

# Secrets; Opening to "Woolgathering"

*by* Brianne Fidgety

Everybody has secrets, tucked away in wooden boxes that sometimes splinter under the weight of a night of drinking. The secrets spill out across the table for all the town to see, congealed and matted like a series of blood clots, in a moment that culminates in temporary relief for the owner, but ultimately evolves into his own downfall — a man can be shunned, divorced, or hung in the town square if his secrets are good enough.

Some of us, however, turn our secrets over in our souls, churning them with the fury of the howling winds of a January night. They are eroded and shaped and fine-tuned with the precision of a jeweler; the deeper and darker they are, the more brilliant of pearls they become, glowing with white fire in the clamshell hearts of their keepers.

If I were to be cut open, it would be revealed that my arteries are tangled with opals and emeralds. Some of my secrets are so old and polished that they must have the appearance of an army of glittering tumors. On nights like these, when the chill of the air threatens to hush the sea under a blanket of ice, I like to picture that. Tonight it keeps comfort and strength clinging to my bones, keeps my splintered hands clamped to the heavy oars. I cannot stop here; my secrets would still be able to swim back to shore.

