

Then She Was Gone by Lisa Jewell

5 stars

Tangled relationships and shattered lives

Ellie Mack is a much loved 15-year-old approaching her GCSEs with confidence and enjoying her romance with a special boyfriend. She gets on with her family and is popular at school, so it is a major shock when she leaves home one morning to visit the library and fails to return.

Her parents, Laurel and Paul are devastated, not least because despite a full investigation there are no clues to her disappearance. In time, in the absence of any leads and without a body, the police are forced to put the case on hold.

The family are torn apart by accusations and guilt; Laurel cannot forgive Paul for his inability to understand her despair and loss, and Ellie's siblings, Jake and Hanna suffer emotional neglect as Laurel finds it impossible to move on with life and becomes more and more obsessive and distant. She and Paul divorce.

Ten years after Ellie's disappearance Laurel stops at a local cafe one day where she meets Theo and with a mutual attraction they start a relationship. She is introduced to Theo's nine year-old daughter Poppy and feels she seems to bear a close resemblance to Ellie.

Laurel finally re-enters the world of the living but there are unanswered questions around Theo and Poppy, not least the disappearance of Poppy's mother five years before, and Laurel is forced to confront the nature of her relationship with Theo.

This as an interesting novel with aspects of the story being told by different voices as the reader unravels the twists and turns of a complex and original plot. The lead characters are well drawn and evoke strong emotions in the reader, some of sympathy and others of distrust and disgust.

Lisa Jewell has created a truly original story which is difficult to put down, and whilst as a reader you may feel you have worked out what has happened, it isn't until the final few pages that you get the full shocking truth.

Pashtpaws

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.