



Stolen: Escape from Syria

Louise Monaghan , Yvonne Kinsella

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In the vein of *Not Without My Daughter*, *Stolen: Escape from Syria* is a memoir recounting a mother's crusade to rescue her kidnapped daughter from her abusive ex-husband during the tumultuous days of the Arab Spring

In the middle of one of the worst civil wars in Syria's history, Louise Monaghan walked across a heavily guarded border to save her six-year-old child from the father who had callously snatched her from her home in Cyprus. Fearing for her daughter's future under the oppressive Sharia law, the Irish mother returned to her ex-husband, Mostafa Assad, to bide her time until she could escape with her daughter.

Once in his homeland, she too was held captive, locked inside a run-down house with little food and no hope of deliverance. Severely beaten by Mostafa —she was even left unconscious on the ground in front of their child—she and her little girl miraculously escaped.

This suspenseful account will pull at your heartstrings, enveloping you in harrowing events that no mother would dare imagine and culminating with the triumphal feats this mother achieved. Smuggled across a heavily patrolled mountain range in the dead of night through bomb attacks and sniper fire, Monaghan and her daughter speak to the transcendent bond between mother and child.

Stolen: Escape from Syria Details

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From Reader Review Stolen: Escape from Syria for online ebook

Sally says

The true account of an Irish woman living the good life in Cyprus. When she takes up with an abusive Syrian guy, it's the beginning of a nightmare, culminating with his absconding with their daughter to his war torn homeland.

Although the actual escape is quite compelling...much nail biting as rescuers renege on the deal, embassies fail to get the paperwork through, the author and child are holed up in safe houses...I found Monaghan's utter foolishness in persisting with the relationship to get to this point quite irritating.

A continual cheater - and with a wife and kids back home - the charmless Assad is also a bully, dangerously violent to both the author and her child, prone to rape and a freeloader. I tried to find a reason for her seeming inability to get out sooner - she had a strong, supportive family in Dublin and a flourishing career. Assad's ability to keep her hooked seem reliant solely on his physical appearance; the naivety in forever going back for more quite breathtaking.

Also, while the author undoubtedly showed courage in her break for freedom, the reader is again irritated by her utter lack of planning and stupidity. When a long-awaited get away becomes possible, she asks if there's time for a shower first. Fleeing a strict muslim land, she inexplicably chooses to ditch the hated hijab for a short dress and wedge heels (not wise when crossing the desert on foot.) Constant bleating about make up and the calibre of the hotels cause one to quite lose patience with her.

But makes the very valid point that marrying a muslim is to be avoided at all cost!

Liralen says

Something that struck me very early on, reading this book: It was published less than a year after the events in question. This works both for and against it, as on the one hand the events are obviously clear in the author's mind, but on the other hand there's not much by way of distance to be had.

It must have been an extremely difficult time to revisit, not to mention live through, and that -- along with the author's devotion to her daughter -- certainly comes through loud and clear. The book's also a bit scattered in places, though, and there was a lot left unsaid. Although the author addresses her attraction to her ex briefly, in the last few pages, that felt too little, too late; while I understand that things like not having makeup available or staying in a very second-rate hotel -- matters of comfort -- can feel extremely important when in a stressful/dangerous situation, I suspect that focusing more heavily on the surroundings (what was Syria *like*? I think all we really learn is that it was dirty and dangerous, no real specifics) would have grounded me more in the setting and let me understand better what the author was feeling.

Chapters three and four, which are background on how the author met her ex and what their life was life together before he kidnapped their daughter, came just when I was getting irritated about the *lack* of background up to that point (though by the middle of chapter four I wished that info had been worked in more gradually...). There's a lot of material in this book, and I applaud the author (and ghostwriter) for tackling it and attempting nuance.

I received a free copy of this book via a Goodreads giveaway.

Shana says

I picked this up thinking it would be an updated, more recent version of Not Without My Daughter, a book and movie I watched when I was younger that really stuck with me. In terms of the story, it is very similar. Instead of an American woman, Iranian man, and their daughter, this book features an Irish woman living in Cyprus, a Syrian man, and their daughter.

Louise Monaghan is divorced from her abusive ex, but their daughter still has visits with him. During one of these outings, the daughter is kidnapped across borders and into Syria. What follows is a highly emotional story of Monaghan's attempts to get her daughter back. The highlights include an inefficient and often detrimental bureaucracy in all countries involved and some major guts on Monaghan's part.

Though Monaghan's story is terrifying and thrilling, the writing itself leaves a lot to be desired. A lot of it is repetitive and the vocabulary isn't very diverse. She relies on the same descriptor words in many cases. She's not a writer, just a person with a story to tell, so I don't necessarily fault her that. I only mention it because at first I wasn't sure if I wanted to continue reading just because it felt redundant.

Linda says

At first I found the writing to be disappointing, but whenever it distracted me, I put an Irish brogue in my mind and could accept the phrasing and repetitiveness as the personality of the author and I imagined her talking to me over coffee. As the book progressed, though, there were less and less instances where I had to employ that tactic. My aim in reading the book was to learn a little about Syria, but the story is really about an abusive relationship with Syria as a backdrop. Louise seemed so meek and passive in the beginning, yet so strong in the end.

Good read. I'd recommend it to folks who liked Dave Pelzer's books.

Roisín says

Being Northern Irish I remember hearing this is the news. The whole way through the book I just wanted to scream the warning signs were there. But I can certainly understand how easy it is to get drawn into a violent marriage. I just hope that because of this book she will have taught other women a valuable lesson. This book is quite similar to the story of Not without my daughter.

The book was very well written and I read it really fast because I kept wanting to see how the story ended. I don't recall hearing at the time how it all ended. As soon as I began to read it I thought this story is familiar it was only when I googled I recognized the woman. I guess the only thing I didn't understand is she kept returning to Cyprus and I think she is either incredibly brave or stupid to return back to the scene of the crime. Nothing could stop him some point returning and attempting to take the kid again. I just wonder if she is always looking over her shoulder and what kind of life. Her kid sounds like an amazing brave little girl. And I do wish them a happy ending. Some valuable lessons from this book that all western women thinking of getting into a relationship with someone from another culture. Lets hope it gets through the dangers.

Sian says

I found the book a really good read but it's incredibly hard NOT to judge a mother that put her daughter in harms way time and time again, even though she had multiple chances to escape him after she found out he was being abusive to her daughter and she her child was terrified of him.

What riled me up was near the end she blames the whole fiasco on her husband for kidnapping her child when she would never have been in this situation in the first place if when he went back to his REAL wife and children in Syria the first time. left her and ignored her for 6 months, she didn't start taking his calls again!

She had a chance then to move on from him, let him stay with his first wife and kids, but she didn't.

I'm sure many of us have done stupid things for love, I am one of them but to blame him the entire time I think she needs to look at herself too and admit half the blame also lies on her.

Tricia says

I loved this book.. I grew up with Louise and we were good friends for many years.. She is godmother to my eldest son but life goes on and we lost touch.. my heart broke when i heard the news of her daughters abduction and soared when she got her home to safety... this book is written in her own words and is as gripping as any true life story can be.. i read it in 1 day.. it really does prove that nobody knows what goes on behind closed doors.... I hope you enjoy this book as much as i did and i hope that louise and the many other women out there that have suffered as she has can move on with their lives and hopefully escape like louise has..a great read enjoy

Rosemary Morris says

As I write this review my sympathy is with Syrians who want a peaceful life. Louise Monaghan's descriptions of random shooting and violence brought home what Syrians are now enduring.

Louise paid a bitter price for falling in love with a Syrian who, to use a cliché, was a 'control freak'. Louise's husband was a womaniser who abused her physically and mentally. Louise divorced him but his outrageous behaviour culminated in his abducting their daughter in Corfu and taking her to Syria.

Regardless of danger, determined to rescue her daughter, May, Louise went to Syria, where she was imprisoned in a filthy house and given little to eat. Eventually, she managed to seize an opportunity to run away from her former husband with their daughter. After incredible hardship they reached Lebanon and flew back to her family in Ireland.

Stolen, Escape From Syria, kept me awake and reading until after midnight. Due to the subject matter I can't describe the book as enjoyable, but it gripped me from the first page to the last.

Lynn says

I actually grabbed this book at the Dollar Store. An easy read, this is the true story of a young girl kidnapped by her father and taken to Syria, his home country. It is mindblowing to think how he was able to do it, the many problems with systems that allow such things to occur, the conditions of a war-torn part of the world, the cultural difference regarding the rights of men and women...

Something happening to my children is my BIGGEST fear. These circumstances are beyond frightening. The determination and extent that Louise Monaghan went through to find and rescue her daughter is UNbelievable. A true and very beautiful testament to a mother's love for her child.

Amy says

I wanted to rate this book higher because I admire Monaghan for sharing her story. I was fascinated to read her descriptions of the places she visited in Syria, and while her descriptions of the physical abuse she suffered were very difficult to read, I appreciated her sharing them, and thought it was not only courageous, but also helpful in understanding how someone could stay with an abusive boyfriend or husband. I am aware of how difficult it is to deal with matters of child custody and domestic abuse in the Middle East, and commend Monaghan for wanting to shed light on the issue.

My two-star rating ("it was okay") reflects the fact that I didn't find the writing itself entirely compelling. Perhaps it was an effort to "stick to the facts" that made it dry, but if the sewage in the streets in Syria is going to be mentioned, I would have loved to have some description of what it looked and smelled like. I wished that conversations that occurred during the book's time frame would have been recreated, rather than just recounted. I also very much wished that Monaghan would have spent some time near the beginning of the book talking about what made her fall in love with her abusive husband, rather than spending a couple of paragraphs on it at the very end of the book. If we had seen her ex-husband through her eyes at the beginning, when she thought he was great, then it might have been easier to understand how she could fall for him and stay with him.

Sarah Lameche says

Well this is the first abduction book I have read where instead of having sympathy for the mother I just feel angry towards her! She stays with the man who beat her after knowing him for such a short time. She continues to go back to him despite his cheating/abusing ways. Then actually had a child with him. She uses too many excuses to stay with him and marries him despite no longer loving him?!

Frankly I feel so sorry for her child and family for the situation she put them in!

She then says she'd hate her child to have an Islamic burial (why?), that waking up to hear the call to prayer at the mosque terrified her?

She didn't want May conforming to a religion she knew nothing about, yet it's OK to christen her and celebrate Xmas and teach her daughter the hail Mary? Rather hypocritical if you ask me.

To top is all off she ends the book telling us she fell for him because he was the most gorgeous man and even her friends/family/strangers all fell for his amazing looks and charm. Sorry but I've seen his photo and he's not all that. I only read the book to the end to ensure May got home safely. Though I just can't understand why she would go on to tell the whole world in this book that she is now living back in Cyprus where her daughter was abducted from? Bizarre. Her husband was a psycho but she chose to be with him. Her daughter didn't. I just thank God she brought her back.

Yvonne Kinsella says

As I wrote this book I am slightly biased, but it is genuinely a fascinating, terrifying, yet inspirational story of the lengths a mother will go to just to protect her child.

Martin says

An interesting story badly written.

Shakaela says

I got this book out because for quite a while I've been really interested in Syria and what is going on there, and I've been thinking of the people suffering over there. (I still am).

Louise's story is a sad one, and my eyes were opened wider to see the picture of what is really happening over there. To think that there are so many more people out there experiencing the horrors Louise and her little girl faced is horrific. I admire Louise for standing tall for what she believes is right, and for pursuing May without giving up hope. I'm sure everyone who knows her is overjoyed at their safety now, and I am so happy they got out of the country before anything worse happened to them. Louise's story was quite detailed, and parts of the story did seem to be repeated in different wording, but there's nothing 'wrong' about that, it's just her way of telling her story.

Before reading this book, I had already known Syria wasn't a nice place to go to, but now, I realize Syria is a far more dangerous place than I had already thought it was. I feel for the innocent people and children over there being killed and abused everyday and still think over what I could possibly do to help. I used to believe I wanted to go to the country myself, but then, when I get there, what do I do?

I suppose the only thing to do now is pray.

Dolly says

This book had potential -- the story was there -- but it was horribly written. A good editor could've reduced the length by at least a third. I found myself getting annoyed with the writer when she complained about the lack of travel soaps at a Turkish hotel near the Syrian border or having to part with her precious makeup case during an escape attempt. TRIVIAL details given the situation. The descriptions of Syria were lacking.
