Cross your heart and hope to survive.

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY WITH MURDER

TRISH LUNDY

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Praise for

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY WITH MURDER

"A wild, twisty ride that kept me up well past my bedtime, with an ending you'll never see coming. I can't wait to see what Trish Lundy does next."

—**LIZ LAWSON**, ***New York Times***–bestselling author of the **Agathas series** and ***The Lucky Ones***

"Everyone's got a secret in the town of Happy Valley, and sometimes the darkest truths are lurking closer than you think. Trish Lundy's debut, *The One That Got Away with Murder*, is a high-speed, high-stakes page-turner with sharp twists and a shocking finale."

—**SKYLA ARNDT**, author of ***Together We Rot***

"In Trish Lundy's debut, new girl Lauren moves across the country for a fresh start, only to discover everyone she meets has a secret, and one of them is deadly. With its pulse-pounding twists and turns, *The One That Got Away with Murder* is a sharp thriller to devour in a single sitting."

—**JESSIE WEAVER**, author of ***Live Your Best Lie***

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For my daughter

ONE

My mom doesn't need to know the real reason I visit her at work.

I slip her a venti iced chai latte as she's charting her patients, and she gives me a quick kiss of thanks before her eyes dart back to the computer screen. She thinks I'm a good daughter, treating her to her favorite drink at dawn. In her eyes, I'm her little pick-me-up. In reality, she has no idea why I'm here. Why I visit her at Valley Hospice every Saturday morning with her chai; why I haven't missed a Saturday for the past six weeks. And like so many things in my life, it's easier if she doesn't know the truth.

I leave the nurses' station and head into the oldest wing of the hospice center, the Crestmont wing. Soft, battered floorboards creak underneath me as I pad down the hall. The rising sun makes the faded photos hanging on the walls come to life again. The largest one is of Carmichael and Rosemary Crestmont, the wing's namesake. A pair of scissors glints in Rosemary's gloved hand as she cuts the ribbon on opening day

in 1973. She's dressed in a floor-length fur coat and stands in three inches of snow. Carmichael has his arm around her, a huge diamond bracelet dangling off his wrist.

I turn the corner, finding myself in the hallway with supplies. Dust coats everything like a thick layer of frost. I stride past each dark door until I reach the one at the very end. I grip the cold brass handle and push it open, my insides already softening. How I always feel right before I see him.

I find him leaning against one of the storage shelves. His volunteer T-shirt is untucked. His dark hair falls around his pale face.

"Hey," Robbie says, his voice still warming up for the day, all throaty and tired.

"Hey," I say back. I drop my keys onto the threadbare couch. Then he's in front of me, and the best part of my week begins.

His lips find the back of my neck, the place no one ever touches except for him, at least for now. I close my eyes and I'm back in my old bedroom, a taller body on top of me that smells like sun and salt. I pull off his shirt to bury the memory, and he's slipping my practice jersey over my head. The faster we do this, the faster he helps me forget. Luckily, he smells like cedar and musk with a tinge of menthol and the slightest hint of tobacco. His bad habit. He kisses me as we fall together onto the couch. He makes his way down my body, past my collarbone, my stomach. I want him more than anything and pull him closer, savoring the way he tastes. I surrender to the

way his teeth graze my lips, the way his hands find my jaw. He strokes my cheek and his touch is smooth and careful. I shut my eyes tighter, imagining a calloused hand instead.

"You're a little tense," Robbie says, breathless. I open my eyes. His lips curl into a hungry smile. "I can fix that."

He pins my legs down. I close my eyes again. I try not to picture anyone this time. Just darkness. Nothingness. Because Robbie knows exactly what to do. I lose myself in it. The warmth returns. Then it builds and builds and builds until it can't build anymore and I collapse.

He rises and I unbuckle his jeans. He reaches for the condom in his pocket before I slide them all the way off. I run my fingers through his hair, pulling him even closer. I wrap my legs around his waist and kiss him, hard, pressing myself against him until he shivers and lets go. The two of us are left sprawled on the couch, hearts still racing.

I will give myself a few minutes to catch my breath, then get dressed and tell him I'll see him next Saturday. This is our routine. The same one we've had ever since I first crossed paths with him in the hallway. He'd asked me if I wanted a tour. When I saw the way his eyes focused on me so intensely, I knew. I knew what I wanted. What I needed. I've done this enough to know how it works. And I knew he wanted it, too.

As I'm slipping my jersey over my head, I catch Robbie staring at me.

"What?" I say.

"I just like looking at you," he says.

I feel my cheeks flush. "You can look all you want next Saturday," I quip back, turning the other way.

"About next Saturday," Robbie says, sliding on his jeans. "I'm going to be at my lake house for Labor Day weekend."

"Oh," I say. I can survive one weekend without hooking up with him. "Right."

A curious look emerges on his face. "I could text you so you won't miss me so much," he says.

I bend down to grab my shorts. "I'm not big on texting," I say.

The less connected we are, the better.

I slide on my shorts, then my socks. When I turn around to pick up my keys, I find Robbie. His head tilted slightly from looking down at me. He smiles. "Don't forget this," he says, pressing my phone into my hand.

Warmth spreads from my throat down into my stomach. I have to throw it on ice.

"Thanks."

Then I'm gone, fixing my messy hair into a ponytail. A few strands fall out of place, and I can't help but notice how well they hold his scent.

TWO

Coach makes us run a mile on the track before practice. It's already so humid I can feel the eggs I doused in hot sauce fighting for a way out of my mouth. I'm not used to it at all, being from California. I'm not used to a lot of things in Happy Valley, Pennsylvania, where we just moved so Mom could take things to the next level with Mark, who she thinks is her soulmate. And partly so I could have a "fresh start." Or maybe mostly so that I could have a fresh start.

This is my shot to not entirely screw up my life like I did back home. I need to maintain at least a 3.5 GPA to make up for the disaster that was my junior year. Getting into a semi-decent college is doable. I'll stay focused. I'll go to school, play soccer since it's the only thing I've ever been good at, and study. Robbie is a nice bonus. He told me he also goes to Valley High. As long as things stay exactly the way they are, we can keep seeing each other on weekends once school starts next week.

It's perfect. A no-feelings arrangement. Because seeing him helps me forget, and forgetting is the only way I'm going

to move on from everything that happened in California. Things are going to be different here.

They have to be.

I don't think my legs can pump any faster. Then I see the dark swoosh of Mara Kumari's hair in front of me. I force myself to pick it up, just a little bit more. Mara's left forward, and she's not in love with the fact that I've joined the team. Even after I sent three perfect corner kicks her way during tryouts. I kind of get it. I'm breaking into a circle of teammates who've played together since seventh grade.

I have to earn my place to start as right midfielder. That means getting a mile time that beats Mara's.

I sprint down the straightaway of sun-soft rubber, but have to slow up around the curve of the track. This pace is actually killing me. I need to catch my breath if I plan on going all out for the last stretch. Just as I'm about to race down the next straightaway, there's a smell. The one that makes my stomach go cold even when it's 85 degrees out.

I look out, beyond the track. Plumes of smoke rise up from the farm on the other side of the road. A farmer carries a torch, deliberately stoking the flames on a small area of her land. It's just a small fire. A contained fire, to burn weeds and decaying crops. But then every logical thought I have is overridden by panic.

Suddenly, everything around me is on fire. I lurch forward, stumbling because I'm drunk. Sweating because it's hot

as hell. The smoke is black as night and I can't see anything. Then I feel his hand, gripping mine. Leading me out.

Until something crashes down around us, and he's screaming. I inhale ash. His burning skin. His burning hair. It suffocates me.

I cough and it's like I'm hacking up a lung. Another ponytail whips by. *Shit.* I give it everything I have.

I'm relieved when I cross the finish line near the front of the pack. Nice to know my legs still work even in a state of panic.

"Six thirty. Not bad, O'Brian," Coach Holliger says, glancing at his watch. He's wearing a faded Penn State Soccer 2014 T-shirt, the year he graduated. The sleeves are tight around his tanned arms.

He flashes me a quick smile. "Those long legs carried you ten seconds faster than yesterday."

I narrow my eyes at him. I've only had women coach me my entire soccer career, and they've never commented on my body. Not even a little bit.

I try to shrug it off. It's probably his version of an awkward compliment since we barely know each other. Coach had been surprised when I was the only person he didn't recognize at open practice sessions in July. Who transfers schools—let alone coasts—right before their senior year?

Sometimes it doesn't feel real. I live here now. I can never go back to California. There's nothing left for me there, anyway.

Rachel was my last tie to home. We grew up together, playing soccer since we were eight. I'll never forget the first day I came back to practice after it happened. My teammates were surprised to see me. It had only been a few days. But I was losing my mind, staying in our apartment. Being alone with my thoughts. Dry heaving whenever I thought about Clint, because there was nothing left in my stomach to throw up.

It felt amazing to exhaust myself. It was a Friday. Rachel and I always got dinner after practice on Fridays.

"I can't wait to inhale a McFlurry," I told her.

She looked at me and blinked. "Oh, I made plans, Laur. I'm really sorry. I didn't think you'd be back so soon."

It was the first time in three years she told me she couldn't. But I could tell by the hesitant look in her eye that it was more like she wouldn't. That was the end of that.

I may not have to win Coach over, but my new team is another story. If I'm starting, that means I'm taking Taylor Covington's spot. That means I have to beat her record for assists.

No pressure.

I guzzle down half my water and I'm trying to catch my breath when I feel a strong pat on my back. I turn around to find Alexis Okada, one of our team captains.

"Good run, Lauren," Lex says. She isn't even a little bit winded, and I know she came in first.

"Thanks," I say, still huffing.

Lex is all muscle, with quads that can send a ball halfway across the field. She plays center mid, and is already committed to Penn State. She bends down next to me, pulling a roll of white prewrap out of her bag. She tears off a piece with her teeth and ties her short black hair back. "My parents are in Hawai'i visiting my grandma so I'm having a kickback tonight for a little team bonding. You can spend the night, too."

I cap my water and shove it back in my bag. All my teammates need to know about me is that I'm dedicated to helping us win on the field. I'm not interested in making friends here.

It's for their sake as much as mine.

"I have plans actually. But thanks."

I jog over to our field, kicking up tufts of freshly cut grass. Then Coach blows his whistle. Time to work my ass off.

I take a seat on a locker room bench. After practicing all morning, my shin guards are ripe. I peel them off and stick them in the sides of my bag, then slide on my sandals. I check my phone. A new text from Mom.

Hi honey! Mark is coming over tonight. I'm thinking we could go out since it's Saturday. There's a noodle house downtown. How does that sound? He's really looking forward to spending more time with you.

I let out a groan. Mark's been over three times this week.

It's not that I hate Mark. He makes Mom happy. But sometimes I get sick of being their third wheel. Sometimes I just want to go to dinner with Mom. The two of us. Like we used to do.

Just then, a sharp laugh shocks me out of my bitching. When I look up, I see Mara keeled over laughing while she and Lex exit the locker room together. As the doors close behind them, and the sliver of light from outside vanishes, I think about how pathetic it sounds to spend the last nights of summer third-wheeling my mom and her boyfriend's dinner.

I chuck my phone in my bag.

I could show face at Lex's. Show everyone I'm a team player. I'll leave before anything has a chance of getting out of control.

I race out the door to catch Lex.

"My plans canceled," I lie. "What's your address?"

Damn, I probably look desperate. But I kind of am.

THREE

I eat a late lunch of radioactive-orange mac and cheese to make sure I'm not a lightweight tonight. I'll have a couple of drinks instead of explaining why I've been trying to stay sober. If they're anything like my team back home, they like to party. I'm not trying to draw even more attention to myself by pretending like I'm better than everyone else.

I shovel the last of the macaroni into my mouth and my phone lights up with a new text. From a number I don't recognize. My stomach drops. I changed my number right before the move to put an end to the constant messages from Donovan and the rest of his teammates.

I take a deep breath and slide open the text.

I'm one step ahead of you

Blood rushes to my head. What the hell does that mean?

But then Mark and Mom are here, their arms full of groceries. I darken my phone. Maybe if I just ignore the text, whoever it is will leave me alone.

"Hey, babe," Mom says.

I tried to let her down easy for tonight's dinner, telling her I had mandatory team bonding. It's not a total lie. Still, my heart twinges a little bit. I know it hurts her feelings that I'm not obsessed with Mark.

"I grabbed a couple things for you to bring to Lex's," she says. She pulls out a huge bag of barbecue chips and bag of peanut M&M's.

Damn, she really does know how to make me feel bad.

"Aw, thanks, Mom."

"Team bonding sounds like a whole lotta fun," Mark says, unloading a bag of groceries.

I grimace. It kind of annoys me that his caramel almond coffee creamer and calcium-fortified orange juice have taken up permanent residence in our fridge. As long as he hasn't officially moved in with us, I can tolerate it. I guess.

That was the deal I made with Mom. I agreed to the move as long as it meant not living with her long-distance boyfriend she met on eharmony. She can wait to live with him until I'm in college. It's less than a year away.

Mark folds up the paper grocery bag and makes eye contact with me. His blue eyes crinkle as he smiles. "How are you liking Happy Valley?" he asks.

He's always tried to engage with me, ever since I first met him in California. Apparently, the headquarters for the company he works for are based in Silicon Valley. Mom would see him when he was in town for work trips. He came over to our

apartment once and I told Mom I approved of him. Which is true. I just don't want to spend every second with him.

Mom looks at me expectantly, as if she's saying, *Please don't be bitchy*.

"It's a little boring," I say honestly. I can just feel Mom tense up as she opens the dishwasher. "But I'm warming up to it."

"The sunset tonight will be beautiful, you can bet on it," Mark says. "There's nothing like a Happy Valley sunset during the last days of summer."

"I mean, I think watching the sun set over the Pacific Ocean in Santa Cruz is pretty hard to beat."

I can't help myself. Then I catch the look on Mom's face, which is pure disappointment. A hot flush of guilt rushes through me. Mom would have never even started dating Mark in the first place if her last relationship had worked out.

It didn't. Because of me.

"But I guess I'll never know until I see it," I add, flashing a quick smile in Mark's direction.

Then I catch the time on the microwave. Six thirty. Lex's kickback starts in an hour.

I sequester myself in the upstairs bathroom. I haven't worn makeup in months, but figure I should at least put some mascara on. I rummage through the cardboard box of my toiletries and find my stained makeup bag at the bottom of it. I find something else, too. My old flask.

I pick it up, hearing liquid slosh inside.

Then Rachel's voice is in my head.

You've been drinking way too much.

I shouldn't.

But there's probably not *that* much left.

I unscrew it and the smell of vodka singes my nose hairs. I take a swig and it burns. In the best way. I drain the flask and take the mascara wand to my lashes.

Before I leave, I can't help but glance at the text again. They haven't sent me any other messages, which is a good sign, but I decide to google their 773 area code. Chicago. Weird. None of the messages I got back home had Chicago area codes. Maybe it really was the wrong number.

I delete the thread and pop a piece of gum in my mouth. Then I slip out the front door before Mom can smell the alcohol on my breath or Mark can give me some of his famous "advice" about being a teenager in Happy Valley. Once I'm outside, I notice there's a small Penn State flag staked into the fresh mulch. Now our house is just like every other one in our neighborhood. The university is the lifeblood of this town. People are obsessed.

Lex lives just a couple of neighborhoods over, which makes for a short walk through some fenceless backyards. I guess that's a perk of living in a small town. Everything is within a ten-minute radius and they've never had to deal with a little thing called traffic. One thing I don't miss about California.

And as much as I want to compare the setting sun to the beauty of back home, I have to admit, it's pretty, like sherbet melting over rolling green hills.

I sigh, taking in the heavy, slow way my breathing feels any time I'm a little tipsy. God, I've missed this feeling. It's like the only thing that stops the constant flow of panicked thoughts. I briefly went to therapy back home. Mom thought I was falling apart. She wasn't wrong. But it's not like I could tell my therapist even a sliver of the truth. I'm a minor. She's a mandated reporter.

I could never tell anyone the truth. That was always the problem. That's why I fucked up so badly in the first place.

The door to Lex's house is unlocked. I take a deep breath. Here, in Pennsylvania, I remind myself, no one has to know about my past. No one will ever know. I'm just the new girl.

I notice everyone's taken their shoes off and left them near the doorway, so I do the same. SZA's new song pulses in my ears. I follow the source of the music down into the finished basement, where the bass makes everything shake. Most of the team is already here. I set the chips and M&M's on a table with pizzas and wings. I find Lex behind the bar counter, mixing drinks. Mara comes up behind her and steals her for a kiss.

Maybe it's the alcohol coursing through her veins, but when Mara sees me, she smiles. I smile back. Something glints against her brown skin, near her collarbone. A gold necklace.

Lex whips around the bar and gives me a hug. She smells like grenadine and whiskey. "You made it! Let me get you a drink."

She hands me a cupful of whatever concoction she's just poured. For the first time, I notice her eyebrow's pierced. She never wears her piercing at practice.

I take a sip of the drink she made. It's strong as fuck.

More bodies fly down the stairs. Andrea Moreno, our goalie, with Gwen Solomon, a forward, and Sophia Hughes, our right defender. They didn't come alone. A handful of guys I've never seen before follow closely behind them.

I check them out. They're tall, with muscular calves. Rough hands. And enough cockiness to fill a room. Lax bros. I can spot one from a mile away.

That's why Robbie's refreshing. He's not my usual type.

"Can we have just *one* party without them?" Mara says, rolling her eyes.

"Sorry to break it to you, but half our team's straight," Lex says, filling up more red Solo cups.

"The least they could do is bring the soccer guys," Mara says. She migrates to one of the speakers and turns up the music. "I actually have something in common with them."

My phone vibrates in my jeans. I take another swig of my drink before I check it.

It's a text from an unknown number. The same Chicago one, actually.

Shit. I was hoping that wouldn't turn into a situation.

I find an isolated corner near the food table and pop a

handful of chips into my mouth. I crunch them in between my teeth and glance down at the text.

You're not going to leave me on read, are you, Lauren?

I'm in no mood to bullshit right now. If I entertained every anonymous text I got back in California, I would have actually lost my mind. I start typing a reply.

Blocking you

The next text comes through before I have a chance to do it.

It's Robbie

My heart does a little thump in my chest.

I'm more relieved than annoyed. Not that I'm going to tell him that.

How did you get my number?

He texts back instantly.

I called myself on your phone while you were changing ;)

I grab another handful of chips and text him back, unsure of whether I'm surprised or mad, or both.

I'm wondering how exactly you did that since my phone was locked.

I've seen you press 1 1 2 2 for the last five weeks . . . C'mon, Lauren. You're practically begging someone to hack your phone.

My cheeks burn.

Why do you have a Chicago number? I guess you were hoping I wouldn't find this whole you-hacking-my-phone-thing creepy?

Typing bubbles instantly.

I had to get a new phone one summer. I was in Chicago at the time. And ouch. I guess I'm failing miserably at trying to impress you?

I feel myself smile, and quickly suppress it.

Andrea's standing in front of me. Up close, I'm surprised to find I'm taller than her, since she's such a presence on the field. She's wearing a low-cut crop top and sweats. Her bare arms have two sets of brown tan lines from alternating

between her long-sleeved goalie jersey and her short-sleeved practice jersey. Her dark brown hair is tied up into a messy bun instead of her usual braids.

She glances down at my phone and raises an eyebrow. "We're starting the bonfire," she says. Her voice is clear as a bell, even as the bass thumps through my chest.

Behind her, I notice everyone is headed for the door that leads outside.

"Oh, cool," I say.

I have no plans to join them. I'll keep the food table company and then I'll slip out as everyone's getting wasted.

Andrea locks eyes with me. "It's team tradition," she says. "We write one thing we're going to leave behind in the old season and then we burn it. We start off every year with a clean slate."

Of course it's team tradition. The last thing I need is to make enemies with our keeper.

"Got it," I say.

I quickly save Robbie's contact and take a step toward the door. Andrea points to a basket filled with brand-new Adidas slides. "Grab a pair of those, too. We always get new ones at the start of the season."

First I grab the closest bottle from the bar and refill my drink. Then I reach into the basket. I find my size of the customized blue-and-white Adidas slides. Our team colors. I throw them on and walk outside.

I gulp down what must be cheap vodka. I need liquid courage if I'm actually going to walk over to the fire pit in the

middle of Lex's backyard. The flames are a couple of feet high. It takes me a few seconds to breathe again.

I try to psych myself up. This will all be over in a matter of minutes.

I make my way toward the small table by the fire pit. Andrea hands me a slip of paper and a permanent marker.

"Get ready to burn it," she says, her smile lighting up her face.

Right.

"Can't wait," I say.

I rub the soreness that tugs at the base of my throat. Being this close to the flames makes me want to tie a plastic bag over my head.

I need to get this over with already.

I chuck my empty Solo cup into a garbage bin and pop off the marker cap.

I write **EVERYTHING.**

It's vague. But truer than anything else I could have written.

I roll my paper into a ball and throw it into the fire. Except I miss, because I suck at anything involving hand-eye coordination. It lands on the ground.

Then someone picks up my paper and drops it into the fire for me. It disintegrates instantly.

"I got you," Mara says.

"Thanks."

"You miss your team in California?" she asks.

The firelight makes her necklace glow. This close, I can see the pendant. A crescent moon.

"Yeah. I do," I say honestly.

I miss how everything was before. Before I blew up my life. I don't miss the way those last few practices went. The way I couldn't find a warm-up partner. The way even Rachel kept her distance from me in the team huddle.

I shove my hands into my pockets so Mara won't see the way I'm coming undone. I find my phone. My crutch. I never had bad social anxiety before everything happened with Clint, but now it rears its ugly head at the worst times.

I have a missed call from Robbie. Now he's calling me, too?

I look up to find Mara's eyes glued to my phone. "Are you tight with a Robbie back home?" There's an edge to her voice. One I don't like.

"Um, why?" I ask.

"Tell me that's not Robbie Crestmont saved in your phone," she says.

I blink, trying to catch up.

Robbie's a Crestmont. Of course he is. That's why he volunteers at Valley Hospice when every other volunteer there is like seventy years old. His family is the reason why it even exists.

I meet Mara's gaze. I'm not trying to get on her bad side.

"We just met," I say. "He volunteers at my mom's work."

"You'd better stay the fuck away from him," she says.

I laugh nervously. "Wow, why do you care so much—"

"It's not funny," she says, her floral perfume suddenly nauseating.

I'm tipsy and my filter quickly goes out the window.

"Okay, what the hell is your problem?"

"Come on, babe," Lex says to Mara, beelining for her from the other side of the fire pit. "How could she know—"

"*Know what?*" I ask.

"Please don't infantilize me right now," Mara tells Lex. Her eyes don't leave mine.

She leans in, making sure I hear every word. "Every girl the Crestmonts date winds up dead."