



Daughters

Elizabeth Buchan

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It is a truth universally acknowledged that all mothers want to see their daughters happily settled.

But for Lara, mother to Maudie and stepmother to Jasmine and Eve, realizing this ambition has not been easy.

With an ex-husband embarking on a new marriage, and the surprising and late blooming developments in her own love life to contend with, Lara has enough to worry about, especially with Eve's upcoming wedding.

And when she begins to fear that Eve is marrying a man who will only make her unhappy, and Maudie reveals something that shocks the entire family, Lara faces the ultimate dilemma. Does she step in and risk the wrath of her daughters? Or does she stand by and watch them both make what she fears will be the biggest mistakes of their lives?

Daughters Details

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From Reader Review *Daughters* for online ebook

Janet says

The Greeks have been credited with the saying, "Call no man happy until he is dead." Perfect happiness is not possible for the living: we can at best hope for fleeting moments of joy to punctuate our regular lives. Lives that have more sorrow sometimes than seems fair, in the world of *Daughters*, results when characters are less than honest with themselves and their past. Not so much lacking self-awareness but lacking the courage to speak and act from the heart. So much gobbledegook you might be thinking at this point ... but blame my powers of description, not the plot.

Daughters is the story of Lara's three daughters, her step-daughters Jasmine and Eve, and her daughter Maudie. Eve is engaged and the story arc is her journey from the announcement to the inevitable conclusion. The precision of the marriage day itself and everything leading up to it is frighteningly detailed and beautiful. Colours, flowers, fabrics, guest-lists are the vehicles through which every aspect of a blended family is held up for inspection during the engagement.

Here's the description from the back-cover: "With Eve's upcoming wedding, Lara has enough to worry about, without also contending with an ex-husband embarking on a new marriage* and the surprising, late-blooming developments in her own love life."

* Lara's ex is actually embarking on a new life because he and his third wife Sarah have inherited a stately home in disrepair. The transformation of the ruined garden to health and beauty, under ex-husband's Bill careful hands, is a thread that runs through the story and yes, it's a metaphor, a good one, for life and relationships. The reader, like Lara, questions and considers and quibbles with the unfolding events of *Daughters*. The POV shifts constantly, between oldest daughter Jasmine, Maudie, the youngest, who is trying to decide on her future (stay or go, live in England or attend Harvard** and their mother Lara. Jasmine is very much in love with Duncan, Eve's fiance Andrew's best friend but but but. Lara's former business colleague because more. All these relationship balls are in the air. Buchan's last book *Separate Beds* had a backdrop of the economic collapse and how every character was affected by that. In *Daughters* the central concern of the story is the past, particularly the past of the blended family and how each character has been changed by that. On the last page I had a bittersweet feeling: each character had made peace with the past, to some extent or another, and as an onlooker, my hopes for each character's future was hopeful to the degree to which that character had laid to rest the ghosts of the family past. *Daughters* is a book that you keep close by while you read it, hoping for a few moments to keep reading, because the unfolding story holds you in its thrall, and you have to find out how it ends.

** About that institution of higher education Harvard. It can seem to a North American reader that every British student crossing the pond goes to Harvard, which is about as unrealistic as every North American student in England attending Oxford or Cambridge. It just struck me as jarring. Even with Maudie's dazzling grades ... of course not impossible but still.

Deanne Harvey says

Sweet readable story

Annalie says

If I'd read the blurb, I would never have read this wonderful novel. It gives a completely wrong impression of what this book is about - the extremely complicated relationships between a loving stepmother and her stepdaughters, her own daughter, her ex husband and his new wife and the many other interesting, very real characters that the author so masterfully created.

Samantha says

This was dull and dreary and the characters were either spoilt brats or wet blankets. It was very slow and too ponderous.

Janet says

I had high hopes for this book, it has some good reviews but I had to abandon it after only 90 pages. I found it really dull. It is told from the point of view of an older divorced mother who's suffering empty nest syndrome. I found her character meddlesome and annoying. I didn't engage with any of the characters and nothing seemed to happen. I found myself dreading picking up the book again and when you're not looking forward to reading a book and not enjoying it, then it's time to move on - so I had to abandon it.

Liz Fenwick says

I loved this book. I didn't want to put the book down until I finished it and when I had I didn't want to leave the world of the book...a fabulous read beautifully written exploring what it's like to raise other people's children.

Ros Lawson says

A good, easy read about family relationships, loyalties & acceptance of certain sadnesses they have encountered. A woman's read I would say and written well. I'll read more of this author's work.

Clare Coffey says

It was ok. I did not enjoy this book as much as I have enjoyed some of her other books. I did not like the character of Maudie- too selfish. Evie I thought was stupid to continue with her relationship with Andrew

who I am sure will cheat on her. I did like Jasmine though and I would have like to have seen more of her character in the book.

Lara I thought dwelt too much on the past and I understand that this was the main gist of the book but I did not really this aspect of the book.

Apparently Buchan was inspired by Lizzie Bennet! I dont think that I would recommend this book to anyone.

Alexa says

(This review was originally posted on Alexa Loves Books)

It's been a while since I posted about a contemporary adult novel. DAUGHTERS certainly caters to my penchant for books about families - and this book is only made more special by the fact that it talks about the relationship between the women in one particular family. ELIZABETH BUCHAN appears to have a firm grasp of the relationships between mother and daughter, between sisters, and it definitely shows in this novel.

Each of the women in this novel is characterized in a way that sets them apart from each other. Lara is the mother, the one who worries constantly over her children, hovering and puttering about in the way only mothers can. Eve is the one who's in control, who appears to know what she wants and gets exactly that by wheedling her way. Jasmine is the middle child, the peacemaker, the one who makes an effort to communicate with all the involved parties in any argument. Maudie is the youngest, headstrong and forceful and opinionated. I had no trouble keeping track of each character's story, as they were all markedly different and followed different arcs.

Apart from the characters, I thought the story was simple, yet realistic. The entire family is forced to face all these "big" moments happening in everyone's lives - Eve's wedding and Maudie's announcement. There's a lot of tension, a lot of emotion, but there's also a whole lot of love You can clearly see how each of the characters I've highlighted loves the others - and that is the novel's strongest selling point to me.

Voula Grand says

I am a long time fan of Elizabeth Buchan's novels, tales of everyday contemporary life thrown into confusion by an external event. Her signature style is intelligent, subtle and profound, with a light touch on her action thread, in contrast to an underlying seam of psychological insight and wisdom. This combination makes for highly readable fiction that conveys some profound messages. Reading some of the reviews of Daughters on Amazon, I am very surprised to see a couple of references to the novel as chick lit... Apparently simply because the characters are slim and like nice clothes. For me, this subtle and provocative novel is as far away from chic lit as it is possible to be. The story covers many modern day challenges and dilemmas: raising children and step children to adulthood; the challenges faced by sophisticated, professional young women who want careers and motherhood; soldiers returning from brutal war-zones, and the grief and relief of an empty nest.

Daughters is, for me her best book. Lara and her family are highly functional: attractive, intelligent, having successfully negotiated the breakdown of Lara and Bills marriage.

Behind this facade, everyone is scarred, (as in real life,) whether from the inevitable scars of loss and bereavement, self-imposed scars of consequences realised from mistakes made, or the particularly striking contrast of the physical and mental scars of war veterans. This last was highly accurate (in my experience as the mother of an ex soldier) and it made me curious as to how she had gained such "insider" insights and secrets of soldiers. This mix of experiences conveys a subtle message: there is usually some satisfaction, some emotional pay-off, in addition to the scar, that, in some instances, renders the wound worth the price.

Two events provide the momentum for the action of the plot: the impending marriage of daughter Eve, a bridezilla, and the surprising decision that daughter Maudie makes about her own future.

Underlying this modern tale of people and events is a subtle undertow, exerted on all family members in different ways, centred on the question: what is the truth of why Bill left Lara, to raise three little girls alone? This question creates an eggshell patch all of its own, and the family become adept at tiptoeing carefully around it daily; they start conversations, then back off, or make snippy remarks, or have sudden brief outbursts of truth. What is unsayable, unspeakable? What would happen if it were said aloud? What is the fear? That it can never be recovered from that there will be no retreat back to safe, eggshell free conversation

Wise insights are sprinkled through this novel like white pepper - barely visible except against a dark background but providing piquant depth to the themes being explored. I was delighted to find that Lara's wisdom was inspired by the writings of Dorothy Rowe, one of my favourite writers of psychology.

Buchan draws liberally from her evidently wide knowledge of nature and history to provide rich settings and metaphors. I was especially engaged by the references to the Orca whale, (a topic of great interest to one of the daughters,) and the powerful maternal instinct they display. This served to underscore Lara's selfless dedication to her three daughters, now rapidly approaching its sell by date, as she attempts to pay penance for a long ago moment of selfishness.

Eventually, the secret that broke Lara and Bills marriage is revealed, and finally Lara is able to leave the past behind.

Fictional stories have the power to change people, if the theme resonates, and there is time to reflect. The day after I finished reading this book, whilst on a relaxing holiday, with my 22 year old daughter, over dinner and a glass of wine, I found the courage to speak of a long held personal secret that I believed it would be helpful for my girl to know. Why ever had I not done this before? I woke the next day, free of worry, as Lara was, once that secret is out and the world has not only not imploded, but actually seems a lighter, happier place.

A great book, and I feel particularly indebted to Ms Buchan for its provocation to me.

Louise Graham says

This is a book that approaches that question I often ask myself, How would I cope bringing up other people's children? As a single Mother of a daughter, I wonder how I would feel about someone elses child coming into our tight little circle and I can't help thinking Elizabeth has addressed many of the questions that I have previously thought which made the story so much more real to me.

Lara is a mother to three grown up girls of which two are her Step Children. Throughout their lives she has

treated them as her own, but is that how they see it and how does those feelings effect their relationship with their half Sister?

Elizabeth has beautifully written a wonderful, thought-provoking novel about a family who are all entering the next chapter of their lives, whether that is marriage, college or moving home. Such amazing observations from each of the character's perspective. Whilst Lara is clearly the leading lady of this book, each daughter, the ex husband and new partners all have their own story that threads through the pages. All struggling with the same taboo subject, the thing that is never discussed. They are all strong people in their own way, each have hidden insecurities that make them do what they do as your turn the pages of this book.

This is not a laugh out loud easy breezy Chick Lit, but instead an extremely engaging story that I believe will make you look around and think of your relationships with your Mother's, Sisters and Daughters as it certainly has me. A truly fabulous book that pulls you into this family with every page.

Gillian says

A new take on the Mrs. Bennett desire to see your daughters happily settled. This time the viewpoint is that of a modern woman, who took on two stepdaughters as a young newly wed and added one of her own. We see her perspective and those of all three daughters as well in the run up to the second daughter's impending wedding.

Lisa says

On the run up to step-daughter Eve's wedding, Lara finds herself questioning events in the past that affected the lives of not just her but her ex husband, their children and his new wife.

Lara married Bill, a widow with two young daughters, promising not to have any more children in case she too should die in childbirth. Finding it impossible to keep this pledge and giving in to her own desire for children, Lara becomes pregnant with daughter Maudie and then with son Louis who dies and unwittingly throws the family into turmoil. The ripples of this tragedy have far reaching effects on the whole family and these are brought to the fore in the months's before Eve's wedding.

Buchan makes us question exactly what we should ask of someone we love and what we should promise and when a compromise should be reached. She handles the step family issues with insight, that despite Lara bringing up her step daughters as her own and the girls as sisters is there always a slight factor of blood over nurture no matter how much you love each other? And does family always come before everything else?

This was my first Elizabeth Buchan novel and I found it a very thoughtful piece of writing which I did enjoy. The concept was good, modern day families being the theme and the relationships within that family. The issues raised, which were many, were valid and made sense and were written about with understanding and depth.

We get to know the characters very well and although none are particularly described as one thing or another, it nonetheless comes through very clearly what they are like.

It was interesting how the decisions of one individual affect others and their decisions through life and quite clever how Elizabeth Buchan portrays that, quite subtly but insistently.

I could sympathise with Lara wanting her own children after marrying the widow Bill and taking on his children Jasmine and Eve. I could even sympathise with Bill not wanting anymore after the horrific death in childbirth of his first wife. I totally understood that Lara was griefstricken and depressed by the death of her baby son and how her marriage to Bill might break down because of what he saw as her treachery. You can see how the decision not to tell the girls the reasons behind the break-up would affect them and their own future decisions and Eve's wedding is the perfect setting for all this angst and mulling to take place with some very interesting spanners thrown in the works for good measure!

Without exception the characters annoyed me, but that's not necessarily a bad thing in a novel as it shows we all have flaws. Lara persists in being on good terms with her ex, even though he treated her appallingly, and his new wife, who frankly I wanted to smack at times! Eve comes across as a usually sane woman driven slightly mad and very selfish by her plans for a perfect wedding, but is this the result of insecurity? Jasmine on the other hand, wants everything perfect for everyone and becomes a bit of a doormat as a result, perhaps also driven by insecurity? Maudie however, seems quite headstrong and though she loves her family she knows she must put herself first, with interesting and sometimes amusing results. Bill is a man who has to have a woman propping him up and wants all the women in his life to do what he wants and his new wife is obviously insecure about her position in this mixed up, muddled family and trying to find her niche.

Altogether a very interesting and compelling read which throws up lots of questions about modern family life and love.

Isabelle Grey says

Wise and full of tender insights - Elizabeth Buchan at her best!

Deanna Sletten says

Families aren't always as they appear; even the happiest of families may hold deep, deep scars that they choose to hide on the surface. But when a big family event occurs – especially a wedding or a funeral – then those scars tend to raise their ugly heads and threaten family relationships. This is true in Elizabeth Buchan's latest novel, *Daughters*.

As Lara's middle daughter, Eve, plans her wedding, feelings begin to run high throughout the family. The sisters, Jasmine and Maudie, are slightly annoyed by Eve's strict planning and also begin to re-examine their own lives. Past grudges between the sisters arise and thoughts of their childhood invade their minds. Lara also examines the decisions she's made throughout her life and her struggle to let her ex-husband go despite his announcement to finally marry the woman he's been with for years. With all this going on, there is enough drama to fill the pages of this beautifully written book by Ms. Buchan.

I have read and enjoyed each and every one of Ms. Buchan's books and *Daughters* is no exception. I loved this book. Her writing style is so lovely; you become immersed into the story and the lives of these characters before you even realize it. The characters are interesting and well thought out. As in life, sisters are always different from each other and the sisters in this novel reflect that. Good plot, wonderful characters and realistic situations along with beautiful writing adds up to a five-star novel. Ms. Buchan's style is smooth, gentle and lyrical; you don't read her books, you float easily through them. I literally cannot say how

much I appreciate her beautiful way with words. Most writers are writers, but Ms. Buchan is a true artist.

(The author very generously sent me a copy of *Daughters* as a gift because I wasn't able to find it in the U.S. and wanted so much to read it. However, *Daughters* is available in Canada or on Amazon through other sellers, so you should be able to buy and enjoy a copy of this beautifully written novel.)
