

June 29, 1972

Dearest Lil and Harold:

I simply can't get over the shock of what you told me last night about Gary. I don't know Jerry, so I am in no position to judge him. I don't know the standards he lives by. But, of all people in the world, I would have counted on Gary Schoener to be true to you two. His attitude toward both of you was almost idolatry the entire time he spent in our home that summer. He declared that Lil is a saint and Harold the most brilliant, fairest, most noble person in the world. I didn't know either of you at that time, but his raving about you certainly overcame all the criticisms I later heard: "Harold is stubborn." "Harold doesn't share." etc. etc. And then, when I met you, I knew Gary had been absolutely right.

I do know that Gary has admitted that he has been under some strains in the past few years and he has sought professional advice at times. Perhaps, either the information you have recently received is completely inaccurate about Gary's part in whatever it is... or, Gary is definitely a mental case now.

Please let me know if you confirm your information and Gary is to blame for anything that has been done to you. If such is the case, I want to call Gary and try to persuade him to come back to Dallas and spend some time with us. He could stay with Jimmy Lee and Pam (who live a few blocks from us) and perhaps we could help him or find help for him. Harold, I know something is very, very wrong with Gary if he has turned on you.

Permit me to dwell on my problems for a moment. Bob Smith left our home on either a Monday or Tuesday, I've forgotten, the second week of April. Jimmy Lee got in early the next morning and his wife and baby arrived the next afternoon. As I've told you before, she is a little "go-getter" and insisted on finding their own place immediately. Two days later, they moved into a little house (a converted double garage) with living room, kitchen, one bedroom and bath downstairs and a large bedroom upstairs. The boxes had been arriving from Germany since early March and my two back rooms were stacked to the ceiling with their things. The day after they moved, Larry and Billy used Larry's little Toyota and helped move the boxes to Jimmy Lee's house. They had just unloaded at Jimmy's and were returning to my house at 1:30 p.m. when an elderly lady in a big '98 Oldsmobile ran a stop sign and hit Larry right in the side. It crushed that little Toyota like a sardine can. Billy only got a broken arm and some scratches but Larry was medically dead when they got him to Presbyterian Hospital. They say you are medically dead when your blood pressure drops below 60 and his had dropped to almost 50. They removed 3 quarts of blood from his stomach during the surgery. His left lung was gone. Every rib on his left side broken (some in four places) and three of the ribs had splintered in the left lung. His heart was damaged (they said it was badly bruised and the blood all coagulated on the left side of it). The spleen was ruptured and had to be removed.

Buck was in the Central Jury Room, having been called for Jury duty on Monday of that week. The hospital called him. They paged me in Titches, a big department store, where I had run over to pick up some crib sheets I had ordered. They called Bobbie at home. My office drove me out to the hospital and they stayed with us until the doctor came out and told us all the bad news after the surgery. Buck got a suite at the hospital so someone could stay day and night. Bobbie had a two-week old baby girl but she just left the baby with a friend and never left the hospital. They would let two of us go in to stand by Larry's bed in the intensive care unit every two hours. Bobbie never missed a single opportunity to go in, day or night.

You remember, Larry and Bobbie had been separated but he came home just before the baby was born and they had been getting along so well. Everything was apparently just fine. She would call us to come over and when we would get there, she would say things like, "Mary, Larry is being so sweet to me and doing so much, I don't want to ask him to sweep the floor or wash the dishes. Would you do that for me?" Of course, I was thrilled to do anything for her, and particularly pleased that Larry was behaving so well.

Larry and Bobbie had been married eight years. When they had been married two years, Larry was manager of the largest Skillern drugstore in Dallas. I must say he wasn't the best husband in the world but he was providing for them and seemed to enjoy his work. One night he was presented with some big award for having the best displays or some such thing and then the next morning they called him in and fired him. It really crushed him. Buck went to the top men in Skillerns to find out why. (We didn't want to learn years later that he had been fired for stealing or something like that.) Buck found out he had made an error in an order which had been very costly for the store... he had ordered 1,000 cases of soap powder instead of 100 cases, or something like that. They had a very good reason for getting rid of him. But Bobbie wanted to get a divorce. She came to us and asked us to recommend a lawyer. We did, and gave her the name of our family lawyer. The next night she came over and said Charles Ben Howell wouldn't handle it. I called him at home and asked him why. He said, "Why, Mary, you know I'm not going to represent anyone against one of your family." I said, "You treat her just like she was our daughter." Buck and I went with her to Mr. Howell's office the next day. We paid for the divorce. Then, she dropped the divorce just before it was final.

Everything went along fine until last summer. You know Larry was picked up in a drug raid and put in jail. She sued for divorce again. We certainly couldn't blame her and did everything for her we could. However, he is our son and we love him regardless of what he does. We also tried to help him. He moved back in with us when we got him out of jail. We got him a lawyer and finally got him completely out of it.

By that time, Bobbie knew she was pregnant and dropped the divorce.

Up in May of this year, they were ready to take Larry out of intensive care and the night before they took him out we were sitting in the suite on the 10th floor of the hospital waiting for the visiting time when Bobbie said, "Tomorrow I'm going to tell Larry that I'm getting a divorce." We were all astonished. I said, "Bobbie, please wait until he is home and over this accident. We always have agreed with you on everything you've wanted to do. We know Larry hasn't done right. But, this is not the time to upset him with anything like that. Please do it for us if not for Larry's sake." She was adamant. Nothing could change her mind. We alerted the hospital the next day when they were moving him to a room on the 8th floor. They advised us to get a private duty male nurse, which we did. She told him that afternoon and he went berserk. Most of the time since then he has been completely irrational.

We have only seen the baby twice since Larry's accident. She brought the baby over for about five minutes late in the evening on Mother's Day and then for about five minutes on Father's Day. One thing I must admit. Bobbie is really looking better. Do you remember how bedraggled she looked? Well, she has really been taking care of her appearance and is beautiful and well dressed.

Larry made a peculiar but pertinent remark to Buck and me not long ago. He said, "I am the best read person I know. I have more general knowledge than anyone I know. But, I've made a mess of everything I've ever tried to do. I don't know why you two haven't given up on me long ago." Buck and I were both speechless but we really felt sorry for him because he was certainly telling the truth.

Well, I said "a moment" and I've rambled on for three pages. Please forgive me.

Love to you both...

*Mary*