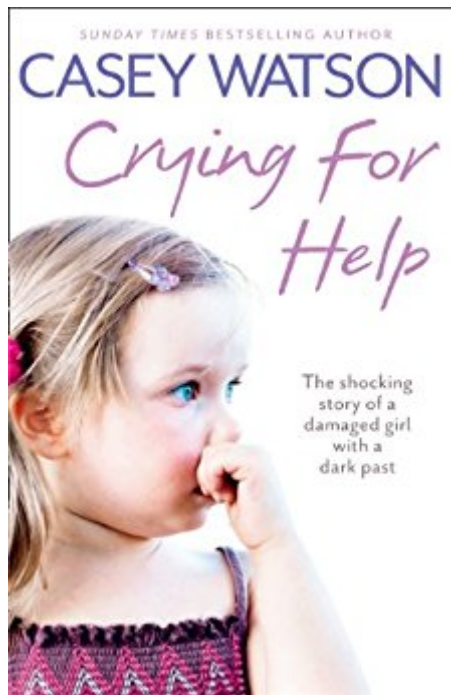


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Crying For Help: The Shocking True Story Of A Damaged Girl With A Dark Past



Synopsis

The second book from Sunday Times bestselling author Casey Watson. Two weeks after saying farewell to her first foster child, Casey is asked to look after Sophia, a troubled 12-year-old with a sad past. Sophia's actions are disturbing and provocative and, before long, Casey and her family find themselves in a dark and dangerous situation. Two years ago Sophia's mother had a terrible accident. Sophia has been in care ever since. Right away, Casey feels something isn't right. Sophia's a well-developed girl, who looks more like 18 than 12. She only seems to have eyes and ears for men, and treats all women with contempt and disgust. And she has everyone around her jumping through hoops. Over time, as more details begin to emerge about Sophia's past, it becomes clear that her behaviour is a front for an early life filled with pain and suffering. But although Casey feels she is gradually breaking through to Sophia and getting her to open up about things she has never spoken about before, her violence is threatening the safety of the whole family, forcing Casey to question whether she can really handle this lost and damaged girl. Both shocking and inspiring, this true story will shed new light on the extreme and sometimes dangerous nature of foster care. Includes a sample chapter of Little Prisoners.

Book Information

File Size: 1195 KB

Print Length: 304 pages

Publisher: Harper Element (February 2, 2012)

Publication Date: February 2, 2012

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B005WKGMSC

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #53,842 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #8 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Social Services & Welfare #21 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Parenting & Relationships > Adoption #30 in Books > Parenting & Relationships > Adoption

Customer Reviews

Her passive response to this incredibly sick girl, almost led to her death. Pushing her down the stairs, brutally being beaten by her, her son too scared to live there, these were clues that you call the social services and have a psychotic teen admitted to a mental ward. I did not believe for a minute she resisted common sense to protect the child. She kept her because she couldn't believe she could fail and be out maneuvered by a 12 year old. Well she was because the child was begging for professional help, not smothering, mothering, love. She needed serious help and Casey refused to give up until the child slashed her wrists. Her stubborn pride and stupidity were irritating, making this story hard to read without being frustrated and wanting to tell Casey for God's sake give her to a psychiatrist and admit defeat.

At first, 12-year-old Sophia comes across as a bit spoiled. She speaks rudely and gives orders to her social workers. Her new foster carer Casey Watson is alarmed and amazed. Yet before long, it's clear that Sophia's life has been anything but ideal. She was diagnosed at a young age with Addison's, a potentially life-threatening illness that dictates much of her existence. Then, when Sophia was only 11, the single mother who raised her had a tragic accident, ending up in a vegetative state in a hospice. Is it any wonder Sophia has some behavior problems? As with all the other children who come into her home, Watson is determined to help as best she can. But despite the most heartfelt efforts by the entire Watson family, young Sophia quickly seems to be growing worse. While she does indeed have her good days - days where she's sweet and kind, and it's easy to see the girl she could have been - there are also many days where Sophia seems mentally ill. Out of seemingly nowhere, her mood will change. She will begin to shout, make accusations, behave sexually toward adult men, and most terrifying, physically attack whoever is around her. As Sophia has already reached an adult height of 5'8", she's capable of inflicting serious harm. Is Sophia truly suffering from some sort of mental illness? Or has the trauma of her mother's accident simply made some irreparable damage? What's more, the Watsons begin to question whether it even WAS an accident, as Sophia's behavior begins to hint at a darker possibility... Watson tells the frank details of a story that isn't often told publicly, that of trying to care for a mentally ill child. Her words are both revealing and necessary.

This is the second of three books by Casey Watson that I have read. Casey, a foster carer for children who have suffered abuse, writes as though she is talking to you and has a really great way of telling it how it is, warts, bad language and all. The content is indeed shocking but Casey and her

family seem absolutely the right people to be caring for these children until they can be found permanent foster parents. It is a very confronting book, especially when read from the comfort of an ordinary, loving family home and it is hard to believe that there are children who are suffering so much at the hands of their parents (in this case, at the hands of a mother with mental health issues and a non-supportive family). Not a book for the faint-hearted but a timely reminder that not everyone's lives are full of love and laughter.

I liked this book but probably would not re-read it. Sophia's story is indeed sad, and the issues Casey and family dealt with, horrendous. This girl had psychological as well physical problems, and I don't really know why she was placed with carers who had only fostered one child previously. Regardless, the story is well-told in Casey's rough and ready style, which makes it realistic. Sophia is an unlikeable 'character' which is a bit of a problem, although the reader does feel sympathy for her suffering. Not all foster children will be likeable ! I think the book would be better off with just the main title, not including the sub-title. Also, why are the cover photos of this genre never true to the likeness of the child featured in the book? It was stated Sophia looked 18, not 8!

It was interesting to get a glimpse into how the foster care system works outside of America, for we US readers, but ultimately the book just didn't hold my attention. Ms. Watson seems to want recognition for her sacrifices in specializing in "damaged" children. The "cliffhanger" endings at the end of EVERY chapter got old really really really fast. I got tired of reading how she and her husband refer to each other as "love" in every single sentence they utter. If she was trying to establish that they were a close knit, supportive, loving family, that wasn't the way to do it. (I call my guy "love" as well, but not every single time I speak to him). I was also bothered that no one ever actually treated Sophia's real issues or seemed to care about the root cause of her behaviors and actions. I can't tell if that's an actual issue with the foster care system or just Ms. Watson's poor writing that left out those details.

The writing of this book was amateurish -- almost every chapter ends with something like "we had no idea what was in store for us..." which was, frankly, cheesy. The book cover is also grossly misleading, since a very young girl is pictured and the story is about a teenage girl. I stuck with it, thinking that Watson would tell the story about HOW to foster a child with severe emotional issues, but in the end she didn't. The girl was a temporary placement in her home and her issues were too large for her family to handle, so the girl was hospitalized (in the end, it sounds like that was the

proper treatment for the girl who is doing better with psychological help). I forget the exact length of time, but I think it was something like 8 weeks that this girl was in the Watson home. Since there was no real 'ending' and no 'how to' it just felt exploitative. And seeing as how Watson (and others) are writing an endless number of eBooks about troubled children in foster care, it's just about making money. There's no support offered to foster families in similar situations or what helped or what worked -- it's just about a shocking title and cashing in on these poor children bouncing around the foster care system. And, truthfully, it sounds like the foster care system in the UK is better equipped than in the US (Watson is able to call for ambulances constantly when her foster child is acting out) so maybe the health care system offers some practical differences -- the only thing to "learn" here is that if you have a socialized medical system, you can get more help when you need it most.

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