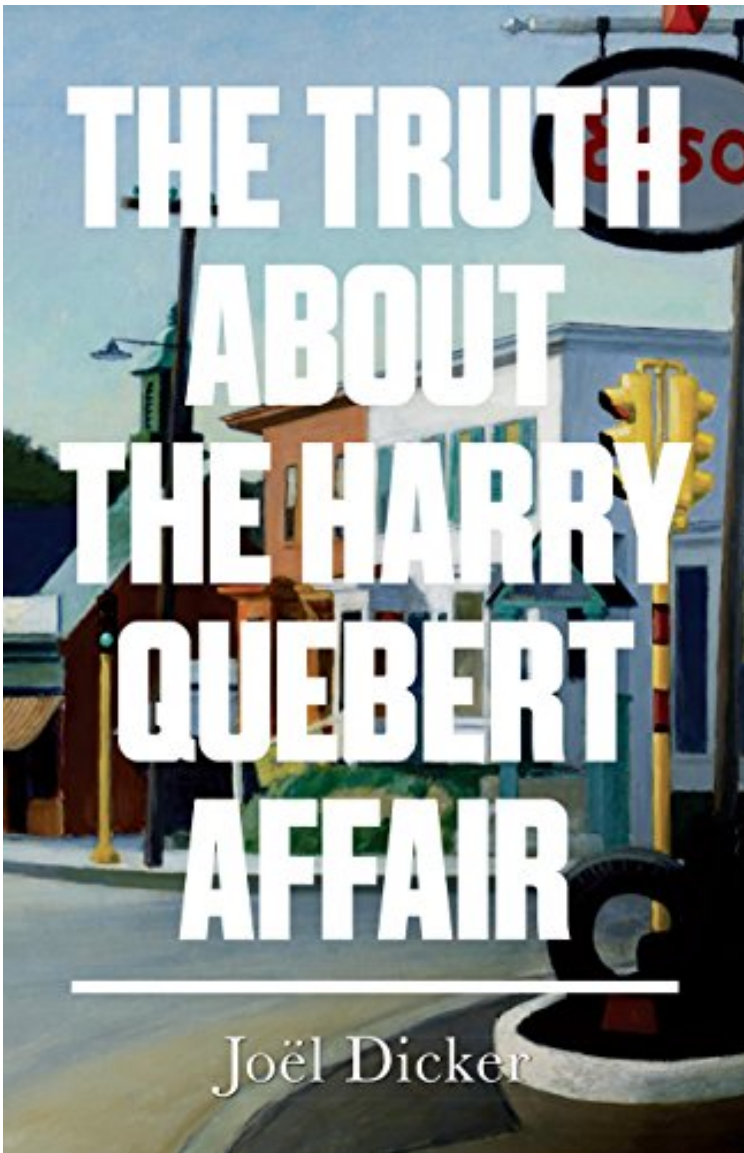


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The Truth about the Harry Quebert Affair (English Edition)



Par Jol Dicker

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAugust 30, 1975. The day of the disappearance. The day Somerset, New Hampshire, lost its innocence. That summer, struggling author Harry Quebert fell in love with fifteen-year-old Nola Kellergan. Thirty-three years later, her body is dug up from his yard, along with a manuscript copy of the novel that made him a household name. Quebert is the only suspect. Marcus Goldman - Quebert's most gifted protg - throws off his writer's block to clear his mentor's name. Solving the case and penning a new bestseller soon merge into one. As his book begins to take on a life of its own, the nation is gripped by the

mystery of 'The Girl Who Touched the Heart of America'. But with Nola, in death as in life, nothing is ever as it seems. Extrait***This excerpt is from an advance uncorrected proof.***Copyright 2014 by Joel Dicker

Jesus, Marc, have you heard? Heard what? My God, turn on the T V! Its about Harry Quebert! Its Quebert! I put on the news. To my amazement I saw the house at Goose Cove on the screen and heard the presenter say: It was here, in his home in Somerset, New Hampshire, that author Harry Quebert was arrested today after police discovered human remains on his property. Initial inquiries suggest this may be the body of Nola Kellergan, a local girl who at the age of fifteen disappeared from her house in August 1975 and has never been seen since. The room began spinning around me, and I collapsed onto the couch in a daze. I couldnt hear anything clearly anymore not the TV, nor Douglas, at the other end of the line, bellowing, Marcus? Are you there? Hello? He killed a girl? Quebert killed a girl? In my head, everything blurred together like a bad dream. So it was that I found out, at the same time as a stupefied America, what had happened a few hours earlier: That morning a landscaping company had arrived at Goose Cove, at Harrys request, to plant hydrangea bushes. When they dug up the earth, the gardeners found human bones buried three feet deep and had immediately informed the police. A whole skeleton had quickly been uncovered, and Harry had been arrested. On TV screen they cut between live broadcasts from Somerset and from Concord, sixty miles northwest, where Harry was in police custody. Apparently a clue found close to the body strongly suggested that here were the remains of Nola Kellergan; a police spokesman had already indicated that if this information was confirmed, Harry Quebert would also be named as a suspect in the murder of one Deborah Cooper, the last person to have seen Nola alive on August 30, 1975. Cooper had been found murdered the same day, after calling the police. It was appalling. The rumble grew ever louder as the news crossed the country in real time, relayed by television, radio, the Internet, and social networks: Harry Quebert, sixty-seven, one of the greatest authors of the second half of the twentieth century, was a child predator. It took me a long time to realize what was happening. Several hours, perhaps. At 8 p.m., when a worried Douglas came by to see how I was holding up, I was still convinced that the whole thing was a mistake. How can they accuse him of two murders when theyre not even sure its the body of this Nola? I said. Well, there was a corpse buried in his yard, however you look at it. But why would he have brought people in to dig up the place where hed supposedly buried a body? It makes no sense! I have to go there. Go where? New Hampshire. I have to defend Harry. Douglas replied with that down-to-earth Midwestern sobriety: Absolutely not, Marcus. Dont go there. You dont want to get involved in this mess. Harry called me . . . When? Today? About one this afternoon. I must have been the one telephone call he was allowed. I have to go there and support him! Its very important. Important? Whats important is your second book. I hope you havent been taking me for a ride and that you really will have a manuscript ready by the end of the month. Barnaski is shitting bricks. Do you realize whats going to happen to Harry? Dont get mixed up in this, Marc. Dont screw up your career. On T V the state attorney general was giving a press conference. He listed the charges against Harry: kidnapping and two counts of murder. Harry was formally accused of having murdered Deborah Cooper and Nola Kellergan. And the punishment for these crimes, taken together, was death. Harrys fall was only just beginning. Footage of the preliminary hearing, which was held the next day, was broadcast on T V. We saw Harry arrive in the courtroom, tracked by dozens of T V cameras and illuminated by photolighting, handcuffed, and surrounded by policemen. He looked as if he had been through hell: somber faced, unshaven, hair disheveled, shirt unbuttoned, eyes swollen. His lawyer, Benjamin Roth, stood next to him. Roth was a renowned attorney in Concord who had often advised Harry in the past. I knew him slightly, having met him a few times at Goose Cove. The whole country was able to watch the hearing live as Harry pleaded not guilty, and the judge ordered him remanded into custody in New Hampshires State Prison for Men. But this was only the start of the storm. At that moment I still had the naive hope that it would all be over soon, but one hour after the hearing, I received a call from Benjamin Roth. Harry gave me your number, he said. He insisted I call. He wants you to know that hes innocent, that he didnt kill anybody. I know hes innocent, I said. Tell me how hes doing? Not too great, as you can imagine. The cops have been giving him a hard time. He admitted to having a fling with Nola the summer she disappeared. I knew about Nola. What about the rest? Roth hesitated a second before answering. He denies it. But . . . But what? I demanded. Marcus, Im not going to hide it from you. This is going to be difficult. The evidence is . . . The evidence is what? Tell me, for Gods sake! This has to stay a secret. No one can know. I wont say a word. You can trust me. Along with the girls remains the investigators found the manuscript of The Origin of Evil. What? Im telling you, the manuscript of that damn book was buried with her. Harry is in deep shit. What does Harry say? He says he wrote that book for her. That she was always snooping around his

home in Goose Cove, and that sometimes she would borrow his pages to read. He says that a few days before she disappeared, she took the manuscript home with her. What? He wrote that book for her? Yes. But that can't get out, under any circumstances. You can imagine the scandal there'd be if the media found out that one of the bestselling books of the last fifty years is not a simple love story, like everyone thinks, but based on an illicit affair between a guy of thirty-four and a girl of fifteen . . . Can you get him released on bail? Bail?

You don't understand how serious this is. There's no question of bail when it comes to capital crimes. The punishment he risks is lethal injection. Ten days from now his case will be presented to a grand jury, which will decide whether to pursue charges and hold a trial. It's just a formality. There's no doubt there will be a trial. And in the meantime? Hell stay in prison. But if he's innocent? That's the law. I'm telling you this is a very serious situation. He's accused of murdering two people. I slumped back on the couch. I had to talk to Harry.

Ask him to call me! I said to Roth. I'll pass on your message. Tell him I absolutely have to talk to him, and that I'm waiting for his call. Right after hanging up, I went to my bookshelves and found my copy of *The Origin of Evil*. Harry's inscription was on the first page: To Marcus, my most brilliant student Your friend, H. L. Quebert, May 1999 I immersed myself once again in that book, which I hadn't opened in years. It was a love story, mixing a straight narrative with epistolary passages, the story of a man and woman who loved each other without really being allowed to love each other. So he had written this book for that mysterious girl about whom I still knew nothing. I finished rereading it in the middle of the night, and contemplated the title. And for the first time I wondered what it meant: Why *The Origin of Evil*? What kind of evil was Harry talking about?-----Two days passed, during which the DNA analyses and dental impressions confirmed that the skeleton discovered at Goose Cove was indeed that of Nola Kellergan. The investigators were able to determine that the skeleton was that of a fifteen-year-old child, indicating that Nola had died more or less at the time of her disappearance. But, most important, a fracture at the back of the skull provided the certainty, even after more than thirty years, that Nola Kellergan had died from at least one blow to the head. I

had no news of Harry. I tried to get in touch with him through the state police, through the prison, and through Roth, but without success. I paced my apartment, tormented by thousands of questions, plagued by the memory of his weird call. By the end of the weekend, I couldn't take it anymore, and I decided that I had little choice but to go to see what was happening in New Hampshire. *Revue de presse* The book of the year (Simon Mayo) An expertly realised, addictive Russian doll of a whodunnit (Fanny Blake Daily Mail) A top-class literary thriller that smoothly outclasses its rivals (Melissa Katsoulis The Times) Should delight any reader who has felt bereft since finishing *Gone Girl*, or Stieg Larsson's *Millennium Trilogy* (Patricia Nicol Metro) It's a terrific story and I'm loving it (Philip Schofield Mail on Sunday) It's like 'Twin Peaks' meets *Atonement* meets *In Cold Blood* - the French thriller everyone is talking about (Gaby Wood Daily Telegraph) An intricate murder mystery that could be the read of the summer (Sunday Times) The tale is expertly told, as unreliable information dances with necessary plot shifts and unexpected moments of catastrophe. An accomplished thriller (James Runcie Independent) Pacy, pleasingly complex and addictive (Good Housekeeping) Complex, intriguing and highly enjoyable (Heat) With enough plot twists to fill a truck, it is a racy read (Economist) Tremendous fun and almost insanely readable (John Boland Irish Independent) Combines literariness with compulsively readable storytelling (G.Q.) A seductive read . . . well-crafted and highly enjoyable (Daniel Hahn Independent on Sunday) Dicker has the first-rate crime novelist's ability to lead his readers up the garden path . . . An excellent story (Caroline Jowett Sunday Express) Unimpeachably terrific . . . A playful, page-turning whodunit . . . If Norman Mailer had been accused of murder and Truman Capote had collaborated with Dominick Dunne on a tell-all about it, the result might have turned out something like this (Chelsea Cain New York Times) Dicker's bestseller features a labyrinthine murder mystery and a book-within-a-book subplot . . . It's energetically written and cleverly constructed. (Mail on Sunday) 'A great noir' *Corriere della Sera*. (*Corriere della Sera*) 'The cleverest, creepiest book you'll read this year ... *Twin Peaks* meets *Atonement* meets *In Cold Blood*' Gaby Wood, Daily Telegraph. (Daily Telegraph) 'All the ingredients of a world bestseller' *Die Zeit*. (*Die Zeit*) 'The tale is expertly told, as unreliable information dances with necessary plot shifts and unexpected moments of catastrophe. An accomplished thriller' Independent. (Independent) 'A global phenomenon' *Le Monde*. (*Le Monde*) 'A smart, immensely readable, impressively plotted page-turner ... A tour de force, this seems set to be a huge success' Patricia Nicol, Metro. (Metro) 'Dicker has the first-rate crime novelist's ability to lead his readers up the garden path ... An excellent story' Sunday Express. (Sunday Express) 'An intricate murder mystery that could be the read of the summer' Sunday Times. (Sunday Times) 'A spellbinding literary thriller

... It is maddeningly, deliciously impossible to guess the truth' Melissa Katsoulis, The Times. (The Times)