

Nobody's Favorite

Victoria Stott

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This is an honest and painful look at abuse issues from a survivor's perspective.

Adopted at eighteen months old, Victoria Stott had no way of knowing that she was entering hell. *Nobody's Favorite* is the powerful, heartbreaking story of a life scarred by the trauma of secrets, lies, and sexual and emotional abuse, and of a courageous woman's struggle to see good come out of evil.

Stott was raised on various Canadian Forces bases during the 1970s. A secret military program of creating "artificial families" as a cover for intelligence activities had brought her father, mother, adopted brother, and herself together. Bringing family problems to light risked exposing her father's work, so her brother's vicious hatred of her and the repeated rapes, beatings, attempts on her life, and the total destruction of any sense of self-worth she suffered at his hands, had to be kept secret.

Her attempts to run away were foiled by the military police. When her brother turned his violence on her father as well, Stott secretly planned to kill him, but instead left, enduring homelessness. Poor relationship choices kept her locked in the cycle of abuse and ill health; four pregnancies and the lack of adequate and timely mental health care kept her imprisoned in poverty; and religion kept her shackled in guilt, fear, and shame until she roused her own inner strength to battle the demons that tormented her.

Stott's memoir, which she calls a "declaration of war" on the effects of trauma, poverty, and homelessness in her life, is a disturbing look at the many ways in which families, churches, local communities, police and justice officials, and the health-care system have abandoned society's most vulnerable members. In detailing the horrific events that scarred her, Stott brings to life the fear, anger, shame, worthlessness, and sense of abandonment she felt when her calls for help were repeatedly ignored.

She also sheds light on hidden abuse, revealing how those who are being abused may appear normal and happy, may be good students and contributing members of the community, and may appear mature beyond their years. Stott exhibited all of these traits; in keeping her hellish secrets, she sacrificed her own welfare to protect her father's image in the military and community.

The book's design and layout make for easy reading, and Stott's chapter titles are creative and intriguing. Errors in grammar, syntax, and punctuation are many, however, and are distracting.

Dedicated to abuse survivors, *Nobody's Favorite* is an honest and painful look at abuse issues from a survivor's perspective. It also offers hope for healing. "My response to my suffering is to forgive those who caused it, love those who understand it and give hope to those who need it," Stott writes. Calling survivors "special treasures to the world," she shows how their battle can be won by a simple strategy: overcoming evil with good.

KRISTINE MORRIS (February 6, 2017)

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