



Bone

By Fae Myenne Ng



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Bone By Fae Myenne Ng

"We were a family of three girls. By Chinese standards, that wasn't lucky. In Chinatown, everyone knew our story. Outsiders jerked their chins, looked at us, shook their heads. We heard things."

In this profoundly moving novel, Fae Myenne Ng takes readers into the hidden heart of San Francisco's Chinatown, to the world of one family's honor, their secrets, and the lost bones of a "paper father." Two generations of the Leong family live in an uneasy tension as they try to fathom the source of a brave young girl's sorrow.

Oldest daughter Leila tells the story: of her sister Ona, who has ended her young, conflicted life by jumping from the roof of a Chinatown housing project; of her mother Mah, a seamstress in a garment shop run by a "Chinese Elvis"; of Leon, her father, a merchant seaman who ships out frequently; and the family's youngest, Nina, who has escaped to New York by working as a flight attendant. With Ona and Nina gone, it is up to Leila to lay the bones of the family's collective guilt to rest, and find some way to hope again.

Fae Myenne Ng's luminous debut explores what it means to be a stranger in one's own family, a foreigner in one's own neighborhood--and whether it's possible to love a place that may never feel quite like home.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This remarkable first novel chronicles a believable journey through pain to healing, exposing the emotional scars--the bleeding hearts and aching kinship bones--of its characters as they try to survive. The Leong family, based in San Francisco's Chinatown, includes three daughters: educator/community-relations specialist Leila, the narrator; restaurant hostess Ona, whose troubled life ends tragically in early adulthood; and Nina, who eventually takes off for New York, where she works as a flight attendant. Heading the clan (in an idiosyncratic, maddening fashion) are mother Mah, a seamstress who owns a baby clothing store, and father Leon, a merchant seaman who lives apart from his wife in an SRO-type hotel, keeping his "Going-Back-to-China Money" in a brown bag. Ng summons a quiet urgency from simple language, both in her physical descriptions (such as that of the office of the Hoy Sun Ning Yung Benevolent Association) and in her depictions of the characters' seesawing thoughts and feelings as they move between the Chinese- and English-speaking cultures. She ventures outside the Leong household less often than one might wish, but she lucidly renders those secondary characters, notably Leila's beau, Mason Louie, a mechanic who strives to understand and embrace her relatives but also hopes to convince her to establish a separate family with him. Ng reveals his insight into Leila's moodiness thus: "He says my anger is like flooding--too much gas, killing the engine." With such brilliant details, and in the larger picture of how death and life inform one another, this writer makes a stunning debut. Major ad/promo; author tour.

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From Library Journal

In sharp contrast to the overdramatized lives of Chinese Americans in Amy Tan's work, Ng's simply written first novel is totally without sensationalism. Yet because her characters are depicted so realistically, the reader cannot but be moved by the hopes, grief, and quarrels of two generations of Chinese Americans in San Francisco's Chinatown. Mah, who has worked hard all her life in garment sweatshops, finally is able to own her baby-clothing store. Her husband, Leon, who used to be a merchant seaman, worked two shifts in ships' laundry rooms to provide for his family. Nevertheless, the family is torn apart after Ona, the middle daughter, jumps from the tallest building in Chinatown. The bones of contention and bones of inheritance come together in great turmoil as Nina, the youngest daughter, leaves Chinatown for New York City and then Leila, the oldest, marries and moves out to the suburbs. Leon, the paper son to old Leung, fails to keep his promise to take Leung's bones back to China. Thus, a family's tragedy is cast in greater historical context, and the reader is rewarded with a rich reading experience. Recommended for all libraries.

- *Cherry W. Li, Los Angeles*

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Review

"An incantory first novel . . . [Ms. Ng] is blessed with a poet's gift for metaphor and a reporter's eye for detail." *Michiko Kakutani, New York Times*

"Brutal and poignant, dreamy and gritty, specific to its place and resonant in its implication about what it means to be an American." *Seattle Times/Post-Intelligence*

"An extraordinary first novel . . . A hopeful, charming, and surprisingly joyous work." *Chicago Tribune*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Elizabeth Brock:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a go walking, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or read a book allowed Bone? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can smarter than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have different opinion?

Anthony Wood:

As people who live in typically the modest era should be up-date about what going on or details even knowledge to make all of them keep up with the era that is certainly always change and make progress. Some of you maybe may update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice to suit your needs but the problems coming to anyone is you don't know which one you should start with. This Bone is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, because book serves what you want and wish in this era.

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