



Out from the Underworld

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Forty years later, Heather Siegel tells the remarkable story of how she and her siblings, Jaz and Greg, banded together to find out what happened to their mother and fight their way Out from the Underworld with nothing but their wits, determination, unbreakable bonds and gifts for humor and compassion to sustain them. A wrenching, inspiring story filled with heartbreak, hope and love, Out from the Underworld will move you to laughter and tears.

Out from the Underworld Details

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From Reader Review Out from the Underworld for online ebook

Aditi says

“To those who are struggling. To talk about a struggle, you're likely to forget about it. To be shown a struggle, you're likely not to forget it. But, to live through a struggle, you'll understand it.”

---Valerie Owens

Heather Siegel, an American author, pens her memoir called, *Out from the Underworld* where she narrates about her mother's sudden disappearance, living under shabby conditions, abandonment, foster care and finally standing strong through all the challenges in her life.

Synopsis:

Heather Siegel was six years old when her mother disappeared, sending her father into a tailspin that took Heather and her siblings down with him—from a comfortable suburban home to a barely habitable basement apartment, a dark world they soon found themselves fighting to return to from the exile of foster care, then fighting even harder to escape.

Forty years later, Heather Siegel tells the remarkable story of how she and her siblings, Jaz and Greg, banded together to find out what happened to their mother and fight their way Out from the Underworld with nothing but their wits, determination, unbreakable bonds and gifts for humor and compassion to sustain them. A wrenching, inspiring story filled with heartbreak, hope and love, Out from the Underworld will move you to laughter and tears.

Heather is left abandoned by her own mother, who was a gorgeous yet a hippie woman, along with her elder sister, Jaz and her younger brother, Greg. The author narrates her painful journey from her father's underground basement apartment at his parents' home to foster care to the abuses to the feeling of abandonment at such a tender age.

Heather describes her father as a good man and even though he couldn't provide basic shelter for his children, Heather still loves him with vigor. All through her childhood while growing up, she bonded well with her sister, Jaz, since her brother, Greg got placed under a good foster family. On the other hand, Heather and Jaz had not much luck and went through a lot of challenges and difficulties like abuse while growing up.

But the pain of their mother leaving them under such harsh conditions, never left Heather for a single moment whereas her sister was brave and strong enough to mask that pain with her smart attitude. Their struggle for survival through the storm filled Heather with hope to move forward in her life.

The author pens a very honest and heart-felt memoir with her evocative yet disturbing narrative style. From the very first page, the author's crisp words captivated my mind. The descriptions are vividly portrayed with careful intricacy and detailing of each scenes, thus it let me see through her than child's eyes. The writing style is fantastic as she layered with the right emotions to make the story a page-turner. Her broken and lost childhood only made her stronger and transformed her into a better person.

I believe people who've grown up in a foster care and have had a broken childhood can easily relate to the author's painful journey. The emotions that the author try to capture only made my heart fill with sadness and gratification. And the way she unfolded her whole life story forty years later, made me see it like it only happened yesterday.

Her life story is miserable yet thoroughly inspiring enough to see how wrong choices by the parents can destroy the childhood of their children, how responsibility is the one main thing that holds a family together and how hope helps us battle any war in this world.

Verdict: *This is a must read memoir for all those who belong from a broken home and a broken childhood.*

Courtesy: *I received this book for a blog tour, and I'm glad that I got to read this memoir.*

Gmr says

This recollection of thoughts and memories takes us from the author's childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. She and her siblings survived much more than a broken home. From the moment her mother made a seemingly selfish decision, it was almost all downhill from there. From a self-implosion father unable to step out of his own shadow to care for those in his charge to a parade of women that would each leave their mark (for better or worse) on their young lives, the eventual realization reached was that no matter how much they wished, hoped, and dreamed that their remaining parent would rise above to save them like a phoenix from the ashes, it simply was not in their cards. So, they had to make their own luck and reach towards a happier ending.

It was so hard to watch this little family within a family be broken up again and again with atrocities committed against them that none should have to bear. It was inspiring to see how they pulled together to take care of each other while still reaching out to try and rescue the lost parent that still lived. Jaz may have been a hardcore-kick-butt-and-apologize-later type of girl, but deep down she was the "mother" between them, always guiding, sharing, and caring...in her own way. Greg, their brother, was a gentle spirit, and carried that kindness with him despite the tortures others inflicted upon him. As for Heather, she's more than simply our narrator or a victim of circumstance, she's a survivor, and considering where she came from any sort of normalcy achieved would be a celebratory point. So, settle for what she could get? Nope! She shot for the stars and while fame and fortune may not have been the end result, a life in the sun, with loved ones to cherish, and even a chance to make amends with her father, are definitely not something to shrink from.

In conclusion, an honest share of a life that was much more thorns than roses but with an ending that opened more doors than it closed, for the better. It's been said you never know what you're capable of until put to the test. Well, when their feet were to the fire, they didn't shirk away.

review copy received in exchange for my honest review...full post can be seen on my site

Micki Peluso says

Out from the Underworld

By Heather Siegel

“How did I get so lucky?” Heather Siegel asks her sweet baby daughter. As a survivor of child neglect, abandonment and abuse, she is lucky. Yet she paid full price for it as she flashes back to a childhood brimming over with memories — mostly bad. Somehow the good early years with her parents, especially her mother, offer strength on her journey toward survival.

Heather is abandoned by her mother at six-years-old, along with her eight-year-old sister, Jaz, and her baby brother, Greg. She relates her memories of those times with candor, resentment and a bit of mostly dark humor usually spewing from her sardonic sister, Jaz.

Her blond Nordic mother, so beautiful, albeit a bit of a hippie, yet light hearted and hopeful, disappears, leaving her father unable to cope with his own loss. He puts the girls into foster homes, separated from Greg, who is placed separately. Only till he gets his head together, he tells them; but that never happens. The children spend the next six years in foster homes sharing every other weekend with their father. Greg is lucky to be placed in a fairly good home, the girls not so much. Heather bonds to her one foster mother more out of need than love.

Jaz hides her hurt with sarcasm and a smart mouth, not allowing the blisters on her soul to show. Unlike her sister, Heather cannot hide mourning her beautiful mother, wondering why she left; wondering if she'll ever come home — home to her father's basement apartment, dark and dank — the underworld.

Author Heather Siegel writes a debut memoir that is often painful to read. Yet she never loses her innate hope that things will change for the better. The author bares her soul in this story so that those also abandoned and neglected and abused, can relate, while other readers may cringe at the heartache laced through this coming-of-age story. Due to graphic sex and language this book is recommended for adults only.

The story told through the point of view of Heather, Jaz and Greg, comes to a riveting end, shocking and painful yet offering a closure of sorts. This is a haunting memoir, disturbing at times yet grasps onto readers taking them along for an emotional ride of ups and downs into an unforeseen yet somewhat satisfying ending.

Micki Peluso, author of . . . And the Whippoorwill Sang.

David Watson says

Heather was six years old when her world was turned upside down. Her mother vanished leaving her family in a tailspin. Heather, along with her brother and sister were forced from a nice home to a dark basement where they lived with their father who never got over the loss of his wife. The children were eventually forced in and out of foster care with their only goals being to find out what happened to their mother and find a new home outside of the basement.

Out From The Underworld by Heather Siegel is a memoir about a dark childhood, but it's also a story of hope and proof that patterns can be broken. The writing in the story is excellent and the characters seem like people you would see in your every day life, because they are. This is a story about neglect and abandonment but none of the characters in it are bad, they are more like shades of grey. Everyone has their own issues and

what we have in this story is three siblings who learned that the only people they could trust 100 % was themselves.

I was impressed with the detailed memories that Heather has of this period of her life and I loved the fact that it seemed like this book was written from a kid's point of view. Meaning that it wasn't written from a viewpoint of an adult looking back on her childhood, the impression I got was that Heather was remembering everything from when she was a child and writing it as she saw it from her younger self's viewpoint.

For instance one of my favorite scenes was early in the book when Heather's grandma is complaining about her life and says she wishes she could move to Canada. Heather's sister right away asks what's stopping her from moving to Canada. Her grandma acts shocked and mentions several reasons why she can't pick up and leave. I thought this was a great example of how children and adults look at the world differently. For kids its easy as saying this would make me happy so I'm going to do it, while an adult is more cynical and will come up with several reasons why they can't be happy.

Another thing that really sticks out about *Out From The Underworld* is the realism. Heather talks about some horrible things in her childhood but she describes good times also. She brings up some fond memories of one of the foster families she lived with but we hear of the family's dark side as well. We also hear how everyones lives get better when Heather's father gets a regular girlfriend but things eventually go bad. Another shade of grey in Heather's life is her father. There are several instances in the book where you see that he is not really a good parental figure, but you also see instances where he shows love for his kids and because of his own upbringing never knew how to be a real father.

Out From The Underworld is a coming of age story by a woman who has suffered through more than most people suffer through. You hear about Heather's world view and you see her opinions on life, working and school change as she gets older. The best part of this book though is that all the kids in the book managed to go on and live happy lives, but not all the people in the book had the same transformation. I think *Out From The Underworld* is a great example of how a memoir should be written and I hope other people who live under similar circumstances read this book and learn that it is possible to escape the cycle of a bad home life.

Kathleen Pooler says

I was hooked into this story from the first page of Heather's prologue when she recalls a day she visited her father with her baby daughter. With heartbreaking detail, she presents the heart of her story—how the father she loves has not changed his ways. I sense there is a painful childhood story behind her words and I am driven to keep reading.

She starts the story the day her mother left her, age five, her eight-year-old sister Jaz, eight and her baby brother Greg in a motel room while she left with a stranger named Slim, stating, "If you need me, I'll be upstairs." It ended up being the last time they saw their mother alive.

The author then takes us on the grueling journey of trying to find their mother while living with their father who has been forced by his own lack of ambition to live in the moldy basement of his parent's home. The squalor and dampness of the setting are palpable. Their grandparents who live upstairs are cold and non-responsive to their grandchildren's needs, leaving them feeling even more abandoned. The author's ability to bring the reader into the scene through vivid sensory details is stunning. Her child's voice is so realistic and

believable that I immediately bond with her and her sister Jaz as she takes me deeper into their horrific story of neglect and abandonment, out from the underground basement apartment, through foster care and back to the basement. This voice is reminiscent of Frank McCourt's voice in *Angela's Ashes* and 'Tis and of Jeannette Walls in *The Glass Castle*. The reader can feel and taste the hollowness, confusion and terror of children left to fend for themselves. Her humor provides a sense of relief for the reader as a sense of resilience in these children is highlighted.

As painful and dreary as these circumstances are, Heather turns this story into a message of love and transformation. Despite the abandonment she feels, she never stops loving her father or hoping he will change for the better. The strength and resilience of these two sisters is awe-inspiring and serves as a consolation to the reader. In the midst of all they endure, they have a close bond that gets them through.

Heather then brings the reader through to resolution where the children all find their way out of the underground to healthy, productive lives. The reader sees this strength in these children and therefore feels hope throughout the story. They not only survive, they overcome and in doing so provide a message of hope for all who have endured childhood neglect and abuse.

Heather's writing is concise, descriptive and riveting. Once I started reading this memoir, I did not want to put it down. In addition to being an engaging, satisfying read, I highly recommend this memoir for anyone working with neglected or abandoned children.

T.W. Brown says

Heather Siegel's book, *Out from the Underworld* is a tale all too common in our broken society. If we were not immersed ourselves, then I imagine most people know somebody who had a very non-Brady childhood. The book is solid writing and tells Heather's story from the early days on and is full of unsavory and unpleasant moments. Have there been children who endured worse? Sure, but that is not the point. Here is one author laying her soul bare and sharing her LESSONS. I never understand people who "can't finish due to the language" or whatever. What is here in these pages is an uncensored look at ONE story. There is depth and emotion from the author that will pull you in and keep you turning the pages. Is it sad? Yes. But is it truth? Absolutely. This is a story worth reading.

Everybody will find the parts that resonate with them specifically, but more than anything, I think what I took away from this was a person who has the ability to take a horrible situation and, instead of being a stereotype that falls into the same pattern, makes a conscious effort to rise ABOVE. Too often, people dealt a bad hand use it as an excuse to repeat bad behavior. I have always found that weak at best and more of a construct of having that idea preached at them from the mindless TV drones and people who think they are helping by providing such excuses. Bravo to Ms. Siegel for sharing such a raw tale, and doing so in such eloquent fashion.

I was provided an advance copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Barbara Bamberger says

In my mind, it had been easier to idolize the dead parent and to blame the live one...but she'd left us, of her own volition, and that, I had to admit, wasn't his fault.

When Heather, age five, her older sister, Jaz, and baby brother, Greg, were abandoned by their mother, it was only the beginning of sorrows. It couldn't have been much more macabre, since their father, who lived by choice in a basement—not a finished basement but a dank cellar, with low ceilings and pipes and boilers, a hideout more than a residence—also worked in a funeral home. For outings he would take his brooding brood of three to his workplace to cavort among the caskets and survey such bizarre features as the make-up table, where he made corpses (once including Heather's mom) look their best. To literally climb out of the basement into the light was a challenge that, slowly but surely, Heather and her siblings managed to accomplish.

But before the light, there were other forms of darkness, primary among those the periods spent in foster care. Being told that their dad just had to get himself together and they would be home soon, the "care" they got at times bordered on abuse, certainly neglect. In the case of baby Greg, violence was perpetrated; in the case of the girls, sex played a role in shaping their view of life in the "homes" they were consigned to. In one case, Heather innocently strove to please a "smother mother" who clung to her, desperately afraid to be alone. All the while, their pot-smoking father was pursuing numerous relationships with pretty young women; almost any kind of female could apply for life in the basement, as long as she looked young and luridly attractive, not unlike the mother that Heather, Jaz, and Greg had lost. When the youngsters attended her funeral, it should have brought a kind of closure. Prompted by a weird encounter with a Ouija board, they realized that their mother would continue to haunt them until they were able to piece together the circumstances of her violent demise.

Looking at those years of emotional chaos from the security of a stable family life that she has worked hard to attain, and with creative talent bolstered by an MFA in writing, Heather Siegel portrays her semi-orphaned childhood as harsh, eerie, and very real. There's no doubt that kids who have been warehoused in foster care, who have been left to wonder what happened to a disappeared parent, even kids brought up in families with a parent who was simply mentally ill or addicted or for whatever reason incompetent and inattentive, will feel resonance with Heather's harrowing but ultimately hopeful coming-of-age saga.

Barbara Bamberger Scott, 2015 (This review first appeared at www.curledup.com)

Ellen says

ELLEN reviewed it

Riveting, Harrowing, and beyond amazing to me that these 3 children lived through this horrific childhood. Not only did they live through this but each one has become successful in their own right. An extremely powerful read!!!

Sarah Cottrell says

Heather Siegel is a master storyteller like none I have encountered. She cleverly blended the wisdom of hindsight with the magic and innocence of the voice of childhood in order to tell her story with clarity, astuteness, humor, and suspense. Her attention to detail from descriptions of adult actions and speech down

to living conditions and emotional responses leave the reader utterly and completely wanting to scoop up her six year-old self and protect her from the kinds of hard knock that leaves permanent scars.

By the end of the book I was in tears. The final conclusion brought closure and a sense of satisfaction, but also a bittersweet feeling of worry for this woman who had endured so much.

Melinda says

Wow!!! I have to say this story left me shredded. How could a parent voluntarily place their children in foster care? How could a mother walk out on her children, tearing the family apart? How would the children fare from the abuses suffered from foster care as well as from family? Yes, you read correctly, Heather Siegel shares her heartbreaking story of an unimaginable childhood.

A story of resilience, inspiring through utterly tragic circumstances. I shed plenty of tears as I tore through this book. I was left with completely empathy for Heather, admiration as well, she pulled through surviving what very well could have destroyed her. Enduring what no child should.

Heather Siegel clearly shares her story in a solid and compelling fashion as she revisits childhood through adulthood. Her descriptive style leaves you feeling as if you are a helpless fly on the wall observing all the chaos, unable to shelter and help these innocents, your hands bound. Painfully heartbreaking story. Heather Siegel possesses strength and resilience. Quite a moving and memorable story.

Julie says

Infuriating and horrific in the way the children were raised. It's told with such brutal honesty and matter of fact that it takes me a second to realize what Heather (the author and middle child) just told me. I re-read parts to make sure it's truly what I just read. I am so proud of the adults the three made for themselves. They worked for what they now have and didn't use excuses to be lazy or feel entitled. I really enjoyed reading this book. If you three (Greg, Heather, or Jaz) are able to read this, please know that I am so sorry about your Mom. It sounds like she might have truly been mentally ill, and the medical field wasn't nearly as good back then as it is now. Just know that she is looking down on you three and so very proud of you. Thank you for sharing your story with us. I won't forget it.)

Ashley says

I'm not a huge lover of non-fiction reads, but every so often I do enjoy delving into one. Some of my favourite non-fiction reads have been ANGELA'S ASHES, A STOLEN LIFE, HIDDEN GIRL, and THE GLASS CASTLE. What do all these reads have in common? They are all based on thriving under intense and unbearable circumstances. **OUT FROM THE UNDERWORLD by Heather Siegel** was no different.

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DISCLAIMER: Novel was sent in exchange for a honest review

SYNOPSIS: *Heather Siegel was six years old when her mother disappeared, sending her father into a tailspin that took Heather and her siblings down with him—from a comfortable suburban home to a barely habitable basement apartment, a dark world they soon found themselves fighting to return to from the exile of foster care, then fighting even harder to escape. Forty years later, Heather Siegel tells the remarkable story of how she and her siblings, Jaz and Greg, banded together to find out what happened to their mother and fight their way Out from the Underworld with nothing but their wits, determination, unbreakable bonds and gifts for humor and compassion to sustain them. A wrenching, inspiring story filled with heartbreak, hope and love, Out from the Underworld will move you to laughter and tears.*

REVIEW: This book is good - short enough to get her point across but deep enough to really feel the pain of the author.

Heather and her two siblings are snatched away by their mother for a 'jaunt' to Manhattan. Their mother, ever flamboyant, erratic, and bohemian, leaves their hotel suite never to return. The children are shuffled back to their under-prepared father, a funeral director, who cannot fathom the idea of raising 3 kids on his own. The three children are then split and torn between foster homes, both abusive and unfit, for a total of almost 10 years. Read how Heather and her siblings survived foster home, their unfit father, and a life always haunted by their mother.

This novel is quite good - Siegel does an excellent job at setting the scene without being too descriptive and overbearing. The novel is almost written with child-like perspective, giving the reader the ability to see Siegel's plight through the eyes of her 6 - 20 year old self (as opposed to a writer just retelling their story at age 40 or so). The novel is so honest, it's heartbreaking.

The obstacles in the children's lives are ever-apparent. These children do not catch a break, and it makes you yearn for them. No child should feel the harsh sting of being rejected by a parent. No child should feel the repercussions of a woman-chasing father. No child should feel grossly unsupported the way these children do. No child should grow up in a foster home where beatings are a regular thing. The obstacles these children go through before the age of 15 are extraordinary, and really go to show how successful these children are only for the strength and bond of their own siblings.

This is truly a story about love - regardless of what has happened to Siegel, the overwhelming love and affection she has for her foster families and her own father is apparent. Her strength is awe-inspiring and something I could probably only hope to strive for. A riveting memoir!

Amelia says

The author spins the unlikely but true tale of her bizarre childhood, which involved much more darkness than most of us had to endure as youngsters. She and her siblings were abandoned by their mother, given up to foster care multiple times by their womanizing father, ignored by grandparents, mistreated by foster mothers and foster siblings, and just generally had some pretty rotten experiences most of us like to believe are not the norm for children.

The author paints beautiful and often tragic word pictures that convey the emotions and uncertainty of the child she was as well as the feel of the period of society, particularly the sixties and seventies, and the

atmosphere of the places she lived and the people she encountered.

Clearly, she is extremely talented and gifted with words and especially the expression of emotion. The fact that these children emerged as reasonably functional adults is nothing short of miraculous. The narrative is beautiful, powerful, and disturbing.

Diane says

Out from the Underworld offers something different in the memoir world: its title sounds like science fiction, it reads with all the compelling drama of a thriller, yet it actually is the story of Heather Siegel, whose mother disappeared from the family and whose father abandoned his children: a story developed with all the trappings of a good mystery.

Forty years later she is still asking questions, and Out from the Underworld documents not only her survival of a broken childhood and family, but it's lasting (and surprisingly positive) effects on her own family.

It's about how adults make choices, their effects on children, and in turn how further choices are made for future generations - and most of all, Out from the Underworld details not just survival, adaptation and healing, but how Siegel forged a life above and beyond any label of 'victim' or 'damaged' - and perhaps this is its greatest strength, setting the read apart from a mere story of struggle and survival.

The 'Underworld' in Siegel's story is more than the basement apartment that thinly veiled personal hells: it's about mental attitude and how lasting, positive change is achieved against all odds, and it's about accepting parents for who they are rather than who they "should" or could become.

Any who have struggled with their own family hell and idiosyncrasies (either minor or major) will find Out from the Underworld illuminates the course of one woman's transformation and, in the process, serves as a beacon guiding pathways of possibility for others to follow.

Lisa Nevola says

Out From the Underworld was a remarkable true story about Heather Siegel's fight out from the darkness of foster care and the bone-chilling disappearance of her mother at a young age.

Out from the Underworld pulls the reader in from the first chapter and has them hooked until the very last page, leaving the reader with wanting more.

Heather Siegel's truth and rawness leaves the reader quickly turning the page to know more. Out from the Underworld will have your emotions running high with her story of heartbreak, tragedy, and forgiveness.

Simply put, Out from the Underworld is a must read!!
