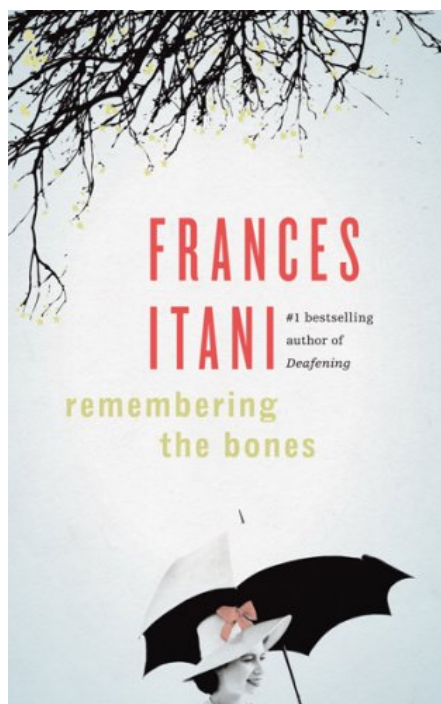




Remembering the Bones

Frances Itani

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Remembering the Bones Frances Itani

Best-selling author Frances Itani's second novel is a beautifully written, moving tale of the staying power of family through time and memory, and the extent to which individual lives can influence and resonate in the world around them. Born on the exact same day as Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, Canadian Georgina Witley is invited to an eightieth birthday lunch at Buckingham Palace. All she has to do is drive to the airport and board the plane for London. Except that Georgie drives off the edge of the road, her car plunging into a thickly wooded ravine. Thrown from the car, injured, and unable to move, she must rely on her full store of family memories, her no-nonsense wit, and a recitation of the names of the bones in her body--an exercise from childhood--to remind her she is still alive. As Georgina lies stranded and helpless, she reflects on her role as a daughter, mother, sister, wife, and widow, on lost loves and painful secrets.

Remembering the Bones Details

Date : Published September 14th 2007 by Sceptre

ISBN : 9780002005401

Author : Frances Itani

Format : Unknown Binding 282 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, Canada, Contemporary

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From Reader Review Remembering the Bones for online ebook

Tara says

Funny, touching, extremely well written. This is only the second book of Itani's that I have read but she is quickly becoming one of my favourite authors.

Diane Morter says

Georgie is born on the same day and year as the Queen, and to celebrate her 80th birthday, the Queen has invited 100 guests with the same birthday to celebrate with her at Buckingham Palace. However, when Georgie sets off for the airport to attend this function, she drives off the road and down a ravine. She is thrown from the car and lies there injured with broken arm and leg, so unable to move much at all. To keep up her strength she reflects on her life as a child, mother, sister, daughter, wife and widow. Beautifully written, I just loved it.

Candice says

I read another of Frances Itani's books, *Deafening* and it was one of my favorites. This was good, too, but I wish I could have read it first because it didn't quite compare to *Deafening*.

The book tells the story of an 80-year-old Canadian widow who was born the same day as Queen Elizabeth II, and is one of 99 people born that same day who have been invited by the Queen to attend a birthday luncheon. While driving herself to the airport Georgie runs off the road and into a ravine and is thrown from the car and injured. To keep herself from panicing, she begins to name the bones of the body, something she learned as a youngster perusing her doctor grandfather's *Gray's Anatomy*. While naming the bones, she reviews her life in the small town of Wilna Creek, Canada. It was an interesting and unusual way to tell the story of a woman and her life and I applaud the author for her originality in this. I thought I had the ending figured out, but I was wrong. A very good and original read.

Corina says

This was well done, especially considering that it is told from the first person point of view which is very difficult to maintain for an entire novel.

It's the story of Georgia who was born on the same day as Queen Elizabeth and because of that, has been invited to celebrate the Queen's 80th birthday along with 98 other people born on the same day. Georgia, always an independent soul, decided to go alone although the invitation says she can bring one guest.

On the morning she leaves home (in Ontario, Canada) to go to the airport for her flight, she is distracted for a fraction of a second and ends up driving her car off of the road and into a ravine which is just a mile or so from her home. She is thrown from the car and wakes up not being able to move her arm or leg. She is too far down the ravine to be spotted if anyone is looking for her but then again, no one would be looking for her because they all know she is off to England for ten days!

Alone, in pain, not able to move, Georgia keeps her mind alert by going through her mind and recalling all the memories she can from the time she was born until the present. When her mind drifts, she calls herself back to the task of staying alert by remembering all the names of the bones of the body which she taught herself, as a child, using her dead grandfather's anatomy textbook (Gray's Anatomy). Through her memories we learn about her childhood, her teen years, her marriage, her days as a young wife and mother, the loss of a child, and the gradual loss of all those around her.

This is very well done. Very entertaining. She gives us things to ponder and things to laugh about!

Joan Bennett says

Excellent writer. Enjoyable read.

Dera Weaver says

I'm so clunky and literal--I'm always going to be disappointed by an ending in which I'm not sure if the character lives or dies. (Except for the Sopranos: I am totally and completely convinced that Tony was killed at the end of the last episode, no matter what everybody else tells me. No doubts for me there.)

Georgie--and I love the childlike name for the main character--was born on the same day as England's Queen Elizabeth, and she's on her way from Canada to England for a special luncheon in Buckingham Palace with others like her to celebrate the Queen's 80th birthday. Just a short distance out of her driveway, Georgie drives over an embankment and is thrown clear of the car, landing wounded and almost immobile at the bottom of a ravine. As her life's memories bubble up, she fights to stay alive and share them with us. This is a story of Strong Women: they all seem to have male names, for example, and they know how to Take Care of Business, that business being life and hard times and sorrow and even some happiness, but not too much.

As I've mentioned before, I'm really drawn these days to end-of-life stories, and I will read any of them I know about. I'm looking for something, obviously. I didn't find it here.

Just wondering--if a book has Questions for Discussion at the end, should I just put it down before I even get started? I'm beginning to think that's a solid decision.

Renee says

I wished more than anything, as I read this book, that it had better structure. Trapping George at the bottom of a ravine was a device to allow all this introspective reflection on life, but turns out, the, mental meanderings of a woman trapped at the bottom of a ravine are not so interesting. It really a bit too much like being inside somebody's head and I'd be happy to sacrifice some authenticity for a more deliberate narrative structure. She was thinking about her mom, then her Grand Da, then her aunt, then her sister, then her mom, then her aunt then her mom and then her daughter. This is one of the few times I wish somebody had just freaking unfurled the story chronologically.

Just imagine if the book had started with the crash. We have the physical crisis but then she goes back to her Grandma. Check back in on the physical crisis--perhaps with more emphasis on what she's doing to get

rescued, how she's hurt -- go back to her mom's story. Tell about her sister. Then unfurl her love, her loss, Harry's death--all the while returning in the present as she pulls her self to a place of better visibility. Then I would have built in some big reason we wanted her survive.

Because, I really didn't care if she survived. So, besides the narrative structure I suppose I also wanted a bit more passion. Maybe she should have found out Harry cheated on her. Something rageful! Some impassioned reason that she wanted to stay alive! Some denouement to the story! Something. Anything but a lazy drifting down memory lane.

Diane says

This is Georgie's story. Georgina Witley. She's nearly 80 and has been invited to participate in a formal lunch at Buckingham Palace because her birthday is the same day as that of Queen Elizabeth I along with the other 99 guests who are also invited. But Georgie only gets to the end of her road where she accidentally drives her car off the road and down into a steep ravine. Georgie is thrown from the car but is injured and has no way to alert anyone.

She spends several days there, with exposure to the elements. While her injuries may not be fatal, lack of food and especially water just might be. She tries to keep her mind alert by reciting the latin names of the bones in the body and remembering anecdotes from her life and her family, hoping to ward off the Grim Reaper who is ever inching closer. She doesn't filter her memories through in chronological order as you might think. That's just the way most minds work. She keeps herself motivated by talking ..to herself, to her late husband, to her mother and even to Death himself as she slowly inches her way to her vehicle, hoping for a little warmth and a way to sound the horn to alert someone for help.

Frances Itani writes exquisitely and she writes about women, women that are vastly different from each other but all have a very true and real presence.

This book fills one of the CanadianContent Bingo squares

?Laura says

On her way to the airport to board a plane to England to share an 80th birthday lunch with the Queen, Georgie Witley accidentally drives her car off the road into a deep ravine. With the accident unwitnessed, and no one to know she is missing, Georgie lay broken in the ravine, slowly trying to make her way back to her car in hopes that by honking the horn she can attract attention. Gradually becoming weaker and more dehydrated, Georgie falls in and out of sleep and her mind flows back and forth between present and past. Through her recollections, we learn the story of her life, from childhood through motherhood through widowhood. We learn of those she has loved and those she has lost and gained, of sorrow and joy, of regrets and uncertainties. This book is beautifully written and poignant, populated by characters who are interesting and endearing. I absolutely loved it.

Helgaklassen says

Parts were entertaining, but I didn't love it.

Angela A says

REMEMBERING THE BONES is the story of Georgie, an eighty-year-old woman who was born on the same day as the wueen. She is on her wya to the airport for a celebration with the Queen herself, when her car slides into a ravine, and she is left nearly immobile. Georgie spends her itmei n the ravine keeping herself alive through memories of her life and family.

This book had excellent prose and description, but the story fell flat. At times, not enough was explained, leaving the reader scratching their head and wondering what happened. For example, Georgie is inexplicably laying outside of the car, even though the story never shows her being tossed from it.

The way the book was divided was excellent, splitting it into sections based on the anatomical features that Georgie is remembering. The painstaking care with which Georgie has remembered the stories of the owmen of her family is rather touching, even if the stories could have used a bit more oomph.

I would hesitantly recommend this book, if just for the stunning prose and elegance with which it is told.

Shonna Froebel says

With the success of her earlier novel, Deafening, I wondered if her new book would be as good, but it definitely is. This novel focuses on Georgina Witley, an 80-year-old woman. Georgina was born on the same day as Queen Elizabeth II and has been invited to help celebrate the occasion at Buckingham Palace. As her husband is dead, and her mother is very old, she has decided to go on her own, including driving to the airport in Toronto. Unfortunately she drives off the road into a ravine and is thrown from the car. Unable to move much due to her injuries she finds herself looking back on her life, singing old songs, and remembering the names of the bones in her body that she learned from her grandfather's anatomy book when she was a child.

As she follows her life through her family background, childhood, marriage and motherhood, she recalls family secrets, personal emotions and hardships. She also things about the Queen's life and its similarities and differences to her own.

George, as she is known to her friends, had a life dominated by the women in her family from her grandmother down to her daughter and has good memories with all of them. Her relations with the males in the family are both more difficult and less close, yet affected her life immensely. Her memories draw the characters clearly, showing heartache and resilience and ultimately at comfort with the life she has lived. A wonderful book.

Allison says

Once again Frances Itani amazes me but this time in so many different ways. I savoured this book even to the point where I went back and reconfirmed some bits. Ah yes it was polio, I forgot.

Great narrative. I was also able to put some unresolved issues to rest.
Thanks for being there even though I didn't know I needed you.
<3

Sandra says

I feel I have read a number of books recently that all relate to the memories of people facing the end of their lives. Well written.

Rachel says

A beautifully told, captivating story told in flashbacks. I was a little unsure about how the story resolved itself -- I was left wanting a little more. But perhaps that is the sign of a great read.. when you are left thinking about it, days after. The language is glorious and the MC is emotionally available.

Mary says

Eighty year old Canadian Georgie Witley has always felt a kinship with Queen Elizabeth; they were born on the same day in the same year, married during the same year and each woman's first child was born just a few months apart. So Georgie is delighted to hear that she is one of 99 people invited to the Queen's birthday luncheon at Buckingham Palace. Unfortunately, as she is driving herself to the airport, Georgie careens off the side of the road and into a ravine just a short distance from her house. The remainder of the book consists of Georgie reciting the bones she had memorized as a child from her grandfather's Gray's Anatomy, recounting her long life and remembering the people who were important to her while she awaits rescue. Reminiscing with Georgie is an evocative experience - here is a woman who has lived through the Depression and WWII, been a daughter, sister, wife, mother and widow, attended a one room schoolhouse, celebrated and mourned, and had her share of secrets. Her past may be typical of many her age, but she uses her memories to keep herself alive at the bottom of the ravine as she drifts in and out of consciousness, braving the cold and fear which threaten to overtake her. A poignant book.

Ladory says

This book is very, very good. I would call it awesome, even. It is just a woman reminiscing about her life and her family. One rather dramatic incident happens at the very beginning and then the woman begins to think about her family. The accounting of these lives begins with the pleasant things. So it's slow, and I even felt slightly bored in the middle. I had a lot going on in my own life, though, and I was distracted. I was retiring from work! But I stuck with it, mainly on a long train ride with nothing else to do. I got back involved in it then. Eventually, the woman gets into the difficult, even tragic events that happened within her family.

This book is written like an autobiography--it's so real and immediate. It is written in the first-person voice of the woman. I found it difficult to believe that it could be pure fiction. The ending is deeply affecting. There is a sticker on the front of my paperback edition: "Finalist, Commonwealth Writers' Prize, Caribbean and Canada region."

My mother sent me this book. She had kept it over a long period and read it twice. It is one of her favorites. She is 86 years old now and reads all the time. Then she sent it to me for my book club. The group will be reading it later this year, but I will move away, so I read it now.

Paula Dembeck says

Georgina Witley is a Canadian widow on her way to London to have lunch with the Queen. The two have the same birthday and Georgie has been picked as one of ninety-nine commoners to celebrate with the monarch on this special day. Georgie has planned her trip carefully and sets out in her car for the airport. In a momentary distraction while checking her watch, she loses control of her car which flips through the guard posts and hurtles down a ravine. Georgie is thrown and lies with broken bones at the bottom, hidden in the brush and unable to be seen by those passing by on the road. No one will know she is there or even think to look for her.

Helpless and alone, Georgie struggles with hunger, thirst and pain waiting and hoping for rescue. To keep her mind off her predicament, she reverts to an old childhood habit, remembering and reciting the names of bones from her grandfather's book "Grey's Anatomy". The bones serve as the framework through which she revisits memories in her life as a child, adult, wife, mother, widow and friend.

She remembers Grandmother Grand Dan, a formidable mid-wife married to a surgeon who was killed in the first war. She reminisces about the first time she was able to tie her shoes as a young girl and stealing peas with her sister during the Depression. She looks back on meeting her husband Harry and their subsequent honeymoon when he contracted polio. And she revisits the experience of attending the opening of her daughter's new theater.

Not all her memories are happy ones and she includes the highs as well as the lows. She remembers her father Mr. Holmes, an emotionally distant man who cared for his family but had loud shouting bouts during his sleep. And she remembers the traumatic death of her small five month old son Matt.

As Georgie sifts through memories and winds her way through family history, she never panics but she does begin to realize she may never be rescued. As she ponders death and continues her long internal conversations, she belts out songs, recites, rhymes, talks to the living and the dead and to the crows that light on the trees that surround her. At this point, she wonders aloud whether her life has had any meaning. It is full of memories of family and domestic life, but she realizes it has also had significance.

The novel's ending is inevitable and we realize, not surprising. But we have come to know Georgie through what may seem an ordinary life and feel a sense of sadness, as we recognize like Georgie, that what may seem ordinary also has meaning.

Lesley says

Interesting way to look back at the character's life.
Not overly exciting.

Felicity says

If there's one book you read this summer, it should be this one. Why? Because it is such an unexpected gem. It's lyrical writing creeps up on you seemingly from out of nowhere and before you know it, you are engrossed in the stor(ies) of the Danforth and Witley families. In particular, you find yourself wrapped up in the mind of Georgina Danforth Witley as she lies trapped at the bottom of a ravine, barely meters from her own home waiting to be rescued (no spoilers there: you learn this in the first few pages of the book). As she lies in the dark and cold, Georgina reflects on her life: her significance as mother, daughter, and wife and the accomplishments of her life. Itani's novel is a moving and engrossing story--read it in one sitting if you possibly can. That shouldn't be hard--It's difficult to put down. Finally, for those of reformed smokers out there, Itani nails the attraction perfectly, describing the "...floating sensation after the first pull inot the lungds, the dizziness, the body sensing that it is off-kilter (189)."
