

The Second Time Around (Clark, Mary Higgins)

By Mary Higgins Clark

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In a novel that reaffirms her reputation as "America's Queen of Suspense," Mary Higgins Clark delivers a gripping tale of deception and tantalizing suspense.

Nicholas Spencer, charismatic head of the medical research company Gen-stone, involved in the development of an anticancer vaccine, suddenly disappears. His private plane crashes en route to Puerto Rico, but his body is not found.

Early results of the vaccine seemed highly promising. Yet, coinciding with Nicholas Spencer's disappearance comes news that the FDA is denying approval. Then follows the shocking revelation that Spencer had looted Gen-stone of huge sums of money -- including the lifetime savings of people who had risked every penny they had.

Marcia "Carley" DeCarlo, the thirty-two-year-old columnist for the *Wall Street Weekly*, is assigned to cover the story. Carley is the stepsister of Spencer's wife, Lynn, an aggressive PR woman and socialite, whom she dislikes and distrusts.

The day after news of her husband's disappearance rocks the financial and medical world, Lynn attends a meeting of the stockholders of Gen-stone, flaunting expensive clothing and jewelry. Accused of having participated in the scam, she appears indifferent to the anger and despair of the people attending, among them a man whose child has cancer and who is now about to lose his home. That night, she narrowly escapes death when her mansion in Bedford, New York, is set on fire. She turns to Carley, begging her to use her investigative skills to prove that she was not her husband's accomplice.

As Carley proceeds with her investigation, she is confronted by seemingly impenetrable questions: Is Nicholas Spencer dead or in hiding? Was he guilty or set up? Why the sudden reversal in medical opinion of the vaccine from recognition to condemnation? And as the facts begin to unfold, she becomes the target of a dangerous group involved in a sinister and fraudulent scheme.

The Second Time Around is Mary Higgins Clark at her best, telling a story that intertwines fiction with the stuff of real-life headlines in a novel of breathtaking suspense and surprises.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
There's something special about Clark's thrillers, and it's not just the gentleness with which the bestselling writer approaches her often lurid subject matter (in this one, for instance, there are numerous killings, but all occur off-page). Special above all is the compassion she extends to her characters-heroines, villains and supporting cast alike. In this latest effort, she conjures empathy even toward a mass killer, whose murderous spree has been sparked by a corporate crime. The smoothly told tale is narrated partly from the third-person perspective of the killer, and partly from the first-person point of view of Wall Street Weekly correspondent Carley De Carlo. Carley is the stepsister of Lynn Spencer, whose charismatic husband, Nicholas, dies in the crash of his small plane as he is fleeing arrest for looting the medical company he founded, which had made claims of a cancer cure, now proved false. Myriad investors have lost much, sometimes everything; one is Ned Cooper, whose beloved wife died as a consequence of Nicholas Spencer's thievery, and who determines to take revenge, setting off on a killing spree. Assigned to do a feature about the Spencer case, Carley digs deep, uncovering clues to a conspiracy within Spencer's medical company, as well as to the possibility that the cancer cure worked after all. Can she get to the bottom of the mess before Ned Cooper, or the possible conspirators, take her out? Clark's fans know the answer to that question, but what the novel lacks in suspense it makes up for in grace, charm and solid storytelling.
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From School Library Journal
Adult/High School-A feature writer for a newspaper, Carley DeCarlo has been assigned to do an article on the life and death of Nicholas Spencer, an eminent researcher who was on the verge of developing a pharmaceutical cure for cancer. Since millions of specially donated dollars are missing from his firm, his airplane accident may have been a faked suicide, or murder. Occasional chapters feature a disturbed man as he retaliates for the death of his wife, which he blames on Spencer's firm. Carley's portion of the story is written in first person so readers follow her doubts and triumphs as clues are revealed. She is a true sleuth; she often gets a clue that confuses her, but she keeps on investigating. Tension builds gradually as readers see both the heroine and the schizophrenic at work. But is he the only villain? Short chapters help to keep the suspenseful plot moving along.
Claudia Moore, W. T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, VA
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From Library Journal
Since her corporate husband is running from the law, a young mother assumes that he is responsible for their son's disappearance. But she's wrong.
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Armando Lemaire:

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Joan Naylor:

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