

THE LOVELY BONES



Book Summary:

A fourteen-year-old girl watches her family and friends from Heaven after she is brutally raped and murdered.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains mild profanity; alternate sexualities; sexual activities including sexual assault; sexual nudity; violence; alcohol use; and suicide commentary.

Young Adult

By Alice Sebold

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3 /5

Minor Restricted
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
9	<p>My father was the kind of dad who kept a nude photo of you when you were three in the downstairs bathroom, the one that guests would use.</p>
13	<p>After this he said, "You're very pretty, Susie." "Thanks," I said, even though he gave me what my friend Clarissa and I had dubbed the skeevies. "Do you have a boyfriend?" "No, Mr. Harvey," I said. I swallowed the rest of my Coke, which was a lot, and said, "I got to go, Mr. Harvey. This is a cool place, but I have to go." He stood up and undid his hunchback number by the six dug-in steps that let to the world. "I don't know why you think you're leaving." I talked so that I would not have to takin in this knowledge: Mr. Harvey was no character. He made me feel skeevy and icky now that he was blocking the door. "Mr. Harvey, I really have to get home." "Take off your clothes." "What?" "Take your clothes off," Mr. Harvey said. "I want to check that you're still a virgin." "I am, Mr. Harvey," I said. "I want to make sure. Your parents will thank me." "My parents?" "They only want good girls," he said. "Mr. Harvey," I said, "please let me leave." "You aren't leaving, Susie. You're mine now." ...I fought hard. I fought as hard as I could not to let Mr. Harvey hurt me, but my hard-as-I-could was not hard enough, not even close, and I was soon lying down on the ground, in the ground, with him on top of me panting and sweating, having lost his glasses in the struggle. ...I thought it was the worst thing in the world to be lying flat on my back with a sweating man on top of me. To be trapped inside the earth and have no one know where I was. ...Mr. Harvey started to press his lips against mine. They were blubbery and wet and I wanted to scream but I was too afraid and too exhausted from the fight. I had been kissed once by someone I liked. His name was Ray and he was Indian. ...He kissed me by my locker the day before we turned in our photos for the yearbook. ..."Don't, Mr. Harvey," I managed, and I kept saying that one word a lot. Don't. And I said please a lot too. Franny told me that almost everyone begged "please" before dying. "I want you, Susie," he said. "Please," I said. "Don't," I said. Sometimes I combined them. "Please don't" or "Don't please." It was like insisting that a key works when it doesn't or yelling "I've got it, I've got it, I've got it" as a softball goes sailing over you into the stands. "Please don't." But he grew tired of hearing me plead. He reached into the pocket of my parka and balled up the hat my mother had made me, smashing it into my mouth. The only sound I made after that was the weak tinkling of bells. As he kissed his wet lips down my face and neck and then began to shove his hands up under my shirt, I wept. I began to leave my body; I began to inhabit the</p>

Page	Content
	<p>air and the silence. I wept and struggled so I would not feel. He ripped open my pants, not having found the invisible zipper my mother had artfully sewn into their side.</p> <p>"Big white panties," he said.</p> <p>I felt huge and bloated. I felt like a sea in which he stood and pissed and shat. I felt the corners of my body were turning in on themselves and out, like in cat's cradle, which I played with Lindsey just to make her happy. He started working himself over me.</p> <p>"Susie! Susie!" I heard my mother calling. "Dinner is ready."</p> <p>He was inside me. He was grunting.</p> <p>"We're having string beans and lamb."</p> <p>I was the mortar, he was the pestle.</p> <p>"Your brother has a new finger painting, and I made apple crumb cake."</p> <p>...Mr. Harvey made me lie still underneath him and listen to the beating of his heart and the beating of mine. How mine skipped like a rabbit, and how his thudded, a hammer against cloth. We lay there with our bodies touching, and, as I shook, a powerful knowledge took hold. He had done this thing to me and I had lived.</p>
16	<p>I knew he was going to kill me. I did not realize then that I was an animal already dying.</p> <p>"Why don't you get up?" Mr. Harvey said as he rolled to the side and then crouched over me.</p> <p>His voice was gentle, encouraging, a lover's voice on a late morning. A suggestion, not a command.</p> <p>I could not move. I could not get up.</p> <p>When I would not—was it only that, only that I would not follow his suggestion?—he leaned to the side and felt, over his head, across the ledge where his razor and shaving cream sat. He brought back a knife.</p> <p>Unsheathed, it smiled at me, curving up in a grin.</p> <p>He took the hat from my mouth.</p> <p>"Tell me you love me," he said.</p> <p>Gently, I did.</p> <p>The end came anyway.</p>
67	<p>If I had known this was to be the sex scene of my life, I might have prepared a bit, reapplied my Strawberry-Banana Kissing Potion as I came in the door.</p>
69	<p>Using a blue ballpoint pen, Brian Nelson had made an obscene hole where her legs were crossed.</p> <p>...how subversive Ruth was then, not because she drew pictures of nude women that got misused by her peers,...</p>
92	<p>My father got what she called "finely drunkened."</p>
104	<p>No counselor could say he had flashed a light under the denser shrubbery by the boy's dorm and found Salmon and Heckler going at it.</p> <p>...She thought of sex as the Star Trek transport.</p>
105	<p>It was not so much, she would write in her journal, that she wanted to have sex with women, but that she wanted to disappear inside of them forever.</p>

Page	Content
111	<p>Their breath began to heat the small space beneath the boat, and he could not stop it- his penis stiffened inside his jeans.</p> <p>Lindsey reached her hand over.</p> <p>"I'm sorry..." he began.</p> <p>"I'm ready," my sister said.</p> <p>At fourteen, my sister sailed away from me into a place I'd never been. In the walls of my sex there was horror and blood, in the walls of hers there were windows.</p>
116	<p>What I think was hardest for me to realize was that he had tried to stop himself. He had killed animals, taking lesser lives to keep from killing a child.</p>
130	<p>"How did your wife die?" my mother asked.</p> <p>"Suicide."</p>
134	<p>She took his hand and placed it on her breast. She whispered in his ear. I knew what was happening. Her rage, her loss, her despair. The whole life lost tumbling out in an arc on that roof, clogging up her being. She needed Len to drive the dead daughter out.</p> <p>He pushed her back into the stucco surface of the wall as they kissed, and my mother held on to him as if on the other side of his kiss there could be a new life.</p>
138	<p>Clarissa, giggly with both fear and lust, had unlocked her privates and slept with Brian.</p>
152	<p>A young girl being led through the streets. She was taken to a pyre where she was wound in a sheet and placed up on a platform built from sticks. The bright fire that consumed her brought my mother into that deep, light, dreamlike bliss. This girl was being burned alive, but, first, there had been her body, clean and whole.</p>
159	<p>She was waiting for her father outside a bar. He raped her in the bushes and then strangled her. That time, as he grew conscious, coming up out of the stupor that often clung on, he heard noises. He turned the dead girl's face toward his, and as the voices grew closer he bit down on her ear. "Sorry, man," he heard two drunk men say as they walked into the nearby bushes to take a leak.</p>
175	<p>...it was now full of nudes she'd copied out of Playboy, scaling various parts up or down and adding hair and wrinkles where they had been airbrushed out- "but at least I'm not a per for charcoal."</p>
212	<p>While the two of them sat with their backs to the fire, shivering at first and drinking the brandy shots Grandma Lynn had Buckley serve them...</p>
218	<p>But Ray was different. Their kisses and early pushing and rubbings were objects under glass to her- memories that she kept preserved.</p>
253	<p>He had made a certain kind of love to my mother before she went away. Sex as an act of willful forgetting. It was the kind he made more and more in the rooms above the barbershop.</p> <p>...The edges of Mr. Harvey seemed oddly blurred. For years he had kept at bay the memories of the women he killed, but now, one by one, they were coming back. The first girl he'd hurt was by accident. He got mad and couldn't stop himself, or that was how he began to weave it into sense. She stopped going to the high school that they were both enrolled in, but this didn't seem strange to him. By that time he had moved so many times that he assumed that was what the girl</p>

Page	Content
	<p>had done. He had regretted it, this quiet, muffed rape of a school friend, but he didn't see it as something that would stay with either one of them. It was as if something outside him had resulted in the collision of their two bodies one afternoon. For a second afterward, she'd stared. It was bottomless. Then she put on her torn underpants, tucking them into her skirt's waistband to keep them in place. They didn't speak, and she left. He cut himself with his penknife along the back of his hand. When his father asked about the blood, there would be a plausible explanation. "See," he could say, and point to the place on his hand. "It was an accident."</p>
267	<p>Ray drew back the curtain. I turned to face him and opened my eyes. I felt a marvelous draft on the inside of my thighs.</p> <p>"It's okay," I said.</p> <p>He stepped slowly into the tub. At first he did not touch me, but then, tentatively, he traced a small scar along my side. We watched together as his finger moved down the ribbony wound.</p> <p>"Ruth's volleyball incident, nineteen seventy-five," I said. I shivered again.</p> <p>"You're not Ruth," he said, his face full of wonder.</p> <p>I took the hand that had reached the end of the cut and placed it under my left breast.</p> <p>"I've watched you both for years," I said. "I want you to make love to me."</p> <p>His lips parted to speak, but what was on his lips now was too strange to say out loud. He brushed my nipple with his thumb, and I pulled his head toward me. We kissed. The water came down between our bodies and wet the sparse hair along his chest and stomach. I kissed him because I wanted to see Ruth and I wanted to see Holly and I wanted to know if they could see me. In the shower I could cry and Ray could kiss my tears, never knowing exactly why I shed them.</p> <p>I touched every part of him and held it in my hands. I cupped his elbow in my palm. I dragged his pubic hair out straight between my fingers. I held that part of him that Mr. Harvey had forced inside me. Inside my head I said the word gentle, and then I said the word man.</p>
268	<p>We made love then. We made love in the shower and in the bedroom and under the lights and fake glow-in-the-dark stars. While he rested, I kissed him across the line of his backbone and blessed each knot of muscle, each mole and blemish.</p>
280	<p>I imagined her tying it on in her heaven, drinking mute juleps with Tennessee Williams and Dean Martin.</p>

Profanity	Count
Bitch	1
Fuck	1
Shit	5