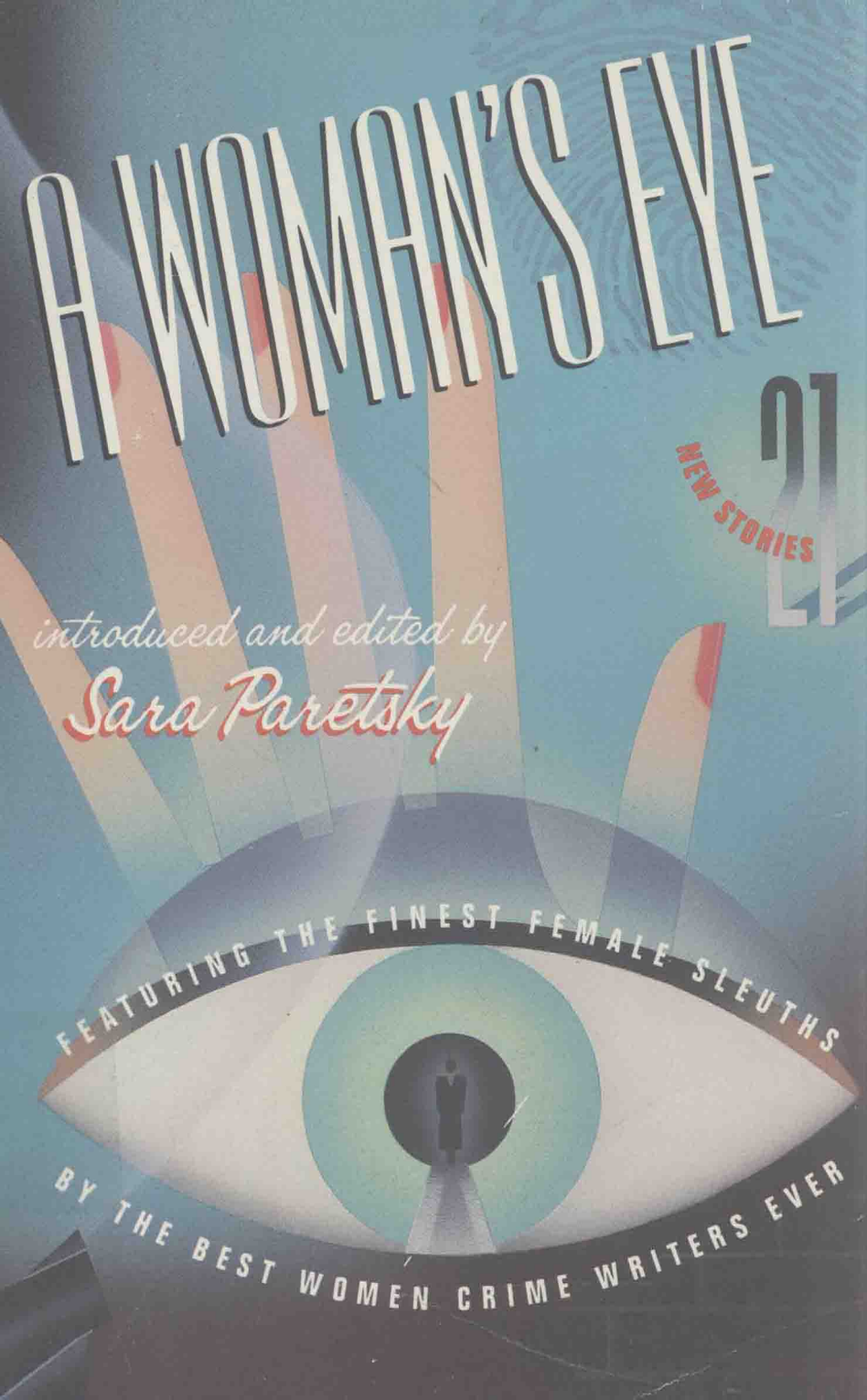


A WOMAN'S EYE



NEW STORIES

21

introduced and edited by
Sara Paretsky

FEATURING THE FINEST FEMALE SLEUTHS

BY THE BEST WOMEN CRIME WRITERS EVER

A WOMAN'S EYE



*edited by
Sara Paretsky*



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EYE OF A WOMAN

*an introduction
by Sara Paretsky*

"My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own."

The Angel in the House spoke these words to Virginia Woolf when Woolf first tried to write for publication. The Angel was a phantasm, but its speech crystallized all the voices Woolf had heard from childhood on, telling her that women should never have a mind or wish of their own. Woolf says she struggled with this Angel for years, trying to kill it so that she could find her own voice. "She died hard," the artist reports. "Her fictitious nature was of great assistance to her. It is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality."

Women have been wrestling with that Angel for many centuries. It is a difficult phantom to overpower because it speaks in so many voices and with so much authority behind it. In some cases the authority is quite specific. John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts Bay, wrote in 1645 that the poet Anne Hopkins "has fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, . . . by occasion of giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books." He added that "if she had

attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to women . . . she had kept her wits."

This kind of authority, this active pressure to keep women doing "such things as belong to women," made it difficult for women to join the ranks of storytellers. Of course, we all look admiringly at the poet Sappho—all except the Athenian men who destroyed much of her work because she was praised more highly than their favorite Pindar. And we see the Lady Murasaki, the eleventh-century creator of the first novel, whose father—recognizing her talent—lamented she had not been born a boy. She only had the minor hurdle of learning to write by secretly looking over her brothers' shoulders—her lamenting father had forbidden her direct education.

By 1700 we find more than one woman writer per century, but to see a continuous chain of female storytellers we can look back only two hundred years. During those two centuries women struggled hard for the right to be published and read. In the nineteenth century they often wrote under men's names to gain an audience—Acton, Curren, and Ellis Bell for the Brontë sisters; George Eliot for Mary Ann Evans; and George Sand for Lucie Dupin Dudevant. George Sand wrote most of her enormous oeuvre at night, starting work at two or three in the morning after finishing with the management of her large household or her numerous lovers. And it is only in this century that we find enough women writing that we no longer see ourselves as odd, or worry, like the seventeenth-century poet Anne Finch, that the masculine art of poetry is making us crabbed and unwomanly.

In some cases, women struggling to express themselves faced a bombardment of wholesale anger—furious reviews, social ostracism, public excoriation—so intense that they stopped writing. Kate Chopin experienced this reaction after publishing *The Awakening* in 1899. The anger against her was so intense that she wrote nothing else for publication. She died five years later at the age of fifty-three, broken by the forcible silencing of her voice.

Edna Pontellier, the heroine of *The Awakening*, married, with two children, leaves her husband in order to paint—and in so doing falls in love with a younger man. She commits suicide in the end, but this fate did not exonerate her or her creator, either in 1900 or today. Over and over reviewers have castigated Chopin for Edna's "selfishness." In 1970 George Spangler condemned Chopin for Edna's "ruthless determination to go her own way" that is "disturbing, even alienating."

Contrast Chopin's fate, and that of her heroine, with Goethe and Faust. At the end of a long life of debauchery Faust "*ist gerichtet, ist gerettet*"—he is judged and saved—a fate his creator, who glorified his own numerous seductions in poems and journals, no doubt expected for himself. Do any biographers of Goethe take him to task for "selfishness" or find Faust "dis-

turbing, even alienating"? The strong expression of sexual desire is not just condoned in the male hero—it makes him more heroic.

In a woman that desire is a sign at best of selfishness, at worst of psychosis. The character Glenn Close plays in *Fatal Attraction*, Alex Forrest, shows that we still find female sexuality—outside of marriage, and specifically married maternity—so shocking and debasing that the character must be deranged. And as with Chopin's Edna Pontellier, the only fitting end for Alex Forrest is death.

It is the struggle to find a voice, to kill the Angel, to figure out what women really want, what our stories really are, that absorbs the energy of many women writers. The voices that tell us we can't do it, or we shouldn't do it, continue to blare at us. They may be loud and raucous, like Norman Mailer, addressing International PEN a few years ago while head of PEN USA, and saying that it isn't possible for women to write as well as men. It's not hard to imagine what threat women present to Mailer's vision of his masculinity that drives him to insist that you "have to have balls" to write well; it is hard to understand why an organization dedicated to freeing imprisoned writers should elect him president.

Mailer's statements are so extreme that many people laugh at him, but he's far from alone in pushing down women's voices. Other people merely express themselves more softly. Women who write strong, even angry stories are no longer told that they are "unwomanly" or "selfish." Today, as Carolyn Heilbrun points out, we hear that we are "shrill," "strident," or, worst of all, feminists. We also find most women excluded from the sacred mystical canon that Allan Bloom, Mortimer Adler, and others keep firing. And a Chicago area critic recently explained that feminists by definition cannot write great books.

In addition to needing considerable courage even to tell stories, we women have also had to figure out what our stories are. The image of ourselves as inconstant, duplicitous, stupid, illogical, using our bodies to seduce and subvert men is such an ancient, ingrained part of our tradition, reinforced in fairy tales, epics, history, that to counteract these images by telling women's stories makes for very heavy work. Writers as different as George Eliot and Virginia Woolf suffered from migraines brought on by the stress of this work and the self-doubts that come from countering so widely accepted an authority.

It was Virginia Woolf who first clearly spelled out the central problem of the female artist: the conflict between her interior vision and the expectation that she subordinate that vision to her perceived primary role as a self-sacrificing angel.

Just being able to articulate this problem was an important step toward resolving it. But many women artists—including the crime writer—continue

to experience stress in taking their own visions seriously. Agatha Christie, who wrested total artistic control for production from her publishers in the twenties, and whose residuals brought in over a million pounds a year at her death, often told reporters that she regarded herself as a wife first, a writer second. One should take this statement seriously: as a sign not of poor-mouthing, but of internal conflict between her success and what she thought her womanly role should be.

In writing mysteries, women for many years created primarily male heroes: Sayers with Wimsey, Tey with Grant, Marsh with Alleyn. When the detectives were women, they were women who did not upset male stereotypes. Jane Marple is everybody's elderly spinster aunt, essentially asexual. While sharp and perceptive, she uses her insights to shore up the patriarchal society in which she lives and operates on its fringes rather than as a professional crime investigator. Lady Molly of Scotland Yard was a bit more daring, but Baroness Orczy assures us repeatedly that Lady Molly never lost her feminine daintiness. Dorothy Sayers created a complex character in Harriet Vane, but could not allow her—or the female dons of Shrewsbury—to solve their own problems. They fester in an environment of fear and mutual suspicion for almost a year before Peter Wimsey arrives. He is able to see through the situation at a glance and in a matter of days resolves the problem for them.

Since Sayers created Harriet Vane sixty years ago women have developed active careers in many spheres. In 1878 the U.S. Supreme Court barred women lawyers because of their "natural timidity and delicacy." Now we have a woman Justice. When I started my first book twelve years ago, Chicago women were fighting for the right to be homicide detectives and patrol officers instead of matrons at the women's jails. Today ten percent of the force is female. We don't think twice about seeing women on the beat, in the courtroom, the operating room, or other exciting arenas.

It's because we see women doing so much that the horizons of our fiction have expanded. We can create heroines who act independently without guilt—not Jane Marples, or even Harriet Vanes—but Kate Fansler, Sharon McCone, or Kinsey Millhone, who are all present in this anthology. And our unmarried women can have affairs without needing to kill themselves afterward, or turning out to be villains like Brigid O'Shaughnessy or Chandler's Dolores Gonzalez.

Does that make this group of writers better than Sayers? By no means. Nor in terms of craft and talent does she have many equals today. But what we do have is the freedom to present an independent woman hero without fear of excoriation.

Kate Chopin, the Brontës, and other pioneers made it possible for us to believe in the female artist. They turned publishing into a routine, accessible, acceptable business—they obviated the need to publish under the cloak of an

anonymous lady, as Austen had to, or under a man's name, as Sand and Eliot felt compelled to. Sayers, Woolf, and others, taking advantage of this ease of publication, made us start thinking about what a genuine woman's voice might be.

Twenty-five years ago Amanda Cross delighted readers with Kate Fansler in *In the Final Analysis*. Kate, professional, witty, feminine, took over where Dorothy Sayers left Harriet Vane: she could solve her own problems. She could investigate and resolve a murder. She could have a warm and wonderful lover but stand apart from him. Cross presented the hero we'd been waiting for all our lives.

What began as a trickle of strong women a quarter of a century ago—with Christy Oper working a New York Transit Authority beat, followed by Cordelia Gray doing an *Unsuitable Job for a Woman*—has grown into a great outpouring of women's stories. Marcia Muller gave us Sharon McCone in *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* in 1977. Five years later Sue Grafton and I flung Kinsey Millhone and V. I. Warshawski on an unsuspecting world; English PI Anna Lee joined us at the same time. Since then the number of interesting women heroes has grown past counting. They range from the private eyes to Julie Hayes in Dorothy Salisbury Davis's books, whose efforts to find her own strength mirror the struggles many American women have gone through in the last twenty years.

This book gathers together a sample of what women have to say about women in the final decade of our century. The collection begins with Liza Cody's story "Lucky Dip." Being homeless and on the street are issues that we all worry about. Cody goes beyond worry to show us through Crystal's eyes what that life is really like. A street girl, Crystal is presented without gloss or sentimentality. The horrors she witnesses, and how she copes with them, may chill you, but will also give you food for serious thought.

The collection ends with another young girl in a different situation. Emma, in Dorothy B. Hughes's "That Summer at Quichiquois," is trying to sort out the passions of the adults around her. This haunting story shows us many different ways to view people, passion, and even forensic evidence.

Between Cody and Hughes we see women struggling with a range of problems. Nancy Pickard takes a new look at jealousy and possessiveness in "The Scar." The New Zealand setting is unusual and arresting, but the feelings, brought to life with delicate realism, have been with us for thousands of years. Private eyes Kinsey Millhone, Sharon McCone, Kiernan O'Shaughnessy, and Lônia Guiu solve cases that are far from conventional. Famous amateurs like Jemima Shore, Julie Hayes, and Kate Fansler are here. Along with these professional crime solvers are mothers, grandmothers, battered wives, social workers, and Barbara Wilson's startling story about one of the world's most revered dead poets. We have the debut of Carolyn Wheat's

new hero, New York Transit cop Maureen Gallagher, whose struggles with sobriety and authority are as important as the torched subway bums she fights for.

Mary Wings's "Kill the Man for Me" is guaranteed to provoke late-night discussions: how far is it permissible to go in seeking justice or revenge? And if her solution shocks you, ask yourself if you were also offended by Charles Bronson in *Death Wish*.

The one thing these stories have in common is the message that there is no one way to view women. Nor is there one way women see themselves. What we have all learned in the last three hundred and fifty years is that the reading and writing of books are "such things as belong to women."

A WOMAN'S EYE

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LIZA CODY is the winner of a Creasey Award for her very popular Anna Lee series of mysteries and has also been nominated for the Edgar. Her rich novels featuring private eye Anna include *Under Contract*, *Bad Company*, *Dupe*, *Head Case*, and *Stalker*, while *Rift* is a stunning novel of suspense set in East Africa. She makes her home in England.

LUCKY DIP

Liza Cody



He was sitting against a bit of broken wall, looking almost normal. I could see him because of the full moon. It was a lovely moon with wispy clouds like old lady's hair across its face.

I watched the man for a couple of minutes, but he didn't move. Well, he wouldn't, would he? I could see he didn't belong—he was far too well dressed—and I wondered how he got there. This is not a part of the city men dressed like him go.

He had not been dead long. You could tell that at a glance because he still had his shoes on. If you die here you won't keep your shoes for ten minutes. You won't keep your wallet for ten seconds, dead or alive.

With this in mind I had a quick look, right and left, for anyone lurking in the shadows. If I'd seen anyone bigger than me, I'd have stayed where I was. Moon shadows are blacker than hearses, and I knew I wasn't the only one out that night. But in the Trenches only the big are bold, and someone big would have been rummaging in the remains already. So I hopped out from behind my pile of rubble and made a run for it.

I reached him in no time at all and grabbed his left lapel. Seven out of ten men are right-handed, and the chances are seven to three anything valuable

will be in a left-hand inside pocket. I took a swift dip and came up with the winnings.

By now I could hear stirrings—a snap of rotten wood, a slide of brick dust. I flicked his watch off his wrist and almost in the same motion made a dive into his jacket pocket. Then I got on my toes and legged it.

I legged it out of the Trenches completely, because, although there are plenty of places to hide, the people I wanted to hide from know them as well as I do. The Trenches are useful as long as it's only the law you want to avoid. Robbing a corpse isn't nice, and I didn't want to take all that trouble only to be robbed myself.

It was just a quick jog to the High Street. On the way I stopped under a street lamp to look at what I had in my hand. The wallet was fat snakeskin, the watch was heavy gold, and the loose change was all pound coins and fifty-pence pieces. For once in my short life I'd struck oil.

All the same you don't break old habits for the sake of one lucky dip, and when I saw all those plump taxpayers doing their late Christmas shopping on the High Street, I stuck out my hand as usual.

"Got any spare change, please?" I said, as always. "For a cup of tea. For a bed for the night. For a hot meal."

And as always they coughed up like princes or told me to get myself a job. It was nice that night. I perform best when there's no pressure, and by the time I'd worked my way down to the station, I'd made a nice little pile. But it doesn't do to loll around and count your takings in public, so I jumped a tube to Paddington.

My sister has this room in Paddington. She lives in Camberwell with her boyfriend, so this room's just for business. I don't trust my sister's boyfriend, but I do trust my sister, up to a point, which was why I went to her business address. You may meet all sorts of funny blokes there, but you won't meet her boyfriend, and that suits me. It suits him, too, if you want to know the truth: he doesn't like me any more than I like him.

When we first came down to the city, Dawn and me, we relied on each other; we didn't have anyone else to turn to. But after she took up with him and he set her up in business, she didn't need me like she used to, and we drifted apart.

The trouble with Dawn is she always needs a man. She says she doesn't feel real without one. Feeling real is important to Dawn so I suppose I shouldn't criticize. But her men have been nothing but a disappointment. You could say I'm lucky to have an older sister like Dawn: she's an example to me. I'd rather die than turn out like her.

Still, she is my sister, and we've been through a lot together. Especially in this last year when we came down to the city together. And before that, when our mum kicked us out, or rather, kicked Dawn out because of the

baby. And after that when Dawn's boyfriend kicked Dawn out because of the baby.

I have never been hungrier than I was last year trying to look after Dawn. She lost the baby in the end, which was a bit of a relief to me. I don't know how we would have managed if she'd had it. I don't think she would have coped very well either. It's much harder to get a man when you've got a little baby to look after.

Anyway, that's all in the past, and now Dawn has business premises in Paddington.

I waited outside until I was sure she was alone, and then I went up and knocked on the door.

"Crystal!" she said when she opened the door. "What you doing here? You got to be more careful—I might've had company."

"Well, you haven't," I said. And she let me in, wrinkling her nose and pulling her kimono tight. I don't like that kimono—it's all hot and slippery. Since she got her hair streaked, Dawn has taken to wearing colors that would look all right on a tree in autumn but turn her hard and brassy.

"Gawd," she said, "you don't half look clatty. Can't you get your hair cut? That coat looks like it's got rats living in it."

I took the coat off, but she didn't like the one underneath either.

"What a pong," she said.

"I had a wash last week," I told her. "But I would like to use your bathroom." I wanted somewhere private to look at what I'd got off the dead man.

"You can't stop around here," she said, worried. "I got someone coming in half an hour." She looked at her watch.

I sat in her bathroom and looked at the dead man's watch. It had *Cartier* written on the face, and it really was proper gold. Quality, I thought, and felt a bit sad. By rights a man with a watch like that shouldn't end up in the Trenches without a stitch on. Because that's how he'd be by now, pale and naked in the moonlight. Nobody would recognize him without his coat and suit and shoes. He'd just look like anyone. We're into recycling in the Trenches.

To cheer myself up I looked at his wallet, and when I counted up I found I had 743 pounds and 89 pence. And I couldn't use half of it.

Imagine me trying to change a fifty-pound note! There's a chance in a million a cat with cream on his whiskers milked a cow, but that's good odds compared to the chance I'd come by a fifty-quid note honestly. I couldn't even pop the watch. One look at a watch like that and any honest pawnbroker would turn me in. A dishonest one would rip me off quick as a wink. Either way the watch was no good for me.

I borrowed my sister's toothbrush and had a fast swipe with her deodorant

before I joined her again. You never know when you're going to find clean water next so it pays to make use of what there is.

"Do me a favor, Crystal," she said, when she saw me. "Bugger off before you frighten the horses."

"Brought you a Christmas present," I said and handed her the watch.

"You're barmy, Crystal." She stared at the watch like it was a spider in her bed. "Who'd you nick this off?"

"I never," I told her. "I found it." And it was true because the feller was dead. It wasn't as if it was his property because there wasn't a him anymore for it to belong to. When you're dead you're gone. And that's final. Dead men don't own watches.

Even with a Christmas present, Dawn wouldn't let me stop for the night. It's a funny thing, if I hadn't had 743 pounds, 89 pence in my pocket, I wouldn't have wanted to. If it had just been the 89 pence, I'd've been quite happy sleeping out.

But having things is dangerous. Having things makes you a mark. It's like being pretty. If you don't believe me, look at Dawn. She's pretty and she's been a mark from the time she was eleven. Being pretty brought her nothing but trouble. She's always had to have someone to protect her. I'm glad I'm not pretty.

There's a hospital down the Harrow Road so I went there. I couldn't decide what to do, so I sat in Casualty till they chucked me out. It's a pity there aren't more places you can go and sit in at night to have a quiet think. It's hard to think on the hoof, and if you are cold or hungry, thinking is not on your mind at all.

It seemed to me, after a while, that the best place to go was where I slept last night. Some might say it was a daft idea to go back to a place that was rousted, but I thought if the police had been there last night, it would be deserted tonight.

Twenty-seven Alma-Tadema Road is a condemned house. They say it's unsafe. There are holes in the roof and holes in the floors, but it is perfectly safe if you are sober, tread carefully, and don't light fires. That was what went wrong last night: we had a couple of winos in, and one of them got cold just before daybreak.

When I got there, I saw that they had nailed more boards across the front door and downstairs windows. I could get in, but it would take time. There were still people up and about so, to be on the safe side, I would have to come back later if I wanted more than a few minutes' kip.

I walked on past and went down to the Embankment. It is quite a long walk, and by the time I got there I was hungry. Actually, I'm hungry all the time. Dawn says she thinks I must have worms and I probably do, but mostly I think it's just my age. Someone like Bloody Mary does almost as much

walking as I do, but she doesn't seem to need half the fuel. She stopped growing years ago.

There are a lot of women like Bloody Mary, but I mention her because she was the one I picked up on the Embankment that night, huffing and puffing along with her basket on wheels.

"Oh, me poor veins," she said, and we walked on together. I slowed down a bit so she could keep up.

"There's a stall open by the Arches," she said. "Couldn't half murder a cuppa."

She used to sing in the streets—walk up and down Oxford Street bellowing "Paper Moon" with her hand held out—but after a bad dose of bronchitis last year her voice went.

At the Arches I got us both a cup of tea and a sausage sandwich.

"Come into money, Crys?" Johnny Pavlova asked. It is his stall and he has a right to ask, because now and then when there's no one around to see, he gives me a cup free. As he always says, he's not a charitable institution, but catch him in the right mood and he'll slip you one like the best of them.

All the same it reminded me to be careful.

"Christmas," I said. "They were feeling generous down the High Street."

"Down the High Street?" he said. "You ain't been on that demolition site, have you? I heard they found this stiff bollock-naked there this evening."

"Did they?" I said as if I couldn't care less. "I didn't hear nothing. I was just working the High Street."

I went over and sat with Bloody Mary under the Arches. Johnny Pavlova doesn't like us hanging too close round his stall. He says we put the respectable people off their hot dogs.

"Will you look at that moon," Bloody Mary said, and she pulled her coats tight.

It was higher in the sky now and smaller, but there was still a good light to see by.

"Where you kipping tonight, Crystal?" she asked. I knew what she meant. A moon like that is a freezing moon this time of year.

Just then, Brainy Brian came slithering in beside us so I didn't have to answer. He was coughing his lungs out as usual, and he didn't say anything for a while. I think he's dying. You can't cough like that and live long. He used to go to college in Edinburgh, but then he started taking drugs and he failed all his exams. He did all right down here in the city because to begin with he was very pretty. But druggies don't keep their looks any longer than they keep their promises. Now he's got a face like a violin and ulcers all over his arms and legs.

When he recovered his breath he said, "Share your tea, Crystal?"

We'd already finished ours so we didn't say anything for a while. But Brian

was so sorry-looking, in the end I went to get another two, one for him and one for Bloody Mary. While they were sucking it up I slipped away.

"Watch yourself, Crys," Johnny Pavlova said as I went by. He gave me a funny look.

The first thing you do when you break into a house is find another way out. A good house has to have more than one way out because you don't want to go running like the clappers to get out the same door the Law is coming in.

The house on Alma-Tadema Road has a kitchen door through to the garden. I loosened the boards on that before lying down to sleep. I also made sure I had the snakeskin wallet safe.

I had made the right decision: there was no one but me there. A heap of damp ashes marked the spot where the winos had lit their fire, and they blew in little eddies from the draught. Otherwise nothing stirred.

I went over the house collecting all the paper and rags I could find to build myself a nest, then I curled up in it and shut my eyes.

Nighttime is not the best time for me. It's when I can't keep busy and in control of my thoughts that bad memories and dreams burst out of my brain. It's hard to keep cheerful alone in the dark, so I need to be very, very tired before I'll lie down and close my eyes. Sometimes I say things over and over in my head until I get to sleep—things like the words of a song or a poem I learned at school—over and over so there's no spare room in my brain for the bad stuff.

That night I must have been very tired because I only got part of the way through "What's Love Got to Do with It," when I dropped off. Dawn used to play that song all the time when we were still living at home. She played it so often it used to drive me up the wall. But it is songs like that, songs I didn't even know I'd learned the words to, that help me through the night nowadays.

The next thing I knew someone was coughing. I opened my eyes but it was still dark, and there was this cough, cough, cough coming my way. Brainy Brian, I thought, and relaxed a bit. It's something you have to watch out for—people coming up on you when you're alone in the dark.

"It's cold," he said when he found me. "It's hard, hard cold out there." He crawled into my nest. I was quite warm and I didn't want to leave but I knew his coughing would keep me awake.

"Give us a cuddle, Crystal," he said. "I got to get warm."

"Shove off," I said. His hands remind me of a fork. Some people do it to keep warm. Not me. I've seen too much and I want to die innocent.

He started coughing again. Then he said, "You got any dosh, Crystal?"

"Enough for a tea in the morning," I said. I really did not want to go. It was one of my better nests and it didn't seem fair to give it up to Brian.

"They're looking for you," he said. "Someone saw you in the Trenches."