



Inside These Walls

Rebecca Coleman

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There is only one day, and I live it over and over...

For Clara Mattingly, routine is the key to enduring the endless weeks, months and years of a life sentence in a women's prison. The convicted murderer never looks back at who she once was--a shy young art student whose life took a sudden tragic turn. And she allows herself no hope for a better future. Survival is a day-to-day game. But when a surprise visitor shows up one day, Clara finds that in an instant everything has changed. Now she must account for the life she has led--its beauty as well as its brutality--and face the truth behind the terrible secret she has kept to herself all these years.

Critically acclaimed author Rebecca Coleman brings you the haunting story of a woman's deepest passions, darkest regrets and her unforgettable and emotional journey toward redemption.

Inside These Walls Details

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Author : Rebecca Coleman

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From Reader Review Inside These Walls for online ebook

Kathy says

A recommended read.

Rebecca Coleman's latest release, *Inside These Walls*, is an incredibly compelling and fascinating character driven novel. Narrated in first person by protagonist Clara Mattingly, this insightful story is a candid portrayal of a life gone tragically wrong.

When *Inside These Walls* first opens, Clara has served 25 years of a life sentence for murder. Although a movie has been made about the crimes and despite numerous media requests, she has never granted a single interview. An unexpected visitor is the impetus behind her decision to cooperate with Karen Shepard, the journalist who is writing a memoir about Clara's long ago boyfriend and partner in crime Ricky Rowan. Clara's past is slowly exposed through her letters to Karen and her own unflinchingly honest reflections. She takes full responsibility for her past mistakes but some truths are revealed a little too late and a relationship Clara has grown to cherish is threatened.

Clara is a reliable narrator and genuinely likable character. Her time in prison has not been easy but she has carved out a comfortable routine for herself. Clara does not dwell on the past nor does she examine long ago memories that are best forgotten. But once she has no choice but to recall her painful past, she does so with surprising candor. Clara remembers Ricky with fondness and despite how badly her life with him ended, she has no regrets about their relationship.

Completely captivating from beginning to end, *Inside These Walls* is a beautifully written story of love, forgiveness and ultimately, redemption. **Rebecca Coleman** broaches difficult topics with sensitivity and the resulting story is realistic, gritty and occasionally, heartbreaking. The novel's ending is low-key and rather anticlimactic yet intensely satisfying.

Michele Whitecotton says

I was surprised at how much I actually liked this book, I thought it was excellent. It really shows you how you shouldn't judge a person based on their worst deed. I enjoyed Clara as a character, she was very well written. She was living a life sentence in prison and this book did a great job showing the rest of us what that would be like. She knew what she did and didn't make excuses and once we got into the meat of the story, it felt almost justified. Without giving anything away, I thought it had a great ending as well. I highly recommend this one.

Faustine says

This book captivated and moved me from the first to the last page !

Rebecca Coleman has a real talent for writing. The several subjects of this novel are all very touchy and she showed lots of sensitivity and accuracy in her writing.

Rebecca Coleman unfolded the story with lots of patience, which keeps the suspense while allowing to know better the character of Clara. I liked the character of Clara from the beginning. Her past and her character are

really consistent, I think Rebecca Coleman really nailed it.
And I couldn't think of better end.
So yes, this book really worth 5 stars.

Yuska Vonita says

I've always been fascinated with prison stories. So, I'm not surprised that I like this book.

Clara is serving a life sentence for doing something terrible in the past. In her cell, she's alone, cutting herself off from other inmates, and depressed.

I learned about Clara's past. How she committed a crime and somehow, I think that she's just naive.

This book is haunting, beautiful, and heartbreaking at the same time. I enjoy every sentence Ms Coleman wrote through Clara. Captivating from the first page to the end.

Aussie bookworm says

Prison Dramas have always been interesting to me, to be locked up without the chance to be released, To receive insight on what when so wrong in these peoples lives to have ended up in prison in the first place, so when I saw this book it immediately ended up on my TBR list.

Clara is currently serving a life sentence for a stupid mistake in her younger years, Through this story we meet Clara who has cut herself off from most inmates to keep her head down and do her time. You get the feeling that Clara is depressed she never has any visitors and she just spends her time looking after her cellmate who was blinded in a fight and working on translating text books and art into braille.

We don't find out straight away what the mistake was that Clara made that landed her a life sentence but learn in dribs and drabs as Clara goes public for the first time on what happened that day her life turned to hell, This style is usually painful for me to read because I can't stand waiting, I am not very patient, but the way Ms Coleman has the story line skipping between the story of what happened and the story line in the present was done well with lots of action between both story lines to keep you interested.

Clara's story is of a naive young adult in love for the first time, who blindly followed what her boyfriend and his friends wanted her to do, you really feel sorry for her until you remember she murdered someone in cold blood.

This book was compelling and heartbreaking at times, I have given it a rating of three hearts because I found that although the story line was focused on the murders of a family which she was wrongly accused of, we do find out that she is responsible for at least one murder, which I found was treated like an add on that we shouldn't pay too much attention to because we are supposed to feel sorry for Clara. Even though we do find out near the end of the book why she did it I still would have liked her to take some more responsibility for it.

Overall a good read for something different, Inside these walls gives a great insight to the life of female prisoners, I recommend it for anyone who is a fan of Orange is the new black.

Kim says

This book started kind of slow.... But I liked the second half better.

Carol - Reading Writing and Riesling says

4 1 /2 stars

My View:

This is a beautiful, poignant and haunting story.

I loved every minute of this narrative; the writing is clear, clean, understated and elegant. The protagonist's voice has a particular sense of calm and peace that I found mesmerising and very, very moving. The story itself is powerful and very sad and very relevant to the social issues and Royal Commissions that countries like Australia are trying to deal with today; this one story speaks so well for the victims of so many kinds of abuse and the voices of the characters in this book ring true and clear, they do not whine, or brashly shout out pleas for attention but quietly inform and allow the reader to peek into the lives of others less fortunate to witness the injustices themselves.

There are so many levels to this very quietly spoken, moving narrative. There were times when I held back a silent tear for the inhumane treatment served up to so many caught up in the penal system - the point of a custodial sentence is to detain not to dehumanise isn't it? All involved in this system are affected, not just those who are incarcerated. I think this point is made very clearly.

Clara's story is moving. Clara's story is engaging, insightful and so well written- and that is the best part – the writing is so restful despite the subject matter being discussed. I loved Clara's peaceful, calm, serene voice. This is a great read. Don't be put off by the gentleness of the words, this is a great story, this is a powerful story of redemption and hopes told by voice that does not preach to or admonish the audience.

PS this is a very cheap ebook to purchase...a bargain read!

Bob says

A talented person, with an artist's eyes and with an art degree, doing life without parole. What does someone like that do with their need to create, when they are leading such a barren life? This person had to learn how to give meaning to her life, despite the circumstances, and she had to do this to a highly functional level.

She used her abilities with art by making Braille books in the prison shop. She tamed her mind by thinking things through, and by learning to adapt. She filled some idle time by practicing ballet, not an easy thing to do in a jail cell..

Some quotes:

"How do you do ballet in a cell? ... The same way you do everything else in a cell. You don't let the environment convince you that you can't. You live inside your head."

"... there's nothing so dark that a bit of light can't break through it."

To her daughter, born in prison and then given up for adoption: "You were destined for the world. He [your father] made mistakes, and I did, and your fate was strong enough to supersede that."

"I wish I could share with you every one of the moments that ushered your soul closer a little closer to the earth."

"I want to live in the awe that resilient life presses forward in spite of the conspiring darkness."

"I am imprisoned here, not entombed."

Kim Huggins says

(4.5 stars) I really enjoyed this book! Any chance of a sequel...a love story, perhaps?

Meg says

Holy. Crap. This book was fantastic and unexpected and just plain awesome. I'm reeling . . . and didn't want it to end. But it put a knot in my stomach, too? So complicated. Review to come.

Dawn says

When I read the summary for this story I was intrigued. How does one live a lifetime in prison? No hope for release, no freedom, the fear of prison violence, the utter futility of continuing to repeat each day until the mercy of your death?

In *Inside These Walls*, we are introduced to Clare Mattingly who is serving the 25th year of a life sentence for murder.

This story explores the life she has lived in such a way. The minutiae of everyday life lived in imprisonment. The small ways Clare found to make life bearable and to bring meaning and purpose to her existence. It also slowly reveals her backstory. The whys and hows of why she is there and how she feels about it from the distance of time. And it answers the questions I had about what life one could have when life is the sentence.

I took a while warming up to Clare. She has learned to be blank and unemotional in order to survive and it is a while before I saw a glimmer of softness. It is there though, in her dancing along the bars of her cell, finding beauty in the raised textures of her Braille art, seeking friendship from a mangy cat and in the caring of her blind cell mate. And it is also there in the slow progression of the unraveling of her story.

It is a slow story, yet full of reasons to continue reading. It would be enjoyable to those who prefer a character driven mystery.

Carla says

It's rare that I have to get a book the day it comes out, but Rebecca Coleman is the kind of author that makes me want to do that. Like her last two books I couldn't put this one down - such a compelling read.

Vika Ryabova says

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Rachel says

I really enjoyed this book... the end tied up everything really well

Diane S ? says

3.5 I first read this author as a buddy read, one of my first buddy reads in fact, and the book we read was the author's first as well, The Kingdom of Childhood. It was a very controversial book about a taboo subject and I was amazed at how sensitively and brilliantly the author handled the subject matter.

This is her third and once again she has taken a character that the reader should immediately disdain for the horrible acts she has participated in, willingly or not. Yet, somehow this doesn't happen, instead we meet a character who has made wrong decisions, regrets them and takes responsibility for them. Coleman uncovers the little things that lie underneath everyone's exterior. The mistakes people make, how one wrong decision and their whole life changes. It made me think back to my own past, how some of the things I did could have gone so wrong. In this book Clare does something much worse than I ever did of course, but the author unveils exactly how she came to be in this position and maybe garners a little sympathy for the person she could have been, the person she was.

The ending I thought was the weakest part of the book, but despite that I really admire this author's talent.

ARC from NetGalley.
