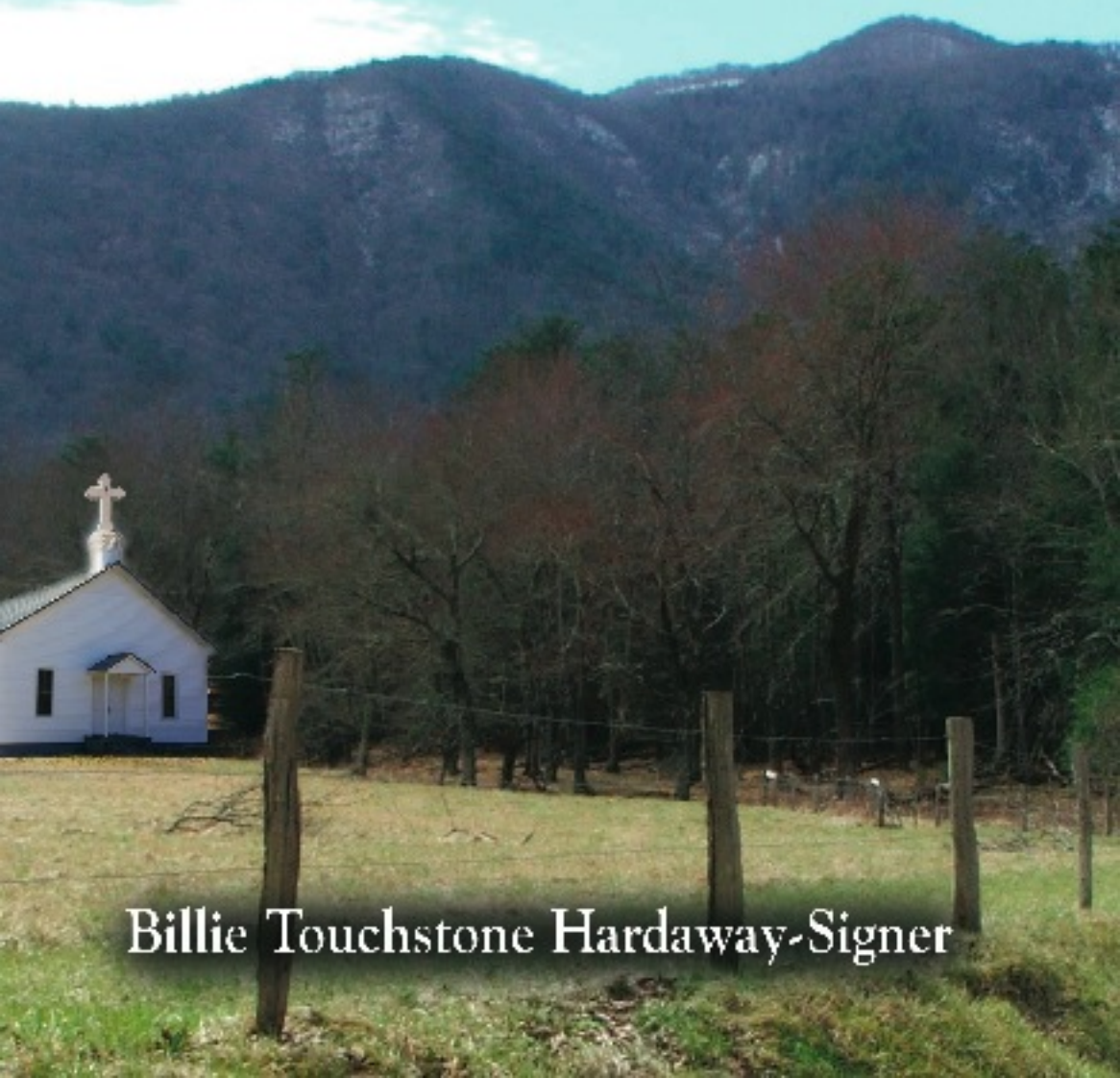
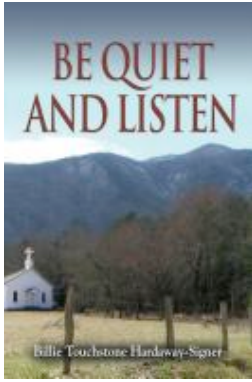


# BE QUIET AND LISTEN



Billie Touchstone Hardaway-Signer



*A tender love story. Annie finds love in her twilight years. Together they find many ways to help others while helping themselves. Theirs is a beautiful love. A book to be enjoyed and remembered*

# Be Quiet and Listen

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# **Be Quiet and Listen!**

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LARGE PRINT EDITION

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First Edition

Stephen Findley and this is my wife, Nita. “

John smiled and nodded to the man’s wife. “I’m John Huntington.” He indicated the dog. “This is Togo.”

Nita inched behind her husband. “Does he bite?”

John smiled. “Not unless I tell him to. And I’ll not tell him to unless you’re selling something or you’re a bill collector.”

The two men laughed.

Ever since the impeachment of the president and his sordid group and the evil intent of folks, no one wanted to trust strangers. John was a friendly person though, and figured he could trust this man and woman. He opened the door wide and invited them in. “Can I help you?”

After everyone was seated, Stephen said, “Yes, I hope so. We’re fairly new to the area and someone

at the post office said you were a construction man and built houses.”

John nodded. “Yes, I was a building contractor most of my life until I retired three years ago. I don't work any more... unless I want to.” John motioned for Togo to come and sit by him. He could tell Nita was nervous. He could also see the dread in Stephen's eyes and knew he was about to be asked for something. John said, “Old folks like me are told not to let strangers in with so much meanness going on, but I guess I can as Togo here is an attack dog.” He laughed.

Stephen said, “You don't look old to me; I'm guessing you're in your sixties. Am I far wrong, John?”

John said, “Yes, you're close. Are you going to build a home?”

Stephen glanced at his wife. “No, we want to

build a church.”

“A church? We’re about overrun with churches, aren’t we?” He half-smiled and looked questioningly at him. “You a preacher?”

“Not yet, but I hope to be someday. I’m studying on it. Nita thinks I have a calling. I want in the worst way to agree with her.” He patted his wife’s hand and she smiled at him. “We visit the Valley Baptist Church in Winston, but we aren’t members. Though they seem a loving church, but they’re not entirely to our liking.”

Nita added quickly, “But it is as close as any church we have found in our search.”

John thought how strange that they were talking about a subject very much like the one he and Annie had discussed earlier in the day. “Getting a late start, aren’t you? I mean, I’m guessing you and Nita to be in your early fifties.”

Nita said as she looked at her husband with much love, "I'm 52 and Stephen is 55."

Stephen had thick salt and pepper hair, as did Nita. But her hair had more pepper than salt. She was almost as tall as her husband and they were both slim. The looks that passed between them spoke of love personified.

Stephen said, "I've wanted to study for years, but things kept getting in my way. Many of the obstacles, I'm sure, were placed by God for His own good reasons. Do you know of anyone who might would be willing to help build a small church? It will be a church that's different from any other."

John shook his head. "No, not right off hand, but lots of folks are looking for work."

"Oh, no, we can't pay; we're looking for someone to volunteer and use it as a tax break. We have no money to pay."

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John lifted his eyebrows, “You mean you want folks to work free?” He frowned. “I don't know of anybody who would do that in these hard times.” He added quickly, “At least not anyone in their right minds.” He chuckled.

Stephen said quickly, “Now that we have a Republican president, things are slowly getting better, wouldn't you say?”

John looked at him and shook his head. “Don't hold your breath; it'll get better but it's gonna take years to undo the mess that last president made for us.”

“I agree”

John sighed. “None of us will ever forget the day it came on the news that the president and his entire cabinet had been impeached for all the evil things done by them. I imagine things will finally get better somewhat, but it'll take a long time.

Stephen took a long breath. “The church where we go says there's an organization that goes around building churches, but they say there are too many Baptist churches to need another one. They help build Baptist churches where there are none or where there are very few.”

“Then why do you want to build another one?”

“Well, as I just said it'll be a different kind of church with some Baptist beliefs, but for the most part it'll be Catholic.”

Once more he thought of Annie giving him the lowdown on what was wrong with the Catholic church of modern times.

Nita frowned slightly. “Come on, Steve. We've taken up enough of Mr. Huntington's time.” She looked at John. “It was nice to meet you and Togo.”

“I'm sorry I can't help you. If I hear of anybody who's interested, I'll tell them about you.

You're in the book?"

He shook his head. "No, we don't have a phone yet, but I work at the lumber yard and it's easy to find our place."

They shook hands and left. After they left, John leaned against the closed door and watched from the window. They looked helpless, as so many Americans did today. At least Stephen had a job and a place to live.

John had not felt the pinch as many had. He had always been a saver, and he'd lived a simple life since his wife had died. Property was cheap and he had been able to pay cash, which had taken all of his savings, for his house and five acres.

When John saw Annie again, he would ask her if she knew of anyone willing to work free to build yet another church. He sighed and wondered what Annie was doing.

He sat down and looked out across the valley, trying to remember the things she had said about her love for a God he had forgotten how to know. He knew there was a God. He went back to the book he had been reading. He found it difficult to concentrate on the words. He sighed and closed the book. He stroked Togo's big head. "They were nice folks though, weren't they?"

Togo answered with a wag of his tail.

Later John made himself a cup of coffee and walked to the table beside the glass doors, his favorite place to sit.

As he stared at the beautiful mountain ranges of the Great Smoky Mountains, he knew God had created all that and much more; it didn't just happen. He sighed and determined that he would let Annie know that he believed in God, but had just stopped loving Him.

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But was that what he felt—that he didn't love God? No, that wasn't it at all. How could he not love Someone who loved him more than was even imaginable and on whom he relied for his every breath? No, surely he loved God, but then what was the drawback?

She would probably say with a bit of fire in those green eyes that he was acting like a spoiled child. He didn't get his way so he would pout and throw a tantrum or two. He smiled. *It would be just like her to say that.*

At that moment she was on her knees on the old slab of wood she had long ago nailed on the porch railing praying that she would be allowed to help him to once again know Jesus God as his Lord and Savior.

His mind flashed back to the couple who were searching for a way to build a little church. It had

left him with a bitter taste in his mouth. He would talk to Annie about it and see if she might come up with a solution. It would be the least he could do for them. He sighed. *They want me to strike out on an adventure, and I'm just not in the right frame of mind for such as that in my twilight years.* He smiled, wondering who he was trying to fool. Little did he know that God had plans for him, or that Annie would be a major part of His plan.

The next day after working in the yard, Annie came in from the porch and put on a pot of red beans. She hoped John would come and have supper with her. Maybe they could talk a bit more. She put on a pot of rice to go with the beans and got out her mixing bowl to make cornbread later. She might even bake an apple pie.

She had noticed from the beginning that John

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didn't seem to care for meat very much. He sometimes ate it when they ate out, but not always.

She preferred simple foods, and she always enjoyed a plate of raw, cut-up veggies.

Lady and Daisy liked the same foods she liked so had no problem there. She had come by them very young and they had quickly adapted to eating without meat. She had been able to buy dry dog food from time to time. She gave them treats of scrambled eggs now and then and they dearly loved macaroni and cheese. When she made deserts, both dogs got a fair portion. She picked up the phone to invite John to supper.

Later, John helped himself to a second helping of red beans and rice and doused them with Tabasco.

Annie smiled. "Whew! You like that hot stuff for sure."

It was easy to tell how much he was enjoying his supper. “Yes, I always did like hot stuff on my food.” He laughed. “Burns out the parasites inside.”

She said, “I like a bit of hot sauce but not that much.” She delicately added a couple of drops to her food.

He smiled and said, “I want to tell you what happened to me yesterday.”

She looked up from her plate. “Good or bad?”

“Neutral, I guess you could say. Let's wait until we're done eating.”

“Uh-oh, must be not good for the digestion.”

He nodded. “It's good enough.”

He pushed his plate back and decided to tease her. “A fine meal, Annie, and the only thing that might have made it even better would have been a cold beer or for you a tall glass of fine wine.”

She hit him on the arm playfully. “No way, but

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I'll make us a pot of coffee to go with our apple pie."

"That's even better."

He had planned how to tell her about his true feelings of belief in God and then about Stephen and Nita. He would tell her first about admitting that he knew there was a God. That would make her happiest.

When he had told her, she beamed. Then she hugged him with all her might.

"You're choking me." He put his hand under her chin and kissed her gently. "You're a wonder, Annie... a real wonder." He paused a minute. "But I don't know how I love Him or even if I do. No, that's not right. I know I love him; I think it's that I'm just mad at Him and have been pouting all these years. How does that sound?" He flashed a crooked smile.

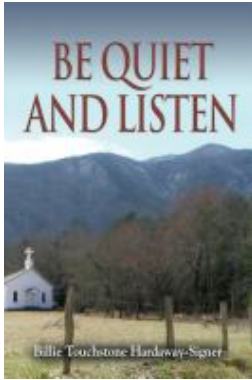
“I think that about hits the nail on the head for you. I even feel that way sometimes, and God understands perfectly. Now what else you have to tell me that will make me giggle?”

He told her about the Findleys and their request and his refusal. “I feel sort of ashamed.”

She patted his arm. “You know, John, I think it might be a good thing to go and see them and see what they have in mind. Won't hurt a thing and we would enjoy the ride down to the village.”

He smiled broadly. “Exactly my thoughts. Can we go tomorrow?”

She nodded. “Sounds like a good plan.”



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