

Rule of the Bone : A Novel

By Russell Banks

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
Rule of the Bone : A Novel By Russell Banks

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Rule of the Bone : A Novel By Russell Banks Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A change in setting halfway through this ambitious novel by the respected author of *Continental Drift* and *Affliction* diminishes its effectiveness to a certain degree. The first half, a starkly realistic, powerful portrait of a troubled adolescent whose life has spiraled out of control, packs a visceral punch. Flunking out of school and already hooked on drugs, the 14-year-old narrator, secretly molested by his stepfather, emotionally abandoned by his weak mother, leaves his mobile home in the depressed upstate New York community of Au Sable and becomes a homeless mall rat. In a burst of bravado, he acquires a crossed bones tattoo, changes his name from Chappie to Bone, and attempts to find some focus in his dead-end existence. Convinced that he is destined for a criminal career, Bone vents his anger in acts of senseless destruction. His vulnerability and his need for love and direction are fused when he and a seven-year-old waif he has rescued from a pedophile take refuge in an abandoned schoolbus with an illegal alien from Jamaica called I-Man, whose Rastafarian wisdom and gentle demeanor are fed by liberal consumption of marijuana, which he deals. It is when Bone follows I-Man to Jamaica that the narrative falters. Though the drug-permeated Jamaican milieu is portrayed with impressive authenticity, the improbability of Bone's macabre adventures there frays the plot's credibility. The novel's strengths-Bone's cool, wisecracking voice and colloquial speech, the details of an adolescent's culture-are diluted by its excesses-too many descriptions of marijuana highs, too many coincidences. Yet one finishes the book with indelible sympathy for tough-guy Bone, touched by his loneliness, fear and desperation, and having absorbed Banks's message: that (as he said recently), society's failure to save its children is "the main unrecognized tragedy of our time." 100,000 first printing; \$15,000 ad/promo; author tour.

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From School Library Journal

YA?Banks is that rarest of beasts, a writer with daring, skill, and heart. His latest book is equally rare?an adult novel about 14-year-old Bone, told from his perspective with corresponding jargon and without ridicule. From the first page, YAs will be captivated?"Anyhow, my life got interesting you might say the summer I turned fourteen and was heavy into weed but I didn't have any money to buy it with so I started looking around the house all the time for things I could sell but there wasn't much." The boy has a disturbed stepfather, a long-suffering mother, and a long-gone father. The first half of the book chronicles his willing but innocent drift into criminality. His life takes a turn for the better when he moves into an abandoned school bus with a Jamaican mystic. He travels to Jamaica with "I-man," and there he finds his self-centered druggie father, turns 15, is sexually initiated, and loses I-man in a violent drug deal. The remarkable narration immerses readers in Bone's self-contained world. The plentiful dialogue is rendered without quotation marks, a quirk that contributes to the almost claustrophobic feeling of being inside the teen's head. Yet, the power of being there is that when Bone begins to mature and break out of his world, so do readers. This novel is raw and moving. Buy it.?Chip Barnett, Rockbridge Regional Library, Lexington, VA

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From Library Journal

Banks (*Continental Drift*, LJ 4/15/85) has found a new voice in this tale about a homeless youth on the edge of society.

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Francine Nott:

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