

Plot summary of bone by fae myenne ng

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In the novel BONE we are introduced to a Chinese family living San Francisco's Chinatown where they find themselves grieving from the recent suicide death of the three daughters Ona Leong. The emphasis is on how the family grieves after their loss, their cultural clashes between the Chinese way of life and the American way of life, the struggles they faced living inside and outside china town, how they feel out of place, not quite Chinese but yet very Chinese, not quite American but yet, very American. The family deals with Ona's death with silent, Chinatowns were created by the legal barriers that prevented assimilation, in addition to housing and labor discrimination which kept Chinese from being able to work and live outside Chinatowns. Leon had entered America via Angel Island with false documents in search of the prosperity. After the San Francisco earthquake in 1906 all immigration records were destroyed which provided the loophole in which Leon paid grandpa Leong five thousand dollars to be his paper son, in return he promised to send his bones back to china.

Leon was a merchant marine who went out on voyages for about 41 days at a time, he had a heart full of hope who believed in that prosperity and happiness were cultivated from relentless hard work. Mah was the mother of Leila, Ona, and Nina. She was married to Leon, and worked as a seamstress in a sewing sweatshop. She had an affair with Tommie Hom the sweatshop owner and landlord 10 years ago during one of Leon's vayages. The novel is narrated through the memory accounts of Leila who is the oldest of three, and Leon's step daughter. Leila's biological father is Lyman Fu who left for Australia when Mah was still pregnant and whom she has never met in person. Leila works at a school where Chinese immigrant children are the

predominant ethnicity and is the bridge between teachers and parents. Leila thinks that she is somewhat responsible for Ona's death, and so does Mah. Leila does not want to tell her Mah about her marriage to Mason, her long-term boyfriend and mechanic by trade because it was not in line with traditional Chinese culture. Ona committed suicide by jumping off a 13th story apartment building in Chinatown right before the Chinese New Year and was the middle daughter. Leon was out at sea when she was born and Mah named her after him which means "peace" in their dialect. Her relationship to Leon seems to be the closest of out of the three daughters.

An example of their father-daughter relationship can be viewed when Leila tells the story about the time Ona got caught shoplifting at Woolworth's, and how Leon took them for ice-cream afterwards and told them: "Don't tell Mah. Our secret. It was only a little thing. Only lipstick." (137). Ona fell in love with Osvaldo, who was the son of Leon's business partner that went south. Everyone in Chinatown loved Ona, and Ona loved Chinatown as well and didn't feel comfortable outside Chinatown. Nina is the youngest daughter and her way of dealing with what she believes is a dysfunctional family is by moving as far as possible from Chinatown, New York. After Ona's death the family is left dealing with grief in silence, no one talked about it or acknowledge it. The sewing ladies are a group of Mah's coworkers from the sewing shop, they come to aid when Mah needs them as described by Leila "The sewing ladies knew, in ways I was still watchin and learning from, how to draw out Mah's sadness and then take it away." (102).

In contrast, they are also responsible for spreading rumors and gossip around Chinatown. New Years the Chinese new year marks an important time of celebration and beginning, which made it difficult for the family to celebrate and welcome incoming good luck because there was the sadness of Ona's death around that time. They believed that attending a funeral so close to the festive days will allow death to follow them into the new year.