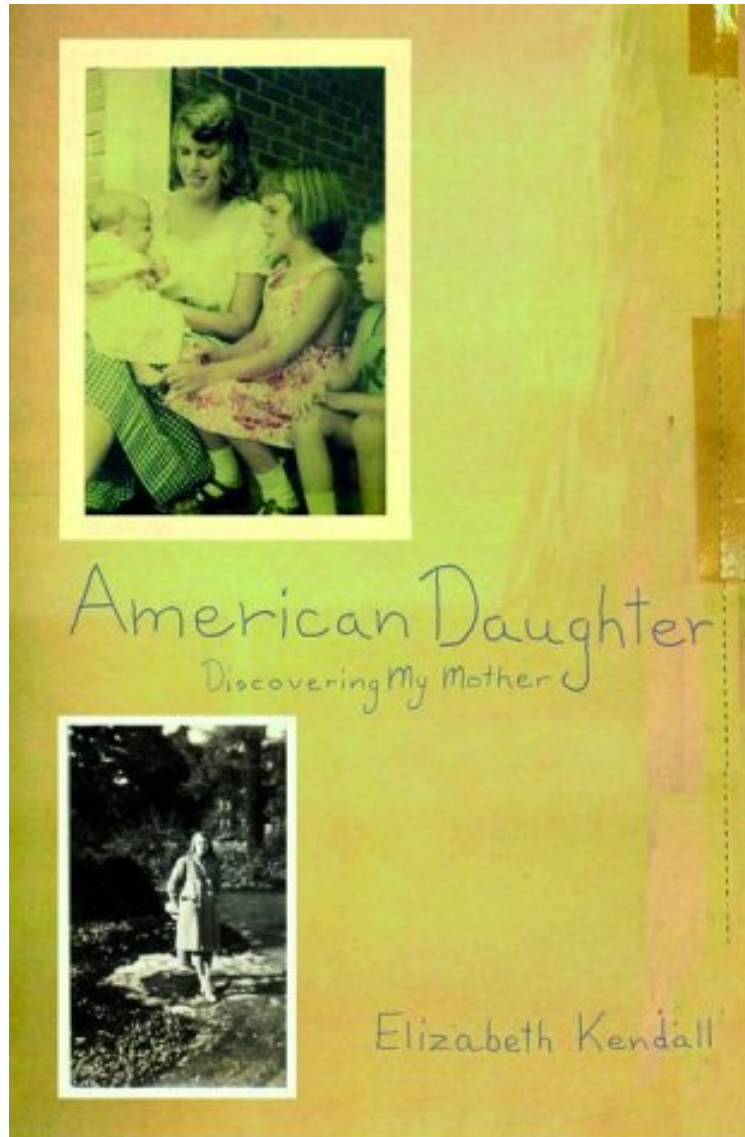


[Download ebook] American Daughter: Discovering My Mother

## American Daughter: Discovering My Mother

*Elizabeth Kendall*

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**Elizabeth Kendall : American Daughter: Discovering My Mother** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Daughter: Discovering My Mother:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Here's an unfair comparisonBy judygarlandheartbreaker.comRead Edna O'Brien's memoir instead. More exotic setting (Ireland, England),and Edna presents her feelings in a more gripping and accessible way.Of course this is unfair of me, but that's the way it is.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. After rereading, sad but aromaticBy Elizabeth KendallThis is, in a way, my favorite of my books. I

wanted it to be a social history, and it is, plus sentiment.<sup>8</sup> of 9 people found the following review helpful. honest and absorbing  
By A Customer I found this book tremendously interesting and absorbing. It says important, perceptive things about all American mothers and daughters, while describing one specific mother/daughter relationship that was both heroic and tragic. An admirably honest, fascinating book.

In this beautifully crafted book, Elizabeth Kendall tells the story of a family, of a passionate attachment between a mother and a daughter and the sudden tragedy that tears it apart. *American Daughter* is also a brilliant portrait of wellborn women's lives in cities and towns in the post-World War II era, as Kendall evokes how difficult it was to become anything other than an American daughter, which meant being a dependent woman. Occupying a coveted place in St. Louis's privileged high society, Henry and Betty Kendall seemed to be the American dream come true: six children, a sprawling house, a legacy of higher education at Harvard and Vassar. Yet underneath lay the flawed marriage of an idealistic young woman who made her eldest daughter her best friend and turned civil rights into her salvation. Elizabeth maintained the family silence as eccentricities began to appear in her father's behavior, along with whispers of financial difficulties. She accompanied her mother back to Vassar for a summer program on the home and family, then came into her own, away from her family, at the haven of a girls' summer camp and at Radcliffe. From the war-torn 1940s, when young men in uniform, home on leave, went to debutante parties, through the seismic social changes of the 1960s, Kendall tells the intertwined story of her mother and herself, of their powerful bond and how both shaped their lives in response to it. Unrelentingly honest, rich with humor and insights into families and women's lives, *American Daughter* is both a poignant portrait of American life at the middle of the twentieth century, and a dual coming-of-age story of a mother and a daughter, united by commitment and love, separated by a fatal accident—and by the vastly different birthrights of their generations.

From Publishers Weekly  
The oldest of six children, Kendall was so close to her mother that she could say: "We confused each other about where one of us started and the other ended." This extraordinary emotional bond was abruptly severed in 1969, when her mother was killed in an automobile accident. Kendall, the driver, and her younger siblings survived. Spurred by her own aging and an anguished love affair some 20 years later to come to terms with the guilt and grief that have dogged her since the accident, the dance critic and historian (*Where She Danced*) began this beautifully realized memoir. The story of her parents' courtship and marriage takes place in St. Louis, from the 1940s through the 1960s, where both parents were members of socially prominent families. Based on her mother's diaries and interviews with family and friends, Kendall re-creates what was, to her, an oddly flawed relationship. Country club wife, caring mother and respectful daughter, her mother sought to find a self apart from her marriage as a social activist. Her father, unsuccessful at starting his own business, had to rely on family connections to find work. Unlike his serious-minded, socially conscious wife, Kendall's father was sardonic and temperamental, finding refuge from his family in his solitary hobby of falconry. With affecting honesty, she describes the birth of her younger sister, Faith, and her mother's intense grief when the brain-damaged child was institutionalized. Kendall's portrait of her mother is both a loving tribute to a woman who transcended the stereotypical role of housewife as well as a fascinating record of a mid-20th-century American woman's life. Agent, Amanda Urban, ICM. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From School Library Journal  
YA—One dark, rainy night, as a college student spelled her mother during a long drive, the car slammed into a bridge. The young driver was basically unhurt, her brothers and sisters survived with minor injuries, but their mother died. Kendall, now a mother, dance critic, and historian, reexamines her childhood and adolescence and the life of her deceased mother. Her mother's early years were shaped by privilege, the death of her brother in World War II, and her early marriage. She earnestly tried to create the ideal scientific family that Vassar taught her to build at the Institute of Family and Community Living. However, her husband's behavior was often erratic, a daughter was born with severe mental retardation, and the family's financial situation became very shaky. Still, she persevered, helping to build the St. Louis Association for Retarded Children and Freedom of Residence (a civil rights group), and even started a career. Kendall was the oldest child, confidante, and helper. She felt compelled by her mother's early neediness to be the responsible one, but felt constrained in that role. As she grew, she was torn by the needs of her family, her own insecurities, and her family's "decayed gentility." Photos of the family highlight their history. More than just a memoir, this insightful book is also a history of the changing roles and expectations of women in post-World War II America. Teens examining their role in the world will find it compelling. Jane S. Drabkin, Potomac Community Library, Woodbridge, VA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
When Kendall was a young woman in the spring of 1969, driving south on Highway 61 in southern Missouri with her mother and four siblings, a slick road, a big truck, and a bridge wall resulted in a car crash that killed her mother and changed her life forever. In this memoir, Kendall, a dance critic and historian, writes a recollection that turns into a tribute to her mother. Hers is an intimate, revealing, and heartfelt story of a family, the impact of one woman, and the power of her close relationship with her daughter. While seemingly personal, this account reflects family life in many small towns across America during the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, by sharing her recollections, Kendall has provided a retrospective on that place and time. Women readers will find this

coming-of-age narrative especially moving. Highly recommended for all libraries.-Cynde Bloom Lahey, New Canaan Lib., CT Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.