

Book review: *Hold Tight Don't Let Go* by Laura Rose Wagner
By Myala Callender

In the novel Hold Tight Don't Let Go by Laura Rose Wagner, the author tells the story of Magdalie, a 15-year-old girl, growing up in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, during the 2010 earthquake. With a rich, poignant, and powerful coming-of-age story, Magdalie's experience of loss, family, hope and love, is something the reader will never forget.

Right from the start, Magdalie's life changes drastically. One day she's an ordinary girl, living with her *manman* (mom) and sister Nadine, the next, her home, her mother and hopes for her future disappear. However, she stays strong through her brand-new, harder life in the camp, with her sister. When suddenly the two are separated, Magdalie is put at a crossroads. After struggling to find herself, open up and trust again, feeling forgotten and alone, she must decide to see her sister again, or make a life for herself in Haiti. After many twists and turns, she learns important life lesson preparing her for the future.

Laura Rose Wagner did a great job on developing strong characters, and strong relationships, each effecting Magdalie in different ways. For example, Nadine and Magdalie. All this time Magdalie hasn't forgotten about her, as she dreams of all the things they would do when they are together again, assured the strong bonds of their friendship couldn't be thinned by distance. But when Nadine stops calling, slowly drifting away, Magdalie is "suddenly severed from Nadine's voice, I feel confused and unmoored, like a forgotten fishing boat bobbing in the tide." (page 201) I especially liked this quote because it developed the idea that no matter what Magdalie thought, distance can change a relationship, but it can't change love, and although they feel

a million miles away, forgotten, the love in their hearts cannot be questioned.

I couldn't find a single weakness in this book, it had a great plot, rich details, and a meaning deeper than the story.

So many people love this book because you get to learn about a country through one girl's perspective. By reading this book you'll be swept away, by every twist and every turn, and with Magdalie, learn a life lesson. I think that through this story the author is trying to communicate the message that in life you will always want something you don't have, but maybe if you stick around long enough, you will notice all you have around you, and that whoever or whatever you desire has always been with you after all.

Review: Red Glass by Laura Resau

By Felix Prasanna

The novel *Red Glass* by Laura Resau provides deep insight into the lives of Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants and citizens. It is a very profound book that will touch you.

Red Glass is realistic fiction set in Tuscon, Arizona. Later in the book the setting moves to Mexico and Guatemala. The story is mainly about the Mexican immigrant situation but also about the main character, Sophie. Sophie is at first an omniphobic teenager who is obsessed with pouring lime juice on her food to disinfect it. But slowly, she starts changing.

In *Red Glass* Laura Resau creates a story in which a Mexican family is trying to cross the border. Only five year old Pablo survives. He is taken in by Sophie and her family. Sophie loves him but she and her family feel that they have to take him to his family so he can make the decision to live with Sophie's family or with his own family. So Dika, Sophie's great-aunt, Dika's boyfriend, his son, Sophie, and Pablo set out to Mexico to let Pablo reunite with his family.

One reason to read this book is the characters. The author slowly develops personalities of the characters-- as she changes them at the same time. The characters don't have "set" personalities, so the author does not use actions to develop her characters as much as usual. But when she really wants to highlight a lasting or strong trait, she does an excellent job of it, using actions. For example, one thing Sophie does during the book is that she starts coming out to the world and accomplishes a lot more than before, running away, she even jumps into a river to recover some jewels. It is very elegant how the author changes Sophie from the mother of all scaredy cats to a daring young woman.

One of the themes of the book that the author really portrayed is love, how love brings both sorrow and happiness. The whole book you could say is based around the theme of love. Sophie brings Pablo to Mexico on a risky journey because she loves him, and she wants the best for him, even if it will affect her in a negative or bad way. The author slowly develops the relationships

between the main characters, Sophie, Ángel, Dika, Lorenzo, Pablo, so that they also show part of their character through how they express love for each other.

This book will appeal greatly to anyone who likes realistic fiction or is following the humanitarian crisis currently happening with global migration. It provides great insight on the immigrant situation. Make sure to check it out at your nearest library!

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No Place by Todd Strasser

Todd Strasser's *No Place* is a realistic fiction novel with a hint of mystery. Some of Todd Strasser's more popular books are, *The Wave*, *Give a Boy a Gun*, *Boot Camp* and *Wish You Were Dead*. This story is about modern day homelessness and can show readers the truth about the homeless. The main character, Dan, lives in "Dignityville," a tent city to shelter those in need. Dan was known as the popular kid at school but now that he is labeled as the homeless kid, Dan gets judged and pitied by his classmates.

I loved how I could relate to the text and how the author made it easy to understand Dan's feelings even though I'm not in his situation. Not only does the novel have its intriguing chapters that always end on cliffhangers, making it impossible to let go of the pages, but it also lets you be the character and have a chance to be in that position. For example, Dan thinks, "There's a deep sinking, regretful sensation you get when the bases are loaded and you give up a grand slam. I'd thought that feeling was limited to

baseball.”(p.104) Not physically of course, but in my head I was right there with Dan.

Although I enjoyed the book, I found that at times the story was becoming more of an informational text than a novel that you fall in love with and reread. As I was waiting for a bright and positive moment, I also noticed that it was becoming sort of negative as the story went along, the situation kept getting worse. For example, Dan thinks, “No. I am so far from okay that I’m not even sure what the word means anymore.” (p.223) I feel that Dan needs to understand that when things go so wrong it feels like they will never get back to normal, you can still be happy and you can’t spend your life waiting for things to change. If I were to recommend this book to someone it would probably be somebody mature. Poverty is a big topic that some younger people may not understand. In conclusion, I thought that *No Place* is relatable, yet at times could have been improved, but overall an outstanding book by Todd Strasser.