



The Wind Done Gone: A Novel

By Alice Randall

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The Wind Done Gone: A Novel By Alice Randall

In a brilliant rejoinder and an inspired act of literary invention, Alice Randall explodes the world created in Margaret Mitchell's famous 1936 novel, the work that more than any other has defined our image of the antebellum South. Imagine simply that the black characters peopling that world were completely different, not egregious, one-dimensional stereotypes but fully alive, complex human beings. And then imagine, quite plausibly, that at the center of this world moves an illegitimate mulatto woman, and that this woman, Cynara, Cinnamon, or Cindy -- beautiful and brown -- gets to tell her story.

Cindy is born into a world in which she is unacknowledged by her plantation-owning father and passed over by her mother in favor of her white charges. Sold off like so much used furniture, she eventually makes her way back to Atlanta to take up with a prominent white businessman, only to leave him for an aspiring politician of her own color. Moving from the Deep South to the exhilarating freedom of Reconstruction Washington, with its thriving black citizenry of statesmen, professionals, and strivers of every persuasion, Cindy experiences firsthand the promise of the new era at its dizzying peak, just before it begins to slip away.

Alluding to events in Mitchell's novel but ingeniously and ironically transforming them, THE WIND DONE GONE is an exquisitely written, emotionally complex story of a strong, resourceful black woman breaking away from the damaging world of the Old South to emerge into her own, a person capable of not only receiving but giving love, as daughter, lover, and mother. A passionate love story, a wrenching portrait of a tangled mother-daughter relationship, and a book that gives a voice to those history has silenced, THE WIND DONE GONE is an elegant literary achievement of significant political force and a novel whose time has finally come.

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The Wind Done Gone: A Novel By Alice Randall **Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #997779 in Books
- Brand: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
- Published on: 2001-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .56" w x 5.50" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 224 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Think of Margaret Mitchell's epic *Gone with the Wind* condensed and told from the perspectives of Mammy and the Tara slaves, and you have Randall's debut novel. This sometimes cryptic but always fascinating story is narrated by Cynara (also Cinnamon or Cindi), the daughter of a slave and a white plantation owner. As the story unfolds, we learn of Cynara's hatred of the white half-sister she calls Other and the privileges bestowed upon Other yet denied Cynara even though they are raised side by side. Both sisters vie for the attentions of Mammy (Cynara's mother and Other's nanny) as children, and for the love of the same man as adults.

Through the eyes of Cynara and the other now freed slaves, we get unique perspectives of life on a Southern plantation and of the Reconstruction era. Randall, an established country songwriter, uses language and idiom to haunting and poetic effect. Fans of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* will enjoy this well-written historical fiction. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 2/15/01; a trust for Margaret Mitchell's heirs has filed an injunction to stop this book's publication as a violation of copyright. Ed.] Karen Traynor, Sullivan Free Lib., Chittenango, N.

- Karen Traynor, Sullivan Free Lib., Chittenango, NY

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From Booklist

Randall's brilliant first novel tells some of what Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* left untold about the racial underbelly of southern gentility. Cynara is Scarlett O'Hara's half-sister, the child of Captain O'Hara and Mammy, before she made herself sexually unavailable under her enormous weight. Cynara's diary of life as a mulatto at Tara and during Reconstruction reveals jealousy, resentment, hypocrisy, well-guarded family secrets, and personal redemption. She writes of her transformation from resentful slave to independent-minded woman, recalling especially her father's treachery as, unable to bear freeing her, he sells her away from her home to avoid her inevitable fate as bedmate to Scarlett's husband. Yet, through a twist of fate, Cynara ends up in a brothel frequented by Rhett Butler. In Randall's South, slaves aren't childish simpletons but clever manipulators with much more depth and texture of character than Mitchell allowed them in her portrayal of a South without racial brutality and miscegenation. Through Cynara, Randall speaks poignantly for those habitually forgotten or silenced in the history of the Old South. She risks being silenced herself, however, for the trust that owns the copyright for *Gone with the Wind* is suing to block publication of *The Wind Done Gone*, and a trust attorney has accused Randall of "wholesale theft of major characters."

Editor's note: As *Booklist* goes to press, it has been announced that a federal district court in Atlanta has granted an injunction blocking publication of Randall's novel. Houghton Mifflin will appeal the injunction.

Vanessa Bush

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About the Author

Alice Randall was born in Detroit and graduated from Harvard in 1981. After a start as a journalist in Washington, D.C., she moved to Nashville to become a country songwriter. The only African-American woman ever to write a number-one country song, she has had more than twenty songs recorded. She is also a screenwriter and has worked on adaptations of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Parting the Waters*, and *Brer Rabbit*. Alice Randall is the author of *The Wind Done Gone*. She was awarded the Free Spirit Award in 2001 and the Literature Award of Excellence by the Memphis Black Writers Conference in 2002, and she was a finalist for the NAACP Image Award in 2002. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee.

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