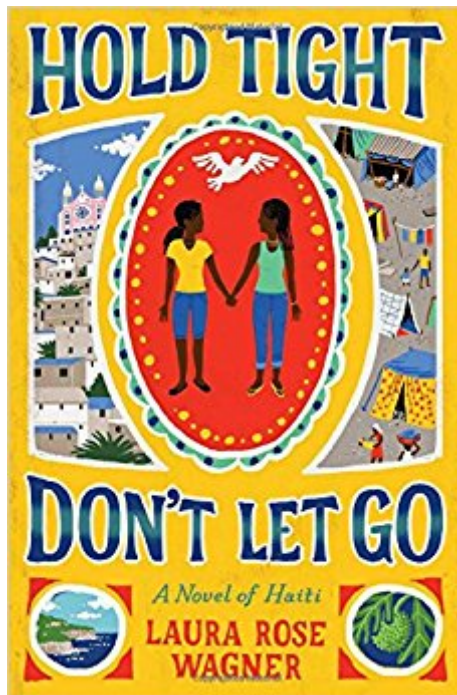




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# Hold Tight, Don't Let Go: A Novel Of Haiti



## Synopsis

"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." â "Madison Smartt Bell, author of *All Souls' Rising: A Novel of Haiti* "In Haiti they say 'Krey' I pale, Krey' I 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." â "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." â "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.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 272 pages

Publisher: Harry N. Abrams (January 6, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1419712047

ISBN-13: 978-1419712043

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #814,741 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #83 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Homelessness & Poverty #664 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Siblings #997 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Death & Dying

## Customer Reviews

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

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'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 afterâ "what international aid really looks like, how temporary situations become permanent, and the how profound losses affect those who are left.â • (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)

Having worked in Haiti for over 30 years I can say this book gives the best understanding of the day to day struggle of life in Haiti, of any book I have read. It is beautifully written. I cried, I laughed, and learned even after 30 years. For a 1st book Ms Wagner, you hit a bases loaded home run! Excellent, excellent, excellent!!

Experienced the earthquake and read the book on a mission trip in Haiti. It was interesting to read the story of one in the worst of it.

Very intense beginning and the description in the days following the quake riveting. A must read about a harrowing time.

A wonderful look into life in Haiti.

Good book. Good condition

Love

Hold Tight, Don't Let Go is a fictional story based on the earthquake that occurred in Haiti in 2010. Magdalie, our main character, resides with her aunt and her cousin, Nadine, whom she has lived with majority of her life. At the start of the story, the earthquake hits and Magdalie's aunt is instantly killed. (This is not a spoiler, it literally occurs in the first two pages.)Magdalie not only has to deal with the death of her aunt, who raised her as a daughter, but now Nadine's father has sent a visa and wants her to come and reside with him in Miami.Laura Wagner did a great job with this story. She used Magdalie to show readers the aftermath of the earthquake and how the people of Haiti, especially those affected by the event, attempted to put their lives back in order. As many know, this catastrophe destroyed many homes, many lives were lost and many were left desperately searching for food and means of ridding themselves of the illnesses that were claiming lives quickly, due to the

sanitary conditions. Wagner was very colorful with descriptions: the dialect of the characters, their emotions, and the scenery- were all captured very well and instantly will draw the reader in. What many may not know is that Wagner was working in Haiti on her PhD when the earthquake occurred and she sustained severe injuries. I am positive, her experience helped to bring life to the characters in this story. Many themes are covered such as: separation anxiety, depression, and even rehabilitation and survival. It is pretty emotional at the beginning, but will definitely be one of those stories that when you finish, it will continue to pull at your heart. After reading this story, I felt like I was boarding a flight and leaving behind the inhabitants I had come to know and like. I gave this book 4 stars, and I only deducted one star because there was a part in the story that became confusing because of the use of nicknames for the characters that were not introduced earlier on. Apart from that, the story line is easy to follow and there is growth for some of the characters. If you liked *American Street* by Ibi Zoboi, then you will like this book. I highly recommend it.

*HOLD TIGHT, DON'T LET GO* by Laura Rose Wagner is an unforgettable young adult novel set in Port-au-Prince Haiti during and after the devastating 2010 earthquake. The story begins with a chilling description of the Haiti earthquake through the eyes of a fifteen-year-old girl named Magdalie. As she searches through the rubble of her home, the stark aftermath of her collapsed world soon becomes clear. The chapters are named with months and years beginning with the earthquake on January 12, 2010 through 2011. The story concludes in January 2020, ten years after the disaster. Wagner does a masterful job describing life for Magdalie including her frustration, resourcefulness, and hope. The author was working on an ethnographic study when she experienced the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Her experiences led to this compelling and realistic portrayal of Haitian culture. While Magdalie's experience with a vodou priestess and the funeral of her Manman may seem alien to readers, teens will empathize with her frustrations about lack of cell phone access and feelings of jealousy when her cousin leaves for America. This beautifully written coming-of-age work of historical fiction would serve as an excellent focal point for a discussion of the human-impact of natural disasters. Consider building a literature circle containing books related to other recent disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. For background information, go to Encyclopedia Britannica at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1659695/Haiti-earthquake-of-2010>. Wikipedia also has an excellent article about the 2010 Haiti earthquake that provides background information for readers. Go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010\\_Haiti\\_earthquake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Haiti_earthquake). Time Magazine also has an excellent series of articles. Go to

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