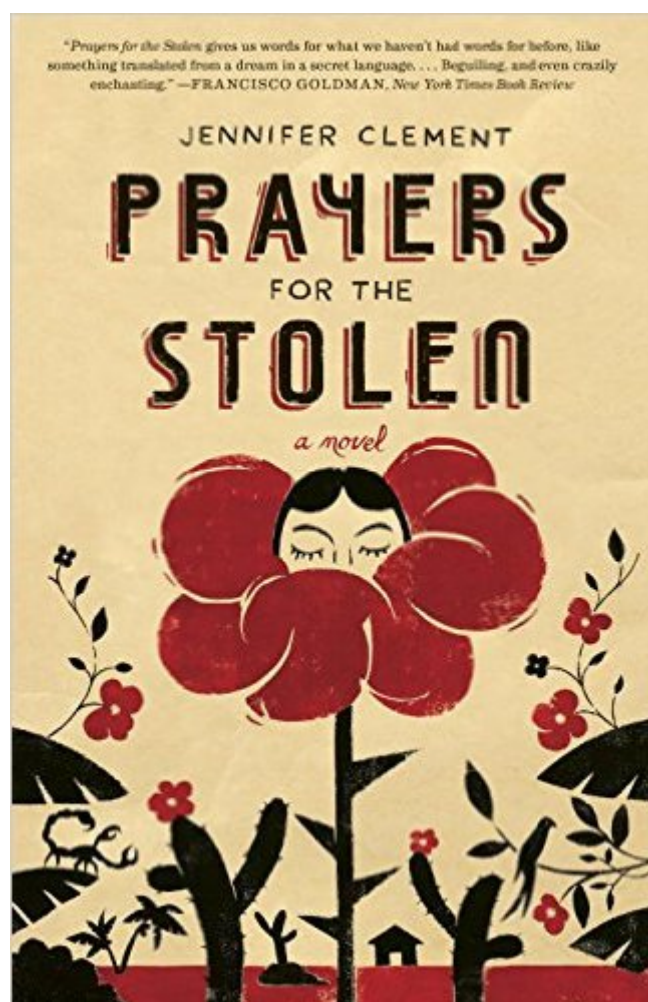


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Prayers For The Stolen



Synopsis

A haunting story of love and survival that introduces an unforgettable literary heroine—Ladydi García 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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Customer Reviews

Jennifer Clement's *Prayers for the Stolen* is going on my "essentials" shelf, my place of honor for books that merit regular rereading. *Prayers for the Stolen* is a hard read, but an absolutely brilliant read. By hard, I don't mean turgid prose or endless, unnecessary detail. It's a hard read in that the lives of all the characters are unrelentingly hard, but the reader so quickly becomes attached to these characters that after the first few pages one is absolutely committed to the book. *Prayers for the Stolen* is primarily set in a small hillside community in Guerrero, not far from Acapulco, where "Everyone's goal was to never come back." This community is a shadow of its former self "now divided by the highway to Acapulco, it's been fragmented; all the males have left for work in the U.S. and most have broken ties with the wives and children left behind; and the women who remain are at the mercy of the members of the drug cartels that flourish in the area. It's the women in this book who are "the stolen," kidnapped by cartel members either for personal use or to be sold for profit. The central characters in this book are a quartet of teen-aged girls growing up under the strict eyes of their mothers who do all they can, first to pass their daughters off as sons, and then, when that is no longer possible, to make their daughters ugly in hopes that this will spare them from abduction: hair is cut short and badly, teeth are deliberately stained with magic marker. These four are: Paula, a remarkable beauty; Estefani, whose mother is dying of AIDS; Maria, the illegitimate half-sister of the book's narrator; and the narrator herself, Ladydi (as in England's Lady Di).

This one was a different kind of reading experience for me. Ladydi's story is exceptional in many ways: from the rural setting of Mexico to the almost tangible emotions to some truly unforgettable characters. But I was disappointed when Ladydi became more of a narrator than anything else. I couldn't connect with her even though I tried. Every time I felt I got some sort of inkling of a personality it disappeared and I felt at a loss. She had many great traits but I forgot she was the main character at times. I was just really surprised at how much of a backseat she took to her own life story. Other characters, even minor ones, really stood out from the pages at time. Her mother is one that immediately comes to mind. Strong-willed and resilient in her own right, Ladydi's mother can be described as a little mad as well. She really drove the story in the beginning for me. Even so I plan on reading more from Jennifer Clement. I like her unique style of writing and am very curious to see it shine through with other stories and characters. I think once I get used to her writing voice I'll come to appreciate the way she does things. I do like how Clement shined light on some of the issues of the hardships and tragedies the people, especially the women, of Mexico

face daily. From the politically involved and horrific drug wars to the tragic world of human trafficking I think Prayers for the Stolen can be used as an introductory awareness piece of work for those that aren't as familiar with these things, like me. A lot of the time Clement let the reader fill in the blanks with their own imagination rather than blatantly shove violent or graphic details into her work. From the very first words of the book the reader knows Ladydiâ™s daily life is one of struggling survival.

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