



The Locksmith's Daughter

Karen Brooks

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From acclaimed author Karen Brooks comes this intriguing novel rich in historical detail and drama as it tells the unforgettable story of Queen Elizabeth's daring, ruthless spymaster and his female protégée.

In Queen Elizabeth's England, where no one can be trusted and secrets are currency, one woman stands without fear.

Mallory Bright is the only daughter of London's most ingenious locksmith. She has apprenticed with her father since childhood, and there is no lock too elaborate for her to crack. After scandal destroys her reputation, Mallory has returned to her father's home and lives almost as a recluse, ignoring the whispers and gossip of their neighbors. But Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's spymaster and a frequent client of Mallory's father, draws her into his world of danger and deception. For the locksmith's daughter is not only good at cracking locks, she also has a talent for codes, spycraft, and intrigue. With Mallory by Sir Francis's side, no scheme in England or abroad is safe from discovery.

But Mallory's loyalty wavers when she witnesses the brutal and bloody public execution of three Jesuit priests and realizes the human cost of her espionage. And later, when she discovers the identity of a Catholic spy and a conspiracy that threatens the kingdom, she is forced to choose between her country and her heart.

Once Sir Francis's greatest asset, Mallory is fast becoming his worst threat—and there is only one way the Queen's master spy deals with his enemies...

The Locksmith's Daughter Details

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Author : Karen Brooks

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From Reader Review The Locksmith's Daughter for online ebook

Meg - A Bookish Affair says

"The Locksmith's Daughter" is the story of Mallory Bright, a young woman with an amazing ability to pick any lock. She eventually finds herself in service to Sir Francis Walsingham, Queen Elizabeth's masterfully powerful spymaster. At first, Mallory sees her service as a way to escape her past but she will begin to see it as something much darker. I love reading about Queen Elizabeth's spies and I love reading in this time so this exciting book was a perfect pick for me!

Mallory is a great character. I was fascinated reading about how she learned how to pick locks and what she was able to do with a skill set that very few had. While it would have been interesting to read about Mallory's spy escapades on its own, I like that the author chose to give her a much more rounded out history. This woman has been through a lot when we first meet her in this book and I loved seeing how her past shapes her future and all of the decisions that she makes throughout this book. Having so much detail about her past really made me care and appreciate her resilience about her throughout the book.

I have liked the books of Karen Brooks' in the past so I was looking forward to this book on its own. This book has a lot of good detail! You get a great sense of what Mallory deals with and how she moves throughout her world. This book is fast paced and kept me reading. Walsingham and his exploits will always make for good reading!

Gaele says

Mallory Bright, when first met, is just returned home to her family, in disgrace. Having had her head turned by a scoundrel and eloping for a marriage that wasn't, she'd disgraced herself and tossed over a solid offer from a young man soon to become a lawyer. Now, she's guilty, saddened, and a shadow of her former self: removed from the convivial relationship with the apprentices and staff of the house, a constant (yet ongoing) trial for her mother, and not comfortable or feeling particularly welcomed in the workshops of the locksmith. A place she spent many hours during childhood learning to pick locks designed to keep unwelcome eyes from the contents they protected. In fact, even for a middle-class craftsman's home, Mallory was vastly different. Educated in the classics, languages, math and discussing politics, her best friend a young actor and playwright who was her constant companion, the fact that she was a woman, subject to the whims of the men and society that dictated her opportunities.

But, her return home after being beaten, abused and generally treated less well than one would a pig, set her on a course that would intimately weave her own skills, her mother's refusal to forego her catholic beliefs, and her sex into the future of the country and monarch, as she came to work for Walsingham, principal secretary and spymaster for Queen Elizabeth, a man who collected information about all in the realm, with an almost fanatical zeal to rout out Catholicism, all couched under the auspices of the faith and its followers being traitorous and treacherous to the Queen. Here is where Malory truly grows and shows that limitations should simply be based in ability and not with some other nebulous standard of faith, appearance or sex, she is used by Walsingham to gather and report on information, usually to do with the "Catholic Threat", she's mesmerized and thirsty for the positive feedback and attention received, all things long denied her in the past few years. Skilled as a lockpick, with a familiarity in the tricks, booby-traps and construction of locks, each becoming ever-more intricate as the secrets they keep safe are more complex or dangerous to their owners.

But, an awakening comes to Mallory as she sees the aftermath of the secrets she's helped to unlock: and her own questions start to arrive: from personal relationships and her mother's unwillingness to shed her papist ways to her best friend Caleb's dancing with acceptable and not with a very mercurial Queen who takes affront quickly, served by one who seems to see threats in every corner. When the tides turn yet again, and her loyalties to family and country are tested, it's glorious to see how she maneuvers through the dangers, taking the largest chances possible, to extricate herself from the grips of the fervor that inflames the crown.

Nothing could please this history geek more than another story with a heroine, flawed yet brave, determined and clever, to work in the seediest and most treacherous place of all – the machinations around Queen Elizabeth and her court – with the threats (real and imagined) to the crown, one without clear heir, the ongoing purge of Catholicism started with her father's (Henry VIII) schism from Rome, and the customs, descriptions, and even quick mentions of court and courtiers – Brooks has written a story that is gripping intelligent, and hopeful, even when things seem darkest. I love history and historic fiction, and the research, characters and the times just come alive in this story, and had me glued to each page and moment: smart fiction that engages and delights, perfect for that 'sense' of late 16th century England and the people who built lives and survived the changing tides.

I received an eARC copy of the title from the publisher via Edelweiss for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Review first appeared at I am, Indeed

Jo says

The Locksmith's Daughter
By Karen Brooks
Genre - Historical Fiction

Synopsis

In a world where no one can be trusted and secrets are currency, one woman stands without fear.

Mallory Bright is the only daughter of London's master locksmith. For her there is no lock too elaborate, no secret too well kept. Sir Francis Walsingham, spymaster and protector of Queen Elizabeth – the last of the Tudor monarchs – and her realm, is quick to realise Mallory's talent and draws her into his world of intrigue, danger and deception. With her by his side, no scheme in England or abroad is safe from discovery; no plot secure.

But Mallory's loyalty wavers when she witnesses the execution of three Jesuit priests, a punishment that doesn't fit their crime. When Mallory discovers the identity of a Catholic spy and a conspiracy that threatens the kingdom, she has to make a choice – between her country and her heart.

Mallory, however, carries her own dark secrets and is about to learn those being kept from her – secrets that could destroy those she loves.

Once Sir Francis's greatest asset, Mallory is fast becoming his worst threat ... and everyone knows there's only one way Sir Francis deals with those.

Review

I loved this book, it was like nothing I'd ever read before. Set during the reign of Elizabeth the first. it was a dangerous time for Catholics, religious persecution was rife and political intrigue was an every day occurrence, traitors were everywhere. Elizabeth faced many threats, her crown was under threat from many quarters, the pope believed a catholic should still be on the throne, the French and Spanish believed Mary queen of Scots was a better candidate and one that would be more sympathetic to their agenda's because she was a Catholic. Francis Walsingham was Elizabeth's spy master, he was a master of uncovering plots. He had a network of 50 spies, many of them were paid out of his own pocket. He soon had agents in the courts of France, Spain, the Low Countries, Germany, the United Provinces, and even Turkey. He was like a black spider at the center of a great web.

The locksmith's Daughter explores the life of Mallory Bright, a young woman touched by hardship, she's a master locksmith and has a talent for uncovering information.

Karen Brooks attention to details made this book a pleasure to read.

The descriptions of clothing, food and even the language, transported me to London during the 1850's.

Highly recommended.

4 stars

Julie says

The Locksmith's Daughter by Karen Brooks is a 2018 William Morrow publication.

A skillfully crafted novel of historical fiction-

Mallory Bright's unorthodox upbringing paves the way for her in unexpected ways when she makes a grave error in judgement and finds her reputation in ruins.

As the daughter of a locksmith, Mallory was taught the trade by her father, much to her mother's intense dismay. But Mallory would never have guessed that her talents would lead her to the queen's personal spymaster or that she'd become his protégé and most valued asset.

This Elizabethan historical drama is chock full of intrigue, vivid, authentic settings and details, heartbreak, and heart pounding suspense, with an unconventional love story capping it off.

This book was much more than I anticipated. The acute religious strife regarding Catholics and Protestants is at the center of the story. Sir Francis Walsingham – a true historical figure- is obsessed with maintaining protestant power over Catholicism. To that end, his training and directives to Mallory were to flush out Catholic spies. Mallory is a much better student than her master could have hoped for. But when she witnesses the results of her handiwork, her heart and mind are conflicted.

“I saw no traitors plotting to bring down a queen, only desperate people; people whose world was in disarray and who felt threatened. Who prayed to the same God, only differently. Did this make what they were doing illegal?”

To complicate matters, Mallory learns some shocking revelations about her own past and struggles to tolerate Nathaniel- an obnoxious friend of a friend, who knows entirely too much about her work with Sir Francis, but who may well be the only person who can help her.

This period in history is so interesting. I never tire of reading novels set during the Elizabethan era. This story highlights the fevered religious paranoia towards Catholics. It was not entirely justified, but there were very serious and real dangers to the throne posed by Catholic spies. The book also touched on the impact the "Bartholomew's Day massacre" had on Sir Francis, which is what helped to fuel his prejudice against Catholics. There was a lot of tension, misinformation, and confusion regarding religion. The fear increased as more assassination attempts on Queen Elizabeth rose. Public executions, such as those described in this novel did indeed occur.

The author did an amazing job of recreating that tension and highlighting the moral dilemmas and atrocities that occurred in the name of religion and politics. The Locksmithing craft and the clever spy codes of the day is very interesting and fascinating. But, the characterizations in this novel are what sets it on a higher pedestal. Mallory is an outstanding personality. Her loyalty, her strength, talent and courage captured my imagination. She is quite the heroine. Nathaniel is truly nasty, in the beginning, but I grew to love him, and loved him even more for loving Mallory. Their love story is not at the center of the novel, but in many ways, it is at the heart of it – maybe even the soul of it. With so many villainous acts, so many selfish and manipulative plots afoot, with the danger at a fever pitch, their relationship lit the way to honor, bravery and hope.

This is a not only a stunning historical novel, but, a compelling story of the true meaning of love and family.

Note: This book was originally published back in 2016 by Harlequin MIRA. Some may have been given the impression this is a traditional historical romance, but it is not. It is pure Historical fiction- with a love story written into it. HF lovers will not want to miss this book!!

5 stars

Naomi says

I do wish they had half stars, because I would probably have given it 2 1/2 stars. I liked *The Brewer's Tale*, and that's why I got this book, but I didn't think it was half as good. I was very aware of the author pushing the book forward on several occasions - places where people's behaviour went against both the person's character and the setting without good explanation.

Let me explain (spoiler alert).

When Mallory goes to work for Sir Francis, her Papa was not happy at all with the arrangement, and yet later he said that he set it up so that Mallory would become one of Sir Francis's watchers. Did he want her to work for Sir Francis or not? I don't think he would have given that he was very worried about Mallory finding out the truth. I also can't imagine him approving of his daughter hunting Catholics when his own wife (whom he loves) is one.

Then there is the whole situation of Mallory finding out who her father is. None of it fitted. She had Papa who lied to her but cared for her all her life and showed her love. Then she had Sir Francis who abandoned her as a baby after admitting that he intended to reject her mother after promising to marry her. He then hired her as a watcher but kept everything purely professional. He only confessed that he was her father when he

could feel that she was slipping from his grasp (Mallory's own deduction) and even then he said it had to remain private. He would only call her daughter that night in the privacy of that office. Yet, Mallory rejected Papa (too angry to even face him) and went running to Sir Francis. I imagine if she was angry with Papa, she would be just as angry with Sir Francis.

She goes to Sir Francis, and he says he can't let her stay at any of his residents and Mallory realised that he isn't going to help her as a father would. Still, when she goes to stay with Lord Nathaniel, she happily continues to do Sir Francis's bidding, despite it meaning spying on her best friend, the man she is starting to fall in love with, and her new companion, whom she is starting to really like. I just don't see how she can have such loyalty to Sir Francis. It doesn't fit at all.

Then when she names her child after Sir Francis after he had Papa tortured and left him unable to be a locksmith. I can understand her getting to the end and at least understanding some of Sir Francis's actions, even forgiving him, but naming her son after him is going too far.

Karen Brooks' style is good and she certainly knows the era that she writes, and for that reason I wanted to give her another half a star, but storyline I found quite irritating.

Joy says

A very long book but a very good story! About how women were treated long ago. Very sad in some parts but it has a classic happy ending.

Lauren says

I won this book in a goodreads giveaway- once I got into the story, I couldn't put this book down! I loved the suspense of the story and the main characters. Mallory was such a strong and independent woman depicted in this time period, which made the mystery and spy games all the more interesting. After reading the author's note, I am even more interested in reading other books related to these people and time in history. Looking forward to my next Karen Brooks read- I only wish I had known her work sooner!

Amanda - Mrs B's Book Reviews says

This is my second helping of Australian historical fiction writer Karen Brooks. Last year I read and enjoyed Karen's first novel, *The Brewers Tale*. *The Locksmith's Daughter* is another fascinating historical tale from Brooks that expertly weaves fact with fiction together with a compelling female protagonist.

It took me no time at all to fall into *The Locksmith's Daughter*. The first person narrative style employed by the author, allows the reader to immediately develop a bond with main protagonist, Mallory Bright. Mallory is an interesting young woman of her time. She is the only daughter and child of a well known locksmith in London, Gideon Bright. Gideon knows the extent of his daughter's talents and has not restricted her as a result. As well as being a language expert, Mallory is successful at the lock picking trade. Her talents catch the eye of one of the most important figures in the Elizabethan era, Sir Francis Walsingham. Sir Francis hires Mallory for her language aptitude, in the hope that she can teach his daughter. However, as the book

progresses, Mallory's role and life becomes much more complicated. Under Walsingham's direction, Mallory becomes a spymaster for the Queen's protector and is caught up in a world dominated by religious divisions and political intrigue.

I had an immediate feeling, just from reading the prologue of *The Locksmith's Daughter* that it was not going to take much at all to get me hooked on this novel. It should be said that I am a long standing fan of historical fiction, in fact, only a few years ago it was the only genre I would read. The Tudor and the Elizabethan era has fascinated me for some time. When I saw that *The Locksmith's Daughter* was set in an era I enjoy reading about, I jumped at the chance to read and review it. It always amazes me that I continually find more interesting historical stories that are borne from this era. *The Locksmith's Daughter* is a prime example of this. Author Karen Brooks should be commended on sheer amount of research she has undertaken, in order to bring this particular story to life. She deftly combines rich historical fact, with her own imagined fictional tale and it comes off just perfectly. What I appreciated about *The Locksmith's Daughter*, was the effort Brooks has put into her novel to ensure that her prose is historically accurate. Although this was tough going reading wise, I still feel this is an important ingredient to good historical fiction novel. Added to this is the specific Elizabethan period detail, such as Brooks' insertion of key historical events, players and even dress codes. All these points combine, to give the book an air of historical authenticity. Readers will find this book delivers a great mix of themes, from drama, to romance and intrigue. The focus on the trade of lock picking, through the main characters of Mallory and Gideon Bright, was particularly enlightening to read. There were some tough moments in this book too, such as instances of domestic violence and torture scenes, which serve to highlight the true extent of women's inferiority in this era. Brooks has cast her characters well, offsetting the main protagonist Mallory, with a superb cast of good and bad minor characters. In particular, I found the character of Caleb fascinating and his minor story thread involving homosexuality in this era, utterly absorbing.

My final word on *The Locksmith's Daughter* should be directed at giving a shout out to the fantastic author's note contained at the end of the book. It provides further detail on the inspiration for the book and provides insight into the sheer level of research that is involved in the creation of a book such as *The Locksmith's Daughter*. *The Locksmith's Daughter* comes highly recommended, especially for those who appreciate full bodied historical fiction, written by an Australian author who knows her craft.

Please note that a free copy of this book was provided to me for review purposes through Beauty and Lace. To read the original review on the Beauty and Lace website please visit here:
<http://bookgirl.beautyandlace.net/boo...>

Leanne Francis says

Brilliant, a big and dense read that transports you to Elizabethan England, the detail is incredible

Rachael McDiarmid says

I've decided to give this book five stars as I absolutely enjoyed everything about it. The characters, the story, the writing. For the last few days I've been lost in Elizabethan England (a place everyone knows I love to

visit) and trapped in the fascinating world of locks and spies! I can't recall reading an historical fiction work with Francis Walsingham as a central character and I was captivated by the world of the spymaster and the relationships around him. Mallory, of course, was the character I loved the most and the book is written from her point of view. What she endured, and what she became, kept me turning those pages as did the world of Gideon, Caleb, Lord Nathaniel, Beatrice and more. Entertaining and interesting, this is a great new book from the author of *The Brewer's Tale* and I can't wait to see what she does next....!

booksofallkinds says

THE LOCKSMITH'S DAUGHTER by Karen Brooks is a richly detailed, historical drama with a main character that will suck you into the story from the very beginning.

Mallory Bright is very different from other young ladies of her time. When scandal destroys her good name, this intelligent, quick, and skillful young woman returns to her father and soon finds herself drawn into a world of subterfuge, intrigue, and danger at the side of Sir Francis Walsingham who works for the Queen. Set during a time of religious upheaval, Mallory soon witnesses the aftermath of her actions as a spy and struggles with the blood on her hands, and when she uncovers a conspiracy that threatens the realm, Mallory will be thrust into danger like never before.

The settings and life of Elizabethan England bursts to life in this excellently detailed historical fiction novel that has action and drama around every corner. While the story starts off a little slow, it was not long before I was completely caught up in this fascinating world and could not put this book down. I loved learning about the intricate art of being a locksmith, and Mallory really is a strong, capable character that is worth reading about.

THE LOCKSMITH'S DAUGHTER by Karen Brooks is an excellent historical novel that has something for everyone and I look forward to reading more from this talented author.

*I voluntarily reviewed this book from Edelweiss

Christie«SHBBlogger» says

[Yes (hide spoiler)]

Scott Klemm says

With a quick glance at the other reviews, I see that I'm the first male to submit a review for Karen Brooks' *The Locksmith's Daughter*. Men should not shy away from this book because the protagonist is female. Karen did not write this book for any one gender. It's not a mushy romance novel, but rather a very meticulously researched historical novel set in Elizabethan England. The main character, Mallory Bright, as the title implies, is the daughter of a locksmith. This was in an era when locksmiths actually made their own locks. Mallory learned their inner workings, became an expert lock picker, and her skill led her to be employed by Sir Francis Walsingham. Sir Walsingham (a real historic figure) was the secretary and spymaster for Queen Elizabeth I. In this period of history, who would suspect a mere woman to be one of

Walsingham's trusted "watchers"?

Karen Brooks, an Australian author, visited England in 2014 to see firsthand the actual locations and streets mentioned in her book. She has made every effort to make her historical novel as accurate as possible including taking up the study of old locks to lend realism to her story. She has sometimes infused her work with the actual language of the day such as the "jake" (privy) and a "jordan" (chamber pot). But, no need to worry. It will not send you scurrying to your dictionary. Their meanings can be figured out by the context.

This is my first time reading one of Brooks' novels, and I am very impressed. She is indeed a master wordsmith. Her novel kept me engaged from beginning to end and included some surprise twists as the story unfolded.

Kate Forsyth says

An absolutely gripping page-turner of a novel set in Elizabethan times, *The Locksmith's Daughter* is told from the first person point of view of a young woman named Mallory Bright. The story starts a little slowly but the pace soon quickens, and the plot begins to twist and turn in unexpected ways.

Mallory is the daughter of a master locksmith who has taught her all his secrets. One evening her father is visited by the Queen's spymaster, Sir Frances Walsingham, and Mallory is asked to show off her skills. She finds herself being trained as a spy to work on Walsingham's behalf, and is drawn deeper and deeper into a dark and violent world.

The book is set during a time of intense religious strife, when Jesuit priests were being hunted down and hanged, drawn and quartered. Mallory finds herself caught with divided loyalties and in danger herself. The world of Elizabethan England is captured with all its myriad sounds and smells, and I particularly loved all the details about devious locks and how the Elizabethan secret service worked. It felt so real and authentic, it was as if I had actually slipped back in time myself – always a sign of meticulous research and attention to detail.

A gripping historical thriller that will quite literally steal your breath!

Laureen says

Although I listened to the audio book and did not read it, this story was amazingly good. I loved it totally and at times I wished I had read it to savour it more. While driving, my concentration was interrupted at times and I missed little bits. The story was set during the reign of Elizabeth I of England and involved the Queen's trusted man, Sir Francis Walsingham? (Spelling?) So much intrigue, such unexpected twists and turns. This story had everything. An impressive, capable, strong woman, a deep love story (not sentimental so much), horrific torture scenes true to the times, the intolerances of Religious belief, family secrets etc etc. I highly recommend this book.
