

Prayers for the Stolen

By Jennifer Clement

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A haunting story of love and survival that introduces an unforgettable literary heroine

Ladydi Garcia Martínez is fierce, funny and smart. She was born into a world where being a girl is a dangerous thing. In the mountains of Guerrero, Mexico, women must fend for themselves, as their men have left to seek opportunities elsewhere. Here in the shadow of the drug war, bodies turn up on the outskirts of the village to be taken back to the earth by scorpions and snakes. School is held sporadically, when a volunteer can be coerced away from the big city for a semester. In Guerrero the drug lords are kings, and mothers disguise their daughters as sons, or when that fails they “make them ugly” – cropping their hair, blackening their teeth- anything to protect them from the rapacious grasp of the cartels. And when the black SUVs roll through town, Ladydi and her friends burrow into holes in their backyards like animals, tucked safely out of sight.

While her mother waits in vain for her husband’s return, Ladydi and her friends dream of a future that holds more promise than mere survival, finding humor, solidarity and fun in the face of so much tragedy. When Ladydi is offered work as a nanny for a wealthy family in Acapulco, she seizes the chance, and finds her first taste of love with a young caretaker there. But when a local murder tied to the cartel implicates a friend, Ladydi’s future takes a dark turn. Despite the odds against her, this spirited heroine’s resilience and resolve bring hope to otherwise heartbreaking conditions.

An illuminating and affecting portrait of women in rural Mexico, and a stunning exploration of the hidden consequences of an unjust war, PRAYERS FOR THE STOLEN is an unforgettable story of friendship, family, and determination.

From the Hardcover edition.

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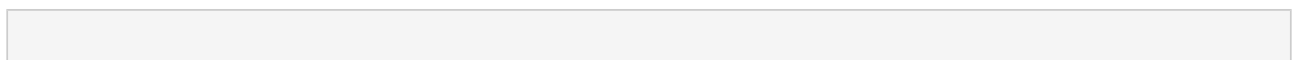
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Prayers for the Stolen By Jennifer Clement Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #91743 in Books
- Brand: Hogarth
- Published on: 2014-11-04
- Released on: 2014-11-04
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .60" w x 5.40" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 240 pages



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

On Writing *Prayers for the Stolen*

In Mexico today women are stolen off the street or taken from their houses at gunpoint. Some women never return home from their work place, a party or from walking to the corner. They are all young and poor and pretty.

I have spent over ten years listening to women affected by Mexico's violence as I was interested in writing about women in Mexico's drug culture. This was a logical step for me after having written the novel *A True Story Based on Lies*, which is about the mistreatment of servants in Mexico. I interviewed the girlfriends, wives and daughters of drug traffickers and quickly came to realize that Mexico is a warren of hidden women. They hide in places that look like supermarkets or grocery stores on the outside, but that are really hiding places with false façades; in the basements of convents, where women live with their children and have not seen daylight for years; and in privately-owned hotels that are rented by the government -- a surreal, Third World concept of a Witness Protection Program.

In rural Mexico, the poorest families dig holes in their cornfields. This is how they hide their women from traffickers. It is as if they planted their daughters in the earth so they would not be stolen.

At Mexico City's Santa Martha Acatitla Prison for women, I have listened to prisoners who have been deeply touched or have actively participated in the violence that Mexico is experiencing today. My conversations with assassins, drug dealers, women who claim to be innocent, and with famous criminals exposed cruel and tender lives. In that prison of rough, bare cement walls, I looked at drawings of shells, sand and blue fish drawn by a seventy-year-old woman who had sold fish tacos on a beach before she was forced by drug traffickers to carry drugs across the Mexican border into the United States. She told me that she liked to steal the prison's saltshakers and rub salt on her skin so she would not forget the sea.

After listening to the women in hiding and the women in jail, as well as the women who have been victims of crime, the primary story for me became Mexico's missing women and children.

For years I had heard or read: *she disappeared; she never came back; today she would be celebrating her sixteenth birthday; I am praying for a sign; she went missing; some men came for her; if I go to the police they laugh at me; she was just walking, just walking down the street; she never called back; she never called; I can see her walk through the door; that man knows where my daughter is; he took some other girls; I feel she's still alive; somebody sent someone for my daughter; someone sent somebody for my daughter.*

Although there are no exact statistics, the number of women trafficked in Mexico is very high. According to the U.S. State Department, 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year. (Note this estimate does not include those trafficked within national borders.) Most people who are stolen and sold are subjected to sex trafficking or other forms of modern slavery: forced labor, debt...

A woman can be sold to different owners many times, and even dozens of times a day as a prostitute, while a plastic bag of drugs can be sold once.

Prayers for the Stolen is a novel about Ladydi Garcia Martínez. She is part of a community, like so many in

rural Mexico, that has been decimated by drug traffickers, government agricultural policies and illegal immigration. Her home is a village near the once glamorous port of Acapulco. Her story, although inspired by truth, is fiction.

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review In Clement's powerful new novel, Ladydi Garcia Martinez tells the story of how she grew up in a remote Mexican mountain village disguised as a boy. This was to ensure that the marauding gangs of drug dealers believed that the village was populated solely by adult women and young boys. No men and absolutely no pretty young girls. It's a survival strategy that works only marginally well. When it doesn't work, well, it's bad. It seems as if these thugs are always lurking, always hovering over villages, always ready to kidnap young, lovely girls. Ironically, it is the lure of this gang life or the flimsy promise of making it in the U.S. that has induced the men of Ladydi's village to leave. And so her History Channel-educated mother does the best she can with whatever meager means are available to raise and protect her daughter in this tenuous, matriarchal culture. It is her mother's pliable morality that defines her character and in a paradoxical way arms Ladydi to survive in modern Mexico. Clement's deft first-person narrative style imbues authenticity to her depiction of a world turned upside down by drug cartels, police corruption, and American exploitation. --Donna Chavez

Review

An *Irish Times* Book of the Year

Finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Prize

"Beguiling, and even crazily enchanting... [Clement] writes a poet's prose, spare and simple, creating her world through patterns of repeated and varied metaphors and images that blossom inside the reader like radiant poppies...*Prayers for the Stolen* gives us words for what we haven't had words for before, like something translated from a dream in a secret language. The novel is an ebullient yet deeply stirring paean to its female characters' resiliency and capacity for loyalty, friendship, compassion and love, but also to the power of fiction and poetry."—**Francisco Goldman, *New York Times Book Review***

"[A] beautiful, heart-rending novel...Fiercely observed comparisons of human and inanimate life form a continuing motif throughout the story...[Clement] achieves the formidable feat of smooth, clear English that pulses with an energy and sensibility that is convincingly Latin American... So compelling...*Prayers for the Stolen* is a powerful read."—**Wall Street Journal**

"The author builds a powerful narrative whose images re-create an alarming reality that not everyone has dared to address but that everyone has definitely heard. Let's pray for spoons."—**El Paso Times**

"The theme of *Prayers for the Stolen* is the wanton violence inflicted on women and the destruction of communities as a result of the drug trade in Mexico, but Clement's eye for the revealing detail, the simple poetry of her language and the visceral authenticity of her characters turn that deadening reality into a compelling, tragically beautiful novel."—**Yann Martel, author of *Life of Pi***

"With *Prayers for the Stolen*, Jennifer Clement has cracked open, rewired, and madly reimagined the coming-of-age narrative through the eyes and mind of an ingenious and wise young woman. This book is a glorious fever dream of honesty and love." —**Patrick Somerville, author of *This Bright River***

"*Prayers for the Stolen* is a magnificent story, filled with a wisdom so dense and ancient as to seem almost unbearable. One wants to turn away, but cannot. It's a mesmerizing read, illustrative of the idea that even traces of beauty, deeply felt, can help carry a traveler through the harshest landscape, or the harshest life."

—Rick Bass, author of *Why I Came West*

“What can I say about this novel? That it’s extraordinary, electric, heartbreaking, profound? There aren’t enough adjectives to describe how moved I was by the story of Ladydi and her friends, of their tragic lives and quiet fortitude in spite of a world that conspires against them. Maybe it’s enough just to say this: *Prayers for the Stolen* is the best book I’ve read in years.” —Cristina Henríquez, author of *The World in Half*

"The most enchanting journey I've taken in a long, long time, and the most important. *Prayers For The Stolen* is a hand-guided tour through a ruthless true corner of our century, with characters so alive they will burrow into your heart. Stunningly written, magically detailed, you see, smell and taste the action on every page, feel every foible, and miss the candor of these funny, aching human voices long after you put them down. As the heroine herself might say: not something to read but to lick off a plate." —DBC Pierre, **Man Booker Prize-winning author of *Vernon God Little***

“Compelling...Just beautiful...Really, really beautiful.”—Diane Rehm, **NPR**

“Clement is more a poet than a documentarian, and the girls and women of the village she chronicles are complex individuals...Clement treats the brutal material honestly...and ultimately allows Ladydi to continue to hope.”—*Publishers Weekly*

"Moving...Through a beautifully rendered poetic rhythm all her own, Clement tells a story of the often forgotten women who carry on through the drug wars...*Prayers for the Stolen* tells a complicated and layered story...It feels painfully real, with a dry wit and subtly inquisitive subtext that should leave American readers wondering what can be done."—*Kirkus Reviews*

International Praise for *Prayers for the Stolen*

“Highly original...[Clement’s] prose is poetic in the true sense: precise as a scalpel, lyrical without being indulgent.” – *The Guardian*

“What a marvelous writer Clement is....[With] power in a prose that is simple and simply beguiling.” – *The Scotsman*

"Bold and innovative...The rich mixture of the outlandishly real and the hyperfabulistic has a certain superstitious power over the reader. Jennifer Clement employs poetry's ability to mirror thought... superbly drawn." —*The Times Literary Supplement*

“That is the triumph of Clement’s tone in the novel—she shows the black comedy in the details and the emergency in the broader picture...There is a chance that fiction can make a difference.”—*Telegraph*

“Beautifully written...Clement's prose is luminous and startlingly original. The sentences are spare and stripped back, but brilliantly manage to contain complex characters and intense emotional histories in a few vividly poetic words. Her portrayal of modern Mexico is heartbreaking; a dangerous and damaging environment for women, but her portrait of Ladydi and her refusal to be one of the lost girls is defiantly bold and bravely uncompromising”— *Sunday Express*

“Ladydi’s irreverent voice sings off the page and there are laughs to be had as she relates her mother’s drunken wisdom and seeks to find a way to live”— *Metro*

”Despite its violent premise, this is a darkly comic read with one of the funniest, most touching narrators in years, highlighting a very real issue in a remarkably fresh way. An inspiring story of female resilience”—
Psychologies

“With Ladydi, Jennifer Clement has created a feisty teenage heroine who is an unforgettable character”—
Good Housekeeping

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Corene Albert:

What do you think of book? It is just for students because they're still students or the item for all people in the world, exactly what the best subject for that? Just you can be answered for that problem above. Every person has distinct personality and hobby for each and every other. Don't to be forced someone or something that they don't would like do that. You must know how great along with important the book Prayers for the Stolen. All type of book is it possible to see on many methods. You can look for the internet resources or other social media.

Eddie Bussell:

This Prayers for the Stolen book is just not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is definitely information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. This particular Prayers for the Stolen without we know teach the one who reading it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't be worry Prayers for the Stolen can bring when you are and not make your carrier space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even cellphone. This Prayers for the Stolen having excellent arrangement in word and layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

Dennis Lewis:

The feeling that you get from Prayers for the Stolen could be the more deep you looking the information that hide inside words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to be aware of but Prayers for the Stolen giving you joy feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their point in particular way that can be understood through anyone who read that because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We recommend you for having this Prayers for the Stolen instantly.

Tamela Campbell:

What is your hobby? Have you heard which question when you got learners? We believe that that query was given by teacher on their students. Many kinds of hobby, Every individual has different hobby. So you know that little person similar to reading or as reading through become their hobby. You must know that reading is very important and book as to be the factor. Book is important thing to include you knowledge, except your current teacher or lecturer. You find good news or update in relation to something by book. Numerous books that can you decide to try be your object. One of them is Prayers for the Stolen.

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