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Clark, Janice. The Rathbones

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Created *2013-10-04 08:00*

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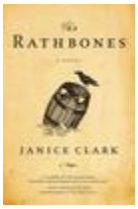

The Rathbone family made a vast fortune in whaling, exchanging barrel after barrel of sperm whale oil for gold. But by the 1850s when this story opens, the Rathbones' almost preternatural understanding of the sea has been lost, the family's dark vigor has paled, and the whales themselves are now nearly gone. Their big house is now nearly empty, containing only fifteen-year-old Mercy, her mother Verity and two silent uncles, and Mercy's cousin Mordecai. Mercy's father, also a whaler, has been gone for nearly ten years, having taken her twin brother along with him. Her brother, whom no one but Mercy will admit ever existed. When Mercy spies upon her mother and a mysterious man in a blue jacket one evening, she winds up fleeing Rathbone House with Mordecai and finds herself launched upon a nearly-epic odyssey around the waters off the coast of Connecticut in search of the truth about her family's history, her father's disappearance, and to Mercy's mind the most important thing of all, her brother's whereabouts.

The story of Mercy's odyssey, which bears a strong resemblance to Homer's Odyssey, is interspersed with stories from her family's past as she begins to piece together the entire long, somewhat sordid tale of the Rathbones' origins and downfall. A compelling story, with vivid, beatifully-constructed sentences and an almost mythic feel, this is a captivating novel.

clark and rathbones
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