

NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE FROM NEW LINE CINEMA

THE #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER!

THE
NOTEBOOK



Nicholas Sparks

A NOVEL



This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright © 1996 by Nicholas Sparks

Reading Group Guide copyright © 1999 by Nicholas Sparks and Warner Books, Inc. Excerpt from

The Wedding © copyright 2003 by Nicholas Sparks

All rights reserved.

Cover art copyright 2004 by New Line Cinema

Book design by L & G McRee

Warner Books

Hachette Book Group

237 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Vist our Web site at www.HachetteBookGroup.com

The "Warner Books" name and logo are trademarks of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

First eBook Edition: December 1999

ISBN: 978-0-446-93064-2

Contents

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Miracles](#)

[Ghosts](#)

[Reunion](#)

[Phone Calls](#)

[Kayaks and Forgotten Dreams](#)

[Moving Water](#)

[Swans and Storms](#)

[Courtrooms](#)

[An Unexpected Visitor](#)

[Crossroads](#)

[A Letter from Yesterday](#)

[Winter for Two](#)

[Reading Group Guide](#)

[A Q & A with Nicholas Sparks](#)

[Discussion Questions](#)

[Nicholas Sparks on Nicholas Sparks](#)

[Prologue](#)

[One](#)

THE WORDS OF LOVE...

“I am nothing special; of this I am sure. I am a common man with common thoughts, and I’ve led a common life. There are no monuments dedicated to me and my name will soon be forgotten, but I’ve loved another with all my heart and soul, and to me, this has always been enough.”

And so begins one of the most poignant and compelling love stories you will ever read...

ALL AMERICA LOVES *THE NOTEBOOK*

“A classic story of love found, lost, and regained....Sparks has a winning combination of style and story.”

—*Christian Science Monitor*

“Remarkable and memorable...beautiful.”

—*Baton Rouge Sunday Advocate (LA)*

“A highly romantic story.”

—*Cincinnati Post (OH)*

“Focuses on a man, a woman, and the transforming power of love....THE NOTEBOOK is shocking only in its simplicity of form and purity of line.”

—*Dallas Morning News*

“A touching story.”

—*San Antonio Express News (TX)*

“A one-night read....Sparks generates authentic emotional power....If you are in need of a good cry, THE NOTEBOOK is absolutely the right book.”

—*USA Today*

“A more romantic testament to love’s enduring miracle than Robert James Waller’s *The Bridges of Madison County*.”

—*Library Journal*

“Lovely...delightfully gentle....The right choice.”

—*Mobile Register (AL)*

“Short enough to read in an evening, but long enough to tell a story of real love and devotion that spans a couple’s life.”

—*Kinston Free Press (NC)*

“A warm, poignant, touching account of one of nature’s rarest commodities: real love...just enjoy the book.”

—*Jackson Clarion-Ledger (MS)*

“THE NOTEBOOK will tear a hole in your heart.... Anyone who does not sob through the last chapter has a heart of stone.”

—*Greenville News (SC)*

“A five-star writer...a story you will cry through and remember for a lifetime.”

—*Winter Haven News Chief (FL)*

“Run, do not walk, to your nearest bookstore or library to get a copy of this gem...a book for everyone who has ever loved or been loved, or dreamed of loving madly, truly, deeply. After finishing this little treasure, even the most jaded reader will be convinced that everlasting love exists.”

—*Mount Airy Gazette (MD)*

“Handled by Sparks with finesse...irrepressibly romantic.”

—*Abilene Reporter-News (TX)*

“Guaranteed to leave its readers in tears...a romantic tale, simply told, but it is an unforgettable one.”

—*Copley News Service*

“The tearjerker story of the year.”

—*Anderson Independent Mail (SC)*

“This poignant tale of love lost and found...resonates with an emotional vibrancy that will enchant readers.”

—*Bookshelf*

“A powerful read that makes it difficult to put the book down.”

—*Newport News Daily Press (VA)*

“Sparks is a true romantic who knows how to weave a sweetly sentimental story.”

—*Warner Robins Daily Sun (GA)*

“Without question, THE NOTEBOOK establishes Nicholas Sparks as a gifted storyteller.”

—*Lexington Herald-Leader (KY)*

“A haunting love story.”

—*Asheville Citizen-Times (NC)*

“A wonderful story of love and devotion...beautifully done, but I must warn everyone to have the hankies ready!”

—*Under the Covers Book Reviews*

“The kind of story that tugs hard on your emotions and makes you cry whether it’s Christmas or July.”

—*BookPage*

“This novel is full of love and sadness; its pages pass too quickly. You might lend THE NOTEBOOK to family and friends to read but be sure to get it back. You’ll want to read it again.”

—*Clark Suburban News (NJ)*

“Pulls at your heartstrings. Be ready, *Bridges of Madison County* fans. Watch out, Robert James Waller.”

—*Raleigh Spectator (NC)*

ALSO BY NICHOLAS SPARKS

Message in a Bottle

A Walk to Remember The Rescue

A Bend in the Road Nights in Rodanthe

The Guardian

The Wedding

Three Weeks with My Brother

*This book is dedicated with love to
Cathy,
my wife and my friend.*

Acknowledgments

This story is what it is today because of two special people, and I would like to thank them for everything they've done.

To Theresa Park, the agent who plucked me from obscurity. Thank you for your kindness, your patience, and the many hours you have spent working with me. I will be forever grateful for everything you've done.

To Jamie Raab, my editor. Thank you for your wisdom, your humor, and your good-hearted nature. You made this a wonderful experience for me, and I'm glad to call you my friend.

Miracles

Who am I? And how, I wonder, will this story end?

The sun has come up and I am sitting by a window that is foggy with the breath of a life gone by. I'm a sight this morning: two shirts, heavy pants, a scarf wrapped twice around my neck and tucked into a thick sweater knitted by my daughter thirty birthdays ago. The thermostat in my room is set as high as it will go, and a smaller space heater sits directly behind me. It clicks and groans and spews hot air like a fairy-tale dragon, and still my body shivers with a cold that will never go away, a cold that has been eighty years in the making. Eighty years, I think sometimes, and despite my own acceptance of my age, it still amazes me that I haven't been warm since George Bush was president. I wonder if this is how it is for everyone my age.

My life? It isn't easy to explain. It has not been the rip-roaring spectacular I fancied it would be, but neither have I burrowed around with the gophers. I suppose it has most resembled a blue-chip stock: fairly stable, more ups than downs, and gradually trending upward over time. A good buy, a lucky buy, and I've learned that not everyone can say this about his life. But do not be misled. I am nothing special; of this I am sure. I am a common man with common thoughts, and I've led a common life. There are no monuments dedicated to me and my name will soon be forgotten, but I've loved another with all my heart and soul, and to me, this has always been enough.

The romantics would call this a love story, the cynics would call it a tragedy. In my mind it's a little bit of both, and no matter how you choose to view it in the end, it does not change the fact that it involves a great deal of my life and the path I've chosen to follow. I have no complaints about my path and the places it has taken me; enough complaints to fill a circus tent about other things, maybe, but the path I've chosen has always been

the right one, and I wouldn't have had it any other way.

Time, unfortunately, doesn't make it easy to stay on course. The path is straight as ever, but now it is strewn with the rocks and gravel that accumulate over a lifetime. Until three years ago it would have been easy to ignore, but it's impossible now. There is a sickness rolling through my body; I'm neither strong nor healthy, and my days are spent like an old party balloon: listless, spongy, and growing softer over time.

I cough, and through squinted eyes I check my watch. I realize it is time to go. I stand from my seat by the window and shuffle across the room, stopping at the desk to pick up the notebook I have read a hundred times. I do not glance through it. Instead I slip it beneath my arm and continue on my way to the place I must go.

I walk on tiled floors, white in color and speckled with gray. Like my hair and the hair of most people here, though I'm the only one in the hallway this morning. They are in their rooms, alone except for television, but they, like me, are used to it. A person can get used to anything, if given enough time.

I hear the muffled sounds of crying in the distance and know exactly who is making those sounds. Then the nurses see me and we smile at each other and exchange greetings. They are my friends and we talk often, but I am sure they wonder about me and the things that I go through every day. I listen as they begin to whisper among themselves as I pass. "There he goes again," I hear, "I hope it turns out well." But they say nothing directly to me about it. I'm sure they think it would hurt me to talk about it so early in the morning, and knowing myself as I do, I think they're probably right.

A minute later, I reach the room. The door has been propped open for me, as it usually is. There are two others in the room, and they too smile at me as I enter. "Good morning," they say with cheery voices, and I take a moment to ask about the kids and the schools and upcoming vacations. We talk above the crying for a minute or so. They do not seem to notice; they have become numb to it, but then again, so have I.

Afterward I sit in the chair that has come to be shaped like me. They are finishing up now; her clothes are on, but still she is crying. It will become quieter after they leave, I know. The excitement of the morning always upsets her, and today is no exception. Finally the shade is opened and the nurses walk out. Both of them touch me and smile as they walk by. I wonder what this means.

I sit for just a second and stare at her, but she doesn't return the look. I

understand, for she doesn't know who I am. I'm a stranger to her. Then, turning away, I bow my head and pray silently for the strength I know I will need. I have always been a firm believer in God and the power of prayer, though to be honest, my faith has made for a list of questions I definitely want answered after I'm gone.

Ready now. On go the glasses, out of my pocket comes a magnifier. I put it on the table for a moment while I open the notebook. It takes two licks on my gnarled finger to get the well-worn cover open to the first page. Then I put the magnifier in place.

There is always a moment right before I begin to read the story when my mind churns, and I wonder, Will it happen today? I don't know, for I never know beforehand, and deep down it really doesn't matter. It's the possibility that keeps me going, not the guarantee, a sort of wager on my part. And though you may call me a dreamer or fool or any other thing, I believe that anything is possible.

I realize the odds, and science, are against me. But science is not the total answer; this I know, this I have learned in my lifetime. And that leaves me with the belief that miracles, no matter how inexplicable or unbelievable, are real and can occur without regard to the natural order of things. So once again, just as I do every day, I begin to read the notebook aloud, so that she can hear it, in the hope that the miracle that has come to dominate my life will once again prevail.

And maybe, just maybe, it will.

Ghosts

It was early October 1946, and Noah Calhoun watched the fading sun sink lower from the wraparound porch of his plantation-style home. He liked to sit here in the evenings, especially after working hard all day, and let his thoughts wander without conscious direction. It was how he relaxed, a routine he'd learned from his father.

He especially liked to look at the trees and their reflections in the river. North Carolina trees are beautiful in deep autumn: greens, yellows, reds, oranges, every shade in between. Their dazzling colors glow with the sun, and for the hundredth time, Noah Calhoun wondered if the original owners of the house had spent their evenings thinking the same things.

The house was built in 1772, making it one of the oldest, as well as largest, homes in New Bern. Originally it was the main house on a working plantation, and he had bought it right after the war ended and had spent the last eleven months and a small fortune repairing it. The reporter from the Raleigh paper had done an article on it a few weeks ago and said it was one of the finest restorations he'd ever seen. At least the house was. The remaining property was another story, and that was where he'd spent most of the day.

The home sat on twelve acres adjacent to Brices Creek, and he'd worked on the wooden fence that lined the other three sides of the property, checking for dry rot or termites, replacing posts when he had to. He still had more work to do on it, especially on the west side, and as he'd put the tools away earlier he'd made a mental note to call and have some more lumber delivered. He'd gone into the house, drunk a glass of sweet tea, then showered. He always showered at the end of the day, the water washing away both dirt and fatigue.

Afterward he'd combed his hair back, put on some faded jeans and a long-sleeved blue shirt, poured himself another glass of sweet tea, and

gone to the porch, where he now sat, where he sat every day at this time.

He stretched his arms above his head, then out to the sides, rolling his shoulders as he completed the routine. He felt good and clean now, fresh. His muscles were tired and he knew he'd be a little sore tomorrow, but he was pleased that he had accomplished most of what he had wanted to do.

Noah reached for his guitar, remembering his father as he did so, thinking how much he missed him. He strummed once, adjusted the tension on two strings, then strummed again. This time it sounded about right, and he began to play. Soft music, quiet music. He hummed for a little while at first, then began to sing as night came down around him. He played and sang until the sun was gone and the sky was black.

It was a little after seven when he quit, and he settled back into his chair and began to rock. By habit, he looked upward and saw Orion and the Big Dipper, Gemini and the Pole Star, twinkling in the autumn sky.

He started to run the numbers in his head, then stopped. He knew he'd spent almost his entire savings on the house and would have to find a job again soon, but he pushed the thought away and decided to enjoy the remaining months of restoration without worrying about it. It would work out for him, he knew; it always did. Besides, thinking about money usually bored him. Early on, he'd learned to enjoy simple things, things that couldn't be bought, and he had a hard time understanding people who felt otherwise. It was another trait he got from his father.

Clem, his hound dog, came up to him then and nuzzled his hand before lying down at his feet. "Hey, girl, how're you doing?" he asked as he patted her head, and she whined softly, her soft round eyes peering upward. A car accident had taken her leg, but she still moved well enough and kept him company on quiet nights like these.

He was thirty-one now, not too old, but old enough to be lonely. He hadn't dated since he'd been back here, hadn't met anyone who remotely interested him. It was his own fault, he knew. There was something that kept a distance between him and any woman who started to get close, something he wasn't sure he could change even if he tried. And sometimes in the moments right before sleep came, he wondered if he was destined to be alone forever.

The evening passed, staying warm, nice. Noah listened to the crickets and the rustling leaves, thinking that the sound of nature was more real and aroused more emotion than things like cars and planes. Natural things gave back more than they took, and their sounds always brought him back to the

way man was supposed to be. There were times during the war, especially after a major engagement, when he had often thought about these simple sounds. "It'll keep you from going crazy," his father had told him the day he'd shipped out. "It's God's music and it'll take you home."

He finished his tea, went inside, found a book, then turned on the porch light on his way back out. After sitting down again, he looked at the book. It was old, the cover was torn, and the pages were stained with mud and water. It was *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, and he had carried it with him throughout the war. It had even taken a bullet for him once.

He rubbed the cover, dusting it off just a little. Then he let the book open randomly and read the words in front of him:

This is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the wordless,
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson
done,
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the themes
thou lovest best,
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

He smiled to himself. For some reason Whitman always reminded him of New Bern, and he was glad he'd come back. Though he'd been away for fourteen years, this was home and he knew a lot of people here, most of them from his youth. It wasn't surprising. Like so many southern towns, the people who lived here never changed, they just grew a bit older.

His best friend these days was Gus, a seventy-year-old black man who lived down the road. They had met a couple of weeks after Noah bought the house, when Gus had shown up with some homemade liquor and Brunswick stew, and the two had spent their first evening together getting drunk and telling stories.

Now Gus would show up a couple of nights a week, usually around eight. With four kids and eleven grandchildren in the house, he needed to get out of the house now and then, and Noah couldn't blame him. Usually Gus would bring his harmonica, and after talking for a little while, they'd play a few songs together. Sometimes they played for hours.

He'd come to regard Gus as family. There really wasn't anyone else, at least not since his father died last year. He was an only child; his mother had died of influenza when he was two, and though he had wanted to at one time, he had never married.

But he had been in love once, that he knew. Once and only once, and a long time ago. And it had changed him forever. Perfect love did that to a person, and this had been perfect.

Coastal clouds slowly began to roll across the evening sky, turning silver with the reflection of the moon. As they thickened, he leaned his head back and rested it against the rocking chair. His legs moved automatically, keeping a steady rhythm, and as he did most evenings, he felt his mind drifting back to a warm evening like this fourteen years ago.

It was just after graduation 1932, the opening night of the Neuse River Festival. The town was out in full, enjoying barbecue and games of chance. It was humid that night—for some reason he remembered that clearly. He arrived alone, and as he strolled through the crowd, looking for friends, he saw Fin and Sarah, two people he'd grown up with, talking to a girl he'd never seen before. She was pretty, he remembered thinking, and when he finally joined them, she looked his way with a pair of hazy eyes that kept on coming. "Hi," she'd said simply as she offered her hand, "Finley's told me a lot about you."

An ordinary beginning, something that would have been forgotten had it been anyone but her. But as he shook her hand and met those striking emerald eyes, he knew before he'd taken his next breath that she was the one he could spend the rest of his life looking for but never find again. She seemed that good, that perfect, while a summer wind blew through the trees.

From there, it went like a tornado wind. Fin told him she was spending the summer in New Bern with her family because her father worked for R. J. Reynolds, and though he only nodded, the way she was looking at him made his silence seem okay. Fin laughed then, because he knew what was happening, and Sarah suggested they get some cherry Cokes, and the four of them stayed at the festival until the crowds were thin and everything closed up for the night.

They met the following day, and the day after that, and they soon became inseparable. Every morning but Sunday when he had to go to church, he would finish his chores as quickly as possible, then make a straight line to Fort Totten Park, where she'd be waiting for him. Because she was a newcomer and hadn't spent time in a small town before, they spent their days doing things that were completely new to her. He taught her how to bait a line and fish the shallows for largemouth bass and took her exploring through the backwoods of the Croatan Forest. They rode in

canoes and watched summer thunderstorms, and to him it seemed as though they'd always known each other.

But he learned things as well. At the town dance in the tobacco barn, it was she who taught him how to waltz and do the Charleston, and though they stumbled through the first few songs, her patience with him eventually paid off, and they danced together until the music ended. He walked her home afterward, and when they paused on the porch after saying good night, he kissed her for the first time and wondered why he had waited as long as he had. Later in the summer he brought her to this house, looked past the decay, and told her that one day he was going to own it and fix it up. They spent hours together talking about their dreams—his of seeing the world, hers of being an artist—and on a humid night in August, they both lost their virginity. When she left three weeks later, she took a piece of him and the rest of summer with her. He watched her leave town on an early rainy morning, watched through eyes that hadn't slept the night before, then went home and packed a bag. He spent the next week alone on Harkers Island.

Noah ran his hands through his hair and checked his watch. Eight-twelve. He got up and walked to the front of the house and looked up the road. Gus wasn't in sight, and Noah figured he wouldn't be coming. He went back to his rocker and sat again.

He remembered talking to Gus about her. The first time he mentioned her, Gus started to shake his head and laugh. "So that's the ghost you been running from." When asked what he meant, Gus said, "You know, the ghost, the memory. I been watchin' you, workin' day and night, slavin' so hard you barely have time to catch your breath. People do that for three reasons. Either they crazy, or stupid, or tryin' to forget. And with you, I knew you was tryin' to forget. I just didn't know what."

He thought about what Gus had said. Gus was right, of course. New Bern was haunted now. Haunted by the ghost of her memory. He saw her in Fort Totten Park, their place, every time he walked by. Either sitting on the bench or standing by the gate, always smiling, blond hair softly touching her shoulders, her eyes the color of emeralds. When he sat on the porch at night with his guitar, he saw her beside him, listening quietly as he played the music of his childhood.

He felt the same when he went to Gaston's Drug Store, or to the Masonic theater, or even when he strolled downtown. Everywhere he looked, he saw her image, saw things that brought her back to life.

It was odd, he knew that. He had grown up in New Bern. Spent his first seventeen years here. But when he thought about New Bern, he seemed to remember only the last summer, the summer they were together. Other memories were simply fragments, pieces here and there of growing up, and few, if any, evoked any feeling.

He had told Gus about it one night, and not only had Gus understood, but he had been the first to explain why. He said simply, “My daddy used to tell me that the first time you fall in love, it changes your life forever, and no matter how hard you try, the feelin’ never goes away. This girl you been tellin’ me about was your first love. And no matter what you do, she’ll stay with you forever.”

Noah shook his head, and when her image began to fade, he returned to Whitman. He read for an hour, looking up every now and then to see raccoons and possums scurrying near the creek. At nine-thirty he closed the book, went upstairs to the bedroom, and wrote in his journal, including both personal observations and the work he’d accomplished on the house. Forty minutes later, he was sleeping. Clem wandered up the stairs, sniffed him as he slept, and then paced in circles before finally curling up at the foot of his bed.

Earlier that evening and a hundred miles away, she sat alone on the porch swing of her parents’ home, one leg crossed beneath her. The seat had been slightly damp when she sat down; rain had fallen earlier, hard and stinging, but the clouds were fading now and she looked past them, toward the stars, wondering if she’d made the right decision. She’d struggled with it for days—and had struggled some more this evening—but in the end, she knew she would never forgive herself if she let the opportunity slip away.

Lon didn’t know the real reason she left the following morning. The week before, she’d hinted to him that she might want to visit some antique shops near the coast. “It’s just a couple of days,” she said, “and besides, I need a break from planning the wedding.” She felt bad about the lie but knew there was no way she could tell him the truth. Her leaving had nothing to do with him, and it wouldn’t be fair of her to ask him to understand.

It was an easy drive from Raleigh, slightly more than two hours, and she arrived a little before eleven. She checked into a small inn downtown, went to her room, and unpacked her suitcase, hanging her dresses in the

closet and putting everything else in the drawers. She had a quick lunch, asked the waitress for directions to the nearest antique stores, then spent the next few hours shopping. By four-thirty she was back in her room.

She sat on the edge of the bed, picked up the phone, and called Lon. He couldn't speak long, he was due in court, but before they hung up she gave him the phone number where she was staying and promised to call the following day. Good, she thought while hanging up the phone. Routine conversation, nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing to make him suspicious.

She'd known him almost four years now; it was 1942 when they met, the world at war and America one year in. Everyone was doing their part, and she was volunteering at the hospital downtown. She was both needed and appreciated there, but it was more difficult than she'd expected. The first waves of wounded young soldiers were coming home, and she spent her days with broken men and shattered bodies. When Lon, with all his easy charm, introduced himself at a Christmas party, she saw in him exactly what she needed: someone with confidence about the future and a sense of humor that drove all her fears away.

He was handsome, intelligent, and driven, a successful lawyer eight years older than she, and he pursued his job with passion, not only winning cases, but also making a name for himself. She understood his vigorous pursuit of success, for her father and most of the men she met in her social circle were the same way. Like them, he'd been raised that way, and in the caste system of the South, family name and accomplishments were often the most important consideration in marriage. In some cases, they were the only consideration.

Though she had quietly rebelled against this idea since childhood and had dated a few men best described as reckless, she found herself drawn to Lon's easy ways and had gradually come to love him. Despite the long hours he worked, he was good to her. He was a gentleman, both mature and responsible, and during those terrible periods of the war when she needed someone to hold her, he never once turned her away. She felt secure with him and knew he loved her as well, and that was why she had accepted his proposal.

Thinking these things made her feel guilty about being here, and she knew she should pack her things and leave before she changed her mind. She had done it once before, long ago, and if she left now, she was sure she would never have the strength to return here again. She picked up her pocketbook, hesitated, and almost made it to the door. But coincidence had

pushed her here, and she put the pocketbook down, again realizing that if she quit now, she would always wonder what would have happened. And she didn't think she could live with that.

She went to the bathroom and started a bath. After checking the temperature, she walked to the dresser, taking off her gold earrings as she crossed the room. She found her makeup bag, opened it, and pulled out a razor and a bar of soap, then undressed in front of the bureau.

She had been called beautiful since she was a young girl, and once she was naked, she looked at herself in the mirror. Her body was firm and well proportioned, breasts softly rounded, stomach flat, legs slim. She'd inherited her mother's high cheekbones, smooth skin, and blond hair, but her best feature was her own. She had "eyes like ocean waves," as Lon liked to say.

Taking the razor and soap, she went to the bathroom again, turned off the faucet, set a towel where she could reach it, and stepped in gingerly.

She liked the way a bath relaxed her, and she slipped lower in the water. The day had been long and her back was tense, but she was pleased she had finished shopping so quickly. She had to go back to Raleigh with something tangible, and the things she had picked out would work fine. She made a mental note to find the names of some other stores in the Beaufort area, then suddenly doubted she would need to. Lon wasn't the type to check up on her.

She reached for the soap, lathered up, and began to shave her legs. As she did, she thought about her parents and what they would think of her behavior. No doubt they would disapprove, especially her mother. Her mother had never really accepted what had happened the summer they'd spent here and wouldn't accept it now, no matter what reason she gave.

She soaked a while longer in the tub before finally getting out and toweling off. She went to the closet and looked for a dress, finally choosing a long yellow one that dipped slightly in the front, the kind of dress that was common in the South. She slipped it on and looked in the mirror, turning from side to side. It fit her well and made her look feminine, but she eventually decided against it and put it back on the hanger.

Instead she found a more casual, less revealing dress and put that on. Light blue with a touch of lace, it buttoned up the front, and though it didn't look quite as nice as the first one, it conveyed an image she thought would be more appropriate.