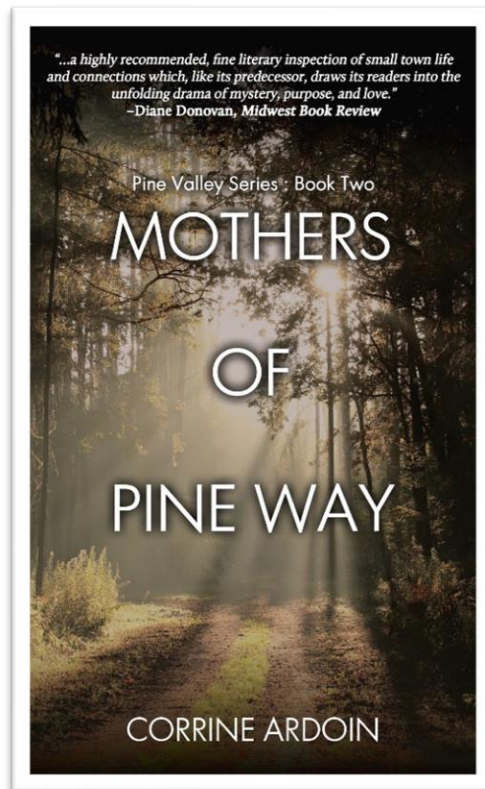




“Book Review: *Mothers of Pine Way*”

By *Samantha Hui*



A poignant and complex literary novel of small-town life and mothers' impact on their children

Reading Corrine Ardoin's work is like peering inside a box that's been locked and hidden away: both curious and hesitant to learn what it might disclose. *Mothers of Pine Way* continues the work of *Fathers of Edenville*, giving us more insight into familiar characters and their plights of a curious small town.



Mothers of Pine Way is a follow-up to *Fathers of Edenville*, but it works a bit more like a companion piece than a sequel, since the events of both novels take place at the same time. The stories that were touched upon in the first novel of the series (focusing on fathers' impact on their children) are further explored in this second novel, this time examining the effects mothers in the small town have on them. Ardoin's *Mothers of Pine Way* depicts small town life as a whole world of its own, offering us an insight into the entanglement that is home.

“Eyes alight, her mother’s memory and stories, her grandmothers’ teachings, and their grandmothers, including the lineage of native blood, like a river flowing in her veins, began issuing forth. She heard in her awareness the songs of her grandmothers, but it was Candelaria’s voice ringing true and being heard by everyone.”

After the death of her mother, Candelaria takes up her mother's mantle and participates in the Chicano movement to gain equal rights and equal treatment for Mexican-American people. Navigating the space between nihilism and pointed, effective activism, much of Candelaria's story is also a reflection on her own upbringing and the stories her mother and the mothers before her have passed down from generation to generation.

Concurrently, Candelaria's daughter Rosa is preparing for her wedding, and Candelaria's son is grappling with a depression that is exacerbated by his relationship with his mistress. As we follow Candelaria's family closely, we also gain insight into the involvements of everyone in direct relation to this family.

“[F]or she knew this truth was what the fight was about at its core: to become fully accepted, with a place in the whole of all people and all things and all places American.”

Ardoin's decision to write this book as she has, closely following more than just a single family in Pine Way, creates for her readers a realistic portrayal of the happenings of a small town. Pine Way is a microcosm of the trials of an entire world. Here, each character is inundated with their own problems ranging from racism to infidelity to familial pressure. But such as the world beyond a novel, Ardoin's characters grapple with multiple interconnected trials that are formed by each character's identities and parental involvement. *Mothers of Pine Way* is sometimes painfully real, with characters you might



expect to meet in your own neighborhoods, and gossip and news you might have heard or spread earlier this morning.

“The stories and the gossip, the rumors by those who were truly poor, poor in spirit, proved themselves deprived, of truth and of beauty.”

Mothers of Pine Way is a terrific companion piece to *Fathers of Edenville* (or is it the other way around?), giving us more time with the characters who we encountered in the first book. Sometime feeling engagingly invasive, this novel is about gossip and family history told in the style of gossip and family history. Corrine Ardoin has offered to her readers a shared, complicated love for small towns that has us leaning in, anxious to hear and learn more.