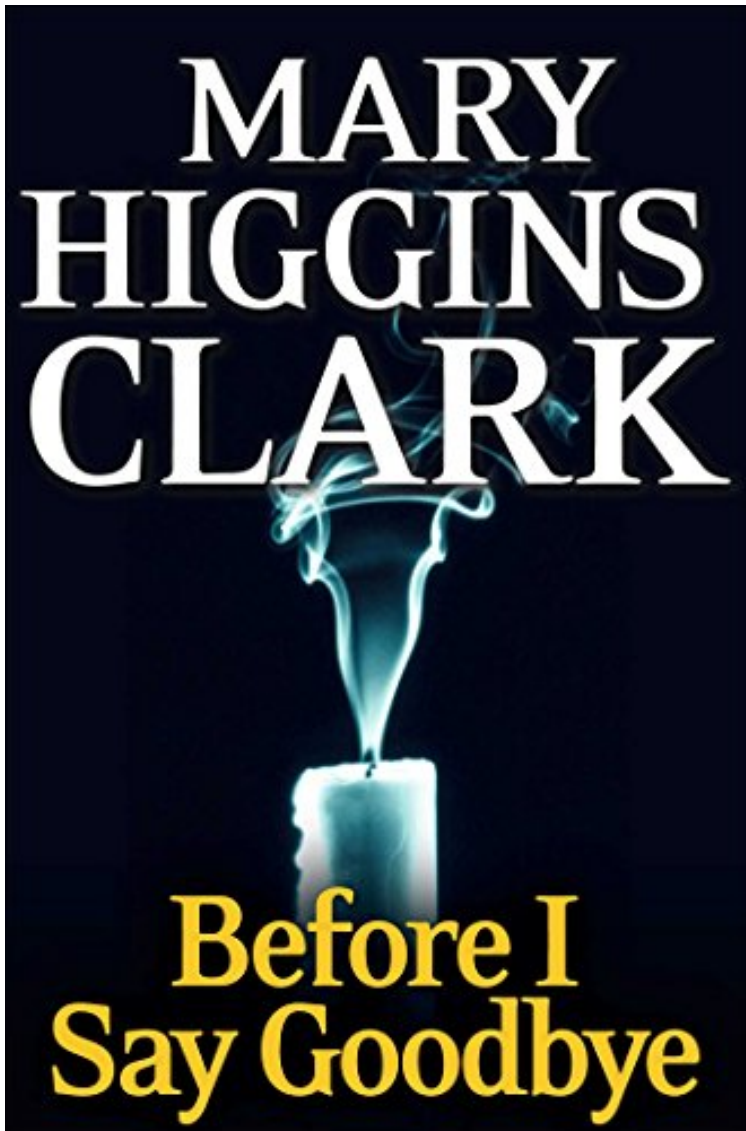


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# Before I Say Goodbye: A Novel (English Edition)



*Par Mary Higgins Clark*  
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**Description :** Description du produit Mary Higgins Clark, America's "Queen of Suspense," delves into the mystery of psychic powers in her gripping new thriller, Before I Say Good-Bye. When Adam Cauliff's new cabin cruiser, Cornelia II, blows up in New York harbor with him and several close business associates aboard, his wife, Nell MacDermott, is not only distraught at the loss but wracked with guilt because she and Adam had just had a serious quarrel and she had told him not to come home. As the investigation into the boat's explosion proceeds, Nell is shocked by the official confirmation that it was not an accident but the result of foul play. Was Adam the target of the explosion? As Nell searches for the truth about Adam's death, she receives messages from Adam transmitted by a medium. What she does not know is that she is being closely watched, and the nearer she comes to learning what actually happened on the boat that night, the

nearer she is to becoming the next victim of a ruthless killer.

Presentation de l'auteur Mary Higgins Clark, America's "Queen of Suspense," delves into the mystery of psychic powers and communication with the dead in her gripping new thriller, *Before I Say Good-Bye*. When Adam Cauliff's new cabin cruiser, *Cornelia II*, blows up in New York harbor with him and several close business associates aboard, his wife, Nell MacDermott, is not only distraught at the loss but wracked with guilt because she and Adam had just had a serious quarrel and she had told him not to come home. The quarrel was precipitated by Nell's decision to try to win the congressional seat long held by her grandfather Cornelius MacDermott. Orphaned at age ten, she had been raised by "Mac," as she called him, and was always at his side on Capitol Hill. Politics was in her blood, and Adam had known her ambitions when they married. Suddenly, however, he became opposed to her plan to run for Congress. Nell, like her great-aunt Gert, possesses psychic gifts, which her grandfather scoffingly dismisses as "flights of fantasy." As a child she had been aware of the deaths of both her parents and grandmother at the exact moment they died. She knew because at that very moment she sensed their presence near her. Even though Nell has the rare gift of extrasensory perception, she is much too levelheaded to accept most of the claims made by many so-called psychics and is skeptical about Aunt Gert's fascination with mediums. After Adam's death, however, Gert begs Nell to see a medium, Bonnie Wilson, who has contacted her, claiming she is in touch with Adam. Still regretting her last angry words to Adam, Nell agrees, hoping that she will be able to reach him through the medium and part from him in peace. As the investigation into the boat's explosion proceeds, Nell is shocked by the official confirmation that it was not an accident but the result of foul play. Adam, an architect, had been involved in a major construction project on land he had recently purchased and which had since had a spectacular rise in value. Was Adam the target of the explosion? Or was it Winifred Johnson, his self-effacing, fifty-two-year-old assistant, who knew too much about bribery in the construction business and who was openly in love with him? Or was it Sam Krause, a builder with a questionable reputation who was involved in the new project? Or Jimmy Ryan, the debt-ridden construction foreman whose wife, after his death, discovers money hidden in their home? Or was it Peter Lang, the wealthy man-about-town real-estate entrepreneur, whose minor traffic accident caused him to miss the fatal meeting on the boat? As Nell searches for the truth about Adam's death, she carries out instructions from Adam transmitted through the medium. What she does not know is that she is being closely watched, and the nearer she comes to learning what actually happened on the boat that night, the nearer she is to becoming the next victim of a ruthless killer..com Mary Higgins Clark's 22nd romantic thriller is destined for bestsellerdom on the strength of her reputation alone. Which is not to say that *Before I Say Good-Bye* doesn't have a bit of all the ingredients of the Clark genre: a little mystery, a likable heroine, and even a nice guy who turns up midway through the novel and promises her romance and a second chance at happiness. But while the set-up is promising and the bare essentials of a compelling read are all here, only readers who are already Higgins fans will be kept completely spellbound. Nell MacDermott is the politically ambitious granddaughter of a canny politician in Manhattan's silk stocking district, and her grandfather wants her to run for his old congressional seat. But there are rumors that Adam Cauliff, Nell's husband, has been involved in a real estate and construction scam, and until Nell gets to the bottom of this her political future will be clouded. When Adam and his assistant are killed in an explosion aboard his boat, Nell is determined to clear his name. Nudged into action by her nascent psychic powers and a medium who may be her only link to Adam, Nell learns more about her husband's mysterious past than she bargained for and--naturally--stumbles onto a conspiracy that puts her own life in danger. The narrative seems more like an outline for a novel than a novel itself; the characters are sketched rather than fully explored--particularly Nell, whose back story doesn't provide enough information to make her actions understandable. But the pacing is expert, and Clark's dedicated fans will doubtless forgive her for not making this her strongest outing. --Jane Adams Extrait Chapter One Nell set off at a brisk pace on her familiar walk from her apartment on Park Avenue and Seventy-third Street to her grandfather's office on Seventy-second and York. From the peremptory summons she had received, demanding that she be there by three o'clock, she knew that the situation with Bob Gorman must have come to a head. As a result she was not looking forward to the meeting. Deep in thought, she was oblivious to the admiring glances that occasionally came her way. After all, she and Adam were happily married. Still, she knew that some people found a tall woman, with the slim, strong body of an athlete, short chestnut-colored hair that was now forming into humidity-caused ringlets, midnight-blue eyes, and a generous mouth, attractive. While growing up, and frequently attending public events with her grandfather, Nell's rueful observation was that when the

media described her, that was usually the word used -- "attractive." "To me, attractive is like having a guy say, 'She's not much to look at, but what a personality!' It's the kiss of death. Just once I want to be described as 'beautiful' or 'elegant' or 'stunning' or even 'stylish,'" she had complained when she was twenty. Typically, her grandfather's comment had been, "For God's sake don't be so silly. Be grateful you've got a head on your shoulders and know how to use it." The trouble was that she knew already what he wanted to discuss with her today, and the way he was going to ask her to use her head was a problem. His plans for her and Adam's objections to them were most decidedly an issue. At eighty-two, Cornelius MacDermott had lost little of the vigor that for decades had made him one of the nation's most prominent congressmen. Elected at thirty to represent the midtown Manhattan district where he had been raised, he stayed in that spot for fifty years, resisting all arguments to run for the Senate. On his eightieth birthday he had chosen not to run again. "I'm not trying to beat Strom Thurmond's record as the longest-serving guy on the Hill," he had announced. Retirement for Mac meant opening a consulting office and making sure that New York City and State stayed in his party's political fold. An endorsement from him was a virtual laying on of hands for neophyte campaigners. Years ago he had created his party's most famous election commercial on TV: "What did that other bunch ever do for you?" followed by silence and a succession of bewildered expressions. Recognized everywhere, he could not walk down the street without being showered with affectionate and respectful greetings. Occasionally he grumbled to Nell about his status as a local celebrity: "Can't set foot outside my door without making sure I'm camera ready." To which she replied, "You'd have a heart attack if people ignored you, and you know it." When she reached his office today, Nell waved to the receptionist and walked back to her grandfather's suite. "The mood?" she asked Liz Hanley, his longtime secretary. Liz, a handsome sixty-year-old, with dark brown hair and a no-nonsense expression, raised her eyes to heaven. "It was a dark and stormy night," she said. "Oh boy, that bad," Nell said with a sigh. She tapped on the door of the private office as she let herself in. "Top of the day, Congressman." "You're late, Nell," Cornelius MacDermott barked, as he spun his desk chair around to face her. "Not according to my watch. Three on the dot." "I thought I told you to get here by three." "I had a column to turn in, and unfortunately my editor shares your sentiments about punctuality. Now, how about showing me the winning smile that melts the voters' hearts?" "Today I haven't got one. Sit down, Nell." MacDermott indicated the couch situated beneath the corner window that offered panoramic views of the city east and north. He had chosen that office because it gave him a view of his longtime congressional district. Nell called it his fiefdom. As she settled on the couch, she looked at him anxiously. There was an unfamiliar weariness in his blue eyes, clouding his usual keenly observant expression. His erect carriage, even when he was seated, always gave the impression that he was taller than his actual height, but today even that seemed diminished. Even Mac's famous shock of white hair appeared thinner. As she watched, he clasped his hands together and shrugged his shoulders as though trying to dislodge an invisible burden. With sinking heart, Nell thought for the first time in her memory that her grandfather looked his age. He stared past her for a long moment, then got up and moved to a comfortable armchair near the couch. "Nell, we've got a crisis, and you've got to solve it. After being nominated for a second term, that weasel Bob Gorman has decided not to run. He's been offered a sweetheart deal to head up a new Internet company. He'll serve out his term till the election but says he can't afford to live on a congressman's salary. I pointed out to him that when I helped him get the nomination two years ago, all he talked about at the time was a commitment to serving the people." She waited. She knew that last week her grandfather had heard the first rumors about Gorman not running for a second term. Obviously the rumors had been confirmed. "Nell, there's one person -- and only one, in my opinion -- who could step in and keep that seat in the party." MacDermott frowned. "You should have done it two years ago when I retired and you know it." He paused. "Look, it's in your blood. You wanted to do it from the start, but Adam talked you out of it. Don't let that happen again." "Mac, please don't start on Adam." "I'm not starting on anyone, Nell. I'm telling you that I know you, and you're a political animal. I've been grooming you for my job since you were a teenager. I wasn't thrilled when you married Adam Cauliff, but don't forget, I helped him to get his start in New York when I introduced him to Walters and Arsdale, a fine architectural firm and among my most valued supporters." Mac's lips tightened. "It didn't make me look good when, after less than three years, Adam walked out on them, taking their chief assistant, and opened his own operation. All right, maybe that's good business. But from the outset, Adam knew my plans for you, your plans for yourself. What made him change his mind? You were supposed to run for my seat when I retired, and he knew it. He had no right to talk you out of it then, and he has no right to try to talk you out of it now." "Mac, I enjoy being a columnist. You may not have noticed, but I get mighty good feedback." "You write a darn good column. I grant you

that. But it's not enough for you and you know it." "Look, my reluctance now isn't that Adam asked me to give up the idea of running for office." "No? Then what do you call it?" "We both want children. You know that. He suggested I wait until after that happens. In ten years I'll only be forty-two. That would be a good age to start running for elective office." Her grandfather stood impatiently. "Nell, in ten years the parade will have passed you by. Events move too fast to wait. Admit it. You're aching to throw your hat in the ring. Remember what you said when you informed me you were going to call me Mac?" Nell leaned forward, clasped her hands together and tucked them under her chin. She remembered; it happened when she was a freshman at Georgetown. At his initial protest, she had held her ground. "Look, you always say I'm your best friend, and your friends call you Mac," she had told him. "If I keep calling you Grandpa, I'll always be perceived as a kid. When I'm with you in public I want to be considered your aide-de-camp." "What's that supposed to mean?" he had responded. She remembered how she'd held up the dictionary. "Listen to the definition. In brief, an aide-de-camp is 'a subordinate or confidential assistant.' God knows for the present I'm both to you." "For the present?" he had asked. "Until you retire and I take over your seat." "Remember, Nell?" Cornelius MacDermott said, breaking her reverie. "You were a cocky college kid when you said that, but you meant it." "I remember," she said. He came and stood right in front of her, leaning forward, his face right in front of hers. "Nell, seize the moment. If you don't, you'll regret it. When Gorman confirms that he isn't running, there'll be a scramble for the nomination. I want the committee to consider candidates behind you from the get-go." "When is the get-go?" she asked cautiously. "At the annual dinner, on the 30th. You and Adam will be there. Gorman will be announcing his intention to leave when his term is complete; he'll get teary-eyed and sniffle and say that, while it was a difficult decision for him to make, something has made it much easier. Then he's going to dry his eyes and blow his nose, point to you and bellow that you, Cornelia MacDermott Cauliff, are going to run for the seat previously occupied by your grandfather for nearly fifty years. It will be Cornelia replacing Cornelius. The wave of the third millennium." Obviously pleased with himself and his vision, MacDermott smiled broadly. "Nell, it'll bring the house down." With a pang of regret, Nell remembered that two years ago, when Bob Gorman ran for Mac's seat, she had had a wild sense of impatience, a compulsion to be there, a need to see herself in his place. Mac was right. She was a political animal. If she didn't get into the arena now, it could be too late -- or at least, too late for a shot at this seat, which was where she wanted to start a political career. "What's Adam's problem, Nell? He didn't use to pull this stuff on you." "I know." "Is anything wrong between you two?" "No." She managed a dismissive smile to signify the suggestion was absurd. How long had it been going on? she wondered. At what point had Adam become distracted, even remote? At first her concerned questions, asking him what was wrong, had been brushed off lightly. Now she detected an edge of anger. Only recently she had told him point-blank that if there was a serious problem with their relationship, then she deserved to hear about it. "I mean any kind of problem, Adam. Being in the dark is the worst problem of all," she had said. "Where is Adam?" her grandfather asked. "He's in Philadelphia." "Since when?" "Yesterday. He's speaking at a seminar for architects and interior designers. He'll be back tomorrow." "I want him at the dinner on the 30th, standing by your side, applauding your decision. Okay?" "I don't know how much applauding he'll do," she said, a hint of dejection in her voice. "When you were married he was gung-ho to be the spouse of a future politician. What happened to change his mind?" You did, Nell thought. Adam became jealous of the time you demanded from me. When she and Adam were first married, he'd been enthusiastic over the idea that she would continue to be active as Mac's assistant. But that had changed when her grandfather announced his retirement. "Nell, we now have a chance for a life that doesn't revolve around the almighty Cornelius MacDermott," Adam had said. "I'm sick of your being at his beck and call. Do you think that will get better if you campaign for his old seat? I have news for you. He won't give you the chance to breathe, unless he's exhaling for you." The children they'd hoped for hadn't arrived, and they became part of his argument. "You've never known anything except politics," Adam pleaded. "Sit it out, Nell. The Journal wants you to do a regular column. You might like the freedom." His entreaties had helped her make the decision not to pursue the nomination. Now, as she considered her grandfather's arguments, along with his unique combination of ordering and coaxing her, Nell dispassionately admitted something to herself: commenting on the political scene wasn't enough. She wanted to be in on the action. Finally she said, "Mac, I'm going to put my cards on the table. Adam is my husband and I love him. You, on the other hand, have never even liked him." "That isn't true." "Then let's put it another way. Ever since Adam opened his own firm, you've had the shiv out for him. If I run for this office, it will be like the old days. You and I will be spending a lot more day-to-day time together, and if that's going to work you've got to promise me that you'll treat Adam the way you'd want to be treated if the positions were

reversed." "And if I promise to embrace him to my bosom, then you'll run?" When she left Cornelius MacDermott's office an hour later, Nell had given her word that she would seek the congressional seat being vacated by Bob Gorman. Copyright 2000 by Mary Higgins Clarke