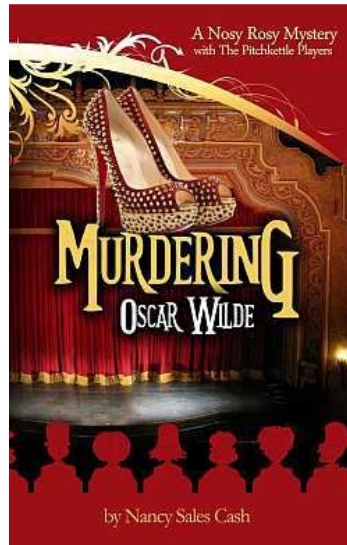


“Murdering Oscar Wilde”

By Nancy Sales Cash



CHAPTER 1

I was plenty worried, but trying not to show it. Peering around the big basement room of ShoeBooties’ restaurant, I did my best to sound optimistic. “It’ll be fine for our play-launchin’ party tomorrow afternoon.”

The very next minute, though, I caved. “B-b-but—” my old stutter always came back when I was stressed “—d-do you think this room will work all right for rehearsals? I was so grateful to ShoeBooties for offerin’ it that I accepted without even asking you.” When I risked a glance at Samantha, though, my real fear burst out. I was about to fail, for the first time in my life, despite what my mother-in-law said. And this failure would be big-time. “Is it o-k-kay for the last play we’ll ever put on in the Marbury Community Theater?”

“Whoa, there. What on earth do you mean?” From her nearly six feet of height Samantha shot me one of the withering looks she reserved for egomaniac actresses, overbearing board members and lazy students. “We’re in trouble, but I’d never go that far.”

“You know it’s t-t-true! There’s more ridin’ on this play than ever before. We are hanging onto our theater – and the Players – by a *thread*.”

“Rosy, we’ve been through thin times before.”

“Yes, b-but this is the end of the road. It’s make-or-break time. If *Earnest* isn’t a success–” I slid a finger across my throat and lolled out my tongue.