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MARY HIGGINS CLARK

Bestselling Author of While My Pretty One Sleeps



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New York Times
Bestseller

LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE



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“Mary Higgins Clark is a born storyteller.”—Washington Post

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POCKET BOOKS

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Acclaim for
MARY HIGGINS CLARK'S
Newest #1 *New York Times* Bestseller

**LOVES MUSIC,
LOVES TO
DANCE**

"Mary Higgins Clark has done it again with *LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE*—created another masterful suspense novel . . . filled with twists and turns. . . . It's another hit."

—*United Press International*

"Mary Higgins Clark, whose eight previous works were all terrific reads, outdoes herself with *LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE*. Clark grabs you from the git-go. . . . Brilliant . . ."

—*USA Today*

"Great plot, lots of romance. Plenty of suspense. Any one of the three would set a book far above its competition, but found together, as they are in Mary Higgins Clark's *LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE*, they make for a surefire winner."

—*Kansas City Star*

"The throat-clutching denouement is pure Clark—inevitable . . . and, ultimately, irresistible."

—*People*

A LITERARY GUILD MAIN SELECTION

“Mary Higgins Clark is at the top of her form with this one.”

—*Detroit News*

“Clark is one of America’s most successful thriller writers, and she shows why in this story. . . . Only a real pro can let herself be seen setting up the machinery and then still pull the rabbit out of the hat. Clark does just that. . . .”

—*Chicago Tribune*

“*LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE* is a chilling tale . . . a fascinating novel . . . classy suspense. . . . Mary Higgins Clark introduces her upper-middle-class characters in wonderfully drawn portraits . . . keeps the reader guessing. . . . She weaves suspense in and out of her social settings, treating us both to vivid descriptions and tense drama.”

—*Wichita Falls Times Record News*

“Clark’s fans both new and old have a treat in store in *LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE*, which will keep the reader interested and puzzled as to the killer’s identity. . . . This book is indeed up to her usual high standards.”

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“In *LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE*, Mary Higgins Clark has once again written a spine-tingling this-could-happen-today novel. . . . Don’t try this book if you’re looking for brief bedtime reading. It’s a quick read, all right—but the chills will stay with you for some time.”

—*Indianapolis Star*

“Mary Higgins Clark, like Alfred Hitchcock before her, stakes out a claim to a kind of fear that is absolutely terrifying because it bubbles under the surface of ordinary lives.”

—*Cosmopolitan*

“Clark’s story moves toward its conclusion like a whirlpool. . . . *LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE* is Mary Higgins Clark’s most intriguing yarn yet.”

—*New York Daily News*

“*LOVES MUSIC, LOVES TO DANCE* is a gracefully written thriller and . . . a genuine whodunit. . . . The novel’s narrative glides smoothly . . . and the tension level is steadily cranked up. . . . Although the villain is so finely drawn that we can sense his nature and feel his murderous rage, his identity remains the ultimate mystery until he launches his final act of terror.”

—*Orange County Register*

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The Anastasia Syndrome and Other Stories

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The Cradle Will Fall

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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

I

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 . . .

Ee-ney-me-ney-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.*"

II

TUESDAY

February 19

Cold. 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