



The Runaway Wife: A powerful and gritty saga set in 1920's London

Rosie Clarke

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Love, marriage, obsession, betrayal and treachery in 1920's London - a powerful and gritty saga perfect for fans of Kitty Neale, Josephine Cox and Rosie Goodwin.

The hedonism of London in the roaring 20's is a world away from Annabel Tarleton's ordinary country existence. Until a chance meeting with the charming Richard Hansen at a society ball changes her life for ever.

Swept off her feet by the dashing Richard, and his renowned fortune, Annabel soon realises all that all that glitters isn't gold. Her bid for freedom has come at a terrible price and she finds herself trapped inside a marriage that behind closed doors is cruel and brutal.

Annabel has no choice but to flee, and will do everything to save herself, and her unborn baby, from destitution. But the very rich and very powerful expect to get what they want - and Richard wants only one thing - Annabel...

The Runaway Wife: A powerful and gritty saga set in 1920's London Details

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Rosie Clarke

From Reader Review The Runaway Wife: A powerful and gritty saga set in 1920's London for online ebook

Kristina says

The Runaway Wife by Rosie Clarke takes readers back in time to just before Christmas in 1929. Annabel Tarleton's family lost most of their money in the recent stock market crash thanks to investments made by her deceased father. Annabel is expected by her mother to marry a well-to-do gentleman and take her place in society like her mother and generations of women before her. At a dance, Annabel encounters Richard Hansen. Richard is handsome, mysterious and has a bad boy reputation which attracts Annabel. Richard, though, states he is not the marrying type. Annabel gets an invitation to spend time at Kendlebury Hall with her friend, Georgie Barrington. While there Annabel meets Paul Keifer (a printer) and they spend time together. Paul soon proposes to Annabel, but she knows her domineering and critical mother will not approve of the match. She turns him down and returns home. Annabel encounters Richard again at a dance where Annabel has indulged in too much champagne and she finds herself in a compromising position. After a quick engagement, Annabel finds herself married to Richard. She soon discovers why people warned her away from him. One night after Richard is particularly cruel, Annabel escapes and hopes that he will not find her (and follow through on his threats). Will Annabel ever be free of Richard?

The Runaway Wife took me back in time to the late 1920s in England. I found The Runaway Wife to contain good writing and nicely developed characters. I like that there are a variety of characters from the different classes (not everyone was Annabel's social class). Annabel is a woman who has been controlled by her mother her whole life. She would like to pursue job opportunities, but her mother is pressuring her to marry (and take her place in society). We get to follow Annabel as she gets married and finds that she has traded her controlling mother for a domineering, abusive husband. It did take me a couple of chapters to get into the story, but then I was hooked. I wanted to find out what would happen to Annabel. There are a couple of slow spots (every book has them), but overall the pace is steady (picks up pace later in the book). I found the story to be realistic (gritty). The violence that Annabel suffers is described as well as other cruel acts performed by Richard. Rosie Clarke captured the era with her descriptions of the locale, the language used by the characters, hairstyles (women cutting off their long hair) and the clothing (hemlines were on the rise). She portrays the changing roles of women, the nightlife (drinking and dancing at nightclubs), the rich finding themselves without money (thanks to the stock market crash), life as a politician's wife and the big estates in trouble. One of the lessons in The Runaway Wife is about choices. Every choice we make takes us down a path. It is important that we learn from our mistakes, so we can make better decisions in the future. I found the ending to be satisfying. I like it when I find myself smiling when I finish a story. Find yourself back in time and experiencing a wide range of emotions in Rosie Clarke's The Runaway Wife.

Debra says

I read for a honest review for NetGalley. I loved Downtown Abbey when it was on TV, when I picked this book out, I thought it was going to be a little like it, so far from it. The characters were interesting we have Annabel whose family lost their life savings due to the market crashing in the 20s like they did here in the U.S but, I guess over in England it hits the social classes a little differently, you have to marry a prince or someone like Richard who is rich, behind doors he's not only cruel but an abuser as well, and Annabel flees for her life, to get as far away from Richard as she can. If it didn't have that aspect I think I would've loved it

more.

Debbie Southwell says

This is the second book I have read by Rosie Clarke (The first being A Wedding at Mulberry Lane which I loved) and although I enjoyed this one I found it a bit of a slow burner.

This is set in the 1920s and the main character is Annabel whose Mother wants her to find herself a rich Husband. Annabel does find a rich Husband, but he is also a monster, one who she needs to run away from. I found the characters well described and loved the twist at the end in regards to Richard's behaviour. I also found myself holding my breath in parts, which to me is an indication that I am absorbed in the book. I felt Rosie set the scene well and could easily imagine living during this period. I would recommend this book because it is worth getting through the slow start as it's a really good read. Thank you to Netgalley and Aria for providing me with a review copy of this book in return for an honest review which is completely my own opinion.

Megan says

I received an e-ARC of this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

This is the story about a young English woman in the 1920s who is pressured by her mother and society to marry well in order to help provide for her family whose once proud estate is slowly crumbling due to some bad investments that her Dad made before he passed and the crash of the Stock Market.

She finds love while visiting a lovely Inn with a dear friend but alas things don't go as planned because Belle feels the pressure to marry a man who is well off but the man she meets whose name is Paul is not rich by any standards though does well on her own.

Forced into a marriage with a man named Richard Jensen whose mood is mercurial at best when he forces her into a compromising position and takes advantage of her after too many drinks, it's certainly a rock start to a marriage that her Mother approves of but her dearest friends tried to warn her away from. He's essentially a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Belle may have all the comforts of money, goods and beautiful surroundings but it's a poor substitute for how mood her husband is, how emotionally and physically abusive he is and generally a terrible person to be around for her well being.

When he does a terrible act to her one night in a fit of rage, Belle knows that she needs to get away from the man before he possibly kills her and manages to find a temporary place of refuge. Afraid Richard will find her, she tries her best to lay low while trying to heal from her ordeal and figure out what she wants to do with her life.

Just as she's starting to enjoy her quiet life helping out at a hotel, working for employers who are very kind and generous, her past is about to come rudely knocking at the door. Belle will have to make some tough decisions, rely on people in unlikely places and just maybe take a leap at having the life she's always wanted

to.

I would just like to point out that there may be a trigger warning concerning abuse and rape but overall it was a very interesting book. It was an interesting story on how quickly someone can change in a matter of months and that sometimes you are much stronger than you initially believed.

An interesting mix of family dynamics, 1920s England, finding love, the pressures of trying to marry well and how appearances can be deceiving. This was not a light book but I really appreciate how the author handled the dark points of the novel without going into detail.

Kathy E says

A very good entertaining read, Annabel showed how women of her time in upper class society stood up to domestic abuse. She proved to be a very gritty brave lady. I was so glad that she got the right man in the end. I thought I recognised Jessie in the book as the Jessie in Rosie Clarke's Jessie's Promise. The Runaway Wife is another well written book. I look forward to more books from Rosie Clarke, I have read all but one that one is to come which is A Wedding in Mulberry Lane. The Emma trilogy are also other excellent reads all I can say is keep the books coming Rosie.

Lady Fembo says

What a page Turner

Wonderful story about the high class family that all they have is the name and pride. The husband died leaving very little to live on and the wife Lady Tartleton expects the children especially the two eldest who are twins Ben and Belle to Mary into money to help out with the running of the house. She will do anything to see to it that Belle gets married as soon as possible. Indeed she marries into money which unfortunately came with a big price to pay

Grace J Reviewerlady says

I love a good saga, as well as being rather fond of a 'period' read, and this one ticks all the boxes – and then some!

Set in the period between the two world wars, this is a tale which acknowledges the changes in Britain, and how difficult life was for young women whose mama's were set in their ways and refused to move with the times. Far more important than happiness was what 'society' thought and woe betide any offspring who didn't bow down to their parents' wishes! The story centres around Annabel, a young lady who would love nothing more than to ignore the shackles of expectation and follow her own path, but years of being raised by a dominant mother who demands conformity puts immense pressure on her.

Annabel's life doesn't pan out the way she would have expected, and we are privy to what happens behind closed doors as well as what the rest of the world sees. Finding herself trapped in an unhappy

marriage but free from her mother's influence, she begins to find her courage. What follows is a gritty, if realistic, read which I enjoyed very much. With sadness and happiness spread over the pages, this is one book I really didn't want to lay aside.

The Runaway Wife is an exceptionally well written novel, true to the period with a wide variety of characters from all walks of life and encompassing all the ups and downs of daily life as well as looking at the wider picture. I am a confirmed fan of this author, loving her writing and finding this truly enjoyable, and definitely one I would recommend to lovers of a good saga set in the twenties.

Barb Klein says

"The Runaway Wife" by Rosie Clarke is a story set in 1920's London amidst the angst of The Great Depression. Annabelle Tarleton's family desperately needs money to keep their estate soluble. The Tarleton matriarch is an unfeeling, selfish woman more enamored by her status in the gentry than in the happiness of her children. Annabelle's brother Ben is expected to marry a bitchy woman for her money. Annabelle is being coerced into marrying an up and coming Member of Parliament...with lots of money. Hetty, their younger sister, is determined to escape her mother's tyrannical moods and find her own way.

Annabelle finds her love, but she knows that her mother will not see that he is good enough for her and sends him away. She then marries the pompous ass with the money and is sorry from the first day of their marriage. Richard is a brutal man who loves to hurt women. After one too many beatings, Annabelle flees, and must hide herself because of his obsession with her. She knows that he will kill her eventually.

Given the story line of this novel, I kept reading to see if all would be well with Annabelle and her loved ones. I must say that I think the story plodded along in too many places. The main character was so indecisive in the face of fear of her husband, that I felt irritated with her. In fact, I was irritated with many of the characters and their seemingly helplessness in the control of their own lives. If you want a possibly true depiction of what life among the upper crust in London was during the depressive years, then you might like this book. Though I do enjoy novels giving glimpses of the past, this one was not my favorite.

I downloaded a Kindle copy of this novel from NetGalley.com in return for my honest review. You can find this review on my blog at <https://wp.me/p2pjIt-tF>. Other reviews can be found at <http://imhookedonbooks.wordpress.com>.

Breakaway Reviewers says

Spousal abuse is not a modern evil.

Annabel Tarleton is expected to marry money to save the fortune of her family, but she falls in love with an ordinary man. To help her family she agrees to stop seeing the love of her life. At a ball, she is put in an awkward position by charming Richard Fortescue. She agrees to marry him to save her reputation and her family.

Not long after their marriage, she realises she is married to a bully and rapist. It becomes imperative she must hide from this cruel man and save her own life and that of her unborn baby.

This was a good book with a touch of chick lit but also the horrible and all too familiar case of spousal abuse, which is still so pertinent today. Who can a woman talk and go to when she is in such a situation?

One of my only criticisms is that, with a little persuasion, Annabel told just about everyone about the abuse. Surely, in the 1920s when this book is set, that sort of trouble was very much brushed under the carpet and not discussed?

Overall a very good book which has you reading just one chapter. I enjoyed the book and will read more by Ms Clarke

Chester

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.

Kathleen Gray says

Remember as you read this historical novel that Annabelle is an abused wife in the 1920s, when women did not have a lot of options- if they had any at all. It doesn't matter if one is at the top or the bottom of the socioeconomic scale. Richard is a truly rotten spouse. My quibble with this is the romance with Paul, who is an interesting character in his own right but it did seem a tad contrived. That didn't stop me, of course, from reading straight through this. Thanks to Netgalley for the ARC. This is for fans of period fiction.

Joanne says

The Runaway Wife was a book which I was really looking forward to reading. Firstly because it's written by Rosie Clarke who is fast becoming one of my favourite authors in the saga genre and secondly it was set in the 1920s and 1930s a period of history I love reading about for all the glitz and glamour. It's a book which didn't disappoint and was devoured in just a couple of days as I tend to get lost in Ms. Clarke's writing. Annabel and her family are feeling the pressure of money troubles after their father lost most of their money in bad investments during the stock market crash. They still have their home but its at the point of falling down around them. Annabel is a woman with intelligence, tenacity and charm longs to go out into the world and find a job. But her mother has other ideas Annabel must marry well like her brother Ben and secure some money for the family, Annabel has too much of a sense of duty to disobey her mother. Which is how she finds herself married to Richard Hansen, instead of the man she has fallen in love with working class Paul Keifer, a printer. Richard is a man who is rich, handsome and completely charming on the outside, much approved by Annabel's mother. Alone in their marriage Annabel soon learns Richard is a cruel and violent man who will stop at nothing to get his own way. Fearing for her own life Annabel decides she's had enough and runs away...after all any life is better than one with Richard.

Annabel is a great character, she hard-working, honest and has any easy nature which seems to put those around totally at ease and I loved how much she changed throughout the novel. At the beginning she has her hopes and dreams but ultimately is controlled by her mother. After her marriage to Richard begins to go wrong she grows in independence and is determined to make her own decisions about her future.

I found The Runaway Wife to be a realistic and well-rounded portrayal of life in the roaring twenties. Every

detail has been thought of and described from the glamourous costumes and hairstyles of the rich and famous to the everyday details of making the families bread on the farm. Written at a time when society was beginning to be more equal with the rich people facing the losses of the stock market and women demanding their right to vote this was a very exciting and uneasy time in history and I think Rosie Clarke has manged to capture this atmosphere perfectly in her novel. It's a book which brings together all classes of people with this well written and gripping story. I loved that is was a bit grittier than your usual saga featuring some more unpleasant aspects of life.

I really enjoyed *The Runaway Wife* and think anyone who has an interest in this period in history will enjoy this book. Thank you to Rosie Clarke for writing another brilliant story and thank you to the publishers Aria for inviting me to be part of the blog tour.

Curious Reader says

This book is about domestic abuse. I couldn't stop myself from comparing this book with the other bodice ripper historical romance. No, this is not a bodice ripper. But the behavior of Richard at the start was so much like the heroes from bodice rippers. Then Richard showed his true colors. He abused Annabel. She had to run away. Richard is not a hero here, he is the villain. I was intrigued with Annabel's life.

Note: I received a free e-copy of the book via Net Galley in exchange for an honest review. Special thanks to the author and publisher for giving me a chance to read it.

Kirsten says

Belle is caught in a web of lies, deceit, trickery, and a yearning for love. Born to the privileged class, both Belle and her twin brother are told they must marry for money as Belle's dad lost everything in the stock market crash. Along comes Richard a man of cruel violence and ambition and conspires with Belle's mom to force a marriage. But Belle really loves Paul, an independent business man. Married to one man who is vicious, loving another that Fate might not let her have, Belle finally decides to be the title character: *The Runaway Wife*. Thoughtfully written, slow plot, well-developed main character with rather flat support characters, it is kind of mixed in its merits. However, I enjoyed this balance of love with a woman who learns to be who she is and develop independence in a 1920's England.

Bethany says

The Runaway Wife is a dark coming of age story set in 1920's England. Annabelle has had a small existence under her mother's thumb, constantly pushed to marry and marry well. When she meets the handsome and wealthy Richard Fortescue at a ball, her life changes. Annabelle is pushed into a quick marriage, discovering that Richard is not what he seems. She experiences abuse at the hands of her new husband and is exposed to the seedy underbelly of London in the 1920's.

Meanwhile, her unsuitable former flame Paul is waiting in the wings. A working class man with a good

heart, Annabelle has fallen for him. But how can she be free of her violent, dangerous husband? This book paints a vivid picture of England during this time period and explores the opposing pulls on those of the upper classes as social norms and gender roles were in flux.

The pacing of the novel was a little off for me. The story was slow to start and we get some unnecessary chapters- particularly frustrating when the title of the book makes it clear that there is supposed to be conflict! However, once things finally started happening it was a fast-paced read that kept me engaged through most of it. There are a lot of great side characters that add charm and dimension to the world and I grew to really like Annabelle and feel for her. On the other hand, I do have some complaints.

****SPOILER WARNING****

First of all, this story falls into a trope that is a pet peeve of mine- villifying a spouse in order to make infidelity seem like an acceptable or even positive choice. Now, don't get me wrong. Annabelle is in an incredibly destructive, abusive relationship and she **SHOULD** absolutely leave her husband. However, that doesn't make it okay for her to engage in a physical relationship with Paul while she is still married. It drives me crazy when books use this tactic to justify character choices in that way.

I also did think that Annabelle was a bit too naive in the later part of the book. Early on it made sense, but after all she has been through, it seems unlikely for her to brush things off as easily as she seems to. I'm referring to instances such as suddenly deciding Richard is no longer a threat, agreeing to a police interview without a lawyer against advice, and assuming the best when Paul is arrested. By that point in the book it was a little irritating and seemed out of character.

Overall, I enjoyed the book and thought it was a fairly well-written historical novel, but definitely had some specific complaints. I was sent a copy of this book by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Diana says

The Runaway Wife by Rosie Clarke attracted my attention because of the setting and time period. I enjoy historical fiction and the theme of marriage in books. The story is set in the 1920s. Readers are introduced to Annabel, a young single woman of what was then known as 'marriageable age'. Annabel's mother is keen to have her get married soon and is specific to the fact that she needs a wealthy suitor. Richard seems to possess this attribute and is also described as being quite attractive. However, it soon becomes apparent that he wasn't all that he seemed at first.

As I already mentioned, the time period really interested me. I like reading about life as it was in the past. In this book, gender inequality was a predominant theme. Sex before marriage was treated quite differently between men and women. It seemed that women had to remain chaste if they wished to get married in future but men didn't have to meet this requirement. Women with children outside wedlock were treated as outcasts. The different portrayals of women and men were sad though eye-opening.

Apart from the gender inequities, there were also themes of marriage and in particular abuse. Annabel is a likeable character and I kept turning the pages because of her. I was curious to know whether she would get out of the abusive marriage and how she would do it especially given the kind of society she was in.

Though I do enjoy a good historical fiction, this one wasn't for me. Romance as portrayed in the book didn't interest me much and I ended up skimming through a few sections. Love triangles are also a pet-peeve of mine and so that didn't help my connection to the story. However, the writing of this book is great so I think readers who don't mind romance in their historical fiction will love *The Runaway Wife* by Rosie Clarke.
