

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# Loves Music, Loves to Dance

Mary Higgins Clark

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## About the Book

Erin and Darcy, answering personal ads as research for a TV show, discover a whole new New York sub-culture - adulterers, con men, the shy and frankly weird, all looking for love. And one man looking for something darker . . .

A serial killer who has got away with murder for fifteen years, and has promised himself just two more . . .

## About the Author

Mary Higgins Clark was born and raised in New York. It was only after she married that she started to write short stories; some years and many rejections later, she sold her first story for \$100. After the death of her first husband, she turned to write novels, and began to enjoy international success with the publication of *Where are the Children?* - her first suspense novel. The many novels she has written since are worldwide bestsellers.

Mary Higgins Clark graduated with a BA in Philosophy in 1974 from Fordham University, where she is now a trustee. She was on the Board of Directors of the Mystery Writers of America for many years, and was its president in 1987. She has received numerous awards, including the Horatio Alger Award, for her active participation in literacy programmes. In 1980 she was awarded France's Grand Prix de Littérature. Mary Higgins Clark remarried after many years of widowhood and now lives with her husband in Saddle River, New Jersey.

Also by Mary Higgins Clark

*All Around the Town*  
*While My Pretty One Sleeps*  
*The Anastasia Syndrome*  
*Weep No More, My Lady*  
*Stillwatch*  
*A Cry in the Night*  
*The Cradle Will Fall*  
*A Stranger is Watching the Children*  
*Where are the Children?*  
*Death on the Cape and Other Stories*  
*I'll Be Seeing You*

# LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE

Mary Higgins Clark



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ENDLESS THANKS to all who gave so much input and encouragement in the writing of this book—my editor, Michael V. Korda; his associate, senior editor Chuck Adams; my agent, Eugene H. Winick; Robert Ressler, Associate Director of Forensic Behavioral Services. Kudos to my daughter, Carol Higgins Clark, for her research, comments and suggestions and for burning the midnight oil with me as we raced to deadline. And of course, special thanks to the rest of my family and friends, who endured my usual self-doubting about whether or not I could tell this story; their saintly patience will have the cathedrals fighting for their bones.

FOR MY BROTHER JOHNNY'S BOYS,  
LUKE AND CHRIS HIGGINS,  
AND FOR HIS GRANDDAUGHTER, LAURA.

WITH LOVE.

*What is a friend?  
A single soul dwelling in two bodies.*

*—Aristotle*

*/*

*MONDAY*

*February 18*

*THE ROOM WAS* dark. He sat in the chair, his arms hugging his legs. It was happening again. Charley wouldn't stay locked in the secret place. Charley insisted on thinking about Erin. *Only two more*, Charley whispered. *Then I'll stop.*

He knew there was no use protesting. But it was becoming more and more dangerous. Charley was becoming reckless. Charley wanted to show off. *Go away, Charley, leave me alone*, he begged. Charley's mocking laugh roared through the room.

If only Nan had liked him, he thought. If only she'd invited him to her birthday party fifteen years ago ... He'd loved her so much! He'd followed her to Darien with the present he'd bought her at a discount house, a pair of dancing slippers. The cardboard shoebox had been plain and cheap, and he'd taken such trouble to decorate it, drawing a sketch of the slippers on the lid.

Her birthday was on March twelfth, during spring break. He'd driven down to Darien to surprise her with the present. He'd arrived to find her house ablaze with lights. Cars were being parked by valets. He'd driven slowly past, shocked and stunned to recognize students from Brown there.

It still embarrassed him to remember that he'd cried like a baby as he turned around to drive back. Then the thought of the birthday gift made him change his mind. Nan had told him that every morning at seven o'clock, rain or shine, she jogged in the wooded area near her home. The next morning he was there, waiting for her.

He remembered, still vividly today, her *surprise* at seeing him. *Surprise*, not pleasure. She'd stopped, her breath coming in gasps, a stocking cap hiding her silky blond hair, a school sweater over her running suit, her feet in Nikes.

He'd wished her a happy birthday, watched her open the box, listened to her insincere thanks. He'd put his arms around her. "Nan, I love you so much. Let me see how pretty your feet look in the slippers. I'll fasten them for you. We can dance together right here."

“Get lost!” She pushed him away, threw the box at him, started to jog past him.

It was Charley who had run after her, grabbed her, thrown her to the ground. Charley’s hands squeezed her throat until her arms stopped flailing. Charley fastened the slippers on her feet and danced with Nan, her head lolling on his shoulder. Charley lay her on the ground, one of the dancing slippers on her right foot, replacing the Nike on her left.

A long time had passed. Charley had become a blurred memory, a shadowy figure lurking somewhere in the recesses of his mind, until two years ago. Then Charley had started reminding him about Nan, about her slender, high-arched feet, her narrow ankles, her beauty and grace when she danced with him....

*Eney-meene-miney-mo. Catch a dancer by the toe. Ten piggy toes. The game his mother used to play when he was small. This little piggy went to market. This little piggy stayed home.*

“Play it ten times,” he used to beg when she stopped. “One for each piggy toe.”

His mother had loved him so much! Then she changed. He could still hear her voice. *“What are these magazines doing in your room? Why did you take those pumps from my closet? After all we’ve done for you! You’re such a disappointment to us.”*

When he reappeared two years ago, Charley ordered him to place ads in the personal columns. So many ads. Charley dictated what he had to say in the special one.

Now seven girls were buried on the property, each with a dancing slipper on the right foot, her shoe or sneaker or boot on the left....

He’d begged Charley to let him stop for a while. He didn’t want to do it anymore. He’d told Charley that the ground was still frozen—he couldn’t bury them, and it was dangerous to keep their bodies in the freezer....

But Charley shouted, "I want these last two to be found. I want them found just the way I let Nan be found."

Charley had chosen these last two the same way he had chosen the others after Nan. They were named Erin Kelley and Darcy Scott. They had each answered two different personal ads he'd placed. More important, they had each answered his *special* ad.

In all the replies he'd received, it was *their* letters and pictures that had jumped out at Charley. The letters were amusing, the cadence of the language attractive, almost like hearing Nan's voice, that self-deprecating wit, that dry, intelligent humor. And there were the pictures. Both were inviting in different ways....

Erin Kelley had sent a snapshot of herself perched on the corner of a desk. She'd been leaning forward a bit as though speaking, her eyes shining, her long, slim body poised as though she were waiting to be asked to dance.

Darcy Scott's picture showed her standing by a cushioned windowseat, her hand on the drapery. She was half-turned toward the camera. Clearly, she'd been surprised when her picture was taken. There were swatches of material over her arm, an absorbed, but amused, expression on her face. She had high cheekbones, a slender frame, and long legs accentuated by narrow ankles, her slim feet encased in Gucci loafers.

How much more attractive they would be in dancing slippers! he told himself.

He got up and stretched. The dark shadows falling across the room no longer disturbed him. Charley's presence was complete and welcome. No more nagging voice begged him to resist.

As Charley willingly receded into the dark cave from which he had emerged, he reread Erin's letter and ran his fingertips over her picture.

He laughed aloud as he thought of the beguiling ad that had summoned Erin to him.

It began: "*Loves Music, Loves to Dance.*"

*//*

*TUESDAY*

*February 19*

*GOLD. SLUSHY. RAW.* Terrible traffic. It didn't matter. It was good to be back in New York.

Darcy happily tossed off her coat, ran her fingers through her hair, and surveyed the neatly separated mail on her desk. Bev Rothhouse, skinny, intense, bright, a night student at Parsons School of Design and her treasured secretary, identified the stacks by order of importance.

"Bills," she said, pointing to the extreme right. "Deposit slips next. Quite a few of them."

"Substantial, I hope," Darcy suggested.

"Pretty good," Bev confirmed. "Messages over there. You've got requests to furnish two more rental apartments. I swear, you certainly knew what you were doing when you opened a secondhand business."

Darcy laughed. "Sanford and Son. That's me."

*Darcy's Corner, Budget Interior Design* was what the placard on the office door read. The office was in the Flatiron Building on Twenty-third Street.

"How was California?" Bev asked.

Amused, Darcy heard the note of awe in the other young woman's voice. What Bev really meant was, "How are your mother and father? What's it like to be with them? Are they really as gorgeous as they look in films?"

The answer, Darcy thought, is, Yes, they're gorgeous. Yes, they're wonderful. Yes, I love them and I'm proud of them. It's just that I've never felt comfortable in their world.

"When are they leaving for Australia?" Bev was trying to sound offhanded.

"They left. I caught the red-eye back to New York after seeing them off."

Darcy had combined a visit home with a business trip to Lake Tahoe, where she'd been hired to decorate a model ski house for budget-priced buyers. Her mother and father were embarking on an international tour with their play. She wouldn't see them for at least six months.

Now she opened the container of coffee she'd picked up at a nearby lunch counter and settled down at her desk.

"You look great," Bev observed. "I love that outfit."

The square-neck red wool dress and matching coat were part of the Rodeo Drive shopping tour her mother had insisted upon. "For such a pretty girl, you never pay enough attention to your clothes, darling," her mother had fussed. "You should emphasize that wonderful ethereal quality." As her father frequently observed, Darcy could have posed for the portrait of the maternal ancestor for whom she had been named. The original Darcy had left Ireland after the Revolutionary War to join her French fiancé, an officer with Lafayette's forces. They had the same wide-set eyes, more green than hazel, the same soft brown hair streaked with gold, the same straight nose.

"We've grown a bit since then," Darcy enjoyed pointing out. "I'm five eight. Darcy the First was a shrimp. That helps when you're trying to look ethereal." She had never forgotten when she was six and overheard a director comment, "How ever did two such stunning people manage to produce that mousy-looking child?"

She still remembered standing perfectly still, absorbing the shock. A few minutes later when her mother tried to introduce her to someone on the set, "And this is my little girl, Darcy," she had shouted "No!" and run away. Later she apologized for being rude.

This morning when she got off the plane at Kennedy, she'd dropped her bags at the apartment, then come directly to the office, not taking time to change into her usual working garb, jeans and a sweater. Bev waited for her to start sipping the coffee, then picked up the messages. "Do you want me to start getting these people for you?"

"Let me give Erin a quick call first."

Erin picked up on the first ring. Her somewhat preoccupied greeting told Darcy that she was already at her worktable. They'd been college roommates together at

Mount Holyoke. Then Erin had studied jewelry design. Recently she'd won the prestigious N. W. Ayer award for young designers.

Darcy had also found her professional niche. After four years of working her way up in an advertising agency, she had switched careers from account executive to budget interior decorating. Both women were now twenty-eight, and they were as close as they'd been when living together in school.

Darcy could picture Erin at her worktable, dressed in jeans and a baggy sweater, her red hair held back by a clip or in a ponytail, absorbed by her work, unaware of outside distraction.

The preoccupied "hello" gave way to a whoop of joy when Erin heard Darcy's voice.

"You're busy," Darcy said. "I won't keep you. Just wanted to report that I've arrived, and, of course, I wanted to see how Billy is."

Billy was Erin's father. An invalid, he'd been in a nursing home in Massachusetts for the past three years.

"Pretty much the same," Erin told her.

"How's the necklace going? When I phoned Friday you sounded worried." Just after Darcy had left last month, Erin had landed a commission from Bertolini Jewelers to design a necklace using the client's family gems. Bertolini was on a par with Cartier's and Tiffany's.

"That's because I was still terrified the design might be off base. It really was pretty intricate. But all is well. I deliver it tomorrow morning and if I say so myself, it's sensational. How was Bel-Air?"

"Glamorous." They laughed together, then Darcy said, "Update me on Project Personal."

Nona Roberts, a producer at Hudson Cable Network, had become friendly with Darcy and Erin at their health club. Nona was preparing a documentary on personal columns—about the kind of people who placed and answered the ads;

their experiences, good or bad. Nona had asked Darcy and Erin to assist in the research by answering some of the ads. “You don’t have to see anybody more than once,” she’d urged. “Half the singles at the network are doing it and having a lot of laughs. And who knows, you might meet someone terrific. Anyhow, think about it.”

Erin, typically the more daring, had been unusually reluctant. Darcy had persuaded her it could be fun. “We won’t place our own ads,” she argued. “We’ll just answer some that look interesting. We won’t give our addresses, just a phone number. We’ll meet them in public places. What’s to lose?”

They had started six weeks ago. Darcy had had time for only one date before she left on the trip to Lake Tahoe and Bel-Air. That man had written he was six one. As she told Erin afterward, he must have been standing on a ladder when he measured himself. Also he’d claimed he was an advertising executive. But when Darcy threw out a few names of agencies and clients, he was totally at sea. A liar and a jerk, she reported to Erin and Nona. Now, smiling in anticipation, Darcy asked Erin to fill her in on her most recent encounters.

“I’ll save it all for tomorrow night when we get together with Nona,” Erin said. “I’m writing every detail down in that notebook you gave me for Christmas. Suffice it to say, I’ve been out twice more since we talked. That brings the total to eight dates in the last three weeks. Most of them were nerds with absolutely no redeeming social value. One it turned out I’d met before. One of the new ones was really attractive and needless to say hasn’t called back. I’m meeting somebody tonight. He sounds okay, but let’s wait and see.”

Darcy grinned. “Obviously, I haven’t missed much. How many ads have you answered for me?”

“About a dozen. I thought it would be fun to send both our letters to some of the same ads. We can really compare

notes if those dudes call.”

“I love it. Where are you meeting tonight’s prize?”

“In a pub off Washington Square.”

“What does he do?”

“Corporate law. He’s from Philadelphia. Just relocating here. You can make tomorrow night, can’t you?”

“Sure.” They were meeting Nona for dinner.

Erin’s tone changed. “I’m glad you’re back in town, Darce. I’ve missed you.”

“Me too,” Darcy said heartily. “Okay, see you then.” She started to say good-bye, then impulsively asked, “What’s the name of tonight’s pig-in-a-poke?”

“Charles North.”

“Sounds upscale, waspy. Have fun, Erin-go-bragh.” Darcy hung up.

Bev was waiting patiently with the messages. Now her tone was frankly envious. “I swear, when you two talk, you sound like a couple of school kids. You’re closer than sisters. Thinking about *my* sister, I’d say you’re a lot closer than sisters.”

“You’re absolutely right,” Darcy said quietly.

*THE SHERIDAN GALLERY* on Seventy-eighth Street, just east of Madison Avenue, was in the midst of an auction. The contents of the vast country home of Mason Gates, the late oil baron, had drawn an overflow crowd of dealers and collectors.

Chris Sheridan observed the scene from the back of the room, reflecting with pleasure that it had been a coup to triumph over Sotheby’s and Christie’s for the privilege of auctioning this collection. Absolutely magnificent furniture from the Queen Anne period; paintings distinguished less by their technique than by their rarity; Revere silver that he knew would set off feverish bidding.

At thirty-three, Chris Sheridan still looked more like the linebacker he had been in college than a leading authority on antique furniture. His six-foot height was accentuated by his straight carriage. His broad shoulders tapered down to a trim waist. His sandy hair framed a strong-featured face. His blue eyes were disarming and friendly. As his competitors had learned, however, those eyes could quickly take on a keen, no-nonsense glint.

Chris folded his arms as he watched the final bids on a 1683 Domenico Cucci cabinet with panels of pietra dura and central reliefs of inlaid stones. Smaller and less elaborate than the pair Cucci made for Louis XIV, it was nevertheless a magnificent, flawless piece that he knew the Met wanted desperately.

The room quieted as the bidding between the two high-stakes players, the Met and the representative of a Japanese bank, continued. A tug on his arm made Chris turn with a distracted frown. It was Sarah Johnson, his executive assistant, an art expert whom he had coaxed away from a private museum in Boston. Her expression reflected concern. "Chris, I'm afraid there's a problem," she said. "Your mother's on the phone. She says she has to talk to you immediately. She sounds pretty upset."

"The problem is that damn program!" Chris strode toward the door, shoved it open, and, ignoring the elevator, raced up the stairs.

A month ago the popular television series *True Crimes* had run a segment about the unsolved murder of Chris's twin sister, Nan. At nineteen, Nan had been strangled while jogging near their home in Darien, Connecticut. Despite his vehement protests, Chris had not been able to prevent the camera crews from filming long shots of the house and grounds, nor from reenacting Nan's death in the nearby wooded area where her body had been found.

He had pleaded with his mother not to watch the program, but she had insisted on viewing it with him. The producers

had managed to find a young actress who bore a startling resemblance to Nan. The docudrama showed her jogging; the figure watching her from the protection of the trees; the confrontation; the attempt to escape, the killer tackling her, choking her, pulling the Nike from her right foot and replacing it with a high-heeled slipper.

The commentary was delivered by an announcer whose sonorous voice sounded gratuitously horrified. "Was it a stranger who accosted beautiful, gifted Nan Sheridan? She and her twin celebrated their nineteenth birthday the night before at the family mansion. Did someone Nan knew, someone who perhaps toasted her on her birthday, become her killer? In fifteen years no one has come forward with a shred of information that might solve this hideous crime. Was Nan Sheridan the random victim of a deranged monster, or was her death an act of personal vengeance?"

A montage of closing shots followed. The house and grounds from a different angle. The phone number to call "if you have any information." The last closeup was the police photo of Nan's body as it had been found, neatly placed on the ground, her hands folded together on her waist, her left foot still wearing the Nike, her right foot in the sequined slipper.

The final line: "Where are the mates to this sneaker, to this graceful evening shoe? Does the killer still have them?"

Greta Sheridan had watched the program dry-eyed. When it was finished, she'd said, "Chris, I've gone over it in my mind so often. That's why I wanted to see this. I couldn't function after Nan died, couldn't think. But Nan used to talk to me so much about everyone at school. I ... I just thought that seeing that program might make me recall something that could be important. Remember the day of the funeral? That huge crowd. All those young people from college. Remember Chief Harriman said that he was convinced her killer was sitting there among the mourners? Remember

how they had cameras set up to take pictures of everyone in the funeral home and at church?”

Then, as though a giant hand had smashed her face, Greta Sheridan had broken into heart-rending sobs. “That girl looked so much like Nan, didn’t she? Oh Chris, I’ve missed her so much all these years. Dad would still be alive if she were here. That heart attack was his way of grieving.”

I wish I’d taken an ax to every television in the house before I let Mother watch that damn program, Chris thought as he ran down the corridor to his office. The fingers of his left hand drummed on the desk as he grabbed the phone. “Mother, what’s wrong?”

Greta Sheridan’s voice was tense and unsteady. “Chris, I’m sorry to bother you during the auction, but the strangest letter just came.”

Another fallout from that stinking program, Chris fumed. All those crank letters. They ranged from psychics offering to conduct seances to people begging for money in exchange for their prayers. “I wish you wouldn’t read that garbage,” he said. “Those letters tear you apart.”

“Chris, this one is different. It says that in memory of Nan, a dancing girl from Manhattan is going to die on the evening of February nineteenth in exactly the way Nan died.” Greta Sheridan’s voice rose. “Chris, suppose this isn’t a crank letter? Is there anything we can do? Is there anyone we can warn?”

*DOUG FOX* PULLED on his tie, carefully twisted it into a precise knot, and studied himself in the mirror. He’d had a facial yesterday and his skin glowed. The body wave had made his thinning hair seem abundant and the sandy rinse completely covered the touch of gray that was emerging at his temples.

A good-looking guy, he assured himself, admiring the way his crisp white shirt followed the lines of his muscular chest and slim waist. He reached for his suit jacket, quietly appreciating the fine feel of the Scottish wool. Dark blue with faint pinstripes, accented by the small red print on his Hermès tie. He looked every inch the part of the investment banker, upstanding citizen of Scarsdale, devoted husband of Susan Frawley Fox, father of four lively, handsome youngsters.

No one, Doug thought with amused satisfaction, would suspect him of his other life: that of the single freelance illustrator with an apartment in the blessed anonymity of London Terrace on West Twenty-third Street, plus a hideaway in Pawling and a new Volvo station wagon.

Doug took a final look in the long mirror, adjusted his pocket handkerchief, and with a glance to make sure he hadn't forgotten anything, walked to the door. The bedroom always irritated him. Antique French provincial furniture, damn place done by an upscale interior designer, and Susan still managed to make it look like the inside of Fibber McGee's closet. Clothes piled on the chaise, silver toilet articles haphazardly strewn over the top of the dresser. Kindergarten drawings taped on the wall. Let me out, Doug thought.

The kitchen was the scene of the usual mayhem. Thirteen-year-old Donny and twelve-year-old Beth jamming food in their mouths. Susan warning that the school bus was down the block. The baby waddling around with a wet diaper and grubby hands. Trish saying she didn't want to go to kindergarten this afternoon, she wanted to stay home and watch "All My Children" with Mommy.

Susan was wearing an old flannel robe over her nightgown. She had been a very pretty girl when they were married. A pretty girl who'd let herself go. She smiled at Doug and poured him coffee. "Won't you have pancakes or something?"

“No.” Would she ever stop asking him to stuff his face every morning? Doug jumped back as the baby tried to embrace his leg. “Damn it, Susan, if you can’t keep him clean, at least don’t let him near me. I can’t go to the office looking grubby.”

“Bus!” Beth yelled. “Bye, Mom. Bye, Dad.”

Donny grabbed his books. “Can you come to my basketball game tonight, Dad?”

“Won’t be home till late, son. An important meeting. Next time for sure, I promise.”

“Sure.” Donny slammed the door as he left.

Three minutes later, Doug was in the Mercedes heading for the train station, Susan’s reproachful “Try not to be too late” ringing in his ears. Doug felt himself begin to unwind. Thirty-six years old and stuck with a fat wife, four noisy kids, a house in the suburbs. The American Dream. At twenty-two he’d thought he was making a smart move when he married Susan.

Unfortunately, marrying the daughter of a wealthy man wasn’t the same as marrying wealth. Susan’s father was a tightwad. Lend, never give. That motto had to be tattooed on his brain.

It wasn’t that he didn’t love the kids or that he wasn’t fond enough of Susan. It was just that he should have waited to get into this paterfamilias routine. He’d thrown his youth away. As Douglas Fox, investment banker, upstanding citizen of Scarsdale, his life was an exercise in boredom.

He parked and ran for the train, consoling himself with the thought that as Doug Fields, bachelor artist, prince of the personals, his life was swift and secretive, and when the dark needs came there was a way to satisfy them.

*III*

*WEDNESDAY*

*February 20*

*ON WEDNESDAY EVENING*, Darcy arrived at Nona Roberts's office promptly at six-thirty. She'd had a meeting with a client on Riverside Drive and phoned Nona to suggest they cab over to the restaurant together.

Nona's office was a cluttered box in a row of cluttered boxes on the tenth floor of the Hudson Cable Network. It held a somewhat battered oak desk piled with papers, several filing cabinets, the drawers of which did not fully close, shelves of reference books and tapes, a distinctly uninviting-looking love seat, and an executive swivel chair which Darcy knew no longer swiveled. A plant which Nona consistently forgot to water drooped wearily on the narrow windowsill.

Nona loved that office. Darcy privately wondered why it didn't destroy itself by spontaneous combustion. When she arrived, Nona was on the phone, so she went out seeking water for the plant. "It's begging for mercy," she said when she returned.

Nona had just completed the call. She jumped up to embrace Darcy. "A green thumb I have not." She was wearing a khaki wool jumpsuit that faithfully followed the lines of her small frame. A narrow leather belt with a white-gold clasp sculpted in the form of linked hands cinched her waist. Her medium-blond hair, streaked with touches of gray, was blunt-cut and barely reached her chin. Her animated face was interesting rather than pretty.

Darcy was glad to see that the pain in Nona's dark brown eyes had been almost completely replaced by an expression of wry humor. Nona's recent divorce had hit her hard. As she put it, "It's traumatic enough turning forty without your husband bumping you for a twenty-one-year-old nymphet."

"I'm running late," Nona apologized. "We're meeting Erin at seven?"

"Between seven and seven-fifteen," Darcy said, her fingers itching to skim the dead leaves from the plant.

“Fifteen minutes to get over there, provided I throw myself in front of an empty cab. Terrific. There’s one thing I’d like to do before we go. Why don’t you come with me and witness the compassionate side of television.”

“I wasn’t aware it had one.” Darcy reached for her shoulder bag.

All the offices rimmed a large central area which was crowded with secretaries and writers at their desks. Computers hummed and fax machines clattered. At the end of the room, an announcer was on camera giving a news update. Nona waved a general greeting as she passed. “There isn’t a single unattached person in that maze who isn’t answering the personal ads for me. As a matter of fact, I suspect there are some supposedly attached guys who are also quietly getting together with an intriguing box number.”

She led Darcy into a screening room and introduced her to Joan Nye, a pretty blonde who didn’t look more than twenty-two. “Joan does the obits,” she explained. “She just finished updating an important one and asked me to take a look at it.” She turned to Nye. “I know it will be fine,” she added reassuringly.

Joan sighed. “I hope so,” she said, and pushed the button to start the film rolling.

The face of film great Ann Bouchard filled the screen. The mellifluous voice of Gary Finch, the Hudson Cable anchorman, was properly subdued as he began to speak.

“Ann Bouchard won her first Oscar at the age of nineteen, when she replaced ailing Lillian Marker in the 1928 classic *Perilous Path*....”

Film clips of Ann Bouchard in her most memorable roles were followed by highlights of her personal life: her seven husbands, her homes, her well-publicized battles with studio executives, excerpts of interviews throughout her long