



One Great Book: Volume II, Episode 1 *Love Walked In* by Marisa de los Santos

[Show Notes](#)

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One Great Book Volume II, Book 1: *Love Walked In*

[UPBEAT INTRO MUSIC]

Hey readers, I'm Anne Bogel, and you're listening to *One Great Book*, the short-form podcast from the team behind *What Should I Read Next*, where each week I pull one stand-out selection off my personal bookshelves and tell you all about it in ten minutes or less.

[MUSIC]

"Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery."

Jane Austen wrote those words to begin her final chapter of *Mansfield Park*. But they could easily have been spoken by another author, one who lives and writes today. In the works of Marisa de los Santos, sad things happen—of course they do, plots are driven by conflict—but hopefulness is always a theme. And even though she takes us, the readers, to difficult places with her characters, we can trust she won't leave us there. Some writers take you to dark places, and that is their role. But Marisa de los Santos believes *her* role is to tell stories with happy endings.

We're starting our summer season today, a time when so many readers are looking for feel-good reads, but ones with substance. And for these readers, I emphatically recommend Marisa's debut novel *Love Walked In*, because it is One. Great. Book.

[MUSIC]



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"My life—my real life—started when a man walked into it, a handsome stranger in a perfectly cut suit, and, yes, I know how that sounds." That's the opening line. The voice belongs to Cornelia, a hopeless romantic who is obsessed with the epic love stories portrayed in classic films, but floundering in her own life. She once thought she had purpose—she even began a graduate program in English lit, but dropped out because she was afraid if she stayed another minute, she'd never enjoy reading again. Nothing else has seemed to fit her just right, so at age 31, she's underemployed at a coffee shop, with no clear idea of what she might do next. But then one October morning a Cary Grant look alike walks through the door—and of course she falls for him. How could she not? He's dashing and dreamy, and they enjoy witty repartee right from the get-go, like Hepburn and Tracy.

That chance meeting takes her life in a whole new direction, though, as it turns out, "the man was more the harbinger of change than the change itself." Cornelia's life shifts when she begins to build an unlikely friendship with her new boyfriend's 11-year-old daughter, Clare. Her life expands even more when her old friend Teo comes to town for an extended visit.



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Love Walked In is told alternately from the perspectives of Cornelia and Clare. Cornelia may not have found her path yet, but Clare is also floundering—or more like drowning—as her home life becomes less and less stable, for reasons that seems to be beyond anyone’s control, least of all her mother’s, who is suffering from what Clare can clearly see is mental illness, but she’s 11 and has no idea what to do about it. As the story unfolds, the reader can see awareness slowly dawning on Cornelia, and as she begins to understand her role in Clare’s life, we cheer her on as she formulates a plan and finds a way out for Clare.

[MUSIC]

Together they navigate big transitions and tough decisions, and they do so with the help of Teo, an old friend from back home in Virginia who Cornelia practically grew up with, and who’s now married to her sister. Teo has a gift for showing up at the right time, for saying the right thing, and making himself indispensable to the people who love him. And if Clare develops a massive crush on Teo and his dreamy green eyes right off the bat—well, you can’t really blame her. Plenty of readers have confessed the same.

A special note for the legions of passionate *Anne of Green Gables* fans: Cornelia’s name has always put me in mind of the similar Cordelia, as in, the name Anne Shirley longed to have for her own, and if you feel that the two characters could be kindred spirits, you’re in good company. As a matter of fact, Anne Shirley gets a mention in *Love Walked In*, quite early, on page 15, thanks to Clare’s obsession with orphans in literature. (And later Cornelia reminds us that there’s a character in *Anne’s House of Dreams* named Cornelia, a fact I had quite forgotten.)

Word to the wise: thanks to Cornelia’s love of old movies, this book can make you walk away with a lengthy to-watch list, featuring stars like Cary Grant, Bette Davis, and of course, Katharine Hepburn. In Cornelia’s words, “If you haven’t seen *The Philadelphia Story*, stop what you are doing, rent it, and watch it.” Because until you do, “you will be living a partial and colorless life.” I’ll admit, she’s persuasive.



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In *Love Walked In*, as in life, conflict is part of growth—yet you can trust these characters will find their way to happiness, and Marisa emphatically believes that *true* happiness is never boring. You can't help but cheer for them as they wade through the tricky waters of friendship, heartbreak, and love. One of Marisa's core beliefs is that real love allows you to be fully, wholly yourself, and you see her characters embody that in these pages, as they *earn* their happy endings.

De los Santos is a poet by training, and it shows in her prose. She has a sense for the sounds of words, and their rhythms, which makes her work a pleasure to read. But saying the language is beautiful is not code for “this book is boring.” *Love Walked In* has all the characteristics of a good binge read: it's a real page-turner, with strong storytelling and well-developed characters you can root for.

In short, if you're intrigued by the sound of a contemporary novel that channels old romantic comedies, has real heart and real substance, and is carried along by the essential belief that happiness makes for terrific reading, *Love Walked In* may be the next great book you're looking for.

Readers, visit modernmrsdarcy.com/onegreatbook to learn more about *Love Walked In* and all of the great books in this volume and in Volume I. If you haven't listened to all of Volume I go back and give those a listen. And be sure you are subscribed in your favorite podcast player because I've got more great books coming your way in Volume II.

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I'd love to hear what you think about *Love Walked In* on Twitter or Instagram @AnneBogel that's Anne with an E, B as in books, O-G-E-L. You can also find me on Instagram @WhatShouldIReadNext. That's the title of my long form podcast where each week a reader tells me three books they love, one book they don't, and what they're reading now, and I recommend three titles they should read next.

Thanks to Kellen Pechacek for his sound design on today's episode.

Readers, that's it for this episode, thanks so much for listening.

And as Rainer Maria Rilke said, "ah, how good it is to be among people who are reading."

Happy reading, everyone.