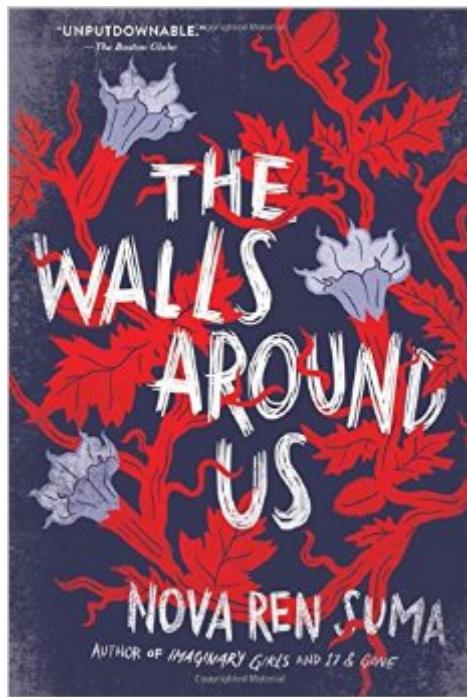


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# The Walls Around Us



## Synopsis

With evocative language, a shifting timeline and more than one unreliable narrator, Suma subtly explores the balance of power between the talented and the mediocre, the rich and the poor, the brave and the cowardly . . . To reveal more would be to uncover the bloody heart that beats beneath the floorboards of this urban-legend-tinged tale. "The New York Times" The Walls Around Us is a ghostly story of suspense told in two voices--one still living and one dead. On the outside, there's Violet, an eighteen-year-old ballerina days away from the life of her dreams when something threatens to expose the shocking truth of her achievement. On the inside, within the walls of a girls' juvenile detention center, there's Amber, locked up for so long she can't imagine freedom. Tying these two worlds together is Orianna, who holds the key to unlocking all the girls' darkest mysteries: What really happened on the night Orianna stepped between Violet and her tormentors? What really happened on two strange nights at Aurora Hills? Will Amber and Violet and Orianna ever get the justice they deserve--in this life or in another one? PRAISE FOR THE WALLS AROUND US: "A gorgeously written, spellbinding ghost story." "Chicago Tribune" "Unputdownable . . . the well-paced plot reveals guilt, innocence, and dark truths that will not stay hidden." "The Boston Globe" "Suma excels in creating surreal, unsettling stories with vivid language, and this psychological thriller is no exception. Along the way, Suma also makes a powerful statement about the ease with which guilt can be assumed and innocence awarded, not only in the criminal justice system, but in our hearts--in the stories we tell ourselves. A fabulous, frightening read." "Booklist, starred review" "The wholly realistic view of adolescents meeting the criminal justice system is touched at first with the slimmest twist of an otherworldly creepiness, escalating finally to the truly hair-raising and macabre. Eerie, painful and beautifully spine-chilling." "Kirkus Reviews, starred review" "This haunting and evocative tale of magical realism immerses readers in two settings that seem worlds apart . . . Suma's unflinchingly honest depiction of the potentially destructive force of female friendship and skillful blending of gritty realism with supernatural elements is reminiscent of Laurie Halse Anderson's Wintergirls, and the eerie mood she evokes is unnervingly potent." "School Library Journal, starred review" "In lyrical, authoritative prose, Suma weaves the disparate lives of [the] three girls into a single, spellbinding narrative that explores guilt, privilege, and complicity with fearless acuity. . . . The twisting, ghostly tale of Ori's life, death, and redemption is unsettling and entirely engrossing." "The Horn Book Magazine, starred review" "Gratifyingly disturbing . . . Suma craftily sets the two stories against one another, moving between Violet's fiercely grounded account and Amber's hauntingly destabilized one, enticing readers to figure out how the pieces

go together.â • â "Bulletin for the Center for Childrenâ ™s Books, starred review â œPowerful . . . The compelling narrative, written in scintillating prose and featuring incredibly real characters, brings the two stories together in an explosive finale with a supernatural twist that results in a satisfying resolution.â • â "VOYA, starred review Â â œGripping . . . Just try to put this down.â • â "Shelf Awareness for Readers, starred review Â â œA suspenseful tour de force, a ghost story of the best sort, the kind that creeps into your soul and haunts you.â • â "Libba Bray, author of *The Diviners* and *A Great and Terrible Beauty* Â Â â œFearlessly imagined and deliciously sinister, *The Walls Around Us* is hypnotic, luring the reader deeper and deeper into its original, shocking narrative.â • â "Michelle Hodkin, author of the *Mara Dyer* Trilogy Â â œWritten in luscious and deliciously creepy prose not easy to forget . . . This is a story about guilt and innocence, about secrets and how deep we let people into those places within us, and itâ ™s a story about how the past can define our present, even if we try desperately to keep that past under wraps. Put it on your radars now; this is an outstanding literary young adult novel more than worth the wait.â • â "Book Riot Â #1 Spring 2015 Kidsâ ™ Indie Next List Pick A Junior Library Guild Selection Â

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I have to be honest... when I got this ARC in the mail, I wasn't expecting much. I hadn't heard of the author before, and was only aware that this buzzy new YA book was supposed to shake its readers to the very core. To me, the cover design was both loud and tacky. Also, it didn't translate into any kind of mood or theme to prepare me for what I was about to read....but then, I started reading. It was difficult to get into, at first. Part of my frustration was being unable to get a firm footing as far as

the two settings of the book: a dance studio and its surrounding world, and a juvenile detention facility, both in modern day upstate New York. But pinpointing that, along with trying to untangle how the three narrators: Amber, Orianna, and Violet are related to each other took some work, and without having read any of Suma's other writing, or having a clear understanding of what this book set out to deliver, well, I wasn't sure if it was worth it or not. All of a sudden, however, somewhere around 100 pages in, which is usually the point when the last few stragglers unsure of whether or not they want to be reading a book if they're waffling about it usually throw in the towel and decide to be done, that feeling dissolved. All I can say is, similar to the feeling Violet, a teenage ballet dancer, describes after she's done dancing and a hush falls over the audience and nobody is clamoring for the exits, I just sat there, probably for a good 20 minutes after I finished reading this book... simply being quiet and sad, moved, confused, and awed by the journey on which this author whom I hadn't fully trusted had taken me, despite my doubts. To say that her two other books (*Imaginary Girls* and *17 & Gone*) didn't get added to my wishlist so much as flew onto it would not be at all incorrect. I don't want to say too much, because I don't want to ruin the mystique the book held for me, as I came to it from a place of almost completely no context, but I do want to do two things: urge anyone who likes YA to read it when it comes out in March, and reassure those readers that, if they share the feelings I had, there are many valid reasons to push through until the 100 page mark, or so, and, that if you do, you won't even notice the next hundred plus pages as they whip by. This book has a profoundly moving story, beautiful imagery and symbolism, and gives a realistically graphic portrayal of life in a juvenile detention facility. But, more than that, Suma opens up new worlds to her readers, who may not realize for quite some time exactly that they intertwine more than they collide. The publisher has been describing it as "*Orange Is The New Black Swan*," and that totally fits. That said, even after reading the book and thus understanding the intended meaning behind the cover design, I still think it sucks.

It's so hard to know exactly what to do with this book. Bottom line: I didn't like it, and won't read it again. Explaining why will be difficult, though. It was not the supernatural aspects - I loved the ghost story aspect and think that it could have been used more fully. It's not the writing - Nova Ren Suma's writing sings off the page, and is achingly beautiful throughout the twists and turns of the story. Maybe that's it. The story. The ending. The millions of questions I still have, and the feeling that I wasted a whole day on this book which left me feeling extremely unsatisfied. But let's start at the beginning. *The Walls Around Us* follow the narratives of Violet and Amber, writing from what seems like different times - one before a tragedy occurs and the other after the tragedy has already

occurred. They are separated by one degree: they both know and care about Orianne, a ballerina sent to a juvenile detention facility for double murder. The ending just ruined it all. It didn't make sense, and it feels as if it's pulled out of a hat. A deus ex machina without the deus. In the end, despite beautiful writing and a gripping story line, the author gets in over her head, trying to be too clever, and I left the novel with a bad taste in my mouth and a grimace on my face. I think this is one of those things where you'll either love it or hate it, and I didn't love it. But maybe you will, so go ahead and try it out

Ahoy there me mateys! This book was lyrical and confusing and a good read. I am not sure where I learned about this book. The story centers around the murder of two fifteen-year-olds. The book switches points of view between two people: 1) Violet, an 18 year old ballet dancer; and 2) Amber, a prisoner in Aurora Hills juvenile detention center. Both points of view discuss among other things, a girl named Orianna. The book is confusing because the plot does not follow a straight timeline and the two girls' perspectives also contradict each other. I had no real idea of what the premise of the book was and so for most of my read I was trying to figure out what the point was. I mean, I had figured out who dunnit pretty early on. But why we were in the heads of these two particular characters was a little more difficult. That said, I found Amber's story of juvi prison life and her own reasons for being in there to be extremely interesting. Her perspective gives us a look at life inside the center. I loved everything around the center's library. Her viewpoint of the other girls at the center is fascinating. The other girls at the center seemed both unique and real. It is quite a complex little microcosm. Violet's sections seem to be about the relationship that she and Ori had and what that meant to her. While she was not a nice person, her voice was engaging. Having worked with ballerinas before, the dance portion of this book felt very real if overdramatized for the purposes of the novel. This book was not a quick read for me. I had a hard time convincing myself to go forward because of the structuring of the narrative. But the voice of Amber in particular kept drawing me back in. The writing was beautiful in many ways. I wanted to know how everything would tie together. When I eventually got to the ending, it surprised me. I am not sure if I liked it. I am not sure that I didn't. I am however glad that I finished it. I can't guarantee that everyone will like this novel. But if you read it, I would love to hear your take on it . . . If you liked this review, see me others on [...]

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