



Wench

A Novel

Dolen Perkins-Valdez

Harper Amistad

Combining the narrative allure of *Cane River* and the moral complexities of *The Known World*, a startling and original debut novel that raises provocative questions of power and freedom, love and dependence, witnessed through the lives of four black slave mistresses in the years before the Civil War

Amistad

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Wench: from Middle English, "wenchel," a girl, maid, young woman; a female child.

Situated in the free state of Ohio, Tawawa House offers respite from life's vicissitudes and the summer's heat. A beautiful, inviting house surrounded by a dozen private cottages, the resort is favored by wealthy Southern white men who vacation there, accompanied only by their slave mistresses.

Regular visitors, Lizzie, Reenie, and Sweet have forged a deep, enduring friendship. They look forward to their annual reunion, and the opportunity it affords them to catch up on changes in their lives and their respective plantations. The subject of freedom is never shared—until the red-maned, spirited Mawu arrives and voices her determination to escape. For these slave mistresses, to run is to leave behind everything they value most—the friends and families trapped at home. For some, it also means tearing the strong emotional and psychological ties that bind them to their masters—bonds they can barely acknowledge yet don't fully grasp.

When a fire on the resort sets off a string of tragedies, Lizzie, Reenie, and Sweet soon learn...

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.Author Website: www.Dolen.Blogspot.com

.Reading Group Guide Available Online at

www.HarperCollins.com/Readers

Author Bio

Dolen Perkins-Valdez's fiction has appeared in the *Robert Olen Butler Prize Stories*, the *Kenyon Review*, and elsewhere. Born and raised in Memphis, a graduate of Harvard, and a former University of California President's Postdoctoral Fellow, she teaches creative writing at the University of Puget Sound