



Lucky Me: My Life With--and Without--My Mom, Shirley MacLaine

Sachi Parker

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Shirley MacLaine's only child shares shocking stories from her out-of-this-world childhood with the famously eccentric actress

Shirley MacLaine is an Academy Award winning actress who has graced Hollywood with her talent for decades, known for her roles in *The Apartment*, *Terms of Endearment*, and recently the BBC/PBS smash *Downton Abbey*. Yet—as her daughter Sachi Parker can attest—growing up with the movie star was far from picture perfect.

The only child of MacLaine and her husband of thirty years, Steve Parker, Sachi's surreal childhood began when she was sent to Japan at the age of two—though her mother would sometimes claim Sachi was six—to live with her mercurial father and his mistress. She divides her time being raised by a Japanese governess and going back and forth to L.A. to be with her mother, hamming it up on movie sets, in photo shoots, and Hollywood parties, even winning—and then abruptly losing—the role of Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As she gets older and attends boarding school in England and Switzerland, becomes a Qantas stewardess, and becomes involved in a series of abusive relationships she tries to unravel the mysteries of her childhood and her parents' unconventional marriage.

Including twenty never-before-seen personal photos, *Lucky Me* is a fascinating look at Hollywood and what it takes to succeed there, the incredible ambition of Shirley MacLaine and the fallout it had on her only child, as well as a woman's attempt to understand and connect with her extremely complicated parents.

Lucky Me: My Life With--and Without--My Mom, Shirley MacLaine Details

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From Reader Review Lucky Me: My Life With--and Without--My Mom, Shirley MacLaine for online ebook

Mediaman says

This shocking story proves that Shirley MacLaine is one of the worst people ever to walk the earth, that she is so insane that she should probably be locked up, and that her ignored daughter is still in denial awaiting her mother's love.

The book contains so many stories that are hard to believe that you'll read with mouth agape. Without giving too many secrets away, you have to wonder how a mother can so ignore a daughter (Parker was sent away at age two and only saw her mother once or twice a year for the rest of her childhood), how a father can be so cruel and creepy (lying, inappropriately touching, taking his six-year-old daughter to a gay club where the waiters are naked), and how this abandoned daughter isn't more bitter. To the end she remains unrealistically optimistic and forgiving, rarely learning from the abuse she suffers at the hands of her parents.

If you don't think MacLaine is 100% crazy then you need to read this book. She is looney, cuckoo, and wacko, along with being completely selfish, unloving, demeaning, and out of touch with reality. She should be locked up in a home or put on trial for child abuse. Not only did she hide a major family secret from her daughter for decades, but she sent the child off to school in England then "forgot" to pick her up during her break (15-year-old Parker wandered Europe alone instead without ever confronting her mother) and balked whenever her daughter asked for money (MacLaine loaned Parker \$500 for a car only after agreeing to a huge interest rate and years later demanded \$850 back from her). While mother spent millions on multiple homes and would buy \$2,000 blouses for herself, she wouldn't give her child a penny. She refused to pay for any college education. And she practically forced her daughter to have an abortion. I don't think I've ever read a story of a worse parent.

The problem with the book (which I read in one afternoon) is that it's too long, filled with some meaningless stories about Parker's small acting career in the last third of the book (anti-climactic after the major secret is revealed). And that the author didn't really learn much from her terrible parents. She claims in the last page that she's "lucky" even though as you read this you have to think that her whole life story is very sad. She's still that little girl looking to win her mother's love.

Denise says

This wonderfully written memoir by the daughter of the actress, Shirley MacLaine, is definitely not your typical child-of-a-celebrity-mommie-dearest story. It was an emotional roller coaster that was equal parts sad, shocking, and triumphant—but mostly shocking. In fact, some of the events the author shares are so outrageous that one would be tempted to write the entire story off as a complete fabrication. Unless...you've read Shirley MacLaine's previous works.

Yet in spite of the indifference and neglect the author suffered at the hands of her dangerously disconnected parents, she continues to believe in their redemption, even in the midst of their repeated and often brutal betrayals. I found myself either marveling at the author's resilience, or cringing as I read about her childlike trust and unwavering faith in questionable characters who were some of the worst that humanity had to offer. But even those people didn't come close to inflicting the kind of damage on her that the parents kept dishing

out well into her adulthood.

The triumph of this story is that Sachi Parker remains steadfast in her compassion and understanding of her parents (and many of the awful human beings she's encountered). I guess that's what made her particular story so compelling for me. Once I started reading this book, I couldn't put it down.

Laura says

meh. Some of the writing was clunky, wonder if the second writer's sections were smoother. Or maybe she is the better writer. I've read Shirley MacLaine's books, they are interesting and even fun but it is also clear in them that she is on her own, you cannot tell that she has family or loves anyone but her work and herself. That said, overall I was disappointed here, I hoped to read the memoir of a woman who has gained strength, insight, and did not still expect or, perhaps, need the love or attention of parents. There were some parts that were illogical-moving to Japan at two, the author claims to have learned Japanese quickly after arriving. She wants independence but seems annoyed that mom never used her influence to get her an acting job, then claims to not need help, but doesn't quite consider that maybe she doesn't act so well. I'd actually want to know who she has become--family? career? Her struggle, perhaps, to overcome. But the book seems to keep her mired in the dysfunction rather than looking back on it from a better place today. I'd wish she realized, or let the reader in on the revelations that were pure abuse and neglect and sexual abuse. I hope she has risen above expecting/wanting her parents to be what they aren't.

Diana says

This book drove me nuts on many levels. While I am sure Shirley McClaine was not the best mother, Sachi Parker takes no responsibility for her life. Everything is always someone else's fault. Spoiler****she basically accuses her father of being lewd and inappropriate with her, but backtracks and questions if she is remembering right (something she does throughout the book). She is not even concerned with trying to become a good actress, she just wants her award-winning mom to get her good parts. I had to agree with the demonized Shirley McClaine, if Sachi was as good as she boasts, and everyone in Hollywood knew who her mother was, she would have gotten more parts. Sachi spends the book blaming her parents (and they definitely sounded off-balance) for every failure. Every lost acting part is because her mother "sabotaged" her. The writing is terrible and laughable. I usually love books like this, but you would have to suspend all belief to really believe this tripe. I also got a little sick of hearing about how truly talented she is and how beautiful.

Lolly K Dandeneau says

It wasn't a book full of earth shattering secrets beyond the clone thing (you have to read it) and while many people say 'oh boo hoo another celebs child whining about not getting everything' I don't think I agree. A child needs love and attention, regardless of who said parent is or what amazing schools one attends. It doesn't sound like she had an easy life, and while she went to great schools, it is rather crushing to imagine a mother and father with so much wealth didn't feel she should have a lick of help with college. If it's true Shirley prevented her daughter's success in acting, then you can't help but feel disgusted. I can't imagine

living a life with ego-maniacs for parents must have been much fun. Actors are used to being center stage and seem to believe everyone in the world is just an extra in the great story of "ME". It is possible to have a career and still love your child. I have seen people comment that a mother and father shouldn't have to be less sexy or give up a career just because one has a child. I disagree, I say don't have a child if you don't have it in you to invest your time and love. I can't imagine being so young and being left to your own devices. The things her father exposed her to was beyond vulgar and damaging, anyone that says different shouldn't have children.

I know people will laugh at how Shirley was duped by her ex, but I think everyone has something that someone skilled in manipulation could use to dupe us with. Was the way she was fooled out of money extreme and silly, yes. But I find it sad she would be more upset about that exposed secret than the fact of how cold she was as a mother. This is one side of the story, but that is with all stories, we can only write from our own perspective. A sad story. One that makes me glad I had parents that were famous only to me.

Susie Geiser says

Fast read, and the story is well told. This is no Mommy Dearest. Joan Crawford, apparently put a lot of work into raising her daughter before she gave up and sent her to boarding school. MacLaine, on the other hand, sent her 2 year old to Japan to live with her husband and his bitter mistress. The entire premise of her parents' marriage is based on a ridiculous deception. So ridiculous, it could only be believed by Shirley MacLaine.

Sachi Parker clearly loves her mom, but the story she tells makes me wonder why, but only because Shirley is not MY mom. MacLaine, like many actors, is a narcissist. She was a product of the sexual revolution, and fiercely ambitious about her career. Add to that her own difficult upbringing, and I'm not surprised that she preferred to be her daughter's playmate in small doses and then drop her off with her father on the other side of the world and pursue her own adventures.

I'm impressed that Parker has been able to thrive, given that she had little support, emotionally or financially from her parents after high school. I'm sure MacLaine will use this as an excuse to separate from her only child permanently, which is sad because a) Parker was just telling the truth of her childhood, and b) the truth I got out of the book is that MacLaine is a delightful, fun, intelligent, ambitious woman who's prone to narcissistic, diva behavior and tales of supernatural nonsense. I already knew that. Parker's dad was the real monster, but at the end of his life he owned up to it and was forgiven, so maybe that's Shirley's problem.

Jo-Ann Murphy says

Ms. Parker is an excellent storyteller, just like her mother. She began by hinting there was a big mystery to be revealed later to keep the reader interested. But even without that fact, I would have found it hard to put this book down.

I always admired Shirley MacLaine as an actress and this clarifies just what a great actress she is. It is obvious that despite her great act as an enlightened human being, she is very far from that but knows how to act and get people to part with their money.

It is amazing this girl grew up without being a total basket case. Her story is fascinating and I have to admire

her in many ways. Though the book often drove me crazy. Things that seemed obvious to me, she seemed oblivious to, such as her mother sabotaging Sachi's career.

Because she is a good storyteller, there is probably some exaggeration. But even allowing for that, I don't think these parents should have been allowed to have a goldfish, let alone a child.

I think there are areas where she could have gone deeper and into more detail, especially about how it affected her growth. However, this is the story of a wounded child. I hope she will follow it with the story of the woman she became.

She finally comes to realize in the book that she was delusional to think her mother was ever trying to help *her career. I have seen her say she still wishes for a relationship with her mother, but I think after this book, she is still delusional.

Tracy says

I found this tale as fantastical as Shirley MacLaine's books on UFOs and reincarnation.

Robin says

I've always been fascinated with Shirley MacLaine's unconventional marriage and life, and I've had a hard time putting this down.

Update: Rounding this up to 3.5 stars.

Send in the Clones

This remained compelling despite the echoes of "Mommie Dearest" (minus the wire hangers), although there were times I was totally annoyed with the author. There were "abuse" issues (more on that in a minute) but what really bugged me was Sachi's constant lamenting the lack of financial help from her parents along with Mom's refusal to practice any nepotism in getting her daughter juicy acting roles; Sachi could have taken a bit more responsibility for many of her own life decisions. One example is that Shirley could have easily afforded the college tuition she refused to give her daughter but Sachi could have done something on her own instead of taking dead end jobs all over the world and depending on the kindness of strangers. That being said, her parents were pretty screwy and Sachi was treated pretty badly at times.

Now, about the abuse Sachi suffered, some of which is suspect as she is a very unreliable narrator: during Sachi's upbringing while under her father, he refused to LET HER READ BOOKS! The horror, the horror indeed...

And the clones reference? You'll have to read the book as you have to read it to believe it.

Mom says

This book was captivating. Sachi wrote in a way that I never wanted to stop reading. She has had a very interesting and heartbreakingly life. Shrouded in mystery, levels of abuse, left on her own to basically raise herself, it's wonder she turned as well-adjusted as she has. I feel so sorry for her, sorry for anyone who must endure what she has had to. It is also an interesting insider look in to the lives of the children of celebrities. Her neglectful upbringing led her to make some bad choices in her life. However, it also taught her how to be better in the examples she had. I am glad she found happiness with her children and could find the love with them she so desperately wanted from her own parents.

Marilyn says

I need a third party to write a book about the daughter, the dad (or whoever he is!), and Shirley MacLaine to try and piece together what really did happen with the the three of them. Whatever the truth, clearly Sachi Parker did not have an ideal upbringing! I love Shirley MacLaine's acting, but it cast a shadow on the rest of her for me.

Shannon Breen says

Another child of a star who gets herself publicity and tries to make some cash by playing on a famous parent's name. While no doubt Shirley MacLaine is not Mother of the Year material (who would let her 2 year old child go live on the other side of the world?), Sachi Parker seems determined to make all her shortcomings someone else's fault. ** Spoiler: I was particularly annoyed when the 27 year old got pregnant, but didn't have any money and ultimately had an abortion. If I had been in MacLaine's shoes I would have helped my daughter financially if she wanted to keep the child, but by the same token it is ultimately Parker's responsibility. She was not some 17 year old who got lured into the back seat of a car. She was a grown woman. After aborting the child, she then somehow a few years later has money for breast enhancement surgery. Not sure how I see her choices as superior to her mother's.

I do think that MacLaine was an absentee parent who put her career first and that's sad. I'm still not sure why she felt the need to tell the world this. We all have issues with family members and things that have happened to us. I resent offspring of the famous using the publishing world as a therapist and then letting us pay for the privilege of listening to their problems. I also found that, without the MacLaine stories, Parker herself is not very interesting. She also, in my opinion, doesn't have her mother's gift for storytelling. I was very glad to be done with this book and while it may not have increased my regard for MacLaine, it left me with a really bad feeling toward Parker.

Sandra says

I'm between a 2 or 3. I find most of what is here believable. I think she is honest in her thoughts and feelings. As with most Autobiographies, the author hides the truth behind other things so they can put it out there without feeling too exposed. All I know is what we all know. This child did spend her life with her Father. Her Mother, Shirley MacLaine spent her life doing her own thing. Acting and all. The abuse she took from her

parents is mostly mental abuse and as a Mother my self I don't know how you leave your child to fend for it self at age 2 and think it's okay. Or abandon them in foreign countries with no money and no way to contact you.

But the the moment I smiled was when Sachiko helps her Mother understand that her Mother's husband has conned her for their whole married life. That he's ripped her off to the tune of over 18 millions dollars. I was very happy when the "gravy train" stopped and Ms. Maclaine divorced her husband. You have to remember that Ms Maclaine was 24 years old when she met her husband and he saw a money machine and she saw love. Sad, but often true for people who have money.

I find Sachiko refreshing in her story telling. I enjoyed the read. whether it's an honest account? Well, you can ask a room full of people what happened in an evening and you will get different answers form them all. I just hope that Shirley MacLaine can open her heart to her daughter as she seems to do for everyone else.

Jeannine says

Ah, tell-all books by celebrity children. Love them, beware of them. I don't believe half of what went on in Mommie Dearest (think about it, if your adoptive mother obliterated you from her will you're not exactly going to be motivated to write something lovely about her and you can pretty much say whatever you want because, she's, well, she's dead. Add to that, no less than Myrna Loy said Christina Crawford was full of crap and I believe Myrna Loy). Bette Davis's daughter - whoa - she's a loon. So, I approached this book by the daughter of Shirley MacLaine with an open, but skeptical, mind.

This was an engrossing page turner about Sachi Parker - the daughter of Shirley MacLaine and "businessman" Steve Parker - who grew up mostly in Japan with her father, while MacLaine worked on her movie career based out of LA. MacLaine and Parker were married in this fashion for 30 years, a marriage (it is revealed in the book) that was based on some very bizarre notions on MacLaine's part (think: government, clones, outer space - no, I'm not kidding).

Sachi (Stephanie) Parker didn't have the easy life you might expect when your mother is a famous (and wealthy) actress. She had two truly kooky parents who (the author is generous here) did the best they could, but often the best they could was very disturbing to this reader. Sachi's tone in this book doesn't reek bitterness - she is generous with her parents' faults and even solicitous of her mother's more kooky "philosophy" about aliens and reincarnation, etc - in fact, Sachi (or her ghostwriter) has a delightful sense of humor. Mostly the reader is left with Sachi's confusion and sadness about some of her mother's behavior towards her, specifically with regards to her own acting career and encouragement in general. This exchange, in a therapist's office made me laugh:

"People don't like nepotism in this business," Mom said. (This was one of her favorite maxims, although I didn't see much evidence for it in Hollywood). "You have to make it on your own. I did."

"Yeah, well, you had Charlemagne and E.T. helping you."

Hee hee.

Parker's account of her various careers and romance misadventures are compelling (although in a couple of instances the latter were a bit TMI for this reader). Parker spent time as a ski instructor, a Quantas airline stewardess (where she scored the highest ever on the empathy test), and as an actress where she worked with no less than Geraldine Page!

As for Shirley, well, I've always thought she was a fruit loop, but love her performances in *The Apartment* and *Terms of Endearment*, and I will always love those performances. But this book only solidified her fruit loopiness. Once again, you can love a person's art but not necessarily the person. I don't think this book revealed too much more than Ms. MacLaine has already personally shared in her own books.

This was a real page turner. Thoroughly enjoyed it and I wish Ms. Parker every good thing in her future.

Laurel-Rain says

The only child of MacLaine and her husband of thirty years, Steve Parker, Sachi's surreal childhood began when she was sent to Japan at the age of two—though her mother would sometimes claim Sachi was six—to live with her mercurial father and his mistress. She divided her time being raised by a Japanese governess and going back and forth to L.A. to be with her mother, hamming it up on movie sets, in photo shoots, and Hollywood parties, even winning—and then abruptly losing—the role of Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. As she got older and attended boarding school in England and Switzerland, became a Qantas stewardess, and then became involved in a series of abusive relationships she tried to unravel the mysteries of her childhood and her parents' unconventional marriage.

Including twenty never-before-seen personal photos, "Lucky Me: My Life With--and Without--My Mom, Shirley MacLaine" is a fascinating look at Hollywood and what it takes to succeed there, the incredible ambition of Shirley MacLaine and the fallout it had on her only child, as well as a woman's attempt to understand and connect with her extremely complicated parents.

As a fan of Shirley MacLaine, I have always been curious about the less publicized aspects of her life, like her daughter, Sachi Parker. I recall seeing Sachi in bit parts in some movies, and noticed the striking physical resemblance between the two.

But so much about Sachi is distinct, unique. Perhaps growing up in Tokyo and being separated from her mother for large chunks of time informed a lot more about her life than just the obvious elements.

In reading Sachi's story, her feelings of loss and abandonment shone through for me. And perhaps knowing more of the details of what her life looked like and how it felt for her has helped me fill in some of those missing details of MacLaine's life, as well.

I like this summing up of Sachi's perspective near the end of the story, when she concludes that she still doesn't understand her mother:

"It has taken me this long to realize that I don't need to understand her. She's on her journey, and I'm on mine. Our lives may intersect at crucial points, but there's no reason to expect them to run side by side, on parallel tracks. Mom's spirit bounces all over the universe like a jet-powered pinball, and every now and then it settles beside me for a moment before some visionary impulse shoots off again. I'm just a stop on the road: she doesn't need me, not at all, and she isn't going to pretend for propriety's sake that she does. She's off fulfilling her destiny."

It takes a lot of courage to accept the reality of one's relationships, especially those most significant in our lives. I also like this summing up in the final paragraphs:

"Looking back over my life, I see that it's full of providential moments, moments of serendipity and grace. Whenever things seemed desolate, whenever I was poised to capsize, something unexpected always came along to help me out."

What I see as I read this story of a woman's journey is that the mother and daughter are not as different as they appear at first glance. They are each vying for her own place in the world, and doing it on her own terms. And while some readers will only see the opposing points of view and conclude that someone is "lying," I see that life is often like that. There is your truth, my truth, and the real truth somewhere in between. Four stars.
