

We'll Meet Again



A NOVEL

Mary
Higgins
Clark



By Mary Higgins Clark

We'll Meet Again
All Through the Night
You Belong to Me
Pretend You Don't See Her
My Gal Sunday
Moonlight Becomes You
Silent Night
Let Me Call You Sweetheart
The Lottery Winner
Remember Me
I'll Be Seeing You
All Around the Town
Loves Music, Loves to Dance
The Anastasia Syndrome and Other Stories
While My Pretty One Sleeps
Weep No More, My Lady
Stillwatch
A Cry in the Night
The Cradle Will Fall
A Stranger Is Watching
Where Are the Children?

MARY
HIGGINS
CLARK

*We'll
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Again*

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Acknowledgments _____

“Once upon a time” is the way most of us start to tell a story. It is the beginning of a journey. We seek out the people who have begun to form in our minds. We examine their problems. We tell their tales. And we need all the help we can get along the way.

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Now once again to joyfully quote my fifteenth-century monk, “The book is finished. Let the writer play.”

FOR MARILYN,

My firstborn child

With love

Prologue

The State of Connecticut will prove that Molly Carpenter Lasch, with the intent to cause the death of her husband, Dr. Gary Lasch, did in fact cause his death; that as he sat at his desk, his back to her, she shattered his skull with a heavy bronze sculpture; that she then left him to bleed to death as she went upstairs to their bedroom and fell asleep. . . .

The reporters seated behind the defendant scribbled furiously, roughing out the articles they would have to file in just a couple of hours if they were to meet their deadlines. The veteran columnist from *Women's News Weekly* began inking her usual gushing prose: "The trial of Molly Carpenter Lasch, charged with the murder of her husband, Gary, opened this morning in the mellow dignity of the courtroom in historic Stamford, Connecticut."

Media from all over the country were covering the trial. The *New York Post* reporter was jotting down a description of Molly's appearance, noting in particular how she had dressed for her first day in court. What a knockout, he thought, a remarkable blend of classy and gorgeous. It was not a combination that he often saw—especially at the defense table. He noticed how she sat, tall, almost regal. No doubt some would say "defiant." He knew she was twenty-six. He could see that she was slender. Had collar-length, dark blond hair. That she wore a blue suit and small gold earrings. He craned his neck until he could see that she was still wearing her wedding band. He made note of it.

As he watched, Molly Lasch turned and looked around the

courtroom as though searching for familiar faces. For a moment their eyes met, and he noted that hers were blue; and her lashes, long and dark.

The *Observer* reporter was writing down his impressions of the defendant and the proceedings. Since his paper was a weekly, he could take more time in actually composing his article. "Molly Carpenter Lasch would look more at home in a country club than in a courtroom," he wrote. He glanced across the aisle at Gary Lasch's family.

Molly's mother-in-law, the widow of the legendary Dr. Jonathan Lasch, was sitting with her sister and brother. A thin woman in her sixties, she had an expression that was stony and unforgiving. Clearly, if given the chance, she'd gladly plunge the needle with the lethal dose into Molly, the *Observer* reporter thought.

He turned and peered around. Molly's parents, a handsome couple in their late fifties, looked strained, anxious, and heartsick. He noted those words on his pad.

At 10:30 the defense began its opening statement.

"The Prosecutor has just told you that he will prove Molly Lasch guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Ladies and Gentlemen, I submit to you that the evidence will show that Molly Lasch is not a murderer. She is, in fact, as much a victim of this terrible tragedy as was her husband.

"When you have heard all of the evidence in this case, you will conclude that Molly Carpenter Lasch returned on Sunday evening last April 8th, shortly after 8 P.M., from a week in her Cape Cod home; that she found her husband, Gary, sprawled over his desk; that she put her mouth to his to try to resuscitate him, heard his final gasps, then, realizing he was dead, went upstairs and, totally traumatized, fell unconscious on the bed."

Quiet and attentive, Molly sat at the defense table. They're only words, she thought, they can't hurt me. She was aware of the eyes on her, curious and judgmental. Some of the people she had known best and longest had come up to her in the corridor, kissing her cheek, squeezing her hand. Jenna Whitehall, her best friend since their high school years at Cranden Academy, was one of them. Jenna was a corporate lawyer now. Her husband, Cal, was chairman of the board of Lasch Hospital and of the HMO Gary had founded with Dr. Peter Black.

They've both been wonderful, Molly thought. Needing to get

away from everything, she had sometimes stayed with Jen in New York during the past months, and it had helped tremendously. Jenna and Cal still lived in Greenwich, but during the week, Jenna frequently overnighted at a Manhattan apartment they kept near U.N. Plaza.

Molly had seen Peter Black in the corridor as well. Dr. Peter Black—he always had been so pleasant to her, but like Gary’s mother, he ignored her now. The friendship between him and Gary dated from their days in medical school. Molly wondered if Peter would be able to fill Gary’s shoes as head of the hospital and the HMO. Shortly after Gary’s death, he’d been elected by the board to take over as chief executive officer, with Cal Whitehall as chairman.

She sat numbly as the trial actually began. The prosecutor began calling witnesses. As they came and went, they seemed to Molly to be just blurred faces and voices. Then Edna Barry, the plump sixty-year-old woman who had been their part-time housekeeper, was on the stand. “I came in at eight o’clock on Monday morning, as usual,” she stated.

“Monday morning, April 9th?”

“Yes.”

“How long had you been working for Gary and Molly Lasch?”

“Four years. But I’d worked for Molly’s mother from the time Molly was a little girl. She was always so gentle.”

Molly caught the sympathetic look Mrs. Barry cast toward her. She doesn’t want to hurt me, she thought, but she’s going to tell how she found me, and she knows how it will sound.

“I was surprised because the lights were on inside the house,” Mrs. Barry was saying. “Molly’s suitcase was in the foyer, so I knew she was back from the Cape.”

“Mrs. Barry, please describe the layout of the first floor of the house.”

“The foyer is large—it’s really more of a reception area. When they had large parties they would serve cocktails there before dinner. The living room is directly beyond the foyer and faces the front door. The dining room is to the left, down a wide hallway and past a service bar. The kitchen and family room are in that wing as well, while the library and Dr. Lasch’s study are in the wing to the right of the entrance.”

I got home early, Molly thought. There hadn’t been much traffic on I-95, and I was earlier than I’d expected to be. I only had one

bag with me, and I brought it in and put it down. Then I locked the door and called Gary's name. I went directly to the study to look for him.

"I went into the kitchen," Mrs. Barry told the prosecutor. "There were wine glasses and a tray of leftover cheese and crackers on the counter."

"Was there anything unusual about that?"

"Yes. Molly always tidied up when they had company."

"What about Dr. Lasch?" the prosecutor asked. Edna Barry smiled indulgently. "Well, you know men. He wasn't much for picking up after himself." She paused and frowned. "But that was when I knew something was wrong. I thought that Molly must have come and gone."

"Why would she have done that?"

Molly saw the hesitance in Mrs. Barry's face as once again she looked over at her. Mother was always a little annoyed that Mrs. Barry called me Molly and I called her Mrs. Barry. But I didn't care, she thought. She's known me since I was a child.

"Molly hadn't been home when I went in on Friday. The Monday before that, while I was there, she'd left for the Cape. She seemed terribly upset."

"Upset, how?"

The question came quickly and abruptly. Molly was aware of the hostility the prosecutor felt for her, but for some reason it didn't worry her.

"She was crying as she packed her bag, and I could see that she was very angry. Molly's an easygoing person. It takes a lot to ruffle her. In all the years I'd worked there, I'd never once seen her so upset. She kept saying, 'How could he? How could he?' I asked her if there was anything I could do."

"What did she say?"

"She said, 'You can kill my husband.' "

"*'You can kill my husband!'* "

"I knew she didn't mean it. I just thought they'd probably had an argument, and I figured she was leaving for the Cape to cool down."

"Did she often go off like that? Just pack up and leave?"

"Well, Molly likes the Cape; says she can clear her head there. But this was different—I'd never seen her leave like this, so upset." She looked at Molly, sympathy in her eyes.

“All right, Mrs. Barry, let’s go back to that Monday morning, April 9th. What did you do after you’d seen the condition of the kitchen?”

“I went to see if Dr. Lasch was in the study. The door was closed. I knocked, and there was no answer. I turned the knob and noticed it felt sticky. Then I pushed open the door and saw him.” Edna Barry’s voice quivered. “He was slumped over in his chair at the desk. His head was caked with dried blood. There was blood all over him and the desk and the chair and the carpet. I knew right away he was dead.”

Listening to the housekeeper’s testimony, Molly thought back to that Sunday night. *I came home, let myself in, locked the front door, and went down to the study. I was sure Gary would be there. The door was closed. I opened it. . . . I don’t remember what happened after that.*

“What did you do then, Mrs. Barry?” the prosecutor asked.

“I dialed 9-1-1 right away. Then I thought about Molly, that maybe she was hurt. I ran upstairs to her bedroom. When I saw her in there, on the bed, I thought she was dead too.”

“Why did you think that?”

“Because her face was crusted with blood. But then she opened her eyes and smiled and said, ‘Hi, Mrs. Barry, I guess I overslept.’ ”

I looked up, Molly thought as she sat at the defense table, and then realized I still had my clothes on. For a moment I thought I’d been in an accident. My clothes were soiled, and my hands felt all sticky. I felt groggy and disoriented and wondered if maybe I was in a hospital instead of my own room. I remember wondering if Gary had been hurt too. Then there was a pounding at the door downstairs, and the police were there.

All about her, people were talking, but the voices of the witnesses were blurring again. Molly was vaguely aware of the days of the trial passing, of going in and out of the courtroom, of watching people coming and going on the witness stand.

She heard Cal and Peter Black and then Jenna testify. Cal and Peter told how on Sunday afternoon they had called Gary and said they were coming over, that they knew something was wrong.

They said they found Gary terribly upset because Molly had learned he was having an affair with Annamarie Scalli.

Cal said that Gary told him that Molly had been at their home

in Cape Cod all week and wouldn't talk to him when he called, that she slammed down the phone when she heard his voice.

The prosecutor asked, "What was your reaction to Dr. Lasch's confession of this affair?"

Cal said they were deeply concerned, both for their friends' marriage and also for the potential damage to the hospital of a scandal involving Dr. Lasch and a young nurse. Gary had assured them there would be no scandal. Annamarie was leaving town. She was planning to give up the baby for adoption. His lawyer had arranged a \$75,000 settlement and confidentiality statement that she had already signed.

Annamarie Scalli, Molly thought, that pretty, dark-haired, sexy-looking young nurse. She remembered meeting her at the hospital. Had Gary been in love with her, or was it just a casual affair that got out of hand when Annamarie became pregnant? Now she'd never know. There were so many unanswered questions. Did Gary really love me? she wondered. Or was our life together a sham? She shook her head. No. It hurt too much to think like that.

Then Jenna had taken the stand. I know it hurts her to testify, Molly thought, but the prosecutor had subpoenaed her, and she had no choice.

"Yes," Jenna had acknowledged, her voice low and halting, "I did call Molly at the Cape on the day that Gary died. She told me that he had been involved with Annamarie and that Annamarie was pregnant. Molly was totally devastated." Vaguely she heard what they were saying. The prosecutor asking if Molly was angry. Jenna saying Molly was hurt. Jenna finally admitted that Molly was very angry with Gary.

"Molly, get up. The judge is leaving."

Philip Matthews, her lawyer, was holding her elbow, urging her to stand. He kept his hand under her arm, steadying her as they exited the courtroom. Outside, flashbulbs exploded in her face. He made her hurry through the crowd, propelling her into a waiting car. "We'll meet your mother and father at the house," he said as they drove away.

Her parents had come up from Florida to be with her. They wanted her to move, to get out of the house where Gary had died, but she couldn't do that. It was her grandmother's present to her and she loved it. At her father's insistence, she had agreed to at least redecorate the study. All the furniture was given away, and the room