



A Death in Canaan

Joan Barthel

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A son stands trial for his mother's murder in this classic case of good and evil in a small New England town

In the sleepy hamlet of Canaan, Connecticut, Barbara Gibbons stood out. She and her eighteen-year-old son, Peter Reilly, lived in a drab one-bedroom house on a desolate stretch of road. An intelligent, lively woman with a wicked sense of humor, Barbara also had dark moods and drank too much. She fought loudly with neighbors and her son, and appeared to have a messy, complicated love life.

When Peter came home from the Teen Center one night to discover his mother lying naked on the bedroom floor with her throat slashed, the police made him their prime suspect. After eight hours of interrogation and a polygraph test, Peter confessed. Investigators were convinced they had an open-and-shut case, but the townspeople disagreed. They couldn't believe that the naïve teenager was capable of such a gruesome crime, and blamed detectives for taking advantage of the boy's trust. With the help of celebrities including Mike Nichols and William Styron, who contributes an eloquent and persuasive introduction to Joan Barthel's account of the case, the community of Canaan rallied to Peter's defense.

A gripping murder mystery and an intimate portrait of the loyalties, resentments, and secrets lurking beneath the placid surface of quiet towns across America, *A Death in Canaan* is a true crime masterpiece.

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