

THE
Q U I E T
D A U G H T E R
S P E A K S

A NOVEL

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D A U G H T E R
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E V E L Y N R I C H E S I N



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I dedicate this book to the memory of my Daddy, Joe Loghry, who always believed in my writing and so looked forward to seeing it in print. He is much of the reason I have followed through with my dream of writing. Daddy not only taught me but also showed me what a family should be like. This family story is originally and continually inspired by my Daddy.



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CHAPTER ONE

TONIGHT THERE WAS a stranger in the living room with Dad. They'd been talking for an hour while the girls prepared the roast, potatoes, beans, and corn bread. Susan had baked the cake earlier in the day, before she had known there was going to be company.

"Dad wants you to serve tonight and me to stay out of sight," Bren said as she turned off the last burner and pulled the pot off onto a folded cloth on the counter.

"Why?" asked Susan with raised eyebrows. Susan seldom said any unnecessary words. She was the introverted one of the three girls, but if she were going to talk, it would be to one of her sisters and when the notion was upon her.

"Because I chatter too much, and this guy is sad. He's been depressed since the loss of his wife and 'doesn't need a chatter box girl around giggling and all.'" She threw up double fingers from each hand and waved them as she quoted her Dad. "You should see him. He must be more than thirty-five. He wouldn't be bad looking at all, though, if he'd smile. But there's something like a permanent crease between his eyes, like he's worried all the time, and he hasn't smiled since he walked in."

Susan raised her eyebrows again and paused with her stirring spoon in the air over the bowl into which she'd just scraped the potatoes. She stayed in that position, watching her sister fix her own plate, and wondering. She knew that Bren had to be quoting Dad's description of his youngest daughter's chatty, happy disposition. But there was more than that in his reasoning. He didn't like for Bren to be around male company much because she attracted their notice so readily. Not only did she have big, laughing, brown eyes and bouncy, auburn curls; but also her bubbly chatter and laughter kept them watching and entertaining her constantly.

Susan wondered, *How does she know so much about this guy she isn't supposed to be around? She evidently watched him from the peephole in the hall after Dad roused her interest with his orders and description of the stranger.*

The two men had come in together after Dad had gone to town in answer to a phone call from Mr. Green. The Green family, all four of them, had been ill with influenza for a week. The girls had fixed some vegetable soup with what was left in the garden from the season, and Dad had carried it over and picked up some supplies in town. He'd come back an hour ago with this stranger at his side. Susan had heard them talking as they stomped the mud off their boots before coming in the door.

Soon they'd be in here to eat in the kitchen. She shook her head, as though to throw off some thoughts that tried to invade from far off and set another plate on the table. *Dad hasn't said I couldn't sit with him and the company. He might have told Bren, but... he probably didn't say I couldn't because it had never entered his head that I would.* Susan never liked to be in the position of having to talk or entertain in any way. If she had a choice, she'd choose to take her plate to her room when there was company—particularly male company.

Tonight, however, she didn't choose to do so. She took her apron off and smoothed her skirts just as the men, still talking, pushed through the swinging kitchen door. Dad looked at the third plate and then at Susan with a puzzled look, only for a split second. Susan ignored him and moved toward the coffee pot in the corner on the

stove. The stranger waited until Dad indicated the chair to his left and seated himself quietly. The talk had slowed a little.

As Susan set a coffee cup in front of each man, without asking, as her younger sister would have, if the man drank coffee, Dad said, “Oh, Paul, this is my eldest daughter, Susan. Susan, this is Mr. Paul Manifold.”

The man nodded at Susan, and she smiled a quick smile, just enough to acknowledge the introduction.

Her father didn’t make any explanations about his other daughters. He looked a question at Susan. She knew it meant, *You’re eating here?* But she sat down as her only answer. Dad said grace, and after one more glance at Susan, who appeared deaf and dumb to their conversation, went on with his comments to Mr. Manifold. “And so you came to Fairgrounds to see Mr. Green, just for someone to talk to about your situation?”

Paul Manifold didn’t seem aware of Susan’s presence. “Actually, Bill Green is a second cousin of mine. My brother, Jerry, suggested I come by to see him. I guess I’ve heard him preach once or twice, when I was a boy. He wasn’t much more than a boy himself at the time. And I met him at a few family reunions. I don’t know him that well. But he helped my brother through some really difficult times, and Jerry is persuaded that Bill Green hears from God. I guess he has a reputation as a man of wisdom.”

“Yes, he does,” Dad agreed. “People here love him dearly. He is different. He preaches here and there, and he was our interim for a while. He does a lot of counseling—unofficially though. He’s never taken a dime for it. But he never would accept a pastorate, and would never allow anyone to call him Reverend—just Mister or Brother Green or just Bill. But few people call him Bill. They just seem to respect him too much.”

“Bill is a licensed minister, though. And he was in seminary for a couple of years, years ago. My father told me that,” offered Mr. Manifold. “But I was actually passing through here anyway, on my way to Dallas to see my little girl. My parents have her. That’s why...I mean...well, I really wanted to talk to Bill, but he wouldn’t even let me in the house for fear of my catching the flu.

I think I just need a little counsel from one who has some of the wisdom of God. I've often had wisdom for others, but... I guess when it's your own problems, and you're in the middle of them... it's just hard to see out." His voice trailed off for a minute. Then he smiled and said, "The only advice I got from Bill Green was that if I would not mind talking to a stranger, Gerald Moore was as wise a counselor as he knew anything about, though he has no degrees. He said, 'I'd go to him myself in a time of spiritual and emotional instability—which is something that does occur in each of our lives.' He also indicated that you had gone through some of the same problems, losing a wife and rearing your children alone." He glanced at Susan briefly.

Her father smiled a certain one of his smiles at these words, and Susan mentally noted how interesting it was that smiles spoke such clear and different messages. This one, with which she was familiar, was one that said he was thinking, *Well, that's a kind thought, but really, the praise of my value as a counselor is overstated. Don't put much stock in it.* What Gerald said aloud was, "It certainly does occur in each of our lives. I don't know that I will have any advice to give. I am not really a counselor, but I can certainly listen. And yes, my wife did die when the girls were young, and it has been a challenge rearing three daughters on my own." Dad cleared his throat, and after a measured silence, he cut through the barriers between him and each of his dinner companions, both barriers with one sentence.

"I'd like to ask you a few questions of a personal nature, concerning this matter, since you've expressed a need to talk. If you'd prefer to talk without the presence of my daughter, we can move back into the den, or I can ask Susan to be good enough to go and join her sister...."

Susan moved her chair back and stood up, her color rising. She opened her mouth wordlessly, but she was not given a chance to speak.

"No, oh, no, please, Miss Moore, keep your seat. Really, I...well, for some reason, I'm quite comfortable with your presence."

If he had been trying, this stranger could not have paid her a higher compliment. And even she was surprised to see the pride in her father's eyes as he received this answer and began to formulate his next words to Mr. Manifold. Susan was surprised, embarrassed really, by her father's confronting her presence there in this way, when he could have just sent her on some errand. However, he had his reasons, she could see. And she had first surprised him with an untypical behavior, and so she might expect her sharp father to react with a behavior as untypical as her own. She looked from one man to the other and back again, her hands on the back of her chair. What she saw put her quickly at ease, and she seated herself, nodding at Mr. Manifold with a small, quick smile.

"I am glad you feel this way, Paul, because Susan is the best listening ear I know. And if she does speak, it is often with unusual insight. She also knows how to keep her tongue, as most young people of my acquaintance do not." Her father's smile now was so different from that of a few minutes ago, when he had heard Mr. Green's words of praise.

"And now, if it is not too painful, tell me how long it has been since your wife passed away."

With a brief look of interest (something very like curiosity) at Susan, Mr. Manifold began to speak of his beloved wife, who had been tiny and frail all her life and had developed some strange malady after five years of marriage. Susan, at these first descriptions, began to feel somewhat large and clumsy, but she soon lost herself in the effort, so natural to her, to discern human character and evaluate and sort out human problems. She soon forgot to appear unconscious in her straining concentration to understand what had been the personality of this little female, so charming and attractive to Mr. Manifold. As near as she could understand from his discourse, Lila had not been very strong emotionally or physically. Though he never stated it, and perhaps had never thought it, Susan detected a sort of self-focused, child-like woman, who fretted and worried her husband constantly, while flirting and mushing over him as well. Susan didn't think she would have

liked Mrs. Lila Manifold, but it made no difference; she knew that all this reading between the lines was not really all there could be to understanding a person's character and personality. She could be wrong about some of it. Obviously, to Paul Manifold, Lila had been his little lamb, weak and dependent, very important to his happiness. Yet he had never allowed himself a restful happiness because of his constantly trying to pamper and keep her content. Still, he had loved her deeply and been in a depression for the loss of her for a year and a half now, one which he found almost impossible to fight off.

Her father mostly listened and commented occasionally to encourage the man to continue a narrative that was at times difficult for him. She thought Mr. Manifold was tempted not to make the effort; but he had come to town for counsel, and the man he'd gone to, being unable to talk with him, had given his best advice to come to Mr. Gerald Moore.

Mr. Manifold continued, explaining his remorse about his neglect of his small daughter. "I just do not know how to care for her and continue making a living at the same time. She's been with my parents in Dallas most of the time since my wife's death. I know that she needs me. I need her, but..."

Susan knew it was very difficult to work a farm, keep it going, and take care of a toddler at the same time. Still, somehow she felt there was more than what he was actually stating in his guilt about the child. *The child reminds him too painfully of her mother. There is an avoidance there that he is ashamed of. And yet, he wants the child, loves the child. How confusing. How would he have taken care of her if he had kept her there?*

"I go to Dallas as often as I can, but it is hard. And it just about kills me every time I leave. She cries..." Paul's discourse came to a stop for a few seconds.

Dad said some quiet words of comfort and understanding, and then he remembered an article he had read recently. "Susan, would you...? No, never mind. I know exactly where it is. I'll get it myself. Mr. Manifold...Paul, will you excuse me just for a

moment? I want very much to show you this article that I think may speak to your situation.”

“Certainly,” said Paul. He leaned back with his head down and his feet stretched out in front of him for perhaps thirty seconds after Dad’s departure.

At the end of that space of time, Susan cleared her throat and ventured to speak one of her many thoughts. “Have you considered remarrying, Mr. Manifold? Perhaps a companion would be comforting for you and your daughter.”

Paul raised himself to a sitting position quickly, with the attitude of one who had suddenly realized he had been rude and forgotten that he was not alone. “Remarry,” he said, without surprise. “Well, yes, it is something I have considered often. I know I need a wife. I even feel some prompting from God about it, though it may seem strange. However, I cannot love anyone as I loved Lila. No one could take her place with me. And I feel that to ask a woman to marry me and not offer her love would be cheating her.”

Susan nodded. “I have argued the same way many a time with myself. But I have come to believe that though you may not fall in love in the same passionate way you did at first, or perhaps not at all, that is no reason one shouldn’t marry and have a good life with another who has perhaps the same dilemma, or a similar one. I’m sure the marriage state has not always been entered into by starry-eyed lovers, and it has been successful often for people who had other reasons for marrying.”



Paul Manifold’s eyebrows went up, and he politely restrained himself from smiling at this young woman who talked as though she had many years of experience behind her. He struggled in his mind to recall what Bill Green had said of her in his brief description of this little family. *Was there something about an engagement that had been terminated some years ago by death, about her being a quiet and different sort of girl?* He wasn’t even sure about that. He hadn’t really listened well. He’d been so engrossed in his own problems

and their solution. And now, here in her presence, he had failed to notice this quiet and very interesting young woman, as her unusual character deserved. Now, he found himself wanting to know more of her history, but felt he may have no right to ask her. And at this point, her father returned with an opened magazine and began to claim his attention again.

The two men talked, and Susan rose and began clearing the table and running the dishwasher. She brought the coffee pot to the table and refilled the men's cups, but her own was in the dishwasher. Quickly, she finished the dishes. After drying her hands on the towel, she took her apron off and hung it on a nail by the back door, nodded very quickly to the two men, and pushed the swinging door to go out.

Paul quickly stood up in an old-fashioned sort of courtesy and, interrupting her father's words, said, "Miss Moore, I am very glad to have made your acquaintance, and I appreciate your words. I hope to speak to you again in the morning. Perhaps we could continue our discussion."

Susan nodded and smiled and went out. Gerald Moore looked from his departing daughter to his new friend. He looked as though he would ask a question but then thought better of it. The two men sat strangely quiet for a few minutes. Then Gerald said he should really let Paul turn in for the night, and he would show him where his room was if he wanted. A few minutes later, as Gerald left him at the door of the guest room with the magazine in hand, he suggested, "Don't try to rise early. Just sleep as long as you can. It's been a long trip, and the trip to Dallas will be long as well. Do you need to call your parents there?"

"Yes, if you don't mind. In the morning. I can leave enough money for the long distance call."

"No problem. Well...the only problem is getting the phone when the neighbors aren't on it. Out here, we only get party lines."

"That's how it is where I live."

The older man nodded and said, "Good night."

"Good night, Sir, and thank you for an excellent meal and your time and listening ear."