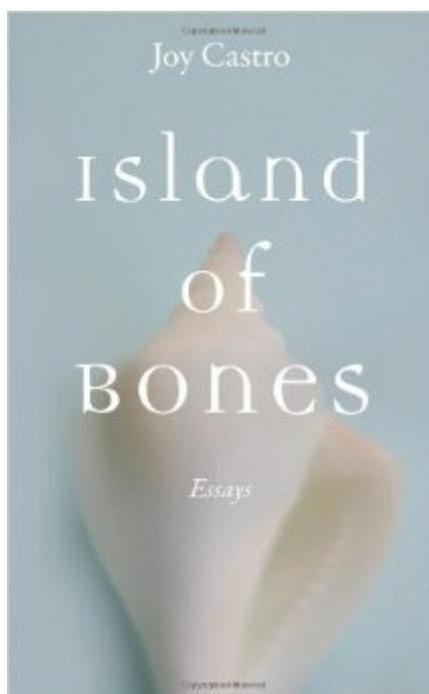


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Island Of Bones: Essays (American Lives)



Synopsis

What is "identity" when you're a girl adopted as an infant by a Cuban American family of Jehovah's Witnesses? The answer isn't easy. You won't find it in books. And you certainly won't find it in the neighborhood. This is just the beginning of Joy Castro's unmoored life of searching and striving that she's turned to account with literary alchemy in *Island of Bones*. In personal essays that plumb the depths of not-belonging, Castro takes the all-too-raw materials of her adolescence and young adulthood and views them through the prism of time. The result is an exquisitely rendered, richly detailed perspective on a uniquely troubled young life that reflects on the larger questions each of us faces in a world where diversity and singularity are forever at odds. In the experiences of her past—hunger and abuse, flight as a fourteen-year-old runaway, single motherhood, the revelations of her "true" ethnic identity, the suicide of her father—Castro finds the "jagged, smashed place of edges and fragments" that she pieces together to create an island all her own. Hers is a complicated but very real depiction of what it is to "jump class," to not belong but to find one's voice in the interstices of identity. *Â*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Island of Bones is a beautifully poetic collection of treatises from the life of Joy Castro. She introduces us to some unknown facts regarding Latin heritage, which she covered so eloquently and made so interesting I wondered why I didn't already know any of it. Raised surprisingly in the

Jehovah Witness faith, I found her insights into JW and its oppression of females absolutely riveting. She shines a unique light on the heartbreak of divorce from a young girl's perspective that burns with intensity. She portrays varying degrees of anxiety and horror of living with her mother's second husband, which had me holding my breath. My heart ached! Joy shares her disappointments with such vividness, as a camera rolling, collecting and revealing disturbing nuances. Castro's beautiful voice concisely suggests, in an understated way, the larger picture with a few intimating details that will haunt you long after you lay this book aside. In Theory is one of the most startling essays I've read in a long time. I wept while reading the events that were possible in the heart of a creosote bush. She is not the voice of every woman, but the voice of so many women who live with the dog of doubt growling at their heels. It is inspirational how she turned so many broken moments into a beautiful mosaic of essays. What I enjoyed most about her writing, is how similar I feel to her, how she and I could have been neighbors, or girlfriends talking over the fence or over coffee. Her thoughtful turns of phrase are like diamonds plucked from the ravaged earth. Her ability to share the bizarre details of her life, allow me to realistically look at the bizarre details of mine. How many women carry a secret shame? While the particulars may not be the same, the burden to carry it in secrecy are identical.

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