



Bone Broth

Lyndsey Ellis

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Lyndsey Ellis's thoughtful multigenerational novel *Bone Broth* is set during the days of the Ferguson protests.

Justine and Wesley moved to the suburbs to escape the traps set for residents of the Pruitt-Igoe projects. But decades later, Wesley has died, and their once up-and-coming neighborhood is no longer considered desirable. It's a change that Justine resents—just as she resents the protests that come in the wake of Michael Brown's murder, which are a painful reminder of the idealism of her youth.

That idealism transferred to her eldest daughter, Raynah, an Oakland activist who inherited her father's house. Though Raynah is growing weary of uphill battles herself, she decides to transform the residence into a social justice museum. In the process, questions about her mother's involvement in covert antiracist actions decades previous arise, complicating their already tenuous relationship.

Meanwhile, Raynah's sister Lois wrestles with the return of Ahmad, her childhood sweetheart and the father of Quentin, who was also murdered. Their politician brother, Theo, works to hide the truth about his sexual orientation, wanting most to belong. Theirs are family troubles that not even Justine's famed bone broth—a delectable mixture with the power to both heal and poison—can assuage.

As much as this is a book that is set in motion by acts of entrenched racism and state-supported violence against Black bodies, it is most a story about family wounds. Even after he's gone, Wesley's internalized misogyny has reaching consequences for his wife and children. It represents freedoms lost, loves departed, secrets buried, and artifices that carry a high cost. Ellis writes with a keen sense of history and a discerning eye, revealing the family's triumphs and heartbreaks at an intermittent, wrenching pace.

Bone Broth is a nuanced, compassionate story set during troubled times.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (May / June 2021)

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