

The First Two Pages: *Liar Liar*

By Nancy Boyarsky (Light Messages Publishing)

Later, Nicole would ponder the truth and its illusive nature. She'd realize how many lies people would tell to protect themselves from it. And, worst of all, how many she herself would tell to get at it. She'd always considered herself a truthful person. Yet she'd find herself lying to others, to her fiancé, and even to herself.

She'd wonder if there was such a thing as the actual truth. Or was truth relative, the product of incomplete or faulty memories, or the limitations of the observer? How often was the truth tainted by what an individual wanted, or needed, to believe?

Since this book is about lying as much as the crimes precipitating them, I thought I'd foreshadow how my protagonist, Nicole Graves, will later view what is about to happen and how she'll feel about it. She's about to learn how badly people want to hide from truth that could damage them. But she'll also learn something about herself: while she disapproves of lies and liars, she herself is rather good at the game. It's a discovery that alarms her. But this is all to come and these first paragraphs are meant to serve as a hook to pique the reader's interest.

On this bright day in mid-March, Nicole stepped into the United Terminal at LAX and encountered a situation she could hardly believe. It was as if she'd slipped back in time to the previous year when the media was stalking her. This morning, they were massed in a corner of baggage claim. After the initial shock of seeing them, she noticed they weren't looking in her direction, hadn't noticed her at all. They were waiting for someone else, someone they expected to come down the escalator from the arrival gates.

The above paragraph tells the reader a little about Nicole's background and is meant to make her more interesting. It reveals that something traumatic

happened to her the previous year, something newsworthy and sensationalistic enough to trigger intense interest from the media, especially the tabloids.

The great hall was a hub of activity, unusually crowded even for a weekend afternoon. The noise was overwhelming. It wasn't just the buzz of the luggage carousels and thud of suitcases dropping from the chute. The source of the commotion was the corner packed with people carrying microphone-equipped cameras. Nicole had an urge to walk out the door, find her car in the lot, and leave. But she had a job to do. She was here to pick up a passenger, and that passenger was no doubt the reason for the welcoming committee.

This paragraph sets the scene. Los Angeles International Airport is an unwelcoming place, noisy and overcrowded. It's even worse than usual when Nicole steps inside. The media is there in full force. The paragraph also illustrates how much last year's unwanted publicity—being pursued by paparazzi—upset Nicole. Her first urge is to flee, but she has an assignment: picking someone up who is the one now being hunted by the media. This, too, is meant to hook the reader into wanting to know more. Why would the media care about the passenger about to arrive? Is she a celebrity or what?

Her charge, Mary Ellen Barnes, was suing a fellow student for rape as well as Oceanside University for failing to protect her after the authorities refused to take action. It was a classic “he said, she said” rape scenario, and a national anti-rape organization was footing the bill for the trial in civil court. The case had captured national media attention, and the tabloids were featuring it along with movie stars' affairs, marriages and divorces. Little wonder that Mary Ellen's arrival would stir up a mob.

Now we begin to get into the plot: a campus rape trial that has, for various reasons, caught national media attention. It also emphasizes why L.A. is a place where tabloids and paparazzi thrive. It is home to countless celebrities, and despite the unpleasantness of LAX, the city has more than its share of glitz and glamor.

Nicole's job was to look after the girl for a day or two and keep her away from the media. She could see it was a lost cause. The tabloids had already found Mary Ellen. They had an uncanny ability to track down those unlucky enough to attract readers, or clicks, as online news sites referred to them. Somehow, they'd discovered when Mary Ellen would be arriving and at which terminal. The tabloid XtraHotNews probably had an airline employee on its payroll. Or one of the paparazzi had hacked into Mary Ellen's phone or her lawyer's. She thought back to the year before when her own cellphone had been hacked by the tabloids. She'd suddenly become an heiress, murder suspect, and target of the media's spotlight. What a nasty experience that had been.

This paragraph goes into the M.O. of the tabloids, the way they keep key sources on retainer to feed them tips. It also shows the ruthless behavior of the paparazzi in chasing down stories, even resorting to illegal methods, like hacking cell phones. This paragraph ends with a little more information about Nicole's own experience with the media and why she was once its target.

Nicole took a step back. The automatic door opened. Another step and she was outside again. A warm breeze ruffled her hair. The weather was a balmy eighty degrees, not unusual for L.A. at this time of year. She reached into her bag and scabbled about, pushing aside the can of pepper spray she always carried found her sunglasses and sun hat. She put them on and tucked her hair into the hat. She hoped this would grant her a degree of anonymity. Even though the reporters and paparazzi weren't looking for her, the fact that Nicole Graves was picking up Mary Ellen Barnes wouldn't go unnoticed.

This paragraph gives us a little more description of the setting, the balmy weather of Los Angeles. It also shows Nicole's attempt to protect herself from the threat posed by the media. She steps outside to put on sunglasses and a hat in order to avoid recognition. She can hope reporters and paparazzi have forgotten her, but can't count on it. Even with a hat and sunglasses, one of them might spot her.

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Nancy Boyarsky is the bestselling author of the award-winning *Nicole Graves Mysteries*, which include *The Swap*, (winner of the *Eric Hoffer Book Award*), *The Bequest*, and her latest book, *Liar Liar*. Before turning to mysteries, Nancy coauthored *Backroom Politics*, a *New York Times* notable book, with her husband, Bill Boyarsky. She has written several textbooks on the justice system as well as articles for publications including the *Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, and *McCall's*. In addition to her writing career, she was communications director for political affairs for ARCO. Readers are invited to connect with Nancy through her website at nancyboyarsky.com.