

The Wake of the Wind: A Novel

By J. California Cooper

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A dramatic and thought-provoking novel of one family's triumph in the face of the hardships and challenges of the post-Civil War South.

The Wake of the Wind, J. California Cooper's third novel, is her most penetrating look yet at the challenges that generations of African Americans have had to overcome in order to carve out a home for themselves and their families. Set in Texas in the waning years of the Civil War, the novel tells the dramatic story of a remarkable heroine, Lifee, and her husband, Mor. When Emancipation finally comes to Texas, Mor, Lifee, and the extended family they create from other slaves who are also looking for a home and a future, set out in search of a piece of land they can call their own. In the face of constant threats, they manage not only to survive but to succeed--their crops grow, their children thrive, they educate themselves and others. Lifee and Mor pass their intelligence, determination, and talents along to their children, the next generation to surge forward. At once tragic and triumphant, this is an epic story that captures with extraordinary authenticity the most important struggle of the last hundred years.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Cooper's disappointing third novel (after *Family*) frustrates readers with a good premise poorly executed. Mordecai and Lifee meet as slaves on a plantation in post-Civil War Texas. Forced to marry by their master before they even know each other, they fall in love just as emancipation is declared, and head east with several other newly freed companions to look for a safe place to live. Cooper conveys the mixture of hope, fear and confusion as hungry and footsore former slaves move across the country. Mor and Lifee find work at a ruined plantation in Georgia and begin a family; and in time, the owner secretly sells her property to them. The tightly knit clan of former slaves prospers, but when lynchings in the area become frequent, they are forced to leave. Eventually they settle on an abandoned farm, where they survive economic depression and other troubles. When tragedy ensues, the next generation must assume responsibility for preserving the family. Though Cooper's research about the troubled historical era provides good details, her characters are mainly two-dimensional stereotypes. The blacks are good, with pure hearts; the whites (with one exception) are duplicitous. Moreover, the prose is wooden and preachy, lacking grace or nuance. This earnest saga of freed slaves aspiring to new lives in the Reconstruction South is commendable in intent but pedestrian in execution.

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From [Booklist](#)

Cooper has written her third novel and another wonderfully rich tale. Two good friends in Africa, Kola and Suwaibu, are taken from Africa and brought to America as slaves. The story of their great-great-grandchildren, Mordecai (Mor) and Lifee, reunites these friends' families through marriage. Mor and Lifee's life together is chronicled through their marriage, freedom from slavery, the birth of their children and grandchildren, and their deaths. Cooper has once again written a compelling story, reminiscent of *The Children of Segu* (1989) by Maryse Conde. All her fans will love this book. *Lillian Lewis*

From Kirkus Reviews

A lyrical, century-spanning family saga on the lives of several African-American families. Cooper (*Some Love, Some Pain, Sometime*, 1995, etc.) begins with a recitation of the brief, hard existence of two young men, Kola and Suwaibu, best friends who, in the 1760s, are captured by slavers and transported to America. Both father children "in this new world of pain," sending some essence of themselves "rushing, striving, pulsing on toward some future." A century later, Mordecai (a Suwaibu descendant) and Lifee (a Kola descendant) meet on a Southern plantation in the last days of the Civil War. Lifee, newly arrived, is slated to become the master's mistress. Beautiful and educated, she is driven by a fierce determination to be free. Mordecai, a skilled farmer and deeply humane, shares her desire for freedom. When the war ends, the two set out to look for a place of their own, making an epic trek across the devastated South before finding land. Cooper's narrative comes into its own with her portrait of the turbulent years following the war, as freed slaves filled the South's roads looking for lost family members and new lives. Her depiction of the ways in which Mordecai and Lifee outwit the violent whites they encounter is vivid, detailed, and stirring. Much of the story concerns the pair's almost continual battle to keep their home and secure an education for their children in the face of violent white opposition. Even if, as Lifee observes at the end of her life in 1895, the world is "still as hard on Negroes" as it can be, she and Mordecai and their equally resilient children have nonetheless managed to defy the odds, and the unpredictable "winds of life," to create a place for themselves in the world. A moving story that combines period detail, terse, flavorful language, and a swift plot to create a portrait of a redoubtable family over time. -- Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Evan Hinson:

The reserve with title The Wake of the Wind: A Novel has a lot of information that you can study it. You can get a lot of profit after read this book. That book exist new understanding the information that exist in this reserve represented the condition of the world at this point. That is important to yo7u to learn how the improvement of the world. That book will bring you throughout new era of the the positive effect. You can read the e-book on your own smart phone, so you can read the idea anywhere you want.

Graciela Johnson:

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Karena Figueroa:

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Carolyn Treece:

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