor to Newsweek and The Atlantic.

*Cover design by Kristen Radtke

Praise for DROWNED BY CORN:

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE: "The descriptions of the accident are chilling: a blow-by-blow account of the grain pulling the young men under and the dramatic rescue of Will, who survived after being buried past his chest. The piece follows Will as his grief sends him into a downward spiral. "Drowned by Corn" is a gripping narrative of tenderness and horror, friendship and loss." — Megan Kirby

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE: "Erika Hayasaki's suspenseful account of the deaths of Paco and Wyatt and the harrowing rescue of Will is the stuff of nightmares. But what elevates this fine work of investigative journalism is her portrayal of Will in the aftermath: his survival guilt, his struggle with alcohol and drugs, his strained relationships and his eventual discovery of a way to endure his and his town's unspeakable losses." — Porter Shreve

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