

SEE WHAT I HAVE DONE

SEE
WHAT
I HAVE
DONE

SARAH
SCHMIDT

 hachette
AUSTRALIA

Quote from 'We outgrow love like other things' J 887/F 1094 by Emily Dickinson from *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1951, 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.



Published in Australia and New Zealand in 2017
by Hachette Australia
(an imprint of Hachette Australia Pty Limited)
Level 17, 207 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000
www.hachette.com.au

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Copyright © Sarah Schmidt 2017

This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be stored or reproduced by any process without prior written permission. Enquiries should be made to the publisher.

National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

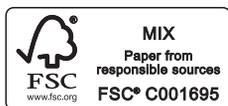
Schmidt, Sarah, author.
See what I have done / Sarah Schmidt.

978 0 7336 3688 2 (paperback)

Murder – Investigation – United States – Fiction.
Suspense fiction.
Historical fiction.

A823.4

Cover design by Design by Committee
Author photo courtesy of Nicholas Purcell Studio
Text design by Bookhouse, Sydney
Typeset in 12.25/17.75 pt Adobe Garamond Pro by Bookhouse, Sydney
Printed and bound in Australia by McPherson's Printing Group



The paper this book is printed on is certified against the Forest Stewardship Council® Standards. McPherson's Printing Group holds FSC® chain of custody certification SA-COC-005379. FSC® promotes environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

For Cody.

And for Alan and Rose who left before I could finish.

*We outgrow love like other things
And put it in the drawer*

Emily Dickinson

*Knowlton: 'You have been on pleasant terms with your
step-mother since then?'*

Lizzie: 'Yes sir.'

Knowlton: 'Cordial?'

Lizzie: 'It depends upon one's idea of cordiality, perhaps.'

Lizzie Borden's inquest testimony

PART I

ONE
LIZZIE

4 August 1892

HE WAS STILL bleeding. I yelled, ‘Someone’s killed Father.’ I breathed in kerosene air, licked the thickness from my teeth. The clock on the mantel ticked ticked. I looked at Father, the way hands clutched to thighs, the way the little gold ring on his pinkie finger sat like a sun. I gave him that ring for his birthday when I no longer wanted it. ‘Daddy,’ I had said, ‘I’m giving this to you because I love you.’ He had smiled and kissed my forehead.

A long time ago now.

I looked at Father. I touched his bleeding hand, *how long does it take for a body to become cold?* and leaned closer to his face, tried to make eye contact, waited to see if he might blink, might recognise me. I wiped my hand across my mouth, tasted blood. My heart beat nightmares, *gallop, gallop*, as I looked at Father again, watched blood river down his neck and disappear into suit cloth. The clock

on the mantel ticked ticked. I walked out of the room, closed the door behind me and made my way to the back stairs, shouted once more to Bridget, 'Quickly. Someone's killed Father.' I wiped my hand across my mouth, licked my teeth.

Bridget came down, brought with her the smell of decayed meaty-meat. 'Miss Lizzie, what . . .'

'He's in the sitting room.' I pointed through thick, wallpapered walls.

'Who is?' Bridget's face, prickly with confusion.

'I thought he looked hurt but I wasn't sure how badly until I got close,' I said. Summer heat ran up my neck like a knife. My hands ached.

'Miss Lizzie, yer scarin' me.'

'Father's in the sitting room.' It was difficult to say anything else.

Bridget ran from the back stairs through the kitchen and I followed her. She ran to the sitting room door, put her hand on the door knob, *turn it, turn it*.

'His face has been cut.' There was a part of me that wanted to push Bridget into the room, make her see what I had found.

She pulled her hand away from the knob and turned to me, owl eyes swooping over my face. A length of sweat trickled from her temple to collarbone. 'What do ya mean?' she said.

Like a tiny looking-glass inside my mind, I saw all of Father's blood, a meal, the leftovers from a wild dog's feast. The scraps of skin on his chest, his eye resting on his shoulder. His body the Book of Apocalypse. 'Someone came in and cut him,' I said.

Bridget was a-tremble. 'What do ya mean, Miss Lizzie? How could someone cut his face?' Her voice soured, a tear. I didn't want her to cry, didn't want to have to comfort her.

'I'm not quite sure,' I said. 'They might have used an axe. Like taking down a tree.'

Bridget began to cry and strange feelings popped across my bones. She faced the door and twisted her wrist, allowed the door to crack open an inch.

'Go get Dr Bowen,' I said. I looked past her, tried to see Father but couldn't.

Bridget turned to me, scratched her hand. 'We should attend to yer father, Miss Lizzie . . .'

'Go bring Dr Bowen.' I grabbed her hand, all rough and sticky, and walked her to the side door. 'You'd best hurry, Bridget.'

'Ya shouldn't be alone, Miss Lizzie.'

'What if Mrs Borden was to come home? Shouldn't I be here to tell her?' My teeth were cold against my teeth.

She looked into the sun. 'Alright,' she said. 'I'll try ta be quick as I can.'

Bridget ran out the side of the house, let the door hit her on the backside, a paddle, and she bobbed as she ran onto Second Street, her white house-bonnet a sail in the breeze. Bridget looked over her shoulder towards me, her face dumb with worry, and I shoed her along, my wrist a flick and crunch. She kept going, hip and shouldered an old woman, made her drop her walking cane, made her cry out, 'What's the hurry, missy?' Bridget didn't respond, *how naughty*, disappeared from sight, and the woman picked up her cane, made it chink against stone, made a tacky-tacky sound.

I watched people pass by, liked the way their voices filled the air, made everything feel whole, and I felt my lips turn a smile as birds jumped over and under tree branches. For a moment I thought of capturing them, placing them in my pigeon aviary in the barn. How

lucky they'd be with me to look after them. I thought of Father, my stomach growled hunger and I went to the pail of water by the well, let my hands sink into the cool sip sip. I brought my hands to mouth and began drinking, lapping with my tongue. It was soft, delicate. Everything slowed down. I saw a dead pigeon lying grey and still in the yard and my stomach murmured. I looked into the sun. I thought of Father, tried to remember the last words I said to him. I took a pear from the arbour, walked back inside.

On the kitchen counter were johnnycakes. I wormed my fingers into their middles until they became small pieces of flour-rocks. I threw a handful of johnnycakes against the wall, listened to them crash in stale waves. Next I went to the stove, pulled the pot of mutton broth close to me and took a deep breath.

There was nothing but my thoughts and Father. I walked towards the sitting room, sank my teeth into the pear, stopped at the door. The clock on the mantel ticked ticked. My legs began to shake and drum into the floor and I took a bite of my pear to make them still. Behind the sitting room door was the smell of tobacco pipe.

'Father,' I said. 'Is that you?'

I opened the door wider then wider, sank my teeth into pear. Father was there on the sofa. He hadn't moved. Pear skin crisped in my mouth and I caught the smell again. 'You ought to stop with the tobacco, Father. It makes your skin smell old.'

On the floor next to the sofa was Father's pipe. I hooked the pipe under my teeth, my tongue pressed against the small mouthpiece. I breathed in. Outside I heard Bridget call like a banshee, 'Miss Lizzie! Miss Lizzie!' I placed the pipe back on the floor, my fingers grazing circles of blood, and as I walked out of the room and half closed the door I took a peek at Father.

I opened the side door. Bridget looked a-fire, flame red, and she told me, 'Dr Bowen's not home.'

Her response made me want to spit at her. 'Go find him. Get someone. Get going,' I said.

Her head jarred backwards. 'Miss Lizzie, shouldn't we get Mrs Borden?' Her voice an echo in a cave, *enough with questions*.

I cracked my heel into the floorboards, made the house moan then howl. 'I told you, she's not here.'

Bridget's forehead creased. 'Where is she? We need ta get her right now.' Annoying, insistent.

'Don't tell me what to do, Bridget.' I heard my voice fold around doors and corners. The house; brittle bone under foot. Everything sounded louder than it should, hurt the ear.

'I'm sorry, Miss Lizzie.' Bridget rubbed her hand.

'Go find someone else. Father really needs help.'

Bridget let out a breath and I watched her run down the street, past a group of young children playing hopscotch. I took another bite of the pear and started to move away from the door.

From across the side fence I heard a woman call my name, felt the drilling of it, 'Lizzie. Lizzie. Lizzie,' bore into my ear. I squinted at a figure walking towards me. I pressed my face into the screen door, pieced together the shapes of familiarity. 'Mrs Churchill?' I said.

'Are you alright, dear? I heard Bridget hollering up and down the street and then I saw you standing at the door looking so lost.' Mrs Churchill came closer to the house, pulled at her red blouse.

On the back step she asked again, 'Dear, are you alright?' and my heart beat fast, fast, fast and I told her, 'Mrs Churchill, do come in. Someone's killed Father.'

Her eyes and nose scrunched, mouth hollowed into an O. A loud bang sounded from the basement; my neck twitched.

‘This doesn’t make sense,’ she said, a small voice. I opened the door, let her in. ‘Lizzie, what’s happened?’ she asked.

‘I don’t know. I came in and I saw him all cut up. He’s in there.’ I pointed to the sitting room.

Mrs Churchill slowed into the kitchen, rubbed her fat, clean fingers over her red-queen cheeks, rubbed them over her gold cameo necklace, covered her chest with her hands. There in all its shine, her gold and diamond wedding ring, *I’d like to keep that*. Her chest heaved, soft, child-suckled breasts, I waited for her heart to burst through ribcage onto the kitchen floor.

‘Is he alone?’ She was a mouse.

‘Yes. Very.’

Mrs Churchill took steps towards the sitting room door then stopped, looked at me. ‘Should I go in?’

‘He’s very hurt, Mrs Churchill. But you could go in. If you wanted to.’

She receded, came back by my side. I counted the times I had seen Father’s body since I found it. My stomach growled.

‘Where’s your mother?’ she asked.

I wrenched my head towards the ceiling, *I hate that word*, then closed my eyes. ‘She’s gone to visit a sick relative.’

‘We really must get her, Lizzie.’ Mrs Churchill tugged at my hand, tried to make me move.

My skin itched. I pulled away from her grip, scratched my palm. ‘I don’t want to bother her right now.’

‘Lizzie, don’t be ridiculous. This is an emergency.’ She scolded me like I was a child.

‘You can see him, if you want.’

She shook her head, baffled. ‘I don’t think I can . . .’

‘I meant, if you saw him, you would see why it isn’t a good idea to fetch Mrs Borden.’

Mrs Churchill placed the back of her hand on my forehead. ‘You feel very hot, Lizzie. You’re not thinking straight.’

‘I’m alright.’ My skin slid from underneath her hand.

Her eyes widened, threatened to outgrow the boundaries of bone, and I leaned towards Mrs Churchill. She flinched. ‘Perhaps we should go outside, Lizzie . . .’

I shook my head, absolute. ‘No. Father shouldn’t be left alone.’

Mrs Churchill and I stood side by side, faced the sitting room door. I could hear her breathe, could hear saliva swish thick over her gums, could smell Castile soap and clove in her hair. The roof cracked, made the sitting room door feather open an inch and my toes wiggled a step then a step until I was a little closer to Father. ‘Mrs Churchill,’ I said, ‘who do you think will wash his body when it comes time?’

She looked at me as if I spoke foreign words. ‘I’m . . . not really sure.’

‘Perhaps my sister could do it.’ I turned to her, watched sadness tiptoe across her brow and gave her a smile, *cheer up now, cheer up.*

Her lips parted, a sea. ‘Let’s not worry about that.’

‘Oh. Alright.’ I turned to face the sitting room door again.

We were quiet for a time. My palm itched. I thought of using my teeth to scratch, went to bring my hand to my mouth when Mrs Churchill said, ‘When did it happen, Lizzie?’

I rushed my hand to my side. ‘I’m not sure. I was outside then I came in and he was hurt. Bridget was upstairs. Now he’s

dead.’ I tried to think but everything slowed. ‘Isn’t that funny? I can’t remember what I was doing. Does that ever happen to you, forgetting the simplest of things?’

‘I suppose so, yes.’ Her words slurped out.

‘He said he wasn’t feeling well and wanted to be alone. So I kissed him, left him asleep on the sofa and went outside.’ The roof popped. ‘That’s all I can remember.’

Mrs Churchill placed her hand on my shoulder, patted me, made me warm and tingle. ‘Don’t push yourself, dear. This is all very . . . unnatural.’

‘You’re right.’

Mrs Churchill wiped her eyes, made them red with tears and rubbing. She looked strange. ‘This can’t be happening,’ she said. She looked strange and I tried not to think of Father alone on the sofa.

My skin itched. I scratched. ‘I’m really thirsty, Mrs Churchill,’ I said.

She stared at me, ruby-eyed, and went to the kitchen counter. She poured water from a jug and handed me a cup. The water looked cloud warm. I sipped. I thought of Father. The water was tar down my throat. I should have poured it onto the floor and asked Mrs Churchill to clean it up, get me something fresh. I sipped again. ‘Thank you,’ I said. I smiled.

Mrs Churchill came close to me, wrapped her arm around my shoulder and held tight. She leaned into me and began whispering but there was the smell of sour yoghurt snaking out from somewhere inside her and it made me dizzy. I pushed her away.

‘We need to get your mother, Lizzie.’

There was noise coming from outside, coming closer to the side of the house, and Mrs Churchill ran to the side door and opened

it. Standing in front of me were Mrs Churchill, Bridget and Dr Bowen. 'I found him, miss,' Bridget said. She tried to slow her breathing, *she sounds like an old dog*. 'I went as fast as I could.'

Dr Bowen pushed his silver, round-rimmed glasses up his narrow nose and said, 'Where is he?'

I pointed to the sitting room.

Dr Bowen, his wrinkled forehead. 'Are you alright, Lizzie? Did anybody try to hurt you?' His voice smooth, honey-milked.

'Hurt me?'

'The person who hurt your father. They didn't try to hurt you too?'

'I've seen no one. No one is hurt but Father,' I said. The floorboards stretched beneath my feet and for a moment I thought I would sink.

Dr Bowen stood in front of me and reached for my wrist, *big hands*, and he breathed out and in, his air swiping my lips. I licked them. His fingers pressed into skin until they felt blood. 'Your pulse is too fast, Lizzie. I'll remedy that as soon as I check your father.'

I nodded. 'Would you like me to come in with you?'

Dr Bowen. 'That's . . . unnecessary.'

'Oh,' I said.

Dr Bowen took off his jacket and handed it to Bridget. He headed for the sitting room, took his brown, weathered leather medical bag with him. I held my breath. He opened the door like a secret, pushed his body into the room. I heard him gasp, say, 'Lord Jesus.' The door was open just enough. Somewhere behind me Mrs Churchill screamed and I snapped my head towards her. She screamed again, the way people do in nightmares, and her noise rattled through my body, made my muscles tighten and ache.

‘I didn’t want to see him. I didn’t want to see him,’ Mrs Churchill screamed. Bridget howled, dropped Dr Bowen’s coat on the floor. The women held each other and sobbed.

I wanted them to stop. I didn’t appreciate how they reacted to Father like that, *they are shaming him*. I went to Dr Bowen, stood next to him at the edge of the sofa and tried to block sight of Father’s body. Bridget called, ‘Miss Lizzie, don’t go in there.’ The room was still and Dr Bowen pushed me away. ‘Lizzie,’ he said, ‘you mustn’t be in here.’

‘I just want . . .’

‘You cannot be in here anymore. Stop looking at your father.’ He pushed me from the room and shut the door. Mrs Churchill screamed again and I covered my ears. I listened to my heart beat until everything felt numb.

After a time, Dr Bowen came out of the room, all pale and sweat, and yelled, ‘Summon the police.’ He bit his lip, his jaw a tiny thunder. On his fingertips were little drops of blood *confetti*, and I tried to imagine the ways he had touched Father.

‘It’s their annual picnic,’ Mrs Churchill whispered. ‘No one will be at the station.’ She rubbed her eyes, made them raw.

I wanted her to stop crying and so I smiled and said, ‘It’s alright. They’ll come eventually. Everything will be alright, won’t it, Dr Bowen?’

Dr Bowen eyed me and I looked at his hands. I thought of Father.

I was four when I first met Mrs Borden. She let me eat spoonfuls of sugar when Father wasn’t watching. How my tongue sang! ‘Can you keep secrets, Lizzie?’ Mrs Borden asked.

I nodded my head. 'I can keep the best secrets.' I hadn't even told Emma that I loved our new mother.

She spooned sugar into my mouth, my cheeks tight with the sweet surge. 'Let's keep our sugar meal between you and me.'

I nodded and nodded until everything was dizzy. Later, when I was running through the house yelling, 'Karoo! Karoo!' and climbed over the sitting room sofa, Father yelled, 'Emma, did you let Lizzie into the sugar?'

Emma came into the sitting room, head bowed. 'No, Father. I swear it.'

I ran by them and Father caught me by the arm, a pull at my socket. 'Lizzie,' he said while I giggled and hawed, 'did you eat something you weren't meant to?'

'I ate fruit.'

Father came right into my face, smelled like butter cake. 'And nothing else?'

'And nothing else.' I laughed.

Emma looked at me, tried to peer into my mouth.

'Are you lying?' Father asked.

'No, Daddy. I would never.'

He had searched me over, searched dimpled cheeks for signs of disobedience. I smiled. He smiled. Off I went again, running and jumping and I passed Mrs Borden in the kitchen and she winked at me.

When the police arrived a short time later they began taking photos of the dark-grey suit Father wore to work that morning, of his black leather boots still tied over ankles and feet. Flashbulbs broke every

six seconds. The young police photographer said he would prefer not to photograph the old man's head. 'Couldn't someone else do it? Please?' he said, wiped the back of his hand over his forehead, like oil was dripping from his head.

An older officer told him to go outside while they found a real man to finish the job. They didn't need a man. A daughter would suffice. I had lovingly looked after Father all morning and his face didn't scare me. I should have said, 'How many photographs do you want? How close would you like me to get? Which angle will lead you to the murderer?'

Instead, Dr Bowen gave me a shot of beautiful warm medicine underneath my skin that made me feel feathery and strange. They seated me in the dining room with Mrs Churchill and Bridget and said, 'You don't mind that we ask each of you some questions, do you?'

The little room was cloying and heavy with the odour of warm bodies and grass, of police mouths smelling of half-digested chicken and damp yeast. 'Of course not,' Mrs Churchill said. 'But I shall not discuss the state Mr Borden was in.' She started to cry, made a whirlwind sound. In my mind I drifted away to the upstairs of the house where everyone became an echo. I thought of Father.

An officer kneeled in front of me, placed a hand over my hand and whisper-spat into my face, 'We will find who did this and come after him with our full force.'

'Men do such horrid things,' I said.

'Yes, I suppose they do,' the officer said.

'I hope Father didn't feel any pain.'

The officer stared at his hands and cleared his throat. 'I'm sure he didn't feel too much.' He gripped his notebook. 'I wondered if you could tell me everything you remember about this morning?'

'I'm not sure . . .'

'There are no wrong answers, Miss Borden.' A sing-song voice. His Adam's apple bobbed, made me think of Halloween games.

I looked the officer in the eye and grinned, *there are no wrong answers*, how kind he was to put me at ease. I knew for sure God would smile on him from now on. 'I was outside in the barn and then I came in and found him.'

'Do you remember why you were in the barn?'

'I had been trying to find lead sinkers for my fishing line.'

'You were going to go fishing?' Scribble, scribble.

'My uncle is going to take me. You should see what I can catch.'

'You're expecting him to visit?'

'Oh, he has already. He's here.'

'Where is he?' the officer asked, a pony searching for feed.

'He's out conducting business. He arrived yesterday.'

'We'll need to ask him questions.'

'Why?' My fingers beat together, pulsed beat, beat, beat, beat, all the way into the centre of my body. I followed the feeling, looked down at myself, noticed a soft, grey pigeon feather stuck on my skirt. I picked it off, rubbed it between my fingers, got all hot and boiled.

'Miss, I hate to be blunt, but a murder has occurred. We must ask your uncle if he saw anyone unusual outside.'

I flashed up at him, 'Yes. Yes, of course.' I stuffed the pigeon feather into my palm, carried it like love.

The officer kept with questions. I glanced around the room, then up at the ceiling, tried to see through spider-web cracked plaster and wood into the rooms above: a few hours before I had been up there, had seen Father and Mrs Borden help each other ready themselves for the day. Mrs Borden had plaited her light-grey, thick-mop hair and pinned it to the top of her head and Father had said, 'Always charming, my dear.' They did that from time to time, their being friendly and pleasant to one another. The officer kept with questions and a fog settled in my mind.

Next to me, I heard Bridget squeak to a second officer, 'Her sister is visitin' a friend in Fairhaven. She's been gone for . . .'

'Two weeks,' I interrupted. 'She's been gone for two weeks and it's time she came home.'

The second officer nodded, gruffed, 'We'll send for her immediately.'

'Good. This is too much for me to take alone.'

Then Bridget said, 'I lock the doors. House is shut tight all the time.' The second officer took notes, wrote furious until sweat formed through his thick moustache. Sometimes Father's beard would wet with anger and when he spoke to you, came close to your face so you could hear his words, the wet would stroke your chin and sink in. A fog settled in my mind. I had the feeling of wanting to stroke Father's beard and face until he looked like the past. I glanced at the sitting room.

'And you know for sure the doors were locked this morning?' the second officer asked Bridget.

'Yes. I had ta unlock the front door this mornin' ta let poor Mr Borden in when he came home early from work.'

The way Bridget spoke about Father made me smile. I turned to face her and the officer. ‘Actually,’ I said, ‘sometimes the basement door isn’t locked.’

Bridget looked me over, her caterpillar eyebrows cracked like earth, and the second officer took notes, took notes. My feet traced circles across the carpet. I opened my eyes wide, felt the house move left then right as the heat ground into walls. Everyone pulled at their necks to unloose their tightly wound clothing. I sat still holding my hands together.

Outside, I could hear swarms of people lining themselves out the front of the house. Voices sounded cannon fire. I swayed with the heat, heard the nails in the floorboards give themselves up. The sounds of pigeon feet tacky-tacked across the roof and I thought of Father. The sun moved behind a shadow and the house popped. I jumped in my chair. Bridget jumped in her chair. Mrs Churchill too. ‘Seems we all have fright,’ I said, wanted to laugh. Mrs Churchill started crying again, made my skin shiver. Inside my head a butcher pounded all sense out of my ears and onto the dining table. My corset groped my ribs and small pools of sweat filled the spaces between arms and legs. Bridget stood from her chair, pulled her dirt-white skirt away from the backs of her thighs and went to Mrs Churchill, comforted her. They spoke. Police took notes, entered and exited rooms, watched me.

I wiped my palm across my face, let the feather fall onto the carpet, noticed tiny droplets of blood sitting on my fingers. I put them to my nose then my mouth. I licked, tasted Father, tasted myself. I swallowed. I looked down at my skirt, discovered blood spots. I stared at the stains, watched them become rivers across my lap, *I know these rivers!* and I thought of the times I played in the

Quequechan River with Emma when we were younger, the way Father would yell out to us from the banks, ‘Don’t go in too deep. You can’t be sure how far down it goes.’

My body craved a past with Emma and Father: I wanted to be small again. I wanted to swim then fish, have Emma and me dry ourselves under the sun until our skin cooked. ‘Let’s be bears!’ I’d tell her, and we’d grow brown and giant, our bear paws swiping each other’s black noses. Emma would draw blood and I’d dig into her fur-covered ribs, touch her heart with my claws. Emma would want to swipe me again but Father would say, ‘Emma, be kind to Lizzie,’ and we’d embrace each other.

It was only two years ago that I was on my grand European tour. The freedom I had. Emma wasn’t there to tell me how to behave or what to say and so I got myself a life. On Father’s insistence I went with cousins, Bordens of blood and of marriage who I barely spoke to back at home, and we set sail, gulped ocean winds, learned how to stand against waves. The things we did.

Rome. My Boston-made shoes got stuck in mosaic-stone sidewalks, made me stumble, look a fool. I bought new, Italian calf-leather boots, walked straight lines, walked as a lady should without raising eyebrows. I’d walk, ears full of that fast Italian, made me want to jump into that sing-song, be spoken from one mouth to the other.

Everything reminded me of how small Fall River was, how big I was finally becoming. Over there the Spanish steps, covered in blooming lavender and carpet-red-coloured azaleas, men and women climbing to the top, sun-kissed faces, kissed lips, two white and

black goats pulling a small grey wooden cart of orange and green vegetables, my cousin and me standing at the base of a marble fountain, pointing to a deep, Roman-red building, whispering, 'John Keats lived inside!' *aren't I the cultured one.*

Over there, men wearing rabbit-felt fedoras sat in circles drinking mud-heavy coffee. Over there, girls dressed in Virgin-laced communion. Over there, three people reading. Over there, pigeons shaking out wings, pecking seed. How I wanted one to take home. Over there, over there, over there. Eyes widened with all the things I saw. I knew more about the world than Emma did and that made me happy. I sent her postcard after postcard so she wouldn't feel like she was missing out, gave my love, gave her reason to miss me more.

I ate and drank what I wanted in Paris. Butter, duck fat, liver fat, triple-cream brie, deep cherry-red wines, pear, clementine and lavender jelly, crème cakes, caviar, escargot in sautéed pine nuts and garlic butter. I did what the French did, licked my fingers, didn't care if people saw, what they thought. Father would've hated it, would've told me I was uncouth. I ate everything up, ate his money, was delightful everywhere I went. I learned how to wrap my tongue around accented vowels, spoke to this stranger and that. Nobody knew me, didn't expect anything from me. I wanted to stay like that forever.

I the explorer. The strolling I did. One day I saw a woman throw herself into the Seine, swim like a swan under arched white-stone bridges, under Pont Saint-Michel. The noises she made, an opera. She smiled, floated along, disappeared. I clapped my hands, bravoed the way she had taken charge of herself. If only Emma had been

able to see. How far a woman could travel if she really put her mind to it. And I put my mind to it.

My skirt stuck to my thighs, *Holy! Blood leeches*, and I began peeling the heavy fabric away, tried to cover the tiny bloodstains on it. From the sitting room, Dr Bowen opened one of the doors that led into the dining room and said, 'We need sheets for the body.' The way he said body made my teeth grind. I shifted in my seat, tried to sneak a look into the sitting room to check if Father was alright.

Mrs Churchill asked, 'Bridget, where are the Bordens' sheets?'

'They're in the cupboard in the guestroom. I'll come with ya.'

'You'll need to take the back stairs,' an officer told them. 'Keep away from the sitting room, ladies.'

They nodded, left the room and feet sounded out small percussion rhythms as they walked up the back stairs across the carpet. Someone handed me a glass of water. I sipped. The clock on the mantel ticked ticked. I sipped again. Dr Bowen placed his hands on my forehead and asked me how I was feeling. I began an answer when two long screams sounded from the floor above. 'What in God's name?' Dr Bowen said.

Two long screams again. 'Somebody! Somebody help us!' Bridget yelled. The screams, the screams.

PURCHASE A COPY OF

**SEE WHAT I HAVE DONE
BY SARAH SCHMIDT**

AT ONE OF THESE RETAILERS:

Paperback:

Booktopia

Dymocks

Indies

QBD

Readings

eBook:

Amazon

Booktopia

Google Play

iBooks

Kobo

FIND YOUR LOCAL BOOKSELLER

FIND A BOOKSHOP

www.indies.com.au