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Butterfly in the Rain: The 1927 Abduction and Murder of Marion Parker

James L. Neibaur

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On December 17, 1927 in Los Angeles, twelve year old Marion Parker, daughter of a prominent banker, was called to the school office where a stranger told her that her father had been in an accident and that she must leave with him right away. Fewer than 48 hours later, she was dead.

What started as a tragic, but otherwise ordinary, kidnapping turned out to be a shocking murder by one of the period's most twisted killers, William Edward Hickman. James L. Neibaur takes a step into history, depicting how this abduction was soon labeled the "crime of the century" and sparked a change in the nation's attention to such cases. With a media-driven nationwide manhunt, one of the biggest and most wide-ranging in California history, and then a desperate attempt at sparing the killer's life with the unfamiliar insanity plea, this infamous case left the abduction and murder of Marion Parker to be etched into 1920s pop culture.

The murder of Marion Parker brought to light the unthinkable reality of child abduction. Neibaur resourcefully weaves together the events surrounding the crime in the context of the contemporary culture and attitudes of the late 1920s, covering the impact of the media's first involvement in a criminal justice case, and how the admired notions of the glamorized '20s were crushed by this ordinary family's chilling reality.

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