

People Magazine

February 25, 2013 Vol. 79 No. 8

Pick of the Week

Wash

by Margaret Wrinkle

★★★★

REVIEWED BY HELEN ROGAN

NOVEL

A descendant of slaveholders, the Alabama-bred Margaret Wrinkle boldly tackles her heritage in this debut novel, and it's a marvel. By turns grim and lyrical, heart-wrenching and hopeful, *Wash* takes place in early-1800's Tennessee, where settlers and their slaves are inextricably bound in a web of oppression, powerful secrets and small moments of decency. Three people dominate Wrinkle's story: Richardson, a tortured landowner, chafes at the system that supports him even as he farms out his prized slave, Washington, for breeding. Wash is a difficult, inscrutable man who survives humiliation and violence by retreating into the spirituality bequeathed him by his West African mother. And Pallas, a midwife and healer, tries to protect Wash, whom she loves, with ancient remedies. In their different ways, all three sense that change is coming. "This will tilt and fade and crumble in the long run. The only question is just how long is the long run, and can they hang on long enough to make it?" With their voices resonating in your head, you'll wish they could have.