



Hard Time

Cara McKenna

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My pounding heart went still, eerie as birds fallen silent in the wake of a gunshot.

He was big. Tall frame, wide shoulders-but not burly. His near-black hair was due for a cut, curling under his ears. Dark brows, dark stubble, dark lashes and eyes.

And he was handsome. So handsome it broke your heart.

A deck of cards was split between his hands, paused midshuffle. Some of the men wore navy scrub tops and bottoms, some navy tee shirts, a few white undershirts. This man wore a tee, with COUSINS stenciled on the front, above the number 802267. Those digits imprinted on my brain, burned black as a brand.

He watched me. But not the way the others did. If he was trying to picture me naked, his poker face was strong, though his attention anything but subtle. His entire head moved as I passed through his domain, but his eyes were languorous. Lazy and half-lidded, yet intense. A hundred looks in one. I didn't like it. Couldn't read it. At least with the horny jerk-offs, I knew where I stood.

I wondered what the worst thing you could do and still only get sent to a medium-security prison was. I hoped not to ever learn the answer.

And I hoped to heaven inmate 802267 hadn't signed up for any of the day's programs.

Hard Time Details

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Download and Read Free Online Hard Time Cara McKenna

From Reader Review Hard Time for online ebook

Baba says

3.75 stars. Full review posted April 21, 2014

What I love about McKenna's writing...

fingers scraping each other's scalps
hands tangling in hair
eager yet shaking fingers undressing each other

lips feathering tender kisses all over each other's bodies
a touch, a caress over heated skin
deep, wet and demanding kisses

the smell of an aroused body
the thrill and anticipation of hot, sweaty sex
labored breathing

licking, biting, clawing, moaning...
faster, deeper...slower

All that and then some until both reach a mind-blowing climax. Delicious.

She does the sensual part of her stories so incredibly well. In fact, she seduces and captures her readers through her alluring writing and it leaves me in a state of heightened anticipation until I can get my hands on her next book. The very best aspects of Hard Time are definitely the absolutely scrumptious smexy times as well as the wonderfully romantic letters that complemented the story nicely. Also, it didn't hurt at all to set my eyes on the gorgeous hero.

Meet Eric Collier...

The con is surprisingly tender and romantic...

I did appreciate the slow build-up very much and the whole prison part with all those letters oozed sensuality to the nth. I'm aware it might not have been authentic but still. Plus, I was very pleased that Annie didn't want to start dating Eric right after he'd been released from prison. She did scrutinize both Eric and herself as well as her options numerous times. I think that was well done and felt realistic. What I must do, however, is challenging the credibility of an inmate being so incredibly romantic and sweet in relation to his criminal offense. Eric can be shockingly violent, that's as safe as the Amen in the church. However, for once my doubts have been overruled by my overall enjoyment of the story. Also, in light of both Eric and Annie's backgrounds, I must question the ILYs that came way, way too fast for my liking and left me somewhat dumbfounded.

Due to the very disappointing ending, I can't give Hard Time a straight four-star rating. Frankly, I don't require (view spoiler) I just hoped that we would see more of Eric and Annie evolving as a couple. I also missed a much anticipated meet and greet between Annie's parents and Eric. Considering Annie's father being a state trooper who didn't have a high opinion of incarcerated cons, it would have been interesting to see her parents dealing with a former prisoner. Exploring that side of the plot could have given Hard Time an extra layer of depth.

It annoyed me that Eric didn't want to come clean why (view spoiler) Plus, it really angered me very much that Eric would (view spoiler)

The first time I heard Kristina over the phone I felt an instant animosity toward her. Statements like this one did not warm her to me either:

(view spoiler)

Kristina manifested too many egoistic trains of thoughts but on the other hand, it really fit her personality. After all, she (view spoiler)

I agree with Annie. She said:

(view spoiler)

Damn straight! That's the part of the plot that angered me the most. They (view spoiler)

And then Annie told Kristina:

(view spoiler)

I'd say what enables this kind of (view spoiler)

All in all a solid and enjoyable read but it could have been better, considering too many questions remained unanswered.

Recommended to all fans of Cara McKenna and to those readers who enjoy a steamy, romantic and sensual read.

<http://baba.booklikes.com>

J *deep in the heart of Texas* says

4.5--Eric Was Perfection--Stars!!

Another winner from Cara McKenna!

A librarian + a convict

And it was, but it was so much more. Two people meeting under unlikely circumstances. Both looking for a second chance and hoping for a new beginning.

"The most honest man I bet I've ever known, and I met him in prison."

"The nicest woman *I* ever knew, and she took up with a convict."

Annie is the new outreach librarian at Cousins Correctional Facility. Once a week she's visits the prison teaching and helping the inmates. Annie hasn't had good luck with men, having been physically abused by her last boyfriend. So imagine her surprise, when she finds herself attracted to inmate 802267, Eric Collier.

Eric Collier is in prison for committing a crime that he has no remorse for. If given the chance to go back, he wouldn't change anything. A crime committed out of a need to protect his family. So imagine his surprise, when he finds himself attracted to the new librarian, Annie Goodhouse.

"Five years since I'd wanted to feel sexual, and invite that attention. Five years since Eric Collier had been with a woman. A long time since a woman had felt like a woman, and a man like a man. A long time for two people to shut their needs in the dark..."

Annie and Eric embark on a forbidden romance....filled with covert glances, lingering touches and some of the most romantic love letters ever written.

Holy hell....hello sexual tension.

Through their words, Annie and Eric are able to explore their feelings for each other. Tell each other all of the things they long for. Experience an almost make-believe love.

And then Eric gets early parole and a second chance. His new beginning. But will it include Annie? Can Annie get past the crime Eric committed and see the person behind the act? The honest, romantic, kind, caring man that wrote Annie the letters?

I fell in love with Eric and Annie's story. I thought both MCs were great. Annie didn't make it easy for Eric. She struggled with the crime Eric committed and his lack of remorse. But in the end, Annie was able to look past that and see Eric for the man he was, the man he is and the man he will be.

"His hand closed around mine, strong and possessive. The hand that'd done unspeakable things in the name of brotherly love. A hand capable of the tenderest acts of intimacy and affection. The hand that had penned the most breathtaking letters, for my eyes alone. I'd hold it tight as we went forward together, sure as I clung to it now. Tight as I'd ached to hold it, back when such a thing had been forbidden. I'd never let it go again, no matter where we ended

up....somewhere warm, someday. Somewhere that belonged to the both of us, far away from the hard cinderblock of Cousins. Out of the cruel cold. Into the light and hope and excitement of our future, whatever it might look like. Into the bright promises of spring, when the entire world wore green."

Brandi says

3.5 Stars

Another book a desperately wanted to love. Lots of great reviews, an interesting synopsis. A romance that starts within prison walls - sign me up. I loved the forbiddenness of their relationship and naughty love letters were a nice bonus. But this heroine. I just could not warm up too. Annie just didn't nothing for me, other than annoy the shit out of me.

That said, I liked the hero, Eric. I thought his characterization was well done, his education level was realistically portrayed through his letters/speech. I did start to find myself frustrated with him, I felt like he shouldn't have let Annie give him such a hard time about his 'criminal' past. I say that because, seriously, he had a good fucking reason. Overall, I'm starting to think I'm in a book funk, because nothing is really doing it for my grumpy ass.

Claire Robinson says

5 - "Here I Come" Stars.

Hard Time is the first book that I have had the pleasure of reading by Cara McKenna, to say I went straight to Amazon and 1-Clicked everything else she has ever written once I had finished it would be totally true... It is one of those books that you read and ask yourself why you have never read a book by the author before.

Although there are a couple of warnings I would give you before you start it yourself, so you don't make the same mistakes I did.

1 - Do NOT start this book at 11pm on a Sunday night if you have to get up for work Monday morning.

2 - Do NOT take your Kindle to bed with you On said Sunday night with the mantra "just one more chapter" running through your head...

Ignore the above at your peril, because I was up until gone 3am reading, and looked like Zombie shite for the whole of Monday!!

That-said I didn't really care as I LOVED this book hard, and I couldn't wait to get home to finish it.

The first 50% of this book just kept me on the edge of my seat, biting my lip, praying that the author would give Annie and Eric a break, the letters *sigh*, their date-nights *fluttery tummy*, and their finally coming together *holy shit I need a shower*.

His gaze...it stuck to me. Clung to me like the heat left by a lovers palm.

I felt him step through the door, a heatwave and a cold front all wrapped inside one man.

This book is unusual, unique and not your normal boy-meets-girl type of romance, and I suppose that is why I loved it so much, I didn't at any point think Hard Time reminded me of anything else I have ever read. Reading of a man who is so hard on the outside, but is willing to sit back and let a woman take charge is a refreshing change as well.

The letter writing, put you in Eric's head perfectly, and gave you his POV without actually putting you in his head.

"You're the first good thing I've felt in so long. The only colourful thing in this shitty grey world I've come back to. The spring seems a long ways off. Maybe seeing you will get me through the winter.

I cannot recommend this book highly enough, for me to rate a book 5 stars nowadays is becoming quite infrequent, but to have the urge to immediately read it again straight after I have finished it. I can hand on heart say that Hard Time is only the second book I have felt that way about this year.

ARC generously provided via Netgalley, and it was an absolute pleasure to provide the above honest review.

Wendy'sThoughts says

5 Prisons... ALL of Them Stars * * * * *

In order to accept some stories we must suspend our analytical minds so that we can truly experience the read. I am doing this disclaimer because if I had not done that for this book, I would have been skeptical about the ins and outs of how communication, letters,etc. were able to not have consequences. That aside... I decided to go with the journey Cara McKenna gave me and this is my experience.

There are things in my life which have given me feelings which I will never forget. I am not talking about the beauty of motherhood or the other expected life events. I am talking about experiences which are minute; but because of the way they make you feel.... become mammoth... overwhelming and life changing.

I have had those experiences... and many have been through the written word... letters and emails... words on pages and screens ... reaching out and touching me deeply with just the words printed or flashing... causing feelings so intense... as I type this... I feel them now.

This book uses just those tools to evoke those same feelings in their characters. Both are locked up. Both are careful to make sure they adhere to the rules and regulations set forth in their prisons....

He, with real bars and guards watching 24/7....

She, with her heart and mind closed up tight from learning to protect and hide....

He, understanding what he did was what needed to be done and willing to pay the price....

She, not knowing the sentence for escaping her assault would be a lock down of her senses and heart....

What happens when these two characters meet in the Correctional Facility starts with a minute occurrence... it is look... a gaze... a sense of something there... He gives it and she feels it....

As the new traveling Librarian for Cousins Correctional Facility, Anne Goodhouse is awakened by thisher body and mind has been imprisoned, shutdown for the last 5 years. She was the classical victim of domestic abuse and only after a hard, eyeopening hit to her ear and jaw did she flee her boyfriend. She left her home, South Carolina and came to Michigan where she took this first job in her chosen field. The area is depressed, as it is no longer the the flourishing automakers paradise... it is seedy and tired...holding on as best it can.

Part of her position is to go to the facility and teach, assist and help the inmates who have earned the privileged of these workshops and classes. It is a daunting task as this is not some country club, white collar crime camp. This is a location for drug and assault offenders who are not rapists or killers. A medium level prison. The real deal.

As Annie goes through her first day, she has signed off on all of the regulations; no suggestive communications... no touching... no taking anything from the inmates... hell if she is able to just do the classes without any complications, it will be an achievement. She also has a huge understanding of rules... she comes from a family of them. Her father is a state trooper... mother old school Southern...and Gram even instilled the most basic rules of womanhood down to the colors of clothing which were unacceptable... red is for whores....

So, Annie knew all about regulations...she had her own body using them against her during the last 5 years...no feelings or hint of desire to tap into to...be alive and womanly...all of those feelings in a holding cell somewhere in her mind... until she saw him....

802267....he rattled her mind's cage... the dark hair, dark eyes, broad body like an inverted triangle and a sense of ease... owning his space around him... she saw him on her walk to the classroom... inadvertently looked for him during the sessions and with the last one of the day, he came to her.... and another push against her cell's bars...happens...

He needs her to help him with writing... he has a real condition of the mind which causes him to be perfectly able to read, study and comprehend... but to write the letters...there is a disconnect. Somewhere during his schooling, no one caught it... so he has had trouble not understanding why... Annie explains what it is and offers to help him. She get's him a processor as he can type easily and they will work together with his writing by hand.

At the next meeting he asks if today she would write a letter for him to someone... it is legal in her mind..so she starts as he dictates....

She hears the words..."Darling.... I missed you since last visit" ...

she feels a stirring...." A few minutes a week with you is almost more cruel than it is worth"

Now her temperature and senses are awakened and she is reeling....what is this he is writing... who is he

writing this to...and over the course of the dictated letter it becomes very clear...he is writing to her.... her alone... and in that recognition... the cell to Annie's mind and body is flung open... she is not totally released yet... but the door has sprung open.... the rush of feelings, lust and desire have made their appearance beckoning her to step out of that place she has locked herself in....

They call to her.... come out Annie...

He has already made the leap... he knows there is risk... he also understands and is willing to obey his own moral code and regulations... he offers her a way to say "yes, I want to continue this exchange between us... yes, I feel it too..." or to let him know, "no... please... no, I do not wish for this." Because Eric... has lived and landed here in this facility due to his moral code and this is who he is.

Both of these characters took me on a ride deep and true.... just the essence of them writing these letters to each other... was so intoxicating, I was drunk on their passion and frankness. It was not the illicitness which made the letters powerful; no.... it was the raw wanting... the taste of desire so strong, they reeked of it...

This was done in such a way... if in the readers' personal life, they ever had something remotely close to letters from a lover.... than all of those experiences would come flooding back.... That is how good these communications were written.

There is much more to this story than what I have shared; it asks questions about behavior; loyalty; willingness to accept; and much more. All of them are presented how real people in today's world handle them. Nothing is sugarcoated.... there are ugly moments....

But if you want to allow yourself to have a moment... to feel the romance of two people drunk on each other... two people connecting on levels few do... then please, take this opportunity and read Hard Times. I am very glad I did.

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♥ Jx PinkLady Reviews ♥ says

4.25 Love Letter Stars

Hard Time is a lovely, HOT romantic read, packed to the rafters with sexual tension and romance, all mixed up in a melting pot where I felt the anticipation of what may come....

Annie Goodhouse knows all about bad boys, so she just wants to play it safe in her new role as an outreach librarian for Cousins Correctional Facility. *She wants to play strictly by the rules.* But inmate Eric sends her rule-book out the window.

Eric Collier prisoner 802267 "So handsome it broke your heart." Good guy or bad guy??? He's guilty of his crime but has strong reasons for protecting his family, rightly or wrongly, he's a loyal ALPHA male. Yum!

5 years since they'd tasted another person.... *The anticipation, the emotion.... The SEXUAL TENSION!*
WOW!

A secret, forbidden romance involving love letters that light up the page with lust and romance, it's all fantasy, *HOT FANTASY* Something that could never be real. *It's safe.*

Then early parole comes and they're faced with the possibility that their **fantasies can become reality?** Their desires can be played out for real?

*Will they make that transition?
Do either of them want to?*

I felt their deep connection, the way they're in tune with each other; their lust and longing... *I felt it all.* The writing is extremely atmospheric; the sexual intensity made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end.

There were moments when the emotion of it touched me deeply; the story gave me a feel of sinking dread that they may miss the opportunity of each other. **Intense emotions, feelings and words.** *Their dialogue to each other is passionate and hot.* I felt like something catastrophic may happen at any time. And to be completely honest, I would have liked more drama, to have felt more angst, I craved it and that's what would have delivered my *amazing* star.

I love the refreshing originality of the story and the sentiment it explores... *Vengeance verses healing.*

To conclude..

Hard Time is a **stand alone** story about forbidden love and taking risks; it's sensual, romantic, HOT and incredibly intense. The sexual tension is off the scale... *Scorching.* It doesn't end in the traditional book tingle, all wrapped-up-in-a-bow kind of way, but it left me with feelings of satisfaction and contentment and thoughts of what may happen to them in their future. If like me you're intrigued by the story and characters and adore a romance with hot lust and passion, then go read and enjoy. *I had the most lovely time with Eric*



Just beautiful

Arc provided by the publisher, via Netgalley, for an honest review.

Christy says

5 Love Letter stars!

Hard Time was a sweet and romantic, original and erotic, fantastically well written story. Once I started reading, I was hooked. Usually a book is very romantic, but lacks the heat I desire. Or it's hot hot hot, but you don't get that sweetness. This was the perfect combination of BOTH!

Annie Goodhouse is a sweet southern girl who has given up on men and love. After a bad experience with an ex took her from her home town in South Carolina to Darren Michigan, she wants to use her life to help others. She does this many different ways as a librarian. She's getting ready to start something new and a little scary... a job at Cousin's Correctional Facility. There she will help the inmates with new skills, read to them etc. Annie is a little nervous, who wouldn't be? What she never expects it to see someone that first day that turns her head. Who makes her feels something again. Inmate 802267.

A tall figure came through the door. I knew who it was without even raising my eyes. Broad shoulders and slim hips, long legs. Overgrown dark hair. Eyes hot enough to singe. Fuck.

Annie is confused by her feelings for this man. She is insanely attracted to him. Soon, she finds out his name and meets him. He appears to be feeling that same 'thing' as Annie.

Eric, inmate 80226 is not a bad man. He just made a poor choice. A choice to protect someone he loved. A choice he would make again if need be. He's doing his time, and looking forward to a life outside of Cousins. Annie is the first good thing about this place. From the first moment he sees her, he has to know her. He needs some help with his writing, and he decides that his first time getting help will be a letter... to her.

Darling,
I missed you since your last visit.
A few minutes a week with you is almost more cruel than it's worth.
I miss you every minute we're apart.
And I watch the clock every morning when I think I might be seeing you again.

Eric and Annie start a relationship through letters. Each week he writes her. If she wants to hear more, she wears the color he chooses for her. Some of these parts had me laughing out loud.

It's not all red. I'm not a total whore. Just a partial one. Just a splash of whore.

?All Eric wants to be is the type of man that Annie deserves. It's hard with him being in prison, but he tries.

Annie starts to feel more than she's ever felt for any man before. How is that possible? This is a convict she's never even touched for goodness sake! He's a criminal. Not knowing exactly what Eric did and why is putting a damper on Annie's feelings. Things aren't black and white. It's hard for her to decide how much to trust him.

Were bad, violent crimes only done by bad, violent men? Could a man who was fundamentally bad make a woman feel the way Eric Collier had made me feel all these weeks?

I think my favorite part of the entire book were the numerous letters written by Eric and Annie while he was locked up. They were so sexy, but also very sweet and romantic. Here are just some of my favorite parts of some of the letters...

'I don't think you've got any clue what it means that you let me write these letters. It gets me so riled up it hurts. But I like it. I imagine it's some spell you've got me under. Makes me want to be all kinds of ways with you.'

'I think about kissing you like I said. Real deep and slow with our eyes closed. Maybe feel your hands on my chest or my back. As I hold your face or hair. As I got to see if you taste like sugar to match how you sound.'

'Sometimes my favorite thing to imagine is just us on a big soft couch. Me on the end and you between my legs, on my lap kind of. I could feel your hair on my cheek while we watched a movie maybe, and I could smell your skin. It would drive me crazy.'

Carrying on this forbidden romance through letters lasts for a while... but what happens when reality sets in? If Eric and Annie can be together, in real life? Release is looking probable for Eric and it's scary for Annie. Being with him through his letters, feeling for him that way is totally different than being with him in real life. Will Annie follow her head or her heart when faced with such a decision?

Annie and Eric... they were both such incredible characters.

Eric. Oh Eric. Who'd have thought Ms. McKenna would have us all falling for a felon? Just like Annie, I found myself falling hard for Eric through his letters. Eric was honest, kind, loyal and loving. And so so romantic! I loved how sweet he was to Annie, how he tried to protect her at all costs. Show her that she could trust him. He knew the situation, and he tried to make sure she stayed safe and happy.

Annie was a character I really liked as well. She wasn't incarcerated, but she felt locked up the last five years, just like Eric. I love how she found a way to finally let someone else back in. To trust, even in such a different situation.

This book was close to perfect for me- there was only one thing I would change and that's the ending. Did I like the ending? Sure. But I wanted more! An epilogue would have been fantastic. That being said, it wasn't enough to take away from my 5 star rating.

I enjoyed the originality. I can't say I've ever read a book about a convict and librarian. It was unique and refreshing. I know I've said it before, but those letters. Oh those letters really got to me in the best way! I loved the sexual tension too. The romance. The emotions. The forbidden love aspect. It was a great story for me, and one that I would highly recommend to anyone looking for something different, sweet and super sexy. Oh- and it's a standalone so that was a big plus as well!

Lisa says

You can find my full review at *Sinfully Sexy* .

5+ Stars!

*“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage;
If I have freedom in my love
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.”*

~Richard Lovelace, To Althea, from Prison

Hard Time is yet another wonderfully written romance by Cara McKenna. This is not my first book by this author. I have come to expect very real, edgy and raw books from her. Ms. McKenna has this innate ability to provide her readers with very relatable characters that simply seem so “normal”. I love the fact that her stories are brilliant depictions of ordinary characters making a real and honest connection. Nothing is over-the-top angsty bullshit. Yet, with these somewhat unassuming characters, this author is able to draw me in and I become completely engrossed with the romantic tales she weaves. Seriously....I love that!

&

Anne (or Annie) Goodhouse is a sweet, polite and somewhat reserved woman who is living far away from her southern roots. Her rocky past with an abusive ex led her to take a job in a small northern town as a librarian – a job that takes her to schools, has her working with seniors and young children and also has her going to Cousins Correctional Facility as their outreach librarian working with the inmates who earn the privilege. Given Annie’s past with the opposite sex, she is quite nervous and intimidated when she commences her new role at the prison. Little does she expect to find someone there who awakens the part of her that has long been dead, someone who draws her in with his intense and commanding presence and has her girly parts standing at attention.

“I’d never felt this. Never had a man felt so right, my need for him so urgent. Animalistic and instinctual.”

Eric Collier has spent the last five years in prison paying for a crime he committed and that he feels no remorse over. In fact, he would do it again if it meant protecting his loved ones. Born and raised in a trailer park and dingy town, Eric is loyal to a fault and would do anything for his family including the use of brute force. When Eric spots the new librarian on her first day, he can’t help but feel this inexplicable pull towards her. She is vastly different from the women he associated with prior to his prison term. Eric soon realizes that Annie is not unaffected by him and so he takes a chance, going against all the rules, and writes her a letter.

“802267. Those digits imprinted on my brain, burned black as a brand. He watched me. But not the way the others did.”

“His attention had become some strange, dark, private treat to brighten the toughest day of my week, and I’d come to crave it.”

“Like you said, we don’t know each other. Only how we seem to make each other feel. But sometimes that feels like enough. So simple and right, when real life can feel far too messy.”

So ensues the beginnings of a forbidden romance between a prison inmate and the shy and timid librarian – neither one of them unable to resist the sizzling connection they seem to share. A secret romance expressed in the weekly exchange of letters. Lusty fantasies are conveyed by both around the safety net of the unlikelihood that their fantasies will ever become reality and come to fruition. The bubble bursts when Eric is released on early parole. Can Eric and Annie translate all they have shared on paper to a relationship outside of the prison walls? Or, is the illusion they created while Eric was incarcerated all they will ever amount to?

“I want to make you feel a hundred things at once - powerless and aggressive, needy and pushy, grateful and greedy...”

“I probably don’t make love. I probably fuck. I’d try for you if you asked me to, though. You’d have to tell me how it’s different. It just seems like something a different kind of man would do.”

“I want to be someone who deserves to be with somebody like you.”

Going into this book I expected it to have a harder, grittier, feel to the storyline given the fact that our hero is a convict. I was so pleasantly surprised to be given a sweet and romantic tale that was quite endearing. Here you have this felon who has to deal with the harsh realities of prison life on a day to day basis, and yet, this same man is capable of relaying his vulnerabilities and deepest desires in his letters to a woman he feels a connection to. He awkwardly expresses himself in writing winning over the sweet librarian with his words. I loved how honest both Eric and Annie were with each other about their feelings, specifically after Eric was released and out on parole. Obviously Annie was hesitant to pursue things with Eric outside of the prison walls at first but she soon comes to understand that the man who wrote the beautiful and sexy letters to her was still the same man openly declaring his feelings to her face to face. Eric and Annie brought out the best in one another. Annie was someone who called to Eric’s protective and passionate nature and he found himself being tender and treating Annie with a gentle hand – something he had never really done before with a woman. Annie blossomed as her relationship with Eric grew deeper and more profound. The shy and reserved girl she started out as became this woman who was willing to stand up for the man she was in love with.

It is worth mentioning how hot and sensual this book is. Cara McKenna surely excels in her ability to provide her readers with some sizzling scenes that will leave you all hot and bothered. The pair starts out on a slow simmer only being able to exchange their fantasies on paper and it all eventually bubbles over when Eric is released and they can experience first-hand the many experiences they articulated on paper. **Damn! Just...damn! Sizzling hotness at its absolute best.**

All in all, *Hard Time* is yet another reason that Cara McKenna is a must read author for me. Her books have this human element and realness often lacking in so many other books. This book was wonderfully romantic and it is a story that left me happily sighing. It is also one that I will re-read when I need a dose of sweet and sexy.

****An advanced reading copy of **Hard Time** by Cara McKenna was provided to me in exchange for an honest review.*

Duchess Nicole says

"I want to make you feel a hundred things at once - powerless and aggressive, needy and pushy,

grateful and greedy..."

Cara McKenna seems to be throwing out winners left and right. Everything I read by her is golden, and Hard Time was no exception.

Annie Goodhouse is a good ole southern girl...polite and ladylike, sweet and tenderhearted. But her life hasn't always been wonderful. The reason she moved to this run down, podunk northern town was to escape an abusive boyfriend. Understandably, she's a bit shy when it comes to men. So it's a bit of a surprise...even to herself, I think...that she agrees to do a prison outreach program one day a week.

On her first day on the job, during the first few moments of panic while walking through the groupings of prisoners that she is now expected to tutor, she spots a man...is drawn to him in a way that she hasn't been in forever.

"802267. Those digits imprinted on my brain, burned black as a brand. he watched me. But not the way the others did."

Eric Collier feels the pull toward Annie. He knows their situation isn't ideal, but in the five years he's been inside Cousin's Correctional Facility, and even in his lifetime before his incarceration, he's never felt this way toward a woman. His trailer park life in a trashy town didn't really give him much opportunity to meet classy women. He notices the way Annie reacts to his presence. One day, the small flirtation between them turns a bit heated. And so against all rules, Eric writes Annie a letter. An innocent letter. And he gives her an out, telling her if she wants another letter, wear red the next time.

"I drummed my fingertips on the hanger and bit my lip. I could throw a cardigan over it. Just let a little of the red peek through. A little wink of whorefulness."

Good girl Annie can't resist the pull, and one letter turns into weekly letters until she starts writing him back. And then one day, Eric is paroled.

MY THOUGHTS:

What I loved so much about this book is how Eric is portrayed. He's a badass, that's for sure. He's an alpha, he's got a rocking body and is tough as hell. But he also has some major vulnerabilities and is quite unsure of himself at times. He has a learning disability that makes it hard for him to write, so his initial letters to Annie are a bit awkward at first.

It's endearing how these two open up to each other through their letters, saying things that they never would in real life. The letters enable them to be honest with each other in a way they couldn't face to face. In this regard, Eric gets to be tender and so gentlemanly, leaving his badass self at the door.

"I don't think you've got any clue what it means that you let me write these letters. It gets me so riled up it hurts. But I like it. I imagine it's some spell you've got me under. Makes me want to be all kinds of ways with you. Helpless sometimes. But darker stuff too. Like I want to punish you for making me this crazy. But nothing bad I promise. Nothing you wouldn't be okay with. The kind of stuff lovers get up to."

There's no need for him to put up a tough front, and so his real self comes through. He's a good person, in jail for doing something that I could hardly blame him for. It's NOT any kind of sexual crime or murder...just to make that clear. He did commit a crime, and he's serving his sentence but I feel confident that most people would understand his situation.

Annie, on the other hand, gets to open up to Eric both emotionally and sexually. Since leaving her ex, she's not been with a man. Her five year dry spell coupled with the fact that she had very little experience before leaving him means that she's quite repressed in that respect. But Eric's honesty and their Friday meetings under the watchful eyes of the guards keep their relationship very low key.

What kept me from giving this five stars was a couple of things. We never find out exactly what prodded Eric into committing his crime. It is alluded to, and a couple of details are given, but the situation is largely left unsaid. Also, the fact that Eric is a convict and Annie's father is a highway patrolman is brought up, but this is a situation that is never resolved. She never tells her parents, which I'm sure she'll have to do eventually, but that is a hurdle that I wish had been addressed more. I felt like there was a lot left up to the reader's imagination with regards to these issues.

"I probably don't make love. I probably fuck. I'd try for you if you asked me to, though. You'd have to tell me how it's different. It just seems like something a different kind of man would do."

However, the sexual aspect of this story was amazing. Eric and Annie don't even touch for a very long time...it's the sensuality that smolders between them at first, and then in their letters, that was so hot. Then there's what their relationship turns into that really makes this story stick for me. This is a couple that I not only root for, but I see them working with very little effort. They just fit. There are moments of humor...namely when Annie is fighting with herself about her good southern girl upbringing clashing with her wants and needs of today. And there's just them, these two good people in bad situations, both completely unsure of themselves. It's as if they learn who they are by reaching out for someone else. It's quite beautiful, actually.

A timid heroine and a wonderful, romantic, totally different kind of hero...definitely a recommended read.

Copy provided by the publisher via Net Galley.

Debra says

★★★★ 4 Stars!

"The most honest man I've ever known, and I met him in prison." - Annie

"The nicest woman I ever knew, and she took up with a convict." - Eric

Hard Time by Cara McKenna was a sweet, memorable, **standalone** read with one of the most romantic heroes I've ever come across...and he turns out to be a convict, imagine that! As surreal as it may seem, Eric really was one of the sweetest male leads ever, and the main reason for that were the letters he wrote weekly.

"Darling,

I missed you since our last visit. A few minutes a week with you is almost more cruel than it's worth. I miss you every minute we're apart, and watch the clock every morning when I think I might be seeing you again. I wish I could see you, away from here. (...) I watch your hands and imagine them on me.

*Yours,
Eric"*

Seriously, the letters alone are reason enough to make you want to read this book! They were possibly my favorite part of the story, exactly because it's so unique for the MC's to write each other letters in this day and age. The last thing 27 year old librarian **Anne Goodhouse** wants, is to fall for one of the convicts in her new place of work, Cousins Correctional Facility. But when she meets tall, dark an handsome convict **Eric Collier** those resolutions suddenly seem much harder to live up to...

Eric and Annie's story is one with a few bumps along the round. As strong as their connection is, it's still incredibly difficult for the two of them, with such different backgrounds, to establish an actual relationship. Still, they're both willing to do whatever it takes to make it work and throughout the story I kept rooting for them. (view spoiler) To be honest, the first 30% of the story would have deserved 5+ stars for me, but from there on out the story became more slow-paced and the ending was a bit abrupt since there was no epilogue. But overall, the romance and the fantastic main characters turned this into a solid 4 star read for me!

"Kiss me." I murmured, the words with desperation.

"I only get to do it once, for the first time."

"I'm going to die if you don't."

His lips twitched and his eyes narrowed, crinkling. "Remind me which of us has been locked up for five years."

This is only my second book by Cara McKenna, but twice now she's created a story with very unusual main characters. A librarian and a convict seem like an unlikely combination, to say the least, but the way the author wrote it, they turned out to be a perfect match for each other. Dealing with the prejudices that come with being a convict isn't a topic that we often read about and the author handled that aspect and the consequences of Eric's conviction in a very realistic way. Mostly though, this is still a story about the power of love and about how the love of the right woman can make a seemingly hopeless man hope for and dream of a bright future again.

A unique, feel-good, emotional read with a **sweet, tortured hero** and a **strong, open-minded** heroine that I would highly recommend giving a try.

"I want to be somebody who deserves to be with somebody like you."

Blacky *Romance Addict* says

This is the sweetest, most romantic erotica I've ever read <3

He is one of the sweetest, most romantic male characters ever!! <3

He is also yummy hot in a convict kind of way XD

Overall, just amazing <3 The letters were fantastic, the first one especially, I kinda wish the prison part was longer, and the second half of the book not that slow, but it was still awesome and I enjoyed every bit of it :DDD

Anyhow, a HUGE rec from me <3

Mo says

4.5 STARS

His near black hair was due for a cut in fact, curling under his ears. Dark brows, dark stubble, dark lashes and eyes. And he was handsome. So handsome he broke your heart

Annie Goodhouse doesn't need to be warned about bad boys; good sense and an abusive ex have given her plenty of reasons to play it safe. But when she steps into her new role as outreach librarian for Cousins Correctional Facility, no amount of good sense can keep her mind—or eyes—off inmate Eric Collier.

802267

"FORGET THAT BIRACIAL BUDDIES *SHAWSHANK* SHIT. CHOCOLATE AND VANILLA DON'T MIX IN HERE"

"Whores wear red," my grandma had told me once – she'd walked in while I was watching *Pretty Woman*. I must have been fifteen. I'd told her, "She is a whore, Gram." And she'd nodded sagely and said, "Stands to reason."

I won't say too much but this book was HOT, Hot, with a capital H!!! Talk about sexual tension.

My arousal went from mouse to cat. Feral to wicked

His body shocked the very breath out of me. Tan and strong and fucking cut.

ARC received from NetGalley.

Jennifer Kyle says

4.5 STARS

"We're whatever you decide we are."

What's not to like about the new librarian, Anne Goodhouse, at Cousins Correctional Facility fall through letters and limited contact for inmate #802267? The first portion of the story really brings the anticipation, excitement and allure of Eric Collier. His letters were simply wonderful and opened up Annie to her sexuality that has been locked down ever since she broke things off with her abusive ex. Asking if Anne want's more letters by wearing certain colors was the sweetest thing. What woman wouldn't love a letter from Eric Collier.

"I've got stuff to say. To you." He tapped the paper, his voice barely a whisper. "If you want to hear more, next week, you wear red."

Overtime both seems to have developed real feelings and those letters get pretty steamy! Anne feels blindsided when she finds out that Eric is being released and panics at the idea of a relationship in the real world. She also must buck up and ask what he was incarcerated for that had him serving a five year sentence.

"Were we lovers? Without ever having touched one another?"

Anne and Eric are pretty awkward outside of their letters but Eric makes it clear that he has strong feelings for her and slowly over time they get to know one another.

"I want to be someone who deserves to be with somebody like you."

Eric is a wonderful hero. I found him to be crazy loyal to his family, and one hell of an attentive lover.

"This what you need tonight?" he asked, words stilted by the impact.

"Why's it always about what I need?"

"Because that's what gets me off, Annie. Being what you need."

I truly enjoyed how his family and his life before prison and the man he was becoming blended. I would have liked to see what her family's reactions and so on went. Overall the story is sexy but has a ton of meat on its bones and well worth the read!

Crystal~BIG book addict~ says

There are no words to describe all of my feelers I have for this book. A convict and a librarian, what's not to love?!

Anne Goodhouse is the new outreach librarian for the local prison. She is there to help teach some of the inmates to read and help with their resumes for when they are released. It has been five years since she left her home and an abusive ex-boyfriend. She has been numb this whole time until she sees prisoner number 802267.

Unlike many of the inmates, his head wasn't shaved. His near-black hair was due for a cut in fact, curling under his ears. Dark, brow, dark stubble, dark lashes and eyes. And he was handsome. So handsome it broke your heart.

Eric has trouble writing and so with the help of the very sexy librarian, he asks her to help him write a letter. This turns out to be a love letter. Anne is confused as to why she is feeling jealousy for the woman who will be on the receiving end of this letter.

Darling, I missed you since your last visit. A few minutes a week with you is almost more cruel than it's worth. I miss you every minute we're apart. And I watch the clock every morning when I think I might be seeing you again.....

Well come to find out, he is writing to her. She gets him a older word processor to help him write things on his own. And this is the start of the love letters.

Things are going smoothly between Eric and Anne. They know they have to be careful so they don't get caught exchanging letters but she can't seem to stop. It isn't until one of the letters says he is getting out on probation that Anne starts to panic. Will he expect to date her? Should he avoid him? What will she do? How will they handle actually being together in the "real world"?

This was such a great love story about beating the odds against you. I have re-read Eric's letters at least twice so far. They make me all melty and hot at the same time. How can a convict be so alpha and yet sweet and innocent at the same time? I can guarantee that even if you don't like the book as a hole, you will absolutely love the letters that were written and the sexual tension and build up.

Go forth and read my friends! This book is definitely worth your time!

This book has definitely received my stamp of approval.

ARC provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Lana ❄️Dirty Girl Romance❄️ says

6+ Are not enough to describe how much I loved this book Stars

And he told me about the things he wanted to do to me, the places he wanted to take me, if he could. The things about me that took his mind off his daily life, and roused his body in idle moments. And I wondered if he wasn't a bank robber after all, the way he kept making off with my heart.

I fell in love with this book. I fell in love with the writing. I fell completely, head over heels in love with the hero. This book; no review I can write will ever do it justice. Cara McKenna is a genius, her stories will grab you by the heart and never let go. She doesn't blow sunshine and rainbows up your ass. She gives you real characters, real emotion that is so well written, it's almost palpable. Did I like this book? No. I fucking **LOVED** this book. I wish I could give it 6 stars. This is a story that will stay with me for a while with characters that I will never forget.

Annie Goodhouse is a good southern girl that hasn't had the best of luck with men. She doesn't have to be warned away from the bad boys, she experienced first hand what the feel of abuse at the hands of a man feels like, and she's shut herself off. Annie is a librarian, and her new role takes her to work as an outreach librarian in the town's medium security prison. And then everything changes when she meets **him** in a place where the worst of the bad boys are...

Eric, or inmate number 802267 as she first knows him, catches her eye right way. But it's not his attitude, leering, or catcalling that snags her, because he doesn't do any of those things.

That stare. That unreadable expression, an impossible mix of apathy and fascination, coldness and seduction.

Eric was not at all what I expected from reading the book's blurb. He's not some ultimate bad boy, an asshole, or a hard-ass. He's simply a man that committed a crime, a crime that he would commit all over again if given the chance. But beneath that tough and muscled exterior there exists a soul of a gentle and romantic man. What first begins as a simple lesson in literacy begins to turn into something much deeper when he gives Annie the first letter.

His attention had become some strange, dark, private treat to brighten the toughest day of my week, and I'd come to crave it.

This book has some of the most amazingly written sexual tension I have ever read. The way that Miss McKenna portrays the angst, lust, and emotion that these 2 people share through simple letters was incredible. It almost felt like Eric was talking directly to me. His letters to Annie made me swoon at the same time it made me lust after him uncontrollably.

Annie was such an amazing heroine. She was strong, yet a little bit broken at the same time. She wasn't mousy, or shy, or some wallflower. I think that's what ultimately made this book so good for me, the fact that both characters had such an amazing balance of realness to them. You can feel how much Annie struggles with her feelings for Eric. She doesn't know the full story of why he was put away and that scares her, but at the same time she finds herself falling for him more and more with each letter.

Were bad, violent crimes only done by bad, violent men? Could a man who was fundamentally bad make a woman feel the way Eric Collier had made me feel, all these weeks?

Eric stole my heart. He was so vulnerable and sweet, but without coming off as weak.

I want to be someone who deserves to be with somebody like you.

Cara McKenna give you two incredibly real characters that each struggle with their own incarceration. While Eric has been shut away in a prison cell for 5 years, Annie has shut herself off from feeling anything sexual after the abuse she suffered at the hands of her own ex. As the book progresses, you see them slowly grow closer together and their bond fully form. They're both scared, they both have their weaknesses, but the connection between them is simply undeniable.

This book gives you everything; incredible characters, erotic love scenes, and an emotional gripping love story between 2 people who couldn't be more different but yet fit together more.

The author doesn't give you an ending that's wrapped up in a perfect little bow, and I think I really loved that in this story. It was fitting. Anything else wouldn't have been true to the characters or the plot. Is there a HEA? (view spoiler)

If you're looking for an beautiful and erotic love story, that's gorgeously written with characters that will stay in your heart for a long time to come, this book is simply a must read. Do not judge it by the cover or the blurb, it doesn't do it nearly enough justice. I simply couldn't recommend this book enough. Read it for yourself and see what all my gushing is about.

ARC courtesy of publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review

For more reviews visit
