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More Than Words: Daughters of Amana Series, Book 2

Judith Miller
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In the twenty-first century, American women recognize creative freedom as an inherent right according to US law. Yet in previous centuries, religious and cultural restrictions prevented the public expression of visual, written, and performed arts by women. Certain societies followed mores that would seem foreign by contemporary standards.

Set in the Amana Colonies, Iowa, in 1885, Judith Miller's *More Than Words* gives the modern reader a revealing look at a talented heroine's desire to express herself in a time and place when a woman's writing must remain curbed to the pages of her own journal. Gretchen Kohler plays a traditional role running her father's general store, while supervising her younger brother and her disruptive grandmother, who suffers from senility. Intellectual and ambitious, Gretchen needs pursuits beyond what her limited environment has provided. She finds happiness and fulfillment in the stories and poems she writes, but only her closest friends are allowed to read her words.

One day, a sophisticated Chicago reporter named Allen Finley stops at the store in Homestead Village, and Gretchen forms a tenuous friendship with him. He wants to publish her work. Her childhood sweetheart, Conrad, does not accept this unfamiliar relationship with enthusiasm. Against the moral dictates of her village, and despite Conrad's misgivings, Gretchen pursues her dream rather than abiding by the rules of the Community of True Inspiration. Instead, she places her trust in Finley, an open-minded individual who is simultaneously her savior and her downfall.

Many historical novelists can describe the era in which a story is set, but few can evoke the true feeling of a distant world as this gifted author can do with ease. From the viewpoint of her main character, Miller brings to life the atmosphere of a secluded nineteenth-century rural community—picturesque and idyllic, yet confining and smothering. Gretchen Kohler is a woman in transition, seeking a sense of self beyond the received and limited notions of family and her expected position in society.

Judith Miller is an award-winning writer of twenty-five books, including novellas and juvenile fiction. Three of her series were coauthored with colleague Tracie Peterson. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Miller now lives in Topeka, Kansas.

More Than Words is the second book in Miller's Daughters of Amana series. Steeped in period details that only a seasoned historical novelist can provide, this heartwarming story will meet the expectations of her fans as well as please critics new to the "bonnet" subgenre. Extensive research backs every page of this meticulous, well-crafted work.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (September 10, 2010)

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