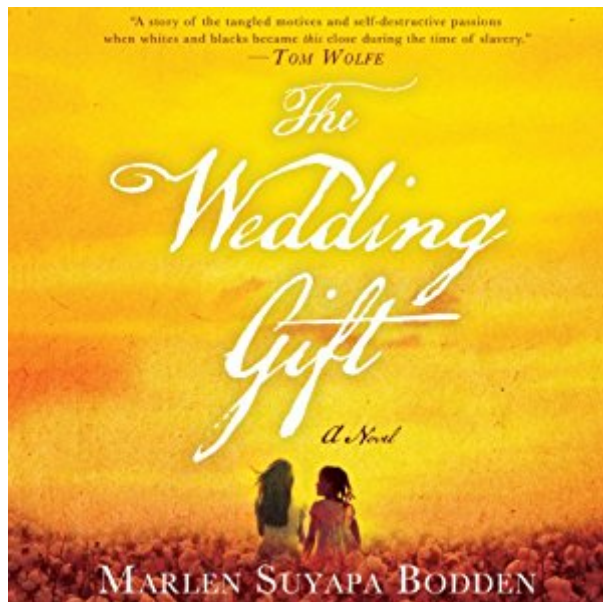


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# The Wedding Gift



## Synopsis

When Cornelius Allen gives his daughter Clarissa's hand in marriage, he presents her with a wedding gift: the young slave she grew up with, Sarah. Sarah is also Allen's daughter and Clarissa's sister, a product of his longtime relationship with his house slave, Emmeline. When Clarissa's husband suspects that their newborn son is illegitimate, Clarissa and Sarah are sent back to her parents, Cornelius and Theodora, in shame, setting in motion a series of events that will destroy this once-powerful family. Told through alternating viewpoints of Sarah and Theodora Allen, Cornelius' wife, *The Wedding Gift* is a stunning novel that shows where the complicated and compelling bonds and relationships between women explored in novels like *The Help* and *The Secret Life of Bees* began. Marlen Suyapa Bodden's novel is an intimate portrait that shows where this particular American story and dynamic all started and will leave listeners breathless. Includes a reading group guide read by the author.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Whispersync for Voice: Ready

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## Customer Reviews

The material in the story was interesting, however, from the beginning the writing struck me as being that of an inexperienced author. The author "tells," but doesn't "show." Description of setting is minimal at best. Character development is so lacking that the reader does not get to understand who the characters are as people and what leads them to make decisions. This makes it difficult to be able to sympathize with any of the characters, and I finished the novel feeling like all of the characters were still strangers to me. Sentences are choppy and short, and the dialogue sounds the

same regardless of who is speaking and their education level, gender, or background. In addition, the plot twists at the end seemed to come out of left field with no foreshadowing and no insight into the character's thought processes as she made those decisions. It felt like the last two pages were an afterthought tacked on to the rest of the story with the main character saying, "Oh, by the way, I did this. Hope I am forgiven." In this section, the protagonist also spoke directly to the reader for the first time in the entire story ("Reader, I ask that you do not judge me harshly...") This direct addressing of the reader also felt unnatural. Overall, the story itself has the components of what could be an engrossing novel if only with better writing and editing. The poor writing got increasingly annoying as I held on to finish the novel. This is the first 99-cent novel I have read on my Kindle, and I really hope the other 99-cent books I have purchased are of better quality. Given the number of 5- and 4-star ratings this book received, I expected it to be much better. Perhaps my expectations were too high for a 99-cent book.

*The Wedding Gift* by Marlen Suyapa Bodden is a poignant portrayal of what it means to be free in America's deep south. It is a tale of two half-sisters, one born from a black slave and the other born from a white southern belle. The two are raised together, yet they each overcome restrictions imposed upon them not only by their circumstances, but also by their color and society's expectations. The author did a wonderful job of drawing parallels between the main characters while demonstrating their differences. Truly, neither of the two women were completely free. The cruelties of slavery were well depicted, and often heart-wrenching to read, especially the forced separation of black families. As the story unfolds the reader will experience the brutality of the times along with the feelings of helplessness and desperation. A wonderful story filled with plenty of emotion. A book that will keep you turning and turning the pages until the incredible ending! Highly recommended.

I picked up this book as a freebie and thought it would be a cheap, and probably not the best written Kindle book; in other words I wasn't expecting much. I was wrong. This is absolutely the best book I've read in a long time. Especially so as the ending is a total surprise. In most books you can figure out where the book is heading but not this one. The ending will surprise you. As to the characters: Most of the female characters are well-rounded and fleshed out. The male characters are less so. You often wonder why Theodora's husband, Cornelius Allen, was violent with women. Usually domestic violence is generational, perhaps not in this case, but an explanation would have helped explain his actions. As to slavery: While this book is a novel, and not a peer reviewed journal article, much can be forgiven. I am sure there are core elements of historical accuracy there could also be

some artistic license. The book describes how a female slave manages to escape to freedom. Her escape is so well written you will be rooting, and secretly hoping, she does make it to safety. Highly recommend. Penmouse

There have been many stories told of Slavery & The South States, and it was with reluctance that I chose this book. However, I'm so glad that I did, as it was interesting story and not too gruesome to read. It was well written and kept me interested all the way through to the end.

I really wanted to like this book. I started reading this book with high anticipation. The beginning of the novel did not disappoint. The author put a lot of work into researching the slavery era and managed to create a very authentic setting. In the beginning, the characters all resonated well. Then the book got very confusing and started developing a lot of inconsistencies. The major problem with this book were the characters and the plot. The author was trying to create multi-dimensional characters. Unfortunately, the effect was to create characters that were highly inconsistent from one scene to another. The most confusing character was one of the antagonists, Mr. Allen. Sometimes he did horrible things. Sometimes he did good things. I had no way of predicting what he would do next and no understanding of why he did the things that he did. I finished the book feeling like the person Mr. Allen was in fact a collection of many different people. The author also had a surprise ending which was inconsistent with the rest of the book and left me with a rather unsettled feeling. Overall, the characters in this book did not make a lot of sense --- I had very little understanding of who they were. In terms of plot, I think the author tried to put in too much. This book had a lot of potential. But unfortunately, there were just too many inconsistencies and too much confusion in the plot.

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