

# Noir

*by* Jake Barnes

The woman was dressed in black. She wore a wide-brimmed hat, which was also black. Her hair was the color of a Raven's wing; her lips were cherry red. Her eyes were in shadow. She held a black and silver cigarette holder in gloved fingers. I asked her if she wanted another martini, and she said but of course and blew a smoke ring at the ceiling. The mysterious woman excused herself and went to the ladies' room. "Je dois prendre une décharge, aussi," she said. Max looked at me. "Is she French?" he asked. I shrugged. I was looking at her ankles as she walked away. Upstairs, in a room where some years later, the occupant would be murdered by his lover, I sat in my skivvies in an armchair and wondered if I should call my wife. My lady friend sat on the bed wearing nothing but her hat and rummaged through her purse. I asked her what she was looking for, and she said her diaphragm.

