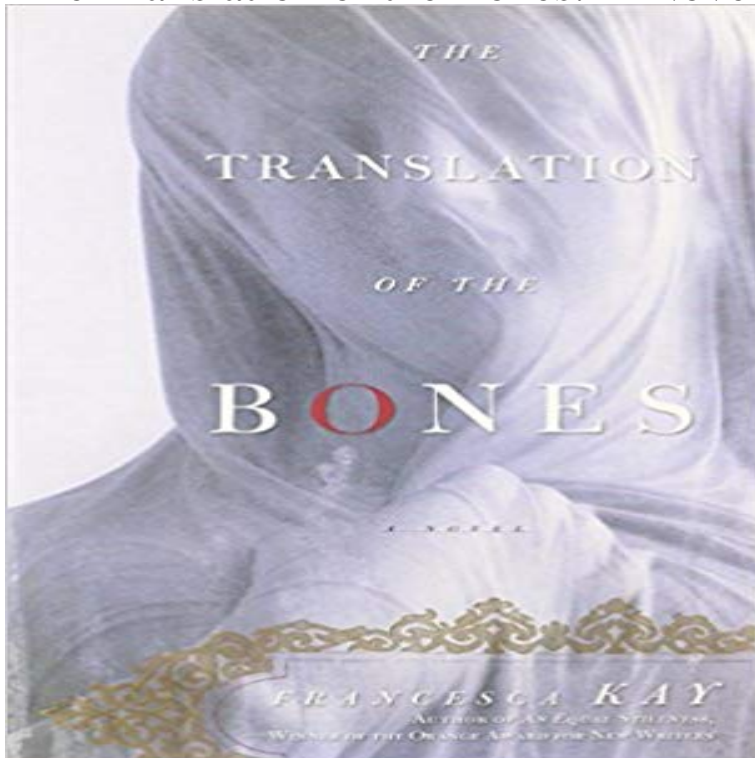


The Translation of the Bones: A Novel



Mary-Margaret O'Reilly is seemingly a harmless enough young woman, ready and willing to help out Father Diamond in the Sacred Heart church in Battersea. She may not be very bright, and she is sadly overweight, but she can certainly clean. She is also very good with children, and helps out an Asian woman on her estate whose little boy Shamsu is adorable. It is the statue of Jesus on the cross Mary-Margaret is especially drawn to, and one day she decides to give Him a thorough and loving cleansing. But then something strange happens, and moments later she lies unconscious, a great gash in her head, blood on the floor. Word gets out that this strange happening is the opening of the statue's eyes and the flowing of blood from its head. Soon a full-scale religious mania descends on the quiet church, and everyone, from Father Diamond to his small but loyal band of parishioners, is affected by it. When she has recovered, Mary-Margaret returns to the church, and to her duties caring for her housebound and even fatter mother Fidelma. Among the parishioners, Stella Morrison meanwhile impatiently awaits the return of her son Felix from boarding school, and Alice Armitage the return of her much older son from Afghanistan. Mary-Margaret goes back obsessively to the statue of Jesus. He has told her things, things she must act on, and urgently. But He has become remote and uncommunicative once again, and she is in despair. The act she decides on is a shocking one, and it will bring together the lives of the O'Reillys and the Morrisons in a way that will change their lives forever. Francesca Kay's second novel, after the prize-winning *AN EQUAL STILLNESS*, is at once a profound meditation on the nature of faith and motherhood and a riveting story of passion gone tragically wrong.

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