

MARY DOWNING HAHN

# Wait Till Helen Comes

★ "A first-rate thriller."

—ALA Booklist, starred review

A GHOST STORY



"YOU'VE BOUGHT a church?" Michael and I looked up from the pile of homework covering most of the kitchen table. I was in the middle of writing a poem for Mr. Pelowski's English class, and Michael was working his way happily through twenty math questions.

Mom filled a kettle with water and put it on the stove. Her cheeks were pink from the March wind, and so was the tip of her nose. "You and Molly will love it," she promised. "It's exactly the sort of place Dave and I have been looking for all winter. There's a carriage house for him to use as a pottery workshop and space in the choir loft for me to set up a studio. It's perfect."

"But how can we live in a church?" Michael persisted, refusing to be won over by her enthusiasm.

"Oh, it's not really a church anymore," Mom said. "Some people from Philadelphia bought it last year and built an addition on the side for living quarters. They were going to set up an antique store in the actual church, but, after doing all that work, they decided they didn't like living in the country after all."

"It's out in the country?" I frowned at the little cat I was doodling in the margin of my notebook paper.

Mom smiled and gazed past me, out our kitchen window and into Mrs. Overton's window directly across the alley. I had a feeling she was seeing herself standing in front of an easel, working on one of her huge oil paintings, far from what she called the "soul-killing life of the city." She has a maddening habit of drifting away into her private dream world just when you need her most.

"Where is the church?" I asked loudly.

"Where is it?" Mom poured boiling water into her cup and added honey. "It's in Holwell, Maryland, not far from the mountains. It's beautiful. Just beautiful. The perfect place for painting and potting."

"But what about Molly and me? What are we supposed to do while you and Dave paint and make pottery?" Michael asked.



"You promised I could be in the enrichment program this summer," I said, thinking about the creative writing class I was planning to take. "Will I still be able to?"

"Yes, and what about Science Club?" Michael asked. "I'm already signed up for it. Mr. Phillips is going to take us to the Aquarium and the Science Center and even to the Smithsonian in Washington."

Mom sighed and shook her head. "I'm afraid you two will have to make other plans for summer. We'll be moving in June, and I can't possibly drive all the way back to Baltimore every day."

"But I've been looking forward to Science Club all year!" Michael's voice rose, and I could tell he was trying hard not to cry.

"You'll have plenty of woods to explore," Mom said calmly. "Just think of all the wildlife you can observe and the insects you can add to your collection. Why, the day Dave and I were there, we saw a raccoon, a possum, a woodchuck, and dozens of squirrels." Mom leaned across the table, smiling, hoping to convince Michael that he was going to love living in a church way out in the country, miles away from Mr. Phillips and Science Club.

But Michael wasn't easy to convince. Slump-



## **"JUST WAIT, MOLLY. WAIT TILL HELEN COMES"**

Twelve-year-old Molly and her ten-year-old brother, Michael, have never liked their younger stepsister, Heather. Ever since their parents got married, she's made Molly and Michael's life miserable. Now their parents have moved them all to the country to live in a house that used to be a church, with a cemetery in the backyard. If that's not bad enough, Heather starts talking to a ghost named Helen and warning Molly and Michael that Helen is coming for them. Molly feels certain Heather is in some kind of danger, but every time she tries to help, Heather twists things around to get her into trouble. It seems as if things can't get any worse.

**But they do—when Helen comes.**

"Genuinely scary, complete with dark secrets from the past, unsettled graves, and a very real ghost."

—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

"An unusually scary, well-crafted ghost fantasy."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

**WINNER OF 11 STATE BOOK AWARDS**

Cover illustration copyright © 2008  
by Larry Rostant



**Clarion Books**  
www.clarionbooks.com

1032983

\$5.95

ISBN-13: 978-0-547-02864-4



9 780547 028644