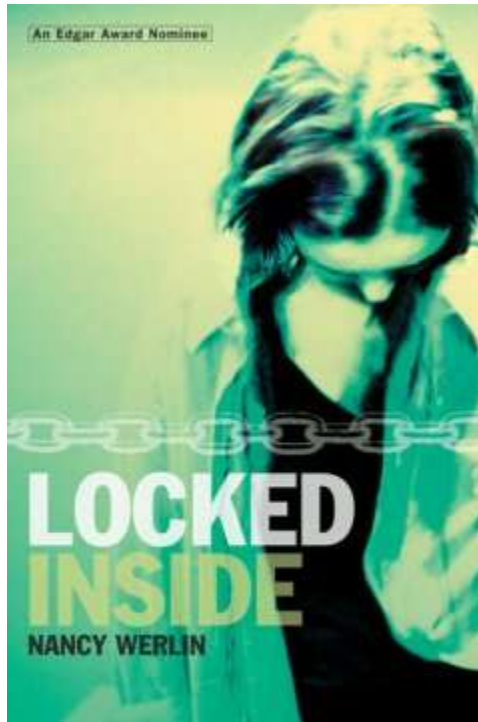


Locked Inside by Nancy Werlin



What's It About?

As the orphaned daughter of a wildly successful inspirational singer/author, Marnie Skyedottir stands to inherit great wealth. But until then, Marnie has to survive a dreary life in private school. She endures by escaping into an online role-playing game as much as possible and steering clear of the other students.

So when Marnie is kidnapped by someone who also claims to be Skye's daughter, she is worried. With her reclusive tendencies, will anyone even know she's gone? And will her online gaming skills be of any help to her in this real-life drama?

- An Edgar Award finalist
- “A thriller for thoughtful readers.” — *Kirkus*

Inspiration

Completely, totally, and fiercely, I love Marnie Skyedottir, the protagonist of *Locked Inside*. While I was writing this novel, whenever Marnie would do something particularly Marnie-like, I'd jump up from my desk chair and dance around. Oh, or cry.

So if anyone dares dislike my Marnie, or wishes her ill in any way, be warned: I shall push you down the airshaft into the Lair of the Rubble-Eater, where you will meet a terrible fate. (See book.) And there'll be no Elf to be your companion. And— worst of all—no Yertle. Take that! Ha!

That is all I have to say at this time. Carry on.

Discussion Questions

(By Lynn Rutan)

As you read:

- We learn in the first sentence that Marnie is worth \$235 million dollars. Does this give you an expectation of how Marnie will behave? Does your opinion change after reading the first chapter?

- In Chapter 2, Marnie comes to the aid of a tablemate, Dorothea, who is mocked by Jenna. Marnie rarely speaks at dinner and she clearly scorns Dorothea. Why do you think she got involved and what do we learn about Marnie from this exchange?
- The Dean and Mrs. Fisher tell Marnie they think she is addicted to her computer, a charge Marnie thinks is ridiculous. What do you think?
- Marnie breaks her own steadfast rule and signs her name in an email to Elf. Why do you think she does this and why is she so dismayed when he figures out her name?
- Marnie often reminds herself of one of Skye's dictums, "You should only alienate folks when you mean and want to do it." Since Marnie seems to have made a practice of alienating people, do you think she wants people to dislike her? Why would she want to do that?
- Authors use a device called foreshadowing to present hints and clues as to what may happen later. What clues can you find that suggest that Marnie senses something is wrong before she is abducted?
- Marnie, locked in the basement room, converses in her mind with the cool voice of the Sorceress Llewellyne, even disagreeing with her about tactics. Where does the voice of the Sorceress come from and how does this dialog affect Marnie?
- Leah Slight tells Marnie that they are half sisters, sharing the same mother. Marnie thinks, "She is nuts," but at the same time she sees a hint of Skye in Leah's eyes. Do you think Leah could be Skye's daughter or is she crazy?
- When Elf and Marnie are trapped in the basement, Elf says, "Do you think you could remember for more than five minutes that I'm on your side?" Marnie thinks, "I can't afford that." Why does that thought flash into Marnie's mind despite being attracted to Elf?
- After Marnie and Elf are rescued, Max sets up elaborate security arrangements. With Leah dead, do you think this is necessary? Do you think Marnie's emotional recovery will be helped or hindered?
- Several days after Marnie returns to school, Jenna joins her at breakfast. Marnie makes an annoying comment and Jenna says, "You never change, do you? Even a near-death experience doesn't change you." Marnie *has* changed, so why did she treat Jenna this way?
- Marnie keeps dreaming about the Rubble-eater. What does this tell us about Marnie's state of mind?
- When Marnie gets her computer back, she visits the Paliopolis game site and realizes this will be her last time there. Since she has enjoyed playing the game so much, why is she stopping?
- Frank and Marnie first acknowledge their feelings for each other online in the Paliopolis chat room. What do we learn about these two characters from this scene?

After you finish the book:

- Locked Inside was written in 2000. Now we have social networks like Facebook, IM and text messaging. Do you think the electronic world is more addictive today, or has our culture changed in the way we interact?
- Marnie used her online game to avoid issues and problems in her life. During her captivity, she relied on her gaming strategies and online persona to develop an escape plan. Do you think she was drawing on her gaming skills or using the game once more to avoid dealing completely with her situation?
- Leah Slaight is an important character in this story, but we never know much about her motivations. Describe what you think her motivations for this desperate act were?
- The voice of Sorceress Llewellyne helped Marnie to cope with a terrifying situation and stayed in her mind after the rescue. Do you think the Sorceress's voice will always be with Marnie?
- We only see Skye through other people's eyes and stories but from what we learn of her, are she and Marnie alike in any way? Are there differences?
- Mystery writers often use "red herrings" or misleading clues. Can you identify any red herrings in this story?
- Marnie is the child of a celebrity. How did that fact shape her personality?
- Frank Delgado, the Elf, appears as a character in Nancy Werlin's earlier book, *The Killer's Cousin*. If you have read that book, think about what you learned about Frank in both books. Was there anything that surprised you about his actions in *Locked Inside*?

Publication Information

Age 13 and up.

First USA publication 2000 by Random House.

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Translations: Spanish, Dutch

Reviews and Awards

- Nominated for the Edgar Award for Best Young Adult Mystery published in 2000
- Texas Lone Star reading list, 2001-2002
- Tennessee Volunteer State Book Award master list, 2003-2004
- South Carolina Young Adult Book Award list, 2002-2003
- Indiana Young Hoosiers Book Award List, 2003-2004
- A Capitol Choice Noteworthy Book for Children, 2000
- Pennsylvania Young Adult recommended list, 2004-2005
- *CosmoGirl* magazine book club pick

- “A compelling thriller . . . This one will gain readers by word of mouth.”—*Booklist*
- “Intelligent, reflective adolescent characters and gripping suspense.” —*Kliatt*
- “A meaty tale of self-discovery . . . A thriller for thoughtful readers.” —*Kirkus*
- “Entertaining adventure aplenty . . . postmodern romance at its finest.” —*The Bulletin*
- “Another fresh and engrossing thriller with psychological depth underlying its clever plot twists.” —*Amazon.com*