



The Enchanted: A Novel

By Rene Denfeld

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A wondrous and redemptive debut novel, set in a stark world where evil and magic coincide, *The Enchanted* combines the empathy and lyricism of Alice Sebold with the dark, imaginative power of Stephen King.

"This is an enchanted place. Others don't see it, but I do." The enchanted place is an ancient stone prison, viewed through the eyes of a death row inmate who finds escape in his books and in re-imagining life around him, weaving a fantastical story of the people he observes and the world he inhabits. Fearful and reclusive, he senses what others cannot. Though bars confine him every minute of every day, he marries visions of golden horses running beneath the prison, heat flowing like molten metal from their backs with the devastating violence of prison life.

Two outsiders venture here: a fallen priest and the Lady, an investigator who searches for buried information from prisoners' pasts that can save those soon-to-be-executed. Digging into the background of a killer named York, she uncovers wrenching truths that challenge familiar notions of victim and criminal, innocence and guilt, honesty and corruption—ultimately revealing shocking secrets of her own.

Beautiful and transcendent, *The Enchanted* reminds us of how our humanity connects us all, and how beauty and love exist even amidst the most nightmarish reality.

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The Enchanted: A Novel By Rene Denfeld Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of the Month, March 2014: Journalist Rene Denfeld channels her experience as a death penalty case investigator into a gut-wrenching, spellbinding debut novel. *The Enchanted* goes deep inside a decaying prison where we meet York, a death row inmate who is on the verge of execution, and "The Lady," an investigator who (against York's wishes) delves into his history in an attempt to have his sentence reduced. What she finds is far from pretty, revealing parallels to her own awful past. There are others, none without tragedy. But their morbid, often unrepentantly violent stories are balanced with moments of emotional escape--poetic beauty from outside the prison and strange explanations from within. These magical aspects, or "enchanted things," are the sensational imaginings of an unhinged, unnamed inmate--York's prison neighbor and our narrator. His is a unique perspective--one that is at once irrational and insightful, driving the plot and providing context and description beyond the walls of the prison and beyond the realms of reality. The result is captivating and perplexing. Given such dark subjects, "enjoying" *The Enchanted* may feel uncomfortable, but there's no crime in embracing Denfeld's ability to evoke empathy for seemingly undeserving characters and inspire wonder within an unlikely place. --Robin A. Rothman

From [Booklist](#)

In her evocative first novel, Denfeld, a boxer and author of the hard-hitting nonfiction book, *All God's Children: Inside the Dark and Violent World of America's Street Families* (2007), seeks to revolutionize our perception of convicts. One of three nameless narrators, a man on death row, states that prison is a place of enchantment. He convincingly describes the mythic beauty of his dank dungeon before introducing the other two mysterious speakers, the jail's fallen priest and a woman hired to exonerate the condemned men. Referred to only as "the lady," she serves as the plot's catalyst. She is enlisted to spare an inmate named York, who was doomed to misery long before he became a criminal. Denfeld's humanizing of the potential for horror that is within all of us and her insistence that the reader see the beauty in the darkest corners of life sizzles through her sharp prose, which both makes us flinch and invites us to imagine. Those familiar with the world of corrections will especially appreciate Denfeld's nuanced portrait of prison life. --Amber Peckham

Review

"A striking one-of-a-kind prison novel. . . . [with] rich, haunting prose . . . A stunning first novel from an already accomplished writer." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"[An] impressive debut. . . . Read this magical book, and prepare to be spellbound." (*Library Journal* (starred review))

"Rene Denfeld is a genius. In *The Enchanted*, she has imagined one of the grimmest settings in the world—a dank and filthy death row in a corrupt prison—and given us one of the most beautiful, heart-rending, and riveting novels I have ever read." (Donald Ray Pollock, author of *The Devil All The Time*)

"*The Enchanted* wrapped its beautiful and terrible fingers around me from the first page and refused to let go after the last. A wondrous book that finds transcendence in the most unlikely of places . . . So dark yet so exquisite." (Erin Morgenstern, author of *The Night Circus*)

“*The Enchanted* is unlike anything I’ve ever read. . . . Contagious and seductive. The reader comes to see through Denfeld’s strange lens, and to savor the richness of the view long after the final page has turned.” (Katherine Dunn, author of *Geek Love*)

“Evocative. . . . Denfeld’s humanizing of the potential for horror that is within all of us and her insistence that the reader see the beauty in the darkest corners of life sizzles through her sharp prose, which both makes us flinch and invites us to imagine.” (*Booklist*)

“*The Enchanted* explores the complexities of many crucial issues, including how we treat our children and the vulnerable and the consequences of our actions. It also makes us ask whether our personal behavior, social policies, and the justice system perpetuate more pain than otherwise for humanity.” (*New York Journal of Books*)

“If you enjoy mystery and suspense as well as a bit of magic and horror you will find it all here. The story is enthralling and keeps you reading far into the night.” (*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*)

“*The Enchanted* is instead a testament to the power of words, of language and symbols to reshape one’s reality, and it is an extraordinarily empathetic look at the sorrows and joys of even the worst aspects of human life.” (*The Oregonian*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Richard Poston:

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Clarence Nelson:

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Floyd Eichner:

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