

Three Women Sleuths in **SKIN DEEP** and Other Stories

by
Sara Paretsky
Sue Grafton
Barbara Wilson



Edited with Notes by
Kazuhiko Yoshida

KENKYUSHA

—Three Women Sleuths in—

SKIN DEEP

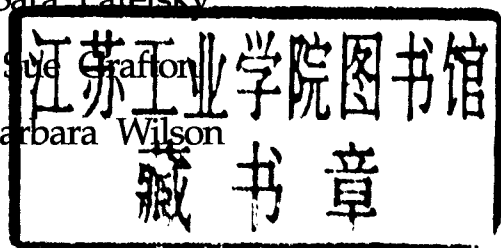
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〈検印省略〉

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は し が き

推理小説の女王と言われた Agatha Christie は取材に訪れた新聞や雑誌の記者に向かって、自分の立場は「まず妻で、次いで作家である」と語っていた。彼女ほどの存在でもこのような発言をしなければならないほど、女性作家に対する当時の世間の目は厳しいものがあった。そのために、19 世紀の女性作家の中には、男性の名前を使って作品を発表するというも行なわれた。プロンテ姉妹は、Acton, Currer, Ellis Bell という名前を用いたし、George Eliot は Mary Ann Evans のことであり、George Sand とは Lucie Dupin Dudevant のことであるのはよく知られた事実である。

しかしこのような女性作家に対する偏見は現在でも完全に払拭されたとは言い難く、アメリカペンクラブの会長であった Norman Mailer が国際ペンクラブの総会で「女性が男性と同じ筆力をもつのは不可能だ」との発言をしたのは、そう遠い昔の話ではない。したがって、女性作家が作品で女性の私立探偵を登場させることがあっても、これまでの男性探偵のイメージを変えるような状況を作り出すことはご法度であった。

Dorothy Sayers が誕生させた女性探偵に Harriet Vane がいるが、物語の中でいろいろあっても、結局のところ問題解決を行なうのは男性の探偵であった。Peter Wimsey はひとめで事件の本質を見通して、数日を出ずして事件の解決に到達する。

その後、女性の社会的地位に変化が生じて、裁判官、弁護士、医師、殺人課刑事、パトロール警官など、これまで男の領域と考えられていた職業に数多くの女性が進出するようになった。それに伴って、推理小説の世界にも変化が訪れた。殺人事件を調査してみずからそれを解決する女性探偵の出番となったのである。Amanda Cross が *In the Last Analysis* (1981) で登場させた Kate Fansler は、そのためにたいへん新鮮な印象を与えて読者を大いに魅了した。

当初はおずおずと始まった小さな流れではあったが、それが激流と化すのにはそれほどの時間はかからなかった。それまでは私立探偵と言えば男性と相場が決まっていた、a private detective [investigator] の代名詞はもっぱら

he が受け持っていた。しかし今や she という可能性があるどころか、むしろその可能性の方が高いという情勢になってきた。こうして脚光を浴びるにいたった女性探偵 (women sleuths) は、Marcia Muller の Sharon McCone のほかに本書に登場する Sara Paretsky の V. I. Warshawski, それに Sue Grafton の作品で活躍する Kinsey Millhone の3人が特に有名である。

また現代の推理小説において私立探偵の双璧を作り出したのは男性なら Robert B. Parker, 女性なら Sue Grafton だという評価もなされている。本書で取り上げた3人目の作家は Barbara Wilson で、彼女の “Theft of the Poet” の場面はイギリスである。本書では、3人の女性探偵の、シカゴ、カリフォルニア、イギリスと異なった地域、風土での活躍ぶりを存分に楽しんでもらおうという趣向である。

なお、1986年に Sara Paretsky の提唱で発足したのが Sisters in Crime (SinC) という団体である。女性作家による推理小説、サスペンス小説を盛り立てていこうとの趣旨で設立されたもので、現在の会員は世界で1,200人を越えたと発表されている。彼女はまた、女性探偵が登場する女性作家による短編を収録した *A Woman's Eye* という短編集の編集者であることも付言しておきたい。どうやら男性の読者をも大いに楽しませてくれる女性探偵が続々と登場してきそうな形勢である。

次に本書に収録した3人の作家を紹介すると、まず Sara Paretsky (1947-) はカンザス州に生まれて、のちにシカゴに移り住んでいる。保険会社の役員を経て現在は文筆活動に専念しており、彼女の創り出した女性探偵は既に紹介した V. I. Warshawski である。

この女性私立探偵はジョギングを毎日欠かすことなく、また歌を歌うのも大好きときている。そしてシカゴ・カブズの大的ファンでもある。なかなかタフな活躍ぶりは定評のあるところであるが、ただ筋道立ててものを考えるような人柄とは言い難く、彼女自身の言葉によれば “I solve my problems better by acting than thinking. That's what makes me a good detective.” (私は考えるよりも行動によって問題解決を計る方が得意である。それこそが私が名探偵であるゆえんである) と言っている。

次の Sue Grafton は1940年にケンタッキー州のルーイヴィルに生まれている。彼女は1980年代に犯罪小説に革命を起こしたとされる3人のうちのひとりで、あとのふたりは先に紹介した Marcia Muller と Sara Paretsky である。Sue Grafton はアルファベット順に並べた作品群で有名になったが、

このシリーズの最初の作品は“A” *Is for Alibi* (1982) である。邦訳はLまで刊行されていて“L” *Is for Lawless* (1995) がそのタイトルである。なお日本語訳はすべて早川書房から出版されていて、いずれも入手可能である [『アリバイのA』『泥棒のB』『死体のC』『欺しのD』『証拠のE』『逃亡者のF』『探偵のG』『殺人のH』『無実のI』（以上ハヤカワ・ミステリ文庫）『裁きのJ』『殺害者のK』『無法のL』（以上ハヤカワ・ノヴェルズ）]。

Barbara Wilson (1951-) は小説家、翻訳家、出版社経営者といった顔を持っている。1960年代後半に大学を中退して、スペイン語、ドイツ語、スカンジナビア語を独学で勉強した。スカンジナビアの女性作家の作品を翻訳したこともあり、1970年代には調査専門のジャーナリストとして活躍した。1976年には共同で Seal Press という出版社を設立している。

彼女の作品で、レズビアン^aの探偵が登場するのは *Murder in the Collective* (1984) であり、売春を主題にしたのが *Sisters of the Road* (1986) である。また *The Dog Collar Murders* (1989) という社会問題を主題にした作品を発表するかたわら、ロンドン在住の翻訳家である Cassandra Reilly を主人公にした *Gaudi Afternoon* (1991) を刊行している。本書に収めた “Theft of the Poet” の主人公もこの Cassandra Reilly である。

なお、本書に収録した3篇の注釈を作成するに際しては、研究社出版編集部の松元久恵氏の綿密な仕事ぶりに大いに助けられた。特に記して感謝の意を表したい。

1996年8月

吉田一彦

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SKIN DEEP

by Sara Paretsky

1

The warning bell clangs angrily and the submarine dives sharply. Everyone to battle stations. The Nazis pursuing closely, the bell keeps up its insistent clamor, loud, urgent, filling my head. My hands are wet: I can't remember what my
5 job is in this cramped, tiny boat. If only someone would turn off the alarm bell. I fumble with some switches, pick up an intercom. The noise mercifully stops.

"Vic! Vic, is that you?"

"What?"

10 "I know it's late. I'm sorry to call so late, but I just got home from work. It's Sal, Sal Barthele."

"Oh, Sal. Sure." I looked at the orange clock readout. It was four-thirty. Sal owns the Golden Glow, a bar in the south Loop I patronize.

15 "It's my sister, Vic. They've arrested her. She didn't do it. I know she didn't do it."

"Of course not, Sal — Didn't do what?"

"They're trying to frame her. Maybe the manager . . . I don't

know."

I swung my legs over the side of the bed. "Where are you?"

She was at her mother's house, 95th and Vincennes. Her sister had been arrested three hours earlier. They needed a lawyer, a good lawyer. And they needed a detective, a good detective. Whatever my fee was, she wanted me to know they could pay my fee. 5

"I'm sure you can pay the fee, but I don't know what you want me to do," I said as patiently as I could.

"She — they think she murdered that man. She didn't even know him. She was just giving him a facial. And he dies on her." 10

"Sal, give me your mother's address. I'll be there in forty minutes."

The little house on Vincennes was filled with neighbors and relatives murmuring encouragement to Mrs. Barthele. Sal is very black, and statuesque. Close to six feet tall, with a majestic carriage, she can break up a crowd in her bar with a look and a gesture. Mrs. Barthele was slight, frail, and light-skinned. It was hard to picture her as Sal's mother. 15 20

Sal dispersed the gathering with characteristic firmness, telling the group that I was here to save Evangeline and that I needed to see her mother alone.

Mrs. Barthele sniffed over every sentence. "Why did they do that to my baby?" she demanded of me. "You know the police, you know their ways. Why did they come and take my baby, who never did a wrong thing in her life?" 25

As a white woman, I could be expected to understand the machinations of the white man's law. And to share responsi-

bility for it. After more of this meandering, Sal took the narrative firmly in hand.

Evangeline worked at La Cygnette, a high-prestige beauty salon on North Michigan. In addition to providing facials and
5 their own brand-name cosmetics at an exorbitant cost, they massaged the bodies and feet of their wealthy clients, stuffed them into steam cabinets, ran them through a Bataan-inspired exercise routine, and fed them herbal teas. Signor Giuseppe would style their hair for an additional charge.

10 Evangeline gave facials. The previous day she had one client booked after lunch, a Mr. Darnell.

“Men go there a lot?” I interrupted.

Sal made a face. “That’s what I asked Evangeline. I guess it’s part of being a Yuppie — go spend a lot of money getting
15 cream rubbed into your face.”

Anyway, Darnell was to have had his hair styled before his facial, but the hairdresser fell behind schedule and asked Evangeline to do the guy’s face first.

Sal struggled to describe how a La Cygnette facial
20 worked — neither of us had ever checked out her sister’s job. You sit in something like a dentist’s chair, lean back, relax — you’re naked from the waist up, lying under a big down comforter. The facial expert — cosmetician was Evangeline’s official title — puts cream on your hands and sticks them into
25 little electrically heated mitts, so your hands are out of commission if you need to protect yourself. Then she puts stuff on your face, covers your eyes with heavy pads, and goes away for twenty minutes while the face goo sinks into your hidden pores.

Apparently while this Darnell lay back deeply relaxed, someone had rubbed some kind of poison into his skin. "When Evangeline came back in to clean his face, he was sick — heaving, throwing up, it was awful. She screamed for help and started trying to clean his face — it was terrible, he kept vomit-
ing on her. They took him to the hospital, but he died around
ten tonight.

"They came to get Baby at midnight — you've got to help her, V.I. — even if the guy tried something on her, she never did a thing like that — she'd haul off and slug him, maybe, but
rubbing poison into his face? You go help her."

2

Evangeline Barthele was a younger, darker edition of her mother. At most times, she probably had Sal's energy — sparks of it flared now and then during our talk — but a night in the holding cells had worn her down.

I brought a clean suit and makeup for her: justice may be blind but her administrators aren't. We talked while she changed.

"This Darnell — you sure of the name? — had he ever been to the salon before?"

She shook her head. "I never saw him. And I don't think the other girls knew him either. You know, if a client's a good tipper or a bad one they'll comment on it, be glad or whatever that he's come in. Nobody said anything about this man."

"Where did he live?"

She shook her head. "I never talked to the guy, V.I."

"What about the PestFree?" I'd read the arrest report and talked briefly to an old friend in the M.E.'s office. To keep roaches and other vermin out of their posh Michigan Avenue offices, La Cygnette used a potent product containing a wonder chemical called chorpyrifos. My informant had been awestruck — "Only an operation that didn't know shit about chemicals would leave chorpyrifos lying around. It's got a toxicity rating of five — it gets you through the skin — you only need a couple of tablespoons to kill a big man if you know where to put it."

Whoever killed Darnell had either known a lot of chemistry or been lucky — into his nostrils and mouth, with some rubbed into the face for good measure, the pesticide had made him convulsive so quickly that even if he knew who killed him he'd have been unable to talk, or even reason.

Evangeline said she knew where the poison was kept — everyone who worked there knew, knew it was lethal and not to touch it, but it was easy to get at. Just in a little supply room that wasn't kept locked.

"So why you? They have to have more of a reason than just that you were there."

She shrugged bitterly. "I'm the only black professional at La Cygnette — the other blacks working there sweep rooms and haul trash. I'm trying hard not to be paranoid, but I gotta wonder."

She insisted Darnell hadn't made a pass at her, or done anything to provoke an attack — she hadn't hurt the guy. As for anyone else who might have had opportunity, salon employees were always passing through the halls, going in and out of

the little cubicles where they treated clients — she'd seen any number of people, all with legitimate business, in the halls, but she hadn't seen anyone emerging from the room where Darnell was sitting.

When she finally got to bond court later that morning, I tried ⁵ to argue circumstantial evidence — any of La Cygnette's fifty or so employees could have committed the crime, since all had access and no one had motive. The prosecutor hit me with a very unpleasant surprise: the police had uncovered evidence linking my client to the dead man. He was a furniture buyer ¹⁰ from Kansas City who came to Chicago six times a year, and the doorman and the maids at his hotel had identified Evangeline without any trouble as the woman who accompanied him on his visits.

Bail was denied. I had a furious talk with Evangeline in one ¹⁵ of the interrogation rooms before she went back to the holding cells.

"Why the hell didn't you tell me? I walked into the courtroom and got blindsided."

"They're lying," she insisted. ²⁰

"Three people identified you. If you don't start with the truth right now, you're going to have to find a new lawyer and a new detective. Your mother may not understand, but for sure Sal will."

"You can't tell my mother. You can't tell Sal!" ²⁵

"I'm going to have to give them some reason for dropping your case, and knowing Sal it's going to have to be the truth."

For the first time she looked really upset. "You're my lawyer. You should believe my story before you believe a bunch of

strangers you never saw before."

"I'm telling you, Evangeline, I'm going to drop your case. I can't represent you when I know you're lying. If you killed Darnell we can work out a defense. Or if you didn't kill him
5 and knew him we can work something out, and I can try to find the real killer. But when I know you've been seen with the guy any number of times, I can't go into court telling people you never met him before."

Tears appeared on the ends of her lashes. "The whole reason
10 I didn't say anything was so Mama wouldn't know. If I tell you the truth, you've got to promise me you aren't running back to Vincennes Avenue talking to her."

I agreed. Whatever the story was, I couldn't believe Mrs. Barthele hadn't heard hundreds like it before. But we each
15 make our own separate peace with our mothers.

Evangeline met Darnell at a party two years earlier. She liked him, he liked her — not the romance of the century, but they enjoyed spending time together. She'd gone on a two-week trip to Europe with him last year, telling her mother she
20 was going with a girlfriend.

"First of all, she has very strict morals. No sex outside marriage. I'm thirty, mind you, but that doesn't count with her. Second, he's white, and she'd murder me. She really would. I think that's why I never fell in love with him — if we wanted
25 to get married I'd never be able to explain it to Mama."

This latest trip to Chicago, Darnell thought it would be fun to see what Evangeline did for a living, so he booked an appointment at La Cygnette. She hadn't told anyone there she knew him. And when she found him sick and dying she'd

panicked and lied.

"And if you tell my mother of this, V.I. — I'll put a curse on you. My father was from Haiti and he knew a lot of good ones."

"I won't tell your mother. But unless they nuked Lebanon 5 this morning or murdered the mayor, you're going to get a lot of lines in the paper. It's bound to be in print."

She wept at that, wringing her hands. So after watching her go off with the sheriff's deputies, I called Murray Ryerson at the *Herald-Star* to plead with him not to put Evangeline's liaison 10 in the paper. "If you do she'll wither your testicles. Honest."

"I don't know, Vic. You know the *Sun-Times* is bound to have some kind of screamer headline like DEAD MAN FOUND IN FACE-LICKING SEX ORGY. I can't sit on a story like this when all the 15 other papers are running it."

I knew he was right, so I didn't push my case very hard.

He surprised me by saying, "Tell you what: you find the real killer before my deadline for tomorrow's morning edition and I'll keep your client's personal life out of it. The sex scoop came 20 in too late for today's paper. The *Trib* prints on our schedule and they don't have it, and the *Sun-Times* runs older, slower presses, so they have to print earlier."

I reckoned I had about eighteen hours. Sherlock Holmes had solved tougher problems in less time. 25

3

Roland Darnell had been the chief buyer of living-room fur-

nishings for Alexander Dumas, a high-class Kansas City department store. He used to own his own furniture store in the nearby town of Lawrence, but lost both it and his wife when he was arrested for drug smuggling ten years earlier. Because of
5 some confusion about his guilt — he claimed his partner, who disappeared the night he was arrested, was really responsible — he'd only served two years. When he got out, he moved to Kansas City to start a new life.

I learned this much from my friends at the Chicago police.
10 At least, my acquaintances. I wondered how much of the story Evangeline had known. Or her mother. If her mother didn't want her child having a white lover, how about a white ex-con, ex- (presumably) drug-smuggling lover?

I sat biting my knuckles for a minute. It was eleven now. Say
15 they started printing the morning edition at two the next morning, I'd have to have my story by one at the latest. I could follow one line, and one line only — I couldn't afford to speculate about Mrs. Barthele — and anyway, doing so would only get me killed. By Sal. So I looked up the area code for
20 Lawrence, Kansas, and found their daily newspaper.

The *Lawrence Daily Journal-World* had set up a special number for handling press inquiries. A friendly woman with a strong drawl told me Darnell's age (forty-four); place of birth (Eudora, Kansas); ex-wife's name (Ronna Perkins); and ex-
25 partner's name (John Crenshaw). Ronna Perkins was living elsewhere in the country and the *Journal-World* was protecting her privacy. John Crenshaw had disappeared when the police arrested Darnell.

Crenshaw had done an army stint in Southeast Asia in the