

RIPPLES
OF A
QUIET TRUST

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A NOVEL

EVELYN RICHESIN



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I dedicate this book to the memory of my mother, Melvina May Wood Loghry. Mama was the first to show delight in my writing and the first to know that I was a teacher and a writer. Mama and Daddy are responsible for rearing me in a Christian, Texas, mid-twentieth-century family. In that setting, Mama answered the calling of her life to rear her children in the knowledge of the Lord, and to minister to other families and individuals alongside of Daddy. Mama always taught us, by her own example of a strong and quiet faith in God, knowing that He was the answer to every problem—just as Susan does in *Ripples of a Quiet Trust*.



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CHAPTER ONE

SUSAN COULDN'T SLEEP. She tossed and she turned. On top of all other worries, she worried about waking Paul. He would have to get up so early to do chores in the morning before breakfast. She finally sat up and quietly slipped out of bed, picking up her Bible from the bedside table as she went. She tiptoed into the hall and then over to Anna's room and peeked in on her to see that she was safely sleeping. *Where did I think she would be? Of course she is sleeping safely.*

She went to the kitchen and poured herself a glass of milk. If it didn't help her sleep, it should at least be good for the child growing inside her. Taking her glass into the living room, she sat down with her Bible in her lap. She sipped from the glass and then set it on the end table beside the couch.

Susan held her Bible against her chest and looked around her. She wondered at all the furniture around her. To whom did she owe all that she had here? The soft, brown couch; the big comfy chair; the coffee table; the large, round, homemade rag rug with greens and browns? She knew the piano came from Paul's grandparents, who had originally owned the farm. Some of the furnishings of the house had been theirs as well. She had stepped into the ownership of so, so much without having done anything to earn it. She had

met Paul one night at her father's table, and a month and a half later they were married. She had just walked in to find all this belonged to her, even her precious daughter, Anna.

Somehow in the quiet darkness, Susan felt the reality of Lila Manifold as though Lila were somewhere in the room just looking curiously at her. Lila, the frail little wife Paul had married and then lost, the one Susan had never really liked even though she'd never met her. Of course, that's not something she would ever have told Paul, or anyone else besides God.

Why hadn't she liked Lila? It certainly wasn't jealousy. She had never known Paul when Lila was alive, nor had she been in love with him when he had first told her about Lila. She had just had an impression of a complaining and self-centered little sick woman who demanded too much from Paul and gave too little. Susan knew it wasn't fair to make such a judgment. Paul seemed to think Lila was very loveable, and the loss of her had definitely left him very depressed for a year and a half. As she looked around now, and thought of all that was in this house, and above all, of little Anna and of Paul as they slept, she suddenly felt tears sting her eyes as she realized what Lila had given her.

"Thank you, Lila," she said, and then "Thank You, Lord. Please forgive me for thinking poorly of Lila. I owe her next to You, for so much of what I have. I definitely owe her for my daughter and my husband. *Who has given me this child?* I read something like that in the Scripture the other day. Lila left me her husband and her child. Forgive me, Lord." Tears ran down her cheeks. She felt God's comforting touch and it seemed as though He were smiling at her. It seemed He was saying, "*That's good, child. That's very good. But that isn't what has been keeping you awake tonight. That isn't what you came in here to talk to me about, is it?*"

"No, Lord, but I thank You for showing me that. I needed it, and I didn't even know I needed it." What had kept her awake? She thought of her sister Bren with her new baby girl. She had just come from her Dad's house in Fairgrounds where Bren and her baby were living with their Dad while Jacob, Bren's husband, was in Korea. Susan knew it wouldn't be many more months before

Jacob's return, which was very good for Bren, of course, but what would Dad do? *When he is with that baby, Dad's eyes shine like they haven't for many years. And Little Angie is definitely bonding to her grandpa. She needs him.*

Bren was taking driving lessons at last, with Dad as teacher, and she was taking some college courses, trying to get at least a little start at her new goal of becoming a kindergarten teacher. This would have to be finished up in Austin. *But in Austin, there are some schools with kindergarten. In Fairgrounds, and even in Blue Hills, all the schools start with first grade. Well, it is just good for Bren that her parents-in-law live nearby, so there is always someone to keep Angie when she has to be at school and Daddy has to work in the shop.* Bren sometimes kept the twins for Caroline as well. Bren was always happy with small children around her.

"But what will Dad do when they leave, God?" Susan prayed. "He has just come through a very sad time alone, and I don't want him to go through that again. Why can't he think of being married again after thirteen years of widowhood?" Certainly there were plenty of widows in his acquaintance. Well, she could readily see that this was not something she could solve, and she must just be glad for the happiness Dad now enjoyed with Bren and Angie living with him. *How Bren keeps house for him, cooking and cleaning and still working, as well as going to school and taking care of an infant is more than I can see. But Bren is happy.*

Only one thing had occurred to mar Bren's happiness since her marriage to Jacob, and as Susan thought of it now, it brought several wrinkles to her forehead, and she was aware of the source of one of the dark clouds over her emotions: Brother Johnson, the pastor of Dad's church.

When Bren stayed with Susan and Paul—awaiting the birth of her child, healing from the hurts she'd gone through, and trying to get her life straightened out after some bad mistakes—one of the most joyful things she had done was teaching children in Sunday School. She had taken so much healing from that experience, and she had realized her life calling.

Now she was back in her home church where children's teachers were badly needed, and Brother Johnson shook his head at Bren's offer to teach. He could not allow her to teach, he said, because she had been living wrong only a few months before, and had become pregnant out of wedlock and married a man who obviously was not the baby's father. He just felt it would be a wrong message to send to young people in the church. Bren had told Susan, "Dad just hung his head when I told him and took my hand in his, and then pulled me to him and held me very close."

As Susan grieved over this situation, she wasn't sure that the pastor was wrong. Nevertheless she felt angry and hurt. She wanted to give that preacher a piece of her mind. "God, I know my sister came to You in a more complete way than ever before while she was here, and that she is an excellent teacher for the very young, but surely when we sin we must have consequences even though we are forgiven. And Brother Johnson hasn't perhaps had time to see who Bren is now."

Still she knew Pastor Johnson didn't understand Bren, nor did he try to. He just knew she had sinned. And who hadn't? She just hoped all the looks Bren was getting from folks would soon pass. She was a godly woman, and surely that would be apparent and her youthful follies soon forgotten. But there were consequences at different times in one's life. She knew that from personal experience. *Someday, Bren will be teaching Sunday School again, and she will be one of the best teachers there have ever been.*

And then there was Susan's best friend Ruby to worry about. She was having extreme marital problems. Susan wasn't sure what Ruby would do. She had gone back to her parents' home in Fairgrounds for a month, and now she was back home with her husband, but from Ruby's letters, Susan expected a real separation soon.

Susan also worried about Anna's maternal grandparents, who wanted Anna to come and stay with them. *Anna doesn't even know them! They have never been there during her memory, and Anna is too young, and is just getting her confidence back from losing her mother and being separated from her father so much of the first two and a half years of her life. Now she is three and is about to be a big sister!*

“Are you mad at me?”

Susan jumped and spilled a little of her milk. “Oh, Paul, you scared the living daylights out of me!”

Paul smiled and came to sit by her, putting his arm around her. “Well, are you?”

“Of course I’m not mad at you, darling. Have I ever been mad at you?”

“Well, I can remember at least once. But you’re trying to get me off the subject. Why are you in here in the middle of the night instead of sleeping peacefully beside me? You were gone for two weeks. I thought I had a wife to sleep with again.”

“I just got up to think and pray a little. I couldn’t sleep.”

“And have you been praying or just worrying?”

“Mostly worrying, I guess,” Susan looked up at him from the top of her eyes, her head still ducked, with a shy, kind of I’ve-been-caught look.

“What are you worrying about, sweetheart?”

“Just Ruby, and Bren, and Dad, and Anna’s grandparents wanting to take her. But I don’t want to talk to you about it, because you need to sleep.”

“Well, then, you need to sleep, too. And I will sleep better if you will sleep with me. So why don’t we pray and leave these things for God to worry about—at least for tonight?”

“Yes, sir. You pray then, since you are not the one worrying at the moment.”

Paul smiled at her with his beaming green eyes. She loved his smiles, so full of love.

“Father,” he began. “You know about all these things Susan is worried about. You already have the answers to her Daddy’s loneliness when Bren goes away, and to Bren’s having to face disapproval and reputation problems.” Susan smiled at how Paul knew the details of her worries. Of course, these were all things they had discussed since she got home.

“You know how we need to answer Anna’s grandparents. I could worry about that again. But I know You have the answer. We just need to hear from You about that. You know about Ruby and Jack

and their problems. We can't do anything at all about it except trust You and encourage Ruby when we hear from her. Give us exactly the right things to say to her and to Anna's grandparents; and meanwhile, give us peace, and let us sleep while it is sleeping time. Just touch my wife right now." As he said this, Paul put his hand on Susan's soft brown hair and smoothed it down until his hand rested on the back of her neck, "and cover her heart and mind with peace as You would cover a baby with a soft blanket to help her sleep. We trust You now with all our worries. We love You. We praise You. We wait for You to act. Thank You, Lord. Thank You. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, we pray. Amen."

Susan looked up at Paul and smiled. He took her hand and pulled her gently from the couch and back to the hall toward their bedroom. She did think about the milk glass sitting on the end table. She should take it to the kitchen and run cold water in it, but she didn't.