



Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti

By Laura Rose Wagner

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"Laura Wagner has managed to get a huge amount of Haiti into the pages of this book: the sun, the rain, the bottomless spiral of catastrophe, rage, despair and indomitable hope." —Madison Smartt Bell, author of *All Souls' Rising: A Novel of Haiti*

"In Haiti they say 'Kreyòl pale, Kreyòl konprann.' Speak plainly and honestly, and be understood. Laura Wagner does just that in this brave, beautiful book, bringing us the complex life of Magdalie, and a glimpse of a people's soul." —Jonathan M. Katz, author of *The Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster*

"Haiti, already one of the poorest countries in the world, was devastated by the earthquake in 2010. This is a story of everything that comes after: from a candid depiction of the international response to a young girl's account of what a life of desperation can do to an individual and to a society. Magdalie's journey shows the importance of connections, of family and friends, during difficult times and the anguish that comes when those bonds are broken. In her debut novel, Laura Rose Wagner has managed to capture the devastation of loss while providing determined hope for the individual and the nation. An important read for anyone who wishes to better understand the reality of life in Haiti after the earthquake." —Ophelia Dahl, executive director of Partners in Health

Hold Tight, Don't Let Go follows the vivid story of two teenage cousins, raised as sisters, who survive the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti. After losing the woman who raised them in the tragedy, Magdalie and Nadine must fend for themselves in the aftermath of the quake. The girls are inseparable, making the best of their new circumstances in a refugee camp with an affectionate, lively camaraderie, until Nadine, whose father lives in Miami, sends for her but not Magdalie. As she leaves, Nadine makes a promise she cannot keep: to bring Magdalie to Miami, too. Resourceful Magdalie focuses her efforts on a reunion with Nadine until she realizes her life is in Haiti, and that she must embrace its possibilities for love, friendship, and a future.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 9 Up—When a natural disaster strikes, what happens after the telethons, after the donations, and after the media attention has disappeared? This powerful debut novel follows Magdalie in the two years following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti as she grieves for her manman, adapts to life in the tent camps, and tries to find a place and a community that feels like home. Magdalie seeks to live a normal life in an impermanent society where "my memories are out to get me." People she loves appear and disappear, her home is made of plywood and plastic tarps, she ducks for cover at the slightest sound, and she has no hope of returning to school. She faces the tenuous circumstances with her beloved cousin Nadine, but then must brave them alone after Nadine is granted a U.S. visa. Wagner creates a portrait of post-earthquake Haiti that is a study of contrasts—hopeful and bleak, warm and lonely. Magdalie searches for connections and solutions, but is also afraid of loving anybody when they might disappear at any moment. There have been literary works that highlight the devastation of the earthquake, but *Hold Tight Don't Let Go* is unique in that it highlights the two years after—what international aid really looks like, how temporary situations become permanent, and the how profound losses affect those who are left. Wagner also effectively highlights the nuances of urban poverty and rural poverty. The book ends with a sweet, optimistic epilogue that provides happy endings, but detracts from the power of the novel. Wagner provides a helpful glossary and brief history of Haiti. A worthy companion to author Nick Lake's *In Darkness* (Bloomsbury, 2012).—Susannah Goldstein, Convent of the Sacred Heart, New York City

Review

STARRED REVIEW

"An insightful disaster-survival story with far-reaching emotional resonance."
(*Kirkus Reviews* 2014-10-15)

STARRED REVIEW

"Wagner's portrait of Haitian culture is particularly compelling, and her descriptions of the settings of the city and Tonton Élie's country hometown are lush, despite the nation's dire circumstances."
(*Publishers Weekly* 2014-11-10)

"[R]eaders will be buoyed by the hopeful future the author imagines for Magdalie and for Haiti."
(Amina Chaudhri *Booklist* 2014-11-15)

"There have been literary works that highlight the devastation of the earthquake, but *Hold Tight Don't Let Go* is unique in that it highlights the two years after—what international aid really looks like, how temporary situations become permanent, and the how profound losses affect those who are left."
(Susannah Goldstein, Convent of the Sacred Heart, New York City *School Library Journal* 2014-12-01)

"Wagner paints a convincing picture of post-earthquake survival...Treatment of Haitian cultural traditions is fascinating and respectful."
(*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*)

About the Author

Laura Rose Wagner has a PhD in anthropology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She lived

in Port-au-Prince from 2009 to 2012, and survived the earthquake. She travels to Haiti often, and founded a creative writing group for young people there.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Irma Patterson:

Book is to be different per grade. Book for children until finally adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important for people. The book Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti was making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The publication Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti is not only giving you more new information but also to get your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your guide. Try to make relationship with the book Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti. You never experience lose out for everything when you read some books.

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Teresa Sullivan:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always make an effort to and must have the spare time or they will get wide range of stress from both daily life and work. So , whenever we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we request again, what kind of activity do you have when the spare time coming to a person of course your answer can unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is usually Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti.

Louella Rape:

Reading can called head hangout, why? Because when you are reading a book specially book entitled Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti your brain will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every aspect that maybe unknown for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a reserve then become one form conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get prior to. The Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel of Haiti giving you a different experience more than blown away your head but also giving you useful information for your better life in this particular era. So now let us demonstrate the

relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished examining it, like winning an activity. Do you want to try this extraordinary spending spare time activity?

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