



Bringing in Finn: An Extraordinary Surrogacy Story

Sara Connell

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In February 2011, 61-year-old Kristine Casey delivered the greatest gift of all to her daughter, Sara Connell: Sara's son, Finnean. At that moment, Kristine—the gestational carrier of Sara and her husband Bill's child—became the oldest woman ever to give birth in Chicago.

Bringing in Finn is the incredible story of one woman's hard-fought and often painful journey to motherhood. In this achingly honest memoir, Connell recounts the tragedy and heartbreak of losing pregnancies; the process of opening her heart and mind to the idea of her 61-year-old mother carrying her child for her; and the profound bond that blossomed between mother and daughter as a result of their unique experience together.

Moving, inspiring, and ultimately triumphant, *Bringing in Finn* is an extraordinary tale of despair, hope, forgiveness, and redemption—and the discovery that when it comes to unconditional love, there are no limits to what can be achieved.

Bringing in Finn: An Extraordinary Surrogacy Story Details

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From Reader Review Bringing in Finn: An Extraordinary Surrogacy Story for online ebook

MH says

Loved it, medical descriptions included. Fascinating view of infertility issues and how they're dealt with. So glad Sara's mom was able to be the surrogate. The whole story left me on a real high.

Laura Simon says

Great story!

Paula Reyes says

Captivating and heart wrenching account of the struggles of infertility, miscarriage and stillbirth yet a love story of a couple who promised and remained committed through their journey and its ups and extreme lows. The "big picture" being their key word to remind themselves to stay focused and thankful. A mother's love is unending and one mother wanted so much for her daughter to feel that love in her arms gave her daughter the ultimate gift.

It was hard to put this one down and it keeps me wondering how Kristine, Sara, Bill and sweet baby Finn are doing today.

Hearing this story actually read by the author is amazing and you really feel the gut punch of her loss and the anticipation of every test result.

I'm so happy I came across this phenomenal find!

Elizabeth Moeller says

I was totally prepared to hate this book. The tabloidy premise, which is a non-fiction account about a woman who has difficulty carrying a pregnancy to term and uses her mother as a surrogate, could have gone horribly wrong in a lot of different ways. However, what I discovered was a very thoughtful account of the desire to mother that led the author to this very unusual decision.

The author is a life coach and speaker by trade which is probably why the book is so grounded in terms of her ability to examine her feelings and motivations in an accessible and interesting way. Although I don't have children and don't particularly want them, her very passionate writing about her desire to have a child with her husband and her pain at not being able to do so made me feel very invested in her quest.

I would warn anyone who has any sort of gynecological trauma in their past that Connell's experience of miscarriage and the multitude of doctors she deals with in her quest to have a baby might be too painful to read. However, I would highly recommend book this for someone looking to investigate what IVF or other fertility treatments entail or for anyone who is interested in thinking more broadly about the meaning of mothering in our society.

Sherrey says

Bringing in Finn is not just a story about a couple who desperately want a child. Nor is it a story intended to only detail their struggles, disappointments and attempts to conceive. It is about so much more than that.

Sara Connell brings to the page a story of extraordinary love that encompasses and bridges a conflicted relationship between a mother and her daughter.

Connell's desire for a child is reinforced by her husband's mutual wish to grow their family. What seem like insurmountable odds work against them as they attempt conception via in vitro fertilization. At times, the despair and heartache described by Connell is wrenching for the reader. At times, I wanted to reach through the pages to help this couple.

And yet help is present on the fringe of this anxious and desperate situation. An unlikely surrogate comes forward in Connell's 61-year old mother. From this gift to her daughter and son-in-law, Kristine unknowingly sets into place another miraculous event.

The cover of Bringing in Finn gives a visual of the happiness that grew out of this couple's struggle to bring Finn into the world.

* * *

My Recommendation:

If you are considering surrogacy, this book may be for you. However, I would caution that there are raw moments of grief, despair and depression within its pages. Be ready to walk a journey with the Connells that you may not yet have experienced yourself. On the other hand, this is a story of hope and miracles that anyone would find worthy of taking the time to read if only because of its simply beautiful message.

* * *

Disclaimer: I received a copy of Bringing in Finn from the publisher via WOW! Women on Writing in exchange for a fair and honest review. The opinions expressed are my own.

Jamie Maier says

I experienced most, if not all of this.

Stephanie says

Bringing in Finn is one woman's true account of her struggle to get pregnant and have a baby. After countless heartaches, lost pregnancies, and IVF (in vitro fertilization) treatments, Sara and her husband, Bill, knew they still wanted to have a child, despite having no success as of yet. Eventually, her 61 year old

mother became a surrogate and carried their son, Finn, to full term for them.

This was a fascinating story. Not only was it incredible that Sara's mother became a surrogate for her own daughter, but her age was an astounding factor as well. It helped create a bond between the family that once seemed lost; what a beautiful thing! And what a gift... to help your child have her own child... just wow!

The first half of the story is also important. It chronicles Sara's own personal journey to having a child and the struggles she endures trying to have a baby. She discusses the various treatments they used while trying to get pregnant, the joy of finally becoming pregnant with twins, as well as the painful miscarriages she faced later on and the loss of the twins she was so excited to conceive after a long road of trying.

While I don't have children just yet, I was moved and fascinated by this story. I also learned a lot about infertility, pregnancy, IVF, and surrogacy making me a much more knowledgeable and empathetic person.

One thing to note is that Sara is very into alternative health and seems quite spiritual. She seems very unique and intelligent! I had a hard time connecting with these ideas at times though. However, it never hurts to learn about new things, ideas, cultures, and more, so this may not be a bad thing.

All in all, a very interesting and lovely story about family, love, and hope.

Note: I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Blu Catalano says

A touching read to share with family, especially mothers and daughters, *Bringing in Finn*, delves from an unusual angle into family connection. For most of the story we follow Sara and Bill as they navigate the road to having children. They begin like most married couples, full of hope and simple dreams. Starting a family seems like a wonderful, essential step in their evolution. Yet, harbingers lie in the background, ignored or unknown. Sara comes to the table with ghosts that sneak out; now that she is ready to be a mother, there is little chance of eluding them. To move forward she must unlock her past and recognize how it affects her present. But that is only the beginning of this tale.

As we learn of the many snares awaiting Sara and Bill, we spend the first half of the book in hospital beds, doctor's offices and harrowing Emergency Rooms. Sara courageously lays her emotional state and process out. Several scenes paint unflinching portraits of deep pain and loss. Knowing one is not alone is half of the battle to overcome these private types of despair. For the many out there who've experienced miscarriage, still birth, infertility and inability to become pregnant, the sharing of this pain—on Sarah's part and the readers' part—will be cathartic.

Sara's profession as a life coach as well as her meditation practice ground her tale, and keep her guided throughout a succession of ordeals. She uses her breathe as a compass and her deep belief in the power of goodness, a North Star. Often the prayer for a Mother's arms is her only solace. These compassionate beings intertwine: The spirit mother, the Earth Mother and her real mother.

As the story progresses her mother Kris comes from the background into focus. The last third of the book is her shared tale, her shared journey with her daughter. Their husbands join them for an exceptional, tender foray into unknown territory.

It must be noted that the abiding luck and abundance of Sara's life overarches this tale. It is clear in every page that she has been given much. Indeed, there is little that she does not have. However, there are many powerful leveling forces. In this case, Sara is every woman in her inability to have living children; she

becomes stripped of cushioning in her despair. Yet, even so, she rises above. Throughout every challenge her remarkably healthy, successful family supports her; what's more, they have the means to do so. Within this loving cocoon, Sara understands that she will overcome the loss, if she must.

So, while this story in its raw moments is universal and should be shared, there is misalignment between Sara's possibilities and many of the people who endure similar circumstances. The riches underlying the success of Sara's and Kris's vision can feel remote to the average person who can't afford \$20,000 fertility treatments, or frequent flights, or gifted spa and vacation dates.

Even so, there is much to be gleaned from this tale of how a family faced the genetic, bone deep ache many experience to have children. There is genuine loss and love. Every detail is heartfelt and given with trust. Despite its small shortcomings, this is a story worth reading, about a woman who suffered terrible trauma and prevailed, about a mother's love, about a family who lost, persisted, and ultimately overcame. Finn was born to them by sheer will, luck, and patience. Sara and Bill are bestowed with the ultimate gift by 61 year old Kris. This in turn Sara bestows upon readers struggling with a similar fate. Hope. Possibility.

Doreen says

Incredibly moving tale of a 61-year old mother who offers to carry the child of her daughter and son-in-law, who've had great difficulty carrying a pregnancy to term. I sympathized very much with Sara Connell: my own relationship with my mom was fairly distant, and it did improve vastly after the birth of my first child. Ms Connell charts the trials and emotional upheavals of finally bringing Finn, her child, into their lives with an honesty that is compelling and raw.

And yet, and yet. While I felt very much for all the participants, the experience of reading this book was like being forced into close quarters with an annoyingly neurotic person. It's nice that Ms Connell acknowledges that she's got a lot of work to do on herself, but my stoic nature had little patience with her drama. As Ms Connell herself admits, she's always been very emotional and sensitive. The experience of reading her memoir is thus *exhausting*, because there's so much that feels self-inflicted and egocentric. I was especially grossed out by the dramatastic bit when her mom was held for observation immediately after delivering Finn. "How could no one have told [me and my husband]?" Ms Connell whines, and afterwards, "I forgave [the doctor] for not telling us what had been happening all those hours." I understand that she's greatly concerned for her mother -- because who wouldn't be? -- but that's not how it comes across, especially since a) her mother's spouse was there the entire time, b) the doctor's primary concern was and should be the patient, not her emotionally needy daughter, and c) it was just for observation while the newborn baby was with Ms Connell and her husband. Calm down, lady, not everything has to be about you.

But, y'know, that's fine: her being neurotic is a personality trait, and who she is, and while I wouldn't want to hang out with her on a regular basis, that doesn't devalue from the book at all. What does detract from it, however, was her appalling lack of knowledge when it came to actual childbirthing issues. She seems like an intelligent person, so I can only attribute this to a willful ignorance of the process. I get that she wanted to spare her mother pain by going as quickly as possible to a Cesarean, but that's a far riskier procedure than birthing naturally, with greater potential for complications and a much longer recovery time. The attitude she threw at the doctors for being reluctant to perform it until they felt the rewards outweighed the risks was obnoxious. And then the bit about binding breasts to stop lactation: I'm not sure what kind of terrible advice they got from their lactation consultant, but that's a guaranteed recipe for mastitis, with little benefit compared to just not nursing. What's especially maddening is that none of this information is hard to find (and don't get me started on the fondness for general anesthesia.) Ironically, the holistic remedies she

described were all really well researched: the contrast makes her ignorance otherwise look stunningly lazy. I get that her background is in homeopathy, and that she was in a tizzy about the whole childbirth thing because it's such a complicated, emotional process, but that's seriously no excuse to not educate yourself, particularly over the course of the 7 years it took.

Anyway, this is a great book for people who want to read about mother-daughter bonding, and about unusual surrogacies, and about how some people manage to overcome obstacles to bring beloved children into the world. I wouldn't recommend it, however, if you don't have a lot of patience for drama llamas. I think I would have enjoyed this a lot more if it had been written from the point of view of Kris Casey, Ms Connell's mother, who sounds like a much more sensible person, both in the main body of the book and in the interview attached to the end.

Bringing In Finn is an extraordinary story. The fact that I occasionally wanted to shake sense into the narrator -- and don't get me wrong, she does seem like a nice person who's trying her best to overcome her persecution complex -- didn't detract from it too much.

I received this book gratis as part of ELLE Magazine's ELLE's Lettres Jurors' Prize program.

Jess says

I loved the surrogacy story and was touched by the grandmothers willingness to help her daughter become a mother. However, I couldn't connect very well with Sara. I cried during her stillbirths and miscarriage, but I feel like maybe her writing style wasn't suited for me as a reader.

Crystal Otto says

Book Review: Bringing in Finn: An Extraordinary Surrogacy Story
by Sara Connell

Review by Crystal J. Casavant-Otto

Bringing in Finn is truly an amazing story that many women and couples can relate to. Around half of all fertilized eggs die and are lost spontaneously, before a woman even knows she is pregnant. Once a woman knows she is pregnant, the miscarriage rate is more like 15-20%. These statistics seem staggering, but yet very comforting. As a woman who has experienced several miscarriages, I felt less lonely knowing others had gone before me. The fact that Sara Connell and her husband had struggled with fertility did not surprise me, what shocked and surprised me was the fact that Sara's 61 year old mother was a surrogate for the couple. The risk of miscarriage is higher in women over 40, so a 61 year old woman carrying a child to term was in and of itself enough to make Bringing in Finn quite the alluring read.

Sara Connell's mother, Kristine, carried Sara and Bill's son Finnean to term making Kristine the oldest woman in Chicago to give birth. Bringing in Finn is the touching and true story of the family's struggle with fertility but also the inspiring story of unconditional love. Sara's writing is thoughtful and inspirational. The honest way she describes her miscarriages is incredibly painful but if the reader can get through the tough times there certainly is triumph in the end.

I didn't know anything about IVF (in vitro fertilization) and the Connell's account was helpful and I consider it an eye opener. I feel like this was a journey for the entire family and not just Sara and Bill's story, or Finn's story, but truly an entire family experience. It was easy to connect with the family and it was difficult to put the book down. I found myself wondering what I would have done in Sara's situation and then wondering what I would have done if I were Sara's mother, Kristine ... would I have taken the risk to bring happiness to my daughter and her husband? Would I have been able to let go of the child I carried? Would I feel like a grandmother or more like a mother to Finnean? I find myself thinking about Sara and her family and it's been weeks since I finished Bringing in Finn. It's safe to say this is a touching story that will leave your heart forever changed.

Kris says

Was good but a little too "Zenish" for me, bordering on losing credibility.

Kathleen Pooler says

The idea that one's own mother would offer to be a surrogate for the child you can't have seems insurmountable, especially since the mother is in her 60s. Add to that the conflicted relationship with this mother. Sara Connell tells her remarkable, true story of surrogacy in a believable and heartfelt way. It goes beyond surrogacy though as it addresses how a conflicted mother-daughter relationship transforms into a strong, loving bond as they prepare for the birth of this long-awaited child. It also explores the impact of this experience on a marriage.

This memoir will touch many who are experiencing difficulty conceiving as well as any who refuse to give up on a dream, despite the odds against that dream. Sara's desire for a child is palpable and when she conceives twins after several previous miscarriages, and carries them longer than any other pregnancy, we rejoice with her and her husband, Bill. But when the twins cannot be saved at twenty-four weeks due to an incompetent cervix, we grieve for their loss right along with them. A long string of visits to a fertility clinic prove unsuccessful. The emotional and financial strain is overwhelming but the marriage endures and blossoms. Just as all hope seems lost, Sara's mother, embarking on her own spiritual journey, feels called to offer to be a surrogate for her daughter's and son-in-law's baby.

Therein lies the journey of bringing a baby into the world while healing a mother-daughter bond and strengthening a marital bond. It is a riveting story of heartbreak and triumph, powerfully written. Sara opens up her heart and allows herself to be completely vulnerable both in her life and in her writing. There are many stories behind the beautiful picture of Bill and Sara holding her son, Finn on the book cover. We, the reader, feel very much a part of these stories through this riveting memoir of hope against all odds

Jill says

I **loved** this book!! I couldn't put it down. I read it in a week, and I never read books that quickly.

One aspect of the book that really stands out is the author's sensory descriptions of Chicago's weather extremes. I could almost *feel* the gusts of cold winter winds hitting me as she described them. The oppressive heat of Chicago summers also hit home.

Of course the book is much deeper than just its setting. The author really opens her heart in describing the joys and pains she experienced throughout the seven-year process of bringing Finn into the world.

My favorite line in the book is on page 12: "My desire to be a mother was like my desire to continue breathing and maintain the use of my limbs."

A close second is the line that follows: "It sounded excruciating to want something so deeply and not know if you'd ever be able to experience it."

Thank you to the author, her husband, her mom and her dad for sharing this extraordinary journey with us. Finn is truly a miracle.

Gayle says

Although the story is memorable, reading it is exhausting. I feel for all that Sara went through during her fertility journey, but I also worry about Finn in the coming years. It comes across that Sara still has a lot of work to do on herself and her emotional needs and perceptions? Will she visit these difficulties on her son???
