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Bastard Out of Carolina Summary

Bastard Out of Carolina is a semi autobiographical novel by Dorothy Allison published in 1992. The novel is set in Greenville, South Carolina in the 1950s and narrated by Ruth Anne Bone, a young girl born out of wedlock. The story follows Ruth Anne as she grows up poor and white in the rural South, presenting a stark contrast between her hopes and dreams and the reality of her life. Significant themes in the novel include the expectations of gender, mother child relationships, class, race, sexuality, family, and coming of age.

Bastard Out of Carolina Plot Summary

The story begins with Ruth Anne Bone, the narrator, growing up in Greenville, South Carolina. She is the eldest daughter of Anney and Glen Waddell, a struggling couple. Anney is a strong-willed woman who is haunted by her illegitimacy and poverty, while Glen is an insecure and shy man. They have two daughters: Ruth Anne and Reese.

Anney's first husband, Lyle Parsons, is killed in a car accident after Reese is born. Anney then remarries a kind boy named Kenan 65. When Anney marries Kenan, she becomes more secure and the family becomes more stable. However, Kenan is not as strong as Lyle, and Anney begins to feel neglected.

Anney's relationship with Glen Waddell eventually becomes strained. She sees Glen as her last chance, and though their relationship is fraught with conflict, they continue to struggle to make ends meet.

The novel spans the life of Ruth Anne from the age of five through thirteen, from 1951 to 1964. It is a difficult tale of a poor struggling South Carolinian mother and daughter who must navigate the challenges of poverty, illegitimacy, and abuse.

Summary

The novel is set in Greenville, South Carolina in the 1950s and narrated by Ruth Anne Bone, the bastard daughter of Dorothy Allison. The story follows Ruth Anne as she grows up poor and white in the rural South, presenting a stark contrast between her hopes and dreams and the reality of her life. Significant themes in the novel include the expectations of gender, mother child relationships, class, race, sexuality, family, and coming of age.

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