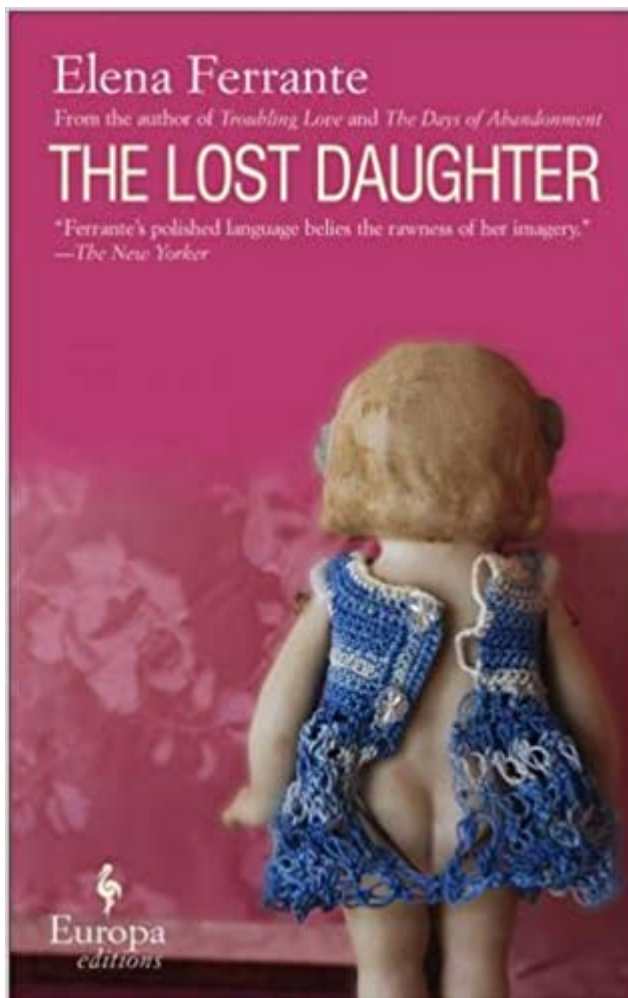


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# The Lost Daughter



## Synopsis

From the author of *My Brilliant Friend* Leda is a middle-aged divorced woman devoted to her work as an English teacher and to her two children. When her daughters leave home to be with their father in Canada, Leda anticipates a period of loneliness and longing. Instead, slightly embarrassed by the sensation, she feels liberated, as if her life has become lighter, easier. She decides to take a holiday by the sea, in a small coastal town in southern Italy. But after a few days of calm and quiet, things begin to take a menacing turn. Leda encounters a family whose brash presence proves unsettling, at times even threatening. When a small, seemingly meaningless, event occurs, Leda is overwhelmed by memories of the difficult and unconventional choices she made as a mother and their consequences for herself and her family. The apparently serene tale of a woman's pleasant rediscovery of herself soon becomes the story of a ferocious confrontation with an unsettled past. Following the extraordinary success of *The Days of Abandonment*, Elena Ferrante's standalone novel *The Lost Daughter* candidly explores the conflicting emotions that tie us to our children. <sup>^</sup>

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The arresting third novel from pseudonymous Italian novelist Ferrante (*Troubling Love*) pursues a divorced, 47-year-old academic's deeply conflicted feelings about motherhood to their frightening core. While on vacation by herself on the Ionian coast, Leda feels contentedly disburdened of her two 20-something daughters, who have moved to their father's city of Toronto. She's soon engrossed in watching the daily drama of Nina, a young mother, with her young daughter, Elena

(along with Elena's doll, Nani), at the seashore. Surrounded by proprietary Neapolitan relatives and absorbed in her daughter's care, Nina at first strikes Leda as the perfect mother, reminding herself of when she was a new and hopeful parent. Leda's eventual acquaintance with Nina yields a disturbing confession and sets in motion a series of events that threatens to wreck, or save, the integrity of Nina's family. Ferrante's prose is stunningly candid, direct and unforgettable. From simple elements, she builds a powerful tale of hope and regret. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

In this brutally frank novel of maternal ambivalence, the narrator, a forty-seven-year-old divorced woman summering alone on the Ionian coast, becomes obsessed with a beautiful young mother who seems ill at ease with her husband's rowdy, slightly menacing Neapolitan clan. When this woman's daughter loses her doll, the older woman commits a small crime that she can't explain even to herself. Although much of the drama takes place in her head, Ferrante's gift for psychological horror renders it immediate and visceral, as when the narrator recalls the "animal opacity" with which she first longed for a child, before she was devoured by pregnancy. Copyright ©2008 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker

This is one really weird book. Look, I am not going to lie to you. The writing is fantastic. The subject, a mother honest about motherhood, is one of my favorite topics. As I read the book I kept thinking that this is a really well written book and I can totally equate with what the character means about finally be free of her grown up daughters and then WHAMO, it takes this really weird turn. Once it took this turn, I was hooked. I laughed out loud. I stared at the words in fascination/horror. I could not put the darn thing down! Good thing It is a fairly short book. Holy Moley. You gotta read it to believe it. I understand that the text was originally written in Italian and then translated to English. If the English version is that witty, biting, and passionate, I wonder what the original Italian translation feels like? On to "The Days of Abandonment," I can't help myself.

Leda is a 47 year-old divorced woman, and mother to daughters, Bianca and Marta, now 22 and 24. The girls have recently moved from Italy to Toronto, Canada to live with their father. Leda is well educated and teaches at the university in Florence, Italy. Leda was not upset when her daughters moved away, in fact it was quite the opposite: "When my daughters moved to Toronto, where their father had lived and worked for years, I was embarrassed and amazed to discover that I wasn't upset; rather, I felt light, as if only then had I definitively brought them into the world. For the first

time in almost twenty-five years I was not aware of the anxiety of having to take care of them. The house was neat, as if no one lived there, I no longer had the constant bother of shopping and doing the laundry, the woman who for years had helped with the household chores found a better paying job, and I felt no need to replace her."It's summer and since she is feeling happy about her new freedom, Leda decides to rent a beach house for six weeks, on the Ionian coast, near Naples. She packs her books and lesson plans for the coming school year and is planning to relax by lounging on the beach by day. Early on she becomes fascinated by the interactions of an attractive young mother named Nina, and her young daughter, Elena. She also intently watches little Elena's interactions with her doll, which the girl calls by several different names. Several other family members visit the family on the beach as well. One day Leda notices the child by the waters edge, so she returns her to her mother who was lying on the beach blanket and hadn't noticed the child had wandered to the water. Another day when the family leaves the beach for the day, Leda notices that Elena's beloved doll was left buried in the sand. This incident upsets Leda, and suddenly this event, along with the interactions of mother and child, opens a floodgate of memories for Leda of her own days as a young mother. Some of the incidents which she recalls of things she did, and ways she reacted to her own daughters --were cringe-worthy. This brief novella, just 124 pages, is sure to evoke emotions among readers, especially mothers. Narrated in the first person, this deep journey into a mother's psyche, gives the reader plenty to think about. Marriage, motherhood, personal freedom, sacrifice and career fulfillment are some of the conflicting issues that surface in this work. Initially, I thought I might have a problem with the flow of the story due to the translation, but that was not the case. Once I got into the rhythm and into what was going on in Leda's head, I was hooked. I liked this one a lot, and would definitely recommend it.

Bright lights cause dark shadows and this book takes on the light of motherhood and its corresponding darker aspects. It is not a crime thriller where the children--grown and young--are in danger, It is a look into the psychology of a woman who never made peace with the sacrifice required by motherhood, but who needed the experience and her children for sanity. When her daughters left home---this is a very female, womanly book but not girly--old issues started to crop up. The psychology rings true and the ending is surprising. Although this author has never been seen in public and there are rumors of various famous authors who may be writing under an alias, I will be surprised if a man has written this book. It is an easy read and I plan to read everything by this author.

Elena Ferrante's voice is so unique. The narrator and main character Elena pulls you into her world during her vacation in southern Italy. We learn about her past, mainly her roles as daughter and mother, and we can relate, even to the episodes that might be hard to accept... All this while she goes to the beach every day and meets an southern Italian family with seemingly mafia ties...I have loved everything I have read by Ferrante. This book serves as a bit of a teaser to what follows in the wonderful Neapolitan Novels.

I read the series of 4 books that starts with *My Brilliant Friend*, and loved them. So I decided to read her earlier books, and started with this one. I didn't expect to like it as much as I did. If you love her other books, go ahead and read this one too! The emotional complexity is surprising. And, keep in mind, this is not a story of a woman's life now in 2016, but a story that takes place in Naples decades ago.

A dense, accurate psychological portrait, unusual in its interest in feminine psyche without the bunting of male fantasy, but nevertheless a peculiar work I am not sure I understand, characters whose untempered malice makes you kind of re-think what's out there. I am reminded a bit of Phillip Roth's *Zuckerman Unbound* - the unheroic antics of that protagonist.

Another amazing novel by this superb author.

A disturbing but impressive revelation of a woman's difficult history with her own daughters and husband, as she finds herself obsessed with a young mother, the woman's young daughter, and the girl's doll. For anyone interested in psychology, and/or the Neapolitan novels.

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