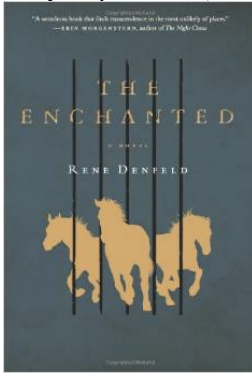


***The Enchanted* by Rene Denfeld  
Harper (March 4, 2014)**



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](#)