

Book Review: The Wrong Daughter
By Dandy Smith

Thanks to NetGalley and Kensington Publishing for this advance reader's copy, in exchange for an honest review. "The Wrong Daughter" has an expected publication date of August 2025.

From the first few chapters, something didn't feel *right* about Dandy Smith's novel "The Wrong Daughter." Let me explain.

The Prologue introduces us to sisters Olivia and Caitlin, ages 13 and 10, respectively. Their parents have gone out for the evening, leaving Olivia in charge. But late at night, before their parents come home, Olivia is abducted at knifepoint by a masked man. Caitlin witnesses the entire scene.

Fast forward sixteen years, Caitlin is an elementary school teacher. She remains haunted by her sister's abduction and has spent her life trying to be the daughter she imagines her parents wanted Olivia to be. In addition to not living her own life, she's been engaged to Oscar for the past three years. Why the delay in scheduling a wedding?

Suddenly, we're thrown into an alternate storyline, where we meet brother and sister Heath and Elinor, ages 20 and 17, respectively. Their well-to-do parents died in a boating accident, and they live in a stately home supervised by their Uncle Robert until Heath comes of age (21). They also have a strange, definitely too-close relationship, dominated by Heath's more-than-overprotective nature.

Back to the Caitlin storyline, and sister Olivia suddenly reappears after sixteen years. Just like that, walks back into the family home. Really? And the awkwardness of the narrative is compounded by parents who don't seem to care where she was or what happened, only that she's back.

But Caitlin senses something is wrong, and she sets out to make things right. Which creates more problems in what quickly becomes a convoluted storyline.

The narrative continues to alternate between the Caitlin-Olivia and Heath-Elinor sagas, and even past the midpoint of the book there's no indication of how these two storylines intersect. And you know they will at some point.

I don't want to give anything away, but suffice to say that once it becomes apparent what the relationship is, it's a bit disorienting. That's because not only are they two storylines, but they're also occurring during different timelines – something that was never made clear early on. Would have been nice to know.

Once the two storylines connect, the pacing picks up, and is the best part of the book, though it took way too long to get there.

I give "The Wrong Daughter" 2.5 out of 5 stars and can't seriously recommend it as a worthwhile read.