



The Turtle Warrior

Mary Relindes Ellis

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Once every now and again a new voice emerges to astonish and Mary Relindes Ellis's is one such voice. Lyrical, assured and deeply felt, Ellis's debut novel is the story of two brothers, their parents, and their neighbors, who farm in the gloriously beautiful, isolated country of northern Wisconsin, inhabited by working-class European immigrants and the Ojibwe.

By 1967, the Lucas farm has fallen into disrepair, thanks to the hard-drinking of John Lucas, who brutalizes his wife and two sons, James and Bill. The elder brother, James, escapes by enlisting in the Marines and fighting in Vietnam, a conflict he does not survive. Young Bill is left to protect his mother, with only his own will and the spirit of his dead brother to guide him. The warrior of the title, Bill fashions a shield from a giant turtle shell that he believes keeps him from harm. And, as he faces manhood, he longs to create a family very different from his father's—a family that must include not only his damaged mother, but the elderly couple who offered him safe haven in his bleakest days.

In *The Turtle Warrior*, Ellis takes the reader from the heartland of America to the battlefields of World War II and Vietnam, weaving a haunting tale of an unforgettable world where the physical and spiritual, the past and present merge.

Lushly evoking both the natural world and the complexities of human relationships, *The Turtle Warrior* will speak directly to the hearts of readers everywhere, especially to admirers of Leif Enger, Russell Banks, and Leslie Marmon Silko.

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Andy Breaux:

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