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your next book

LoveReading Reader reviews of **Blood Ties** by Julie Shaw

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

Anne Rhodes

Life for Kathleen is not easy - to say the least - downtrodden by her stepmother but aided by Terry she finally escapes. Her adventures don't end there, though!

Kathleen leads a Cinderella style existence in a local pub, run by her father John and his second wife Irene, on the Canterbury Estate in Bradford.

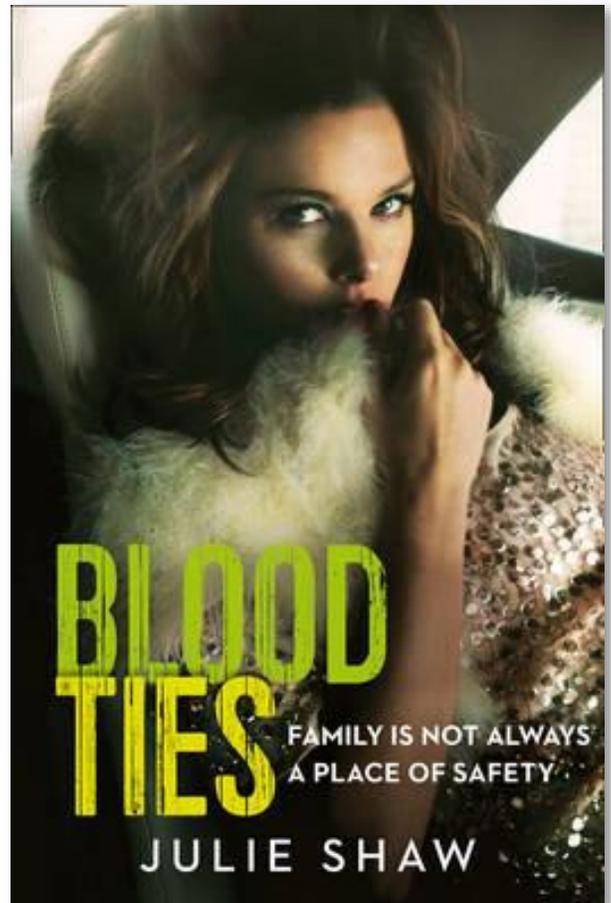
Each person comes alive on the page as you read – and you won't want to put this book down!

Both of Irene's children, Monica and especially Darren, can do no wrong in Irene's eyes and therefore any problem has to be Kathleen's fault.

We follow Kathleen through the problems created by her stepbrother Darren, her falling in love with and dating Terry Harris, and finally moving in with him. Her problems don't stop there and we learn more about Kathleen's life in and around the pub as Irene gets more and more volatile and controlling, and John continues mildly placating Irene, rather than supporting his own daughter.

Fortunately, Terry is always there for Kathleen – and one way or another they get through everything that fate and life throws at them.

 HarperCollins Publishers



You will find yourself talking to the characters as you read, urging, advising, worrying about how they'll cope with each event as it unfolds – as I said, they come alive and you are standing right next to them!

Glenda Worth

'Blood Ties' by Julie Shaw is part 4 in the Hudson family series. A tale of Kathleen who is constantly verbally abused by her stepmother whilst her father is too weak to stand up for her.

Her stepmother constantly makes Kathleen's life miserable and is abusive towards her. When Kathleen is 16 her stepbrother commits suicide, which her stepmother also blames her for. Irene drinks constantly and Kathleen spends all her time trying to avoid her. When an older man comes into her life there is a glimmer of hope and Kathleen can escape, although this doesn't end the traumas in her life.

*This was sent to me by Lovereading to review and **I really enjoyed it. Easy to read with a good storyline I will now be looking for the other books in the Hudson series.***

Celia Cohen

A well written story.

I think it would have been better if it had been made clear that this book had nothing to do with her previous novels about the Hudson family. It took me well into the book to realise that this was a completely different, stand-alone novel. After that I did enjoy the book but I think it lacked the grittiness of her previous novels. It was well written but I felt it had been done before by other novelists and I can't say I was gripped by it.

Pauline Braisher

*This is the story of Kathleen and her quest for happiness. The story is set in inner-city Bradford and is the fourth in the series about the Hudsons, a well-known criminal family from the city. However, there was very little mention of the Hudson's, and Kathleen's story could have been set anywhere: nor was there anything which linked her to the Hudson's. I had read the first book in the series, 'Our Vinnie' and was expecting something similar but I was very disappointed. This story was much less gritty and the characters not so well-drawn. **Having grown up in Bradford during the 1960s, I enjoyed the references to the city but otherwise I was disappointed with this book.***

Cathy Small

You can't choose your family and it doesn't appear you can choose your stepfamily. Kathleen lost her mum at a young age and when her father remarried it wasn't the new family life that they were both expecting. The animosity from her stepmom makes her life a misery and she settles into one of treading on eggshells and staying out the way. Things take a turn for the worse when her stepbrother dies but she finds a new life that she believes will make her happy. She moves out and sets up her own life despite being torn from her father. You would think that Kathleen deserves happiness from now on and she gets that for a while but it takes a nasty turn that makes permanent changes in her life. You will feel sorry for Kathleen because she is just a girl without a mum trying to make a life for herself.

Angie Rhodes

The fourth book in the Tales of the Notorious Hudson Family, has to be for me, the best.

Kathleen lost her mum at the tender age of eight and her dad remarried Irene, who has two children Darren and Monica.

Life is not easy for Kathleen as her step mum has no time for her apart from taking pleasure in making life as miserable as hell for her.

When Kathleen is sixteen, the family life is blown apart by a tragedy, and it will never be the same again.

Kathy finds a glimmer of hope in Terry, an older man who has lost his wife a few years ago but Irene is set on destroying the relationship anyway she can!

This is just as gripping as the first three books, and I hope there will be more. The great thing is you can read them in any order as each book is a story of its own.

Nicola Edwards

As this is the fourth book in the series of the 'The Notorious Hudson Family' and I hadn't previously read any of the others, I was slightly concerned that I would be at a disadvantage. However, this wasn't the case as each of the books seem to follow a different thread.

I also had reservations about the cover as I wasn't sure if this book would appeal to me. However, the phrase 'don't judge a book by its cover' came into my head, so I dived in and I'm so glad I did as I thoroughly enjoyed it!

At sixteen, Kathleen's life is a struggle, living with her father, her resentful step-mother and her two children in a pub. Irene, her step-mother is intent on making Kathleen's life as difficult as possible and puts her down at every opportunity she can get. When Kathleen finds love, her world is opened up to new possibilities and threatens the relationships she has with her family.

A gritty, hard-hitting novel from the 1960s that encapsulates that time in history combined with beautiful writing about the relationships that exist among family members, particularly the bond between father and daughter.

I'm definitely going to read some more from this series now!

Carol Peace

Julie Shaw takes you back to the 60's, her writing is so clear you can easily imagine the characters and situations. A bit of nostalgia and a really good read.

Julie Shaw is a great storyteller and once again she hit's the mark. The book is based in Yorkshire but could be about anyone's town in the mid 60's. Kathleen lost her mother when she was just 8years old and her father quickly remarried, her step mum hates her for some reason and her step siblings seem to agree with their mother. She actually finds love after a tragic event and her stepmum Irene even tries to put a stop to that too, will her father ever intervene and stick up for her? The pub they run is a place to escape to for Kathleen even though she has to work there she finds a little comfort in her surroundings. Will she ever be free of Irene or is this the life she is destined for?

I was lucky to get this book from <http://www.lovereadng.co.uk/> as an advanced copy but I would advise everyone to go out and buy it. It's a great book.

Jennifer Moville

Kathleen lives with her dad, step mum and step brother and sister above a pub

But this is no ordinary family - her step mum hates her with a passion and the siblings are no better - there is Darren - a lazy good for nothing gambler and Monica who takes up most of their shared bedroom with clothes and make up.

Kathleen works shifts in the pub and as a result gets chatting to regular Terry - they fall in love but Kathleen's step mum doesn't approve - Terry is a widower twice the age of Kathleen

A tragedy befalls the family when Darren dies and although it looks like he did it himself it could easily have been one of the many people he owed money to.

Kathleen's step mum Irene is convinced Kathleen is the last one to have seen Darren alive and therefore knows more than she is letting on and yet another family squabble ensues.

*The author seems to have captured more than just an average family who are constantly rowing. **This family is explosive and I have to say the language makes no bones about it so any one a bit shy about bad language...well maybe this book isn't for you.***

Gavin Dimmock

This is Julie Shaw's fourth book detailing the lives of her family in Bradford. I thoroughly enjoyed the very first one, 'Our Vinnie', when I reviewed it back in November 2014 and I had high hopes for this instalment. I have not yet got around to books two and three but they are on my list.

Once again, the writing is fluid, easy going and honest, which makes for a gripping read; Shaw has a clearly defined style which pulls you into caring for her family and the lives they led. She is adept at capturing an essence of the timing and social background to her tales and the mentions of Bradfordian landmarks and the local area is incredibly evocative.

In this absorbing part of Shaw's family history, we encounter 17 year old Kathleen and share a brief but monumental period in her young life. Kathleen leaps of the pages as a remarkable young woman; she is kind, generous, sympathetic and understanding, which is quite impressive given the harsh treatment she has received from her cruel and, quite possibly mentally deranged, step-mother over the preceding 10 years or so. Kathleen's father appears as a stoic, yet impotent figure as he fails to stand up for his daughter against his wife.

Whilst this tale lacks the physical violence and brutal language that we saw in 'Our Vinnie', it is just as powerful in its depiction of the harsh treatment meted out to our heroine, Kathleen, from her awful, bigoted and, frankly, rather hateful step-mother Irene.

Just one slight gripe, I didn't much care for the cover of this fourth book; the three earlier books, in my opinion, had much stronger and more appealing covers.

I enjoyed this tale very much and Julie Shaw, along with her wild, crazy, loving, generous, wonderfully madcap family, have become firm favourites of mine.

<https://themoustachioedReader.wordpress.com>

You can follow Gavin on Twitter: @Gav_The_Bantam

Alison Bisping

'Blood Ties' is a very readable book. The story is about 16 year old Kathleen and her (wicked) step-mother and about Kathleen becoming a woman. It's the 1960s and is great reminder that we didn't have mobile phones and had to rely on letters or a telephone box to call family and loved ones.

I haven't read any other books by Julie Shaw and am now interested enough to hunt them out.

Not much to say without giving away storylines – the characters are believable (although I wanted to shake some of them into more life), it's a good storyline and an easy read.

Jane Brown

Another great title from Julie Shaw and the notorious Hudson family. West Yorkshire and grittiness.

I was asked to review this book by Lovereading.co.uk. As I had previously read 'Our Vinnie' by the same author and lived in West Yorkshire I was keen to read this.

For me the title was a bit scary "family is not always a place of safety" and was a little unsure of the cover.

Shaw does not let you down- writing as she does in her gritty way about the Hudson family in Bradford in the 60s. You have to remember this was a long time ago and things were so different, not always a nostalgic time.

The characters are well written some you warm to some you are so glad you will never know or like. At the same time you cannot put the book down.

I thoroughly recommend you read the novels by Julie Shaw.

<http://browniebookworld.blogspot.co.uk/>

Melanie Kane

*A most evocative read, my heart went out to Kathleen and all the misery and hard-ship she had to endure. **A well written novel with so much detail that I could see this era in my mind's eye.** A harrowing tale of life as an outsider in her own home. I loved the ending, so positive and refreshing to read a happy ending. I loved this novel and how it engaged me.*

Margaret Quirke

An enjoyable read for anyone interested in family chronicles. The book covers grief; jealousy; love; grief; politics within families and sibling rivalry.

The main character - Kathleen - is a sympathetic character whose life is blighted by the loss of her natural mother and the jealousy of her bitter stepmother. She has no place in her heart for Kathleen and her own son can do no wrong in her eyes; she is blind to his obvious faults.

Kathleen's father's love for his daughter is compromised by the demands of his second wife.

The story is told through the eyes of Kathleen. We see her growing into a strong woman and building a life of her own despite the odds.

A gripping read, highly recommended.

Dana Captainino

This is the fourth book in the Julie Shaw's series of novels exploring and celebrating the lives of Bradford's notorious Hudson family.

'Blood Ties' follows the story of Kathleen living in the pub run by her dad and shared with her step mother and step siblings Darren and Monica. Kathleen's own mother died when she was only 8 years old and her stepmother Irene is no replacement. In fact she is very much the evil stepmother set on making Kathleen as miserable as possible. A shocking family incident adds to this and Kathleen is increasingly isolated.

Her father loves her but is weak in her defence and so it is customer Terry, with his own tragic past that provides the love and comfort Kathleen so needs. She is determined and resilient but up against it all the way and fighting hard against Irene and her mission to destroy her.

As a reader you genuinely care about Kathleen and her fate played out against the setting of the 1960s. Despite coming up against real tragedy she battles on and we are willing her to triumph. But can she?

'Blood Ties' is a very good read and its gritty realism keeps your attention throughout, we really care what happens to Kathleen.

Gill Dally-Fitzsimons

The story of Kathleen and her journey to find happiness. A good read! This is the story of Kathleen, a young girl growing up in Bradford, she lives above a pub with her dad, step-mother and step brother and sister. Kathleen's mum died when she was only 8 years old. As in fairy tales the stepmother hates her and goes out of her way to make Kathleen's life as miserable as possible, while her own two good for nothing children can do no wrong in their mother's eyes. This is the story Kathleen and her journey to find happiness. ***If you are a fan of Martine Cole, you would probably enjoy this book.***