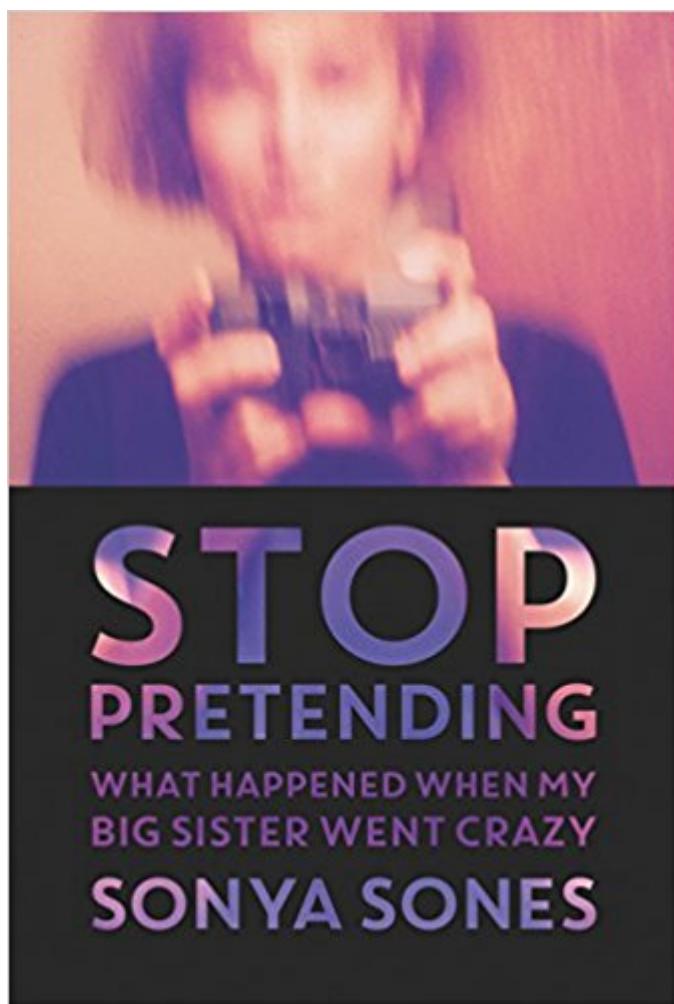


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Stop Pretending: What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy



Synopsis

Continuously in print for nearly two decades, this groundbreaking and profoundly moving story told in verse, from award-winning author Sonya Sones, has been repackaged with a striking new cover and bonus content. When her beloved older sister is hospitalized after a sudden mental breakdown, Cookie is left behind to cope with a family torn apart by grief, friends who shun her, and her fear that she, too, might one day lose her mind. Based on award-winning author Sonya Sones' own true story, this novel explores the chilling landscape of mental illness, revealing glimmers of beauty and of hope along the way. Told in a succession of short and powerful poems, it takes us deep into the cyclone of the narrator's emotions: despair, anger, guilt, resentment, and ultimately, acceptance.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The subtitle of *Stop Pretending* says it all: "What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy." In a sequence of short, intense poems based on the author's own experiences, a 13-year-old girl suffers through her shifting feelings about her sibling's mental illness. She recalls the terror of the Christmas Eve when Sister was suddenly transformed into a stranger; the horror of visiting Sister in the hospital and finding her rocking on all fours; the fear that her friends will find out; her own worry that she, too, may lose her mind; and her wistful memories of Sister as she was before. More complex emotions are also explored, such as her irrational suspicion that Sister may be deliberately acting crazy, as poignantly expressed in the title poem: "Stop pretending./ Right this minute./ Don't

you tell me/ you don't know me./ Stop this crazy act/ and show me/ that you haven't changed./ Stop pretending/ you're deranged." Gradually, as Sister begins to recover, the girl is able to find hope and again take pleasure in her own life. Blank verse is perfect for a story with such heightened emotion, and is a format that has been used with great success in other fine novels for teens, notably the Newbery-award winning *Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hesse, and Robert Cormier's boyhood memoir, *Frenchtown Summer*. Teen readers may even be so inspired as to try their own hand at this challenging but satisfying form. (Ages 10 and older) --Patty Campbell --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 6-9-An unpretentious, accessible book that could provide entry points for a discussion about mental illness-its stigma, its realities, and its affect on family members. Based on the journals Sones wrote at the age of 13 when her 19-year-old sister was hospitalized due to manic depression, the simply crafted but deeply felt poems reflect her thoughts, fears, hopes, and dreams during that troubling time. In one poem, the narrator fears that "If I stay/any longer/than an hour,/ I'll see that my eyes/have turned into her eyes,/my lips/have turned into her lips, ." She dreads having her friends learn of her sister's illness. "If I told them that my sister's nuts,/they might act sympathetic,/but behind my back/would everyone laugh?" and wonders what she could have done to prevent the breakdown. All of the emotions and feelings are here, the tightness in the teen's chest when thinking about her sibling in the hospital, her grocery list of adjectives for mental illness, and the honest truth in the collection's smallest poem, "I don't want to see you./I dread it./There./I've said it." An insightful author's note and brief list of organizations are included. Sharon Korbeck, Waupaca Area Public Library, WI Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a great verse novel. I have a paperback version, and was going to buy the kindle edition, too, but the Kindle edition changes the form. It removes all of the line breaks, and indents words instead. Form is an important part of poetry, and the poetic form is very different without line breaks. The story is the same, of course, so I still recommend it. Just know that it's not entirely true to the original text.

This book, **STOP PRETENDING: WHAT HAPPED WHEN My BIG SISTER WENT CRAZY**, was on a required reading list for a course I took in Young Adult Literature. I could not put it down. On Christmas Eve, "A wild-eyed Jewish girl wearing only a nightgown," rushes out of the house to go to

Midnight Mass. She is in the midst of a nervous breakdown. After this, she is institutionalized, but life must go on for the family. Told through the poems of the younger sister, 13 year-old Cookie, this novel is based upon real life events of the author. In her poems, in which we have the unfolding of the story, Cookie reveals her great fear that this will happen to her as well. She deals with her issues of shame over her sisters' condition. She experiences memories of how life was before the breakdown, and almost lives in a denial of the experience. Her former friends reject Cookie. In her poems, Cookie captures the intense emotions and feelings in dealing with life, and all of the troublesome events of the aftermath of this life altering event. But not all is bad. Cookie finds photography, and begins a healing process. She meets a new boy at school who knows nothing of Cookies' sister, and they fall in love. Within these events, Cookie learns that life goes on, sometimes good, sometimes not so good, but it does go forward. The poems throughout vary in length, but mostly stick to free verse. The use of poems is an effective tool to convey the deep emotions. In the novel, the fate of her sister is unanswered, but seems hopeful in tone. In a final note to the book, Sones does shed light on the rest of the story in her own personal experience, with her own sisters success. She provides support websites and telephone numbers as resources for organizations which help people with emotional disorders and suffering from depression. If you know of anyone who faces the challenge of an institutionalized family member, please buy this book for them. It should provide a tool of dialogue and discussion for the family. As an added note, in the course I took, one of the class members contacted Sonya Sones, and we had an interview with her over the phone. She is delightful, and her upcoming work for publication will also be a novel told in poems. The selections she read ranged from hysterical to deeply pensive. I eagerly await this book, and have added STOP PRETENDING to the must order list for the opening of school (as I am a School Librarian.)

I thought this was an excellent story and very touching. It's very eye-opening for someone who hasn't experienced something like that, which, I believe, is part of the reason the author wrote the book. The style of writing is also quite likable; it's a collection of poems, but they follow a timeline. I would recommend it.

This is a book I had to buy for college - I don't own it anymore, which says that I didn't enjoy it enough to keep it. I'm sure it was fine - it's just not my preferred genre.

This book really gives you a rush of emotion! It's definitely a must. I'm not really into a lot of poetry

books but this is definitely at the top of my list.

After reading Robert Cormier's "Frenchtown Summer", I decided I ought to try to find more books written in free verse. "Stop Pretending" is every bit as good as "Frenchtown Summer" was. I could easily see the narrator's mortification, sadness, and fear. I had a brother who was committed to a psychiatric ward when I was ten, but it was a somewhat different experience as (a) he was only there for a day (b) he was not crazy (c) we have always despised each other anyway, unlike Cookie and her sister. I think the book was much better told in poetry than it would have been in ordinary prose. My favorite poem was "No Matter What". All in all, a brilliant work and I'm itching to get my hands on Sonya Sones's other book.

I cried a little bit, that book was truly amazing. I highly recommended it. I loved the use of symbolism the book used throughout the story.

Beautifully written, full of depth, and easily readable. Once I started I couldn't put it down. It's not a very long book, but the story is touching.

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