

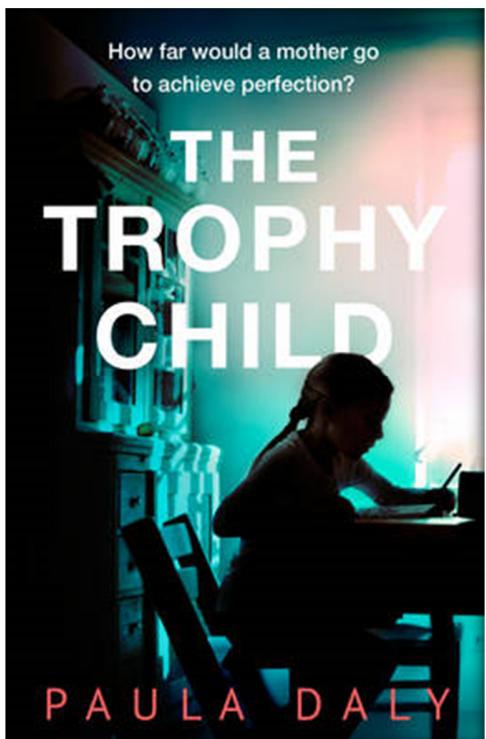


Helping you choose
your next book



Lovereading Reader reviews of **The Trophy Child** by Paula Daly

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereading members.



Nicki Southwell

Wow. This is a brilliant read for lovers of murder mysteries and family drama. The family dynamics will keep you reading until you finish.

This is a complex story of second-time marrieds Karen and Noel.

It opens with Noel sitting at a bar in a hotel, trying to be invisible. Joanne (a DS) has finally met her blind date who is nothing like what he said! She and Noel start to chat and then eat a meal together. Her date has taken the hint and left, so she doesn't feel guilty as they spend the night together having established that they are both single.

Joanne doesn't hear again from Liam until she gets a phone call to say that a young child is missing. Noel's wife Karen is driven as far as their daughter is concerned. Joanne finds the truth out about him (he is not called Liam) but suddenly understands why a man would be driven to do what he did with her.

Karen and Noel's daughter Bronte, is a gifted child – according to Karen. They both have a child each from their first marriages. Liam, 17 appears to spend his day living over their garage and stoned. Verity who is Noel's daughter has issues. Her mother has MS and has to be in a 24-hour care facility, so cannot look after Verity. She has never warmed to her stepmother, but is very fond of Bronte and step brother Liam.

Bronte suddenly goes missing after she and Verity have taken some time out to go to their local recreation ground. Verity pops over to see her mother, Jennifer, whose care home overlooks the recreational ground. When Verity returns home

to report Bronte as missing, Karen immediately puts all the blame on her. She and Karen do not get on and Verity is receiving counselling for a physical attack on Karen. She just wanted Karen to stop what she was doing!

Bronte walks back into the house, as if she hasn't been away, and refuses.

Suzanne Marsh

*I wanted to read 'The Trophy Child' as I have read 'What Kind of Mother Are You' and 'The Mistake I Made'. '**The Trophy Child**' is my third book that I have read by Paula Daly.*

Karen and Noel each have been married before. Noel has a daughter, Verity by his first wife. Karen has a son, Ewan. Karen and Noel have a daughter Bronte, who seems to be spoilt having music lessons and dance classes and doing extra school work and whatever it takes to be top in everything.

Noel's daughter Verity is very different her grades are down and drugs were found in her school locker. Verity is having counselling she attacked her stepmother Karen and nearly strangled her to death. The family is coming to breaking point as Verity and ten-year-old Bronte go out and Bronte disappears. Has Verity done something to her stepsister? Or is there another reason why Bronte has disappeared?

www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com

Maureen Gourlay

This family seem to have it all. But the Blooms are not quite what "Tiger Mother" Karen would have us believe- so when it all falls devastatingly apart, everyone's secrets are out in the open. Gripping.

I have enjoyed all Paula Daly's previous books but when I started this one I did wonder whether it would be as good. I should not have doubted it - a couple of chapters in and I was hooked! The extended family of Dr Bloom seem to have it all, including protégée Bronte whose mother will stop at nothing to see her succeed. But when Bronte goes missing, secrets come to the surface that uncover what is really happening in this family, and we begin to suspect everyone, with all the twists and turns that emerge during the investigation. Even the investigating police officer involved in the case has a secret. This was a gripping and involving read that kept you guessing right up to the very unexpected ending.

Definitely recommended.

Susan Coleman

Paula Daly writes in a very engaging and approachable way, combining a crime novel with an honest exploration of the complexities of familial relationships.

I expected this book to be a heavy read about a 'Tiger Mother', in fact it is about so much more and is presented in a very engaging and approachable way. The novel begins with a portrayal of the impact a pushy Mother has on her broader family. It then develops into a crime investigation which unfolds gently and has the feel of the Northern Crime TV Drama 'Vera'.

Paula Daly shows a deep insight in her exploration of both the individual characters with their frailties and imperfections and of the broader familial relationships. She presents them in a very honest way; Noel admits that he does not love his wife Karen and ""was going to have to act upset"", and Joanne is shown as very likeable, if a bit unprofessional.

Karen is certainly hard to like but we find ourselves feeling some empathy for her with the pressure she feels from society to be the 'perfect Mother', and to produce the 'perfect child'.

The subtle use of wry humour throughout the novel lightens the tone of the story and adds to the likeability of some of the characters. An enjoyable read.

Helen Appleby

A gripping psychological thriller with many twists and turns, the Blooms might look like they are leading a normal life but in reality it is anything but.

This is the first Paula Daley book I had the pleasure of reading and I will certainly be purchasing more as devoured this one in two days. This book looked at what goes on behind closed doors of a seemingly ordinary family on the surface apart from the fact that Karen Bloom is striving for perfection with her daughter Bronte and pushing her to achieve highly to make up for the disappointment of how her son Ewan has turned out. Her husband has been married before and has a daughter Verity who is becoming more volatile as time goes on. This is a psychological thriller with many unexpected twists and turns which kept me hooked until the end.

Emma Barton

This is a well written tense thriller that will keep you guessing all the way through. Highly recommended.

I thoroughly enjoyed The Trophy Child, and find Paula Daly to be a reliably consistent author who writes books you really look forward to reading.

Karen Bloom is a tyrant in her own home. Her meek husband hides at work or at the bottom of a whiskey bottle. Her son (from another relationship) is permanently stoned, and her step daughter is having therapy after almost strangling Karen to death. It is her youngest daughter, Bronte, that has the hardest life as she is put under tremendous pressure to achieve by her Tiger mother.

The characters are well rounded and believable, the plot is full of suspense and as well as being thrilling, there is also humour and real life threads. A highly recommended read.

Sarah Harper

Set in the stunning scenery of the Lake District this is an intriguing tale with a stunning conclusion. It kept me guessing until the final chapters. Great stuff!

When Detective Sergeant Joanne Aspinall's internet dating leads to a liaison with Seamus she can have no idea of the repercussions. Her path crosses that of the fractured Bloom family. Noel who buries himself in his work as a GP and soaks up a bit too much alcohol in order to avoid his oppressive home life. Karen who, to the detriment of everyone else, is brutally pushing her youngest child to the limit in order to create the high achiever she thinks she deserves. Verity who harbours violent thoughts towards her stepmother and is squandering her expensive, private education, possibly in order to get the attention she so lacks. Ewan whose drug habit and lack of ambition seems to disappoint his mother so much. And young Bronte, cocooned from the outside world and pushed to her limits in order to meet her mother's extreme expectations. The fracture lines are already there, it's just a case of when, and not if, this family will implode.

What appears to Joanne to be a straightforward, though far from 'normal', case of a child's disappearance, turns out to be so much more.

Set in the stunning scenery of the Lake District this was an intriguing tale with a stunning conclusion. I fell into it immediately and it was really easy to read with no checking back to see who that character was and what had previously

happened, which can often be necessary (well, for me anyway!).

Carrie Jones

Truly a thriller that kept me guessing until the final pages- I had four potential suspects!

It is not an edge of the seat thriller but one that really develops characters, and has a heart, not full of gory details which are often found in thrillers.

The Bloom family situation is very realistic, and I am sure that many women will recognise a bit of Karen in themselves.

I did find Noel, the husband, at times a little irritating, in contrast I was interested to see Joanne, the police woman's personality develop throughout the story.

The story is told through many viewpoints but this is quite seamless and easy to follow, and gives variety to the way the story is told.

Wonderful setting and interesting characters, a very enjoyable read.

www.boozybookworm.com

Val Rowe

A compelling thriller with surprises when you are least expecting them.

Dr Noel Bloom's life has become dominated by work and alcohol and his relationship with Karen, his perfectionist and compulsive wife is strained to breaking point. The family are troubled. Karen's son Ewan has no focus in life, Noel's daughter Verity is vulnerable and Karen devotes all her time to their daughter, Bronte, whose wellbeing is suffering due to her excessive timetable of extra-curricular activities. Something needs to give.....

A highly enjoyable novel that embraces the types of issues many families find themselves facing as part of their busy lives in today's modern society. As a retired Head Teacher, I encountered many parents like Karen who not only sought to involve their children in a full programme of activities, but also demanded perfection and success in all they undertook; it was quite commonplace to see pupils eating their evening meal from special heated containers in the back of a car and yawning their way through lessons.

I especially liked the development of relationships in this novel and the way in

which it was often difficult to predict what would happen in the ensuing chapter.

A great read which I completed in two days over a holiday period.

Linda Boa

Another triumph in the crowded domestic noir genre from Paula Daly. Take one very pushy and antagonistic mother, a missing daughter, and a family already under pressure, and watch them implode...

Having read two Paula Daly novels already, I'd come to the conclusion that she wrote domestic-noir novels that were a tad superior to many offerings. And it's exactly the same with The Trophy Child.

Karen Bloom, the ultimate ""pushy mother""", is positive her daughter Brontë is exceptionally talented at music and dance, as well as her school lessons. As a result, Brontë has a timetable that would exhaust any adult! As Karen feels her first son is a failure, she leaves him to smoke dope in his own space above the garage. Verity, Dr. Noel Bloom's daughter from his first marriage, is genuinely concerned about her younger sister's welfare, and she and Karen avoid each other whenever possible.

But one day Brontë disappears, sparking a colossal police hunt. Shortly afterwards, Karen - who is possibly the least likeable character I've ever encountered in a book - disappears too. But Karen, unlike Brontë, has a host of enemies...

This is another superb look at the dynamics of a family under pressure from Daly, and how each member copes. All the characters ring true (although Karen is perhaps a tad too monstrous) and, as ever, Daly keeps you turning the pages until you reach the end. This is a crowded genre, but her novels stand head and shoulders above most of the rest. Another triumph from a writer that's now on my autobuy list!

<https://crimeworm.wordpress.com/>

Karen

A captivating and intriguing suspenseful read of a family at breaking point and a mother obsessed with pushing her young daughter to the limits.

'The Trophy Child' is set in the picturesque Lake District – home to the rather dysfunctional Bloom family. The father Noel, is a GP, married to Karen and they have a 10 year old daughter Bronte. Both Noel and Karen have a child from a previous relationship. Karen is obsessed with trying to ensure that Bronte is a super achiever who shines at everything. The poor child is burdened with every extra curriculum activity you could think of – she barely has time to eat however Karen is oblivious to her daughter's distress and marches on regardless. That is until Bronte disappears.

Paula Daly has a talent for creating characters that you love to hate and that get under your skin and that is certainly the case here. This is a story of a family at breaking point. Karen is a 'Tiger Mother' - and proud of it. Her obsession and focus on Bronte is such that she gives neither thought nor care to anyone else in the family.

I don't want to say too much about the plot for fear of spoilers but will only say that the story takes an even darker turn. Paula Daly plants a few red herrings (in my opinion) and although at one stage I thought I knew who was responsible, I was completely wrong.

This is another captivating and engrossing read from an author who seems to specialise in stories of domestic drama. There is enough suspense to keep the reader's interest all the way through and the narrative is sprinkled with her trademark dark humour. I enjoyed it very much but I felt slightly disappointed by the ending. It just seemed rather rushed.

Having said that, I would definitely recommend it. It's still a 4 read for me, I just didn't love it as much as her previous books.*

www.myreadingcorner.co.uk

Lisa Wise

The story had me gripped and the ending was a great unexpected twist. A great suspense thriller.

I have walked around like a zombie for the last week whilst reading 'The Trophy Child', mainly because I literally could not put it down and had way too many late nights just wanting to finish a chapter! The story had me gripped and the ending was a great unexpected twist.

Karen is a 'tiger mum', she pushes Bronte to the limit with out of school activities and extra tuition. Noel, Karen's husband buries his head in the sand and throws himself into his work & the occasional extra marital dalliance.

Verity, Noels's daughter from his first marriage lives with them, Verity's Mum has MS and is in a care home. Verity mildly puts up with Karen but her anger tends to overflow when she witnesses how horrible Bronte's life is becoming at the hands of her Step Mum.

Everything changes on the day Bronte disappears, it starts a whole domino effect of events. Everyone comes under scrutiny and the family is never the same again, but this isn't entirely a bad thing!

Gill Dally-Fitzsimons

A great story, lots of interesting characters. Read this book.

This is a great story, with lots of twists, turns and expect the unexpected. The story is about the ultimate pushy mother, Karen, who will stop at nothing for her daughter, Bronte to achieve. A modern day blended family all with skeletons in the cupboard. Then one night Karen's husband meets Joanne, a detective. Neither tells the other their real name... However, fate intervenes and leads to an exciting story with great complex characters. A must read!!!!