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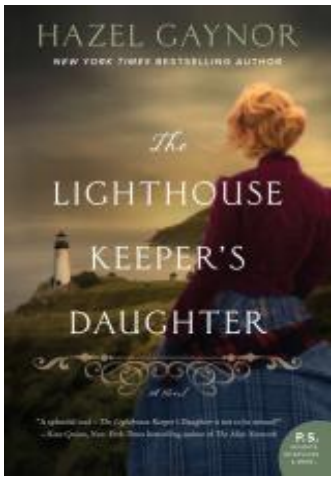
The Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter

by Hazel Gaynor



About the Book

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE GIRL WHO CAME HOME comes a historical novel inspired by true events, and the extraordinary female lighthouse keepers of the past 200 years.

?They call me a heroine, but I am not deserving of such accolades. I am just an ordinary young woman who did her duty.?

1838: Northumberland, England. Longstone Lighthouse on the Farne Islands has been Grace Darling?s home for all of her 22 years. When she and her father rescue shipwreck survivors in a furious storm, Grace becomes celebrated throughout England, the subject of poems, ballads and plays. But far more precious than her unsought fame is the friendship that develops between Grace and a visiting artist. Just as George Emmerson captures Grace with his brushes, she in turn captures his heart.

1938: Newport, Rhode Island. Nineteen years old and pregnant, Matilda Emmerson has been sent away from Ireland in disgrace. She is to stay with Harriet, a reclusive relative and assistant lighthouse keeper, until her baby is born. A discarded, half-finished portrait opens a window into Matilda?s family history. As a deadly hurricane approaches, two women, living a century apart, will be linked forever by their instinctive acts of courage and love.

Discussion Guide

1. What was your response to the opening scenes of the storm and the rescue, especially when Sarah Dawson left her children behind?

2. Despite her undoubted bravery and her part in the rescue of the Forfarshire?s survivors, Grace Darling was a reluctant heroine. What surprised you the most about her reaction to her fame?

3. Reading a novel based on real events can affect readers in different ways. Had you heard of Grace Darling before you read the novel? What is your reaction to her story?

4. Duty versus desire is one of the themes of the book. How did you respond when reading the scenes with Grace and George Emmerson? Do you feel Grace was right to deny her heart in order to devote her life to her family?

5. Sarah Dawson is the generational link between Grace and Matilda Emmerson. How did you respond to Sarah as a character in the novel?

6. The book touches on themes of separation, loss and finding your place in life. In what ways did you relate to the various characters and their struggles?

7. The unique bond between parent and child, particularly mothers and daughters, is also explored through several of the characters in the book. Which relationships particularly resonated with you and why?

8. Do you enjoy reading books written in a dual narrative? Did you have a preference for one time line over the other? If so, why?

9. Matilda?s story reflects that of many unmarried pregnant girls in Ireland in the 1930s. What was your response to her journey from disgraced daughter to determined young mother?

10. As the final scenes in the hurricane unfolded, who were you rooting for and why?

11. Have you ever visited a lighthouse, or would you like to? What is it about lighthouses that fascinates us so much?

12. In many ways, this book is a celebration of women. Who is the most courageous woman you know and why?

Author Bio

Hazel Gaynor is an award-winning, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Irish Times* and internationally bestselling author known for her deeply moving historical novels which explore the defining events of the 20th century. Her novel, THE LAST LIFEBOAT, was a *Times* historical novel of the month, an Audie award winner, and was shortlisted for the Irish Book Awards. Her work is published in 27 territories to date. She lives in Ireland with her family.

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