

The Dazzle of the Light

Georgina Clarke

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In Georgina Clarke's entrancing historical novel *The Dazzle of the Light*, bold Londoners find themselves connected by crimes.

In 1920, Ruby's movie-star good looks and talent for hiding her Cockney accent make her one of the best shoplifters among the Forty Thieves, a woman-lead gang that specializes in lifting luxury goods. But when a jewelry heist goes awry, Ruby is spotted by Harriet, a writer at the *Gazette*, who wants a breakthrough story of her own—she's tired of covering frivolous fashion stories and is keen to be an investigator.

These vibrant leads share a longing for recognition; each is underappreciated, and each is excited by the other's allure. Between Ruby's exhilarating underground life, which no longer sustains her ambitions to stake her own claim, and Harriet's circumscribed day-to-day—which includes a prominent fiancé, parents who indulge her work as a pastime, and a boss who is as prone to strike-throughs as he is to mild encouragement—both women are primed for change.

Ruby's department store raids are thrilling and suspenseful: coordinated signals showcase the thieves' tight-knit work and rivalries. The thieves' encounter at the local pub and on joint assignments reveal them as a war-toughened crew who have few real chances at escaping from their borough, where a nightclub hides scandals. When Ruby and Harriet finally meet, it's an empathetic encounter through which the latter tests her own boundaries and naïveté. The consequences are stunning.

In the sinuous historical novel *The Dazzle of the Light*, two women longing for empowerment develop a realistic understanding of their fragile places within the circles that embrace and confine them.

KAREN RIGBY (May / June 2023)

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