

## Allison's Book Corner February 2022

***Hooked: How Crafting Saved My Life*** by Sutton Foster  
(Grand Central Publishing 2021)

This memoir by Tony Award-winning actress Sutton Foster will crack you wide open emotionally and then put you back together with a song and a dance.

For those of you who do not know, Sutton Foster is an American actress, singer and dancer. She has twice won the Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical. And she has starred in two critically-acclaimed television series: *Bunheads* and *Younger*.



Did you ever have an experience that was so phenomenal, so out of the ordinary that you wanted to bottle it up and carry it with you so you could spritz yourself with it from time to time? My experiences in the audience at Broadway shows have been exactly like that. And in this memoir, Sutton takes you behind the scenes of a few of these shows and gives us a first-hand glimpse into putting on “the big show.” Not surprisingly, a lot of really hard work, mixed with tears and fears, goes into some of the best of Broadway.

But we all start somewhere, and Sutton's childhood was not idyllic. Her mother became a person who was terrified of leaving her own house. The medical term for this condition is agoraphobia. It would be hard for any of us to know what it would be like to have a parent who has this condition. Her mother's illness and attitude permeated everything in the household. However, her mother recognized the talent in her children and supported them in their love for theatre. Sutton's brother is also an award-winning Broadway star.

Her parents' marriage was not one of affection but of obligation. Throughout both the family's relocations to different towns (due to her father's job) and her mother's mental health struggles, Sutton had her auditions and her crafts. Her mother was a cross-stitcher, so Sutton started with that. Soon she was crocheting. She also has a creative mind for painting and creating art pieces and mini-sculptures.

Woven (no pun intended) throughout this memoir are the crafts that Sutton makes to ground herself and to bring herself a sense of peace. She opens up this memoir with a commencement speech that she gave in 2019 at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. She tells the students, "*find a creative outlet. Something that doesn't require someone to give you permission to do it. Pick something that has nothing to do with what you do for a living. And pick something that brings you joy.*"

I think this is great advice. Keeping her hands busy kept Sutton from being anxious or focusing on the wrong things around her during a show. I can relate to her experience. This is one of the reasons I learned to knit a few years ago. I really needed those knitting needles at that particular time in my life. I was not very good but it did not matter, it helped me mentally. Sutton has taught other actresses involved in her various acting projects how to crochet. Sutton shares a few crochet patterns with the readers.

There are so many little treasures in this memoir. A very special one is Sutton's interview with her Broadway idol, actress Patti Lupone. She tells us her experience of first meeting Patti and then reprising one of Patti's roles and having Patti come backstage to congratulate her. I will not give away any secrets, but the interview is a great window into what it is like to be a star on Broadway. It is a wonderful moment. If you are a Broadway fan you will LOVE it. It will bring back so many memories of Evita and also Patti's time on television in the hit ABC show, "Life Goes On." I am singing the theme song as I type this review. It was sung for the series by Patti, of course.

The honesty in this memoir is refreshing. Sutton shares details from her first failed marriage and takes us into her happy second marriage. She shares her struggles with infertility and then her decision to adopt. The backdrops are her shows, her crafts, and her television series.

Fun fact: Sutton's Aunt Mary Anne won the Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest in 1994 for her Fudgy Bonbons. The grand prize in 1994 was \$50,000 and a full kitchen remodel. Sutton shares her Aunt's recipe with the readers.

Sutton's memoir is a wonderfully uplifting read. She is relatable to the reader on so many levels. And if you have followed her career, the book will be such a treat for you as it was for me. In case you do not know, Sutton is currently on Broadway starring in "The Music Man" with Hugh Jackman. Both actors had Covid and have recovered. The show is back on. If this thought makes you as happy as it makes me, you can check out some of Sutton's and Hugh's rehearsals on social media.