The lorry's open back held mattresses, an orange sofa, a chair covered with a bright flower print, all jumbled together, all blistering in the hot August sun.

The driver's door opened and a man climbed out and stood gazing up at the house. He wore a white shirt and a dark tie, and his skin was the deep color of the bittersweet chocolate her mother used for baking.

A woman slid from the passenger side, her pumps clicking against the pavement as she touched the ground. Like her husband, she was smartly dressed, her shirtwaist dress crisply pressed, and as she stood beside him she looked up at the house with an expression of dismay. He smiled and touched her arm, then turned towards the bed of the lorry and called out something.

From amid the boxes and bundles emerged a girl of about her own age with thin, bare, brown legs and a pink ruffled dress. Next came a boy, a year or two older, tali and gangly. It seemed to her that the family had blown in on the hot wind from somewhere infinitely more ex otic than this dingy London neighborhood of terraced houses with peeling plasterwork:

somewhere filled with colors and fragrances she had only imagined. They trooped up the steps together and into the house, and the street seemed suddenly lifeless without them.

When it became apparent that they were not going to reappear right away, she hugged herself in frustration. She would tell someone, then, but who? Her mother wouldn't be back for an hour or two, but her father would be at the café his usual custom after a good morning's trading at his jewelry stall.

Leaping from the steps, she ran. Down Westbourne Park into Portobello, nimbly dodging the fruit-and-veg stalls, then round the corner into Elgin Crescent. She came to a halt in front of the cafe, pressing her nose against the glass as she caught her breath. Yes, there he was, just visible at his favorite table in the back. Smoothing her dress, she slipped through the open door

into the cafe's dim interior. The patrons sat in shirtsleeves, men reading Polish newspapers and filling the hot, still air with a heavy cloud of smoke from their pipes and cigarettes.

She coughed involuntarily and her father looked up, frowning. "What are you doing here, little one? Is something wrong?"

He always thought something was wrong. She supposed he worried so because of his time in the war, although he never talked about that. In 1946, newly demobbed, her father had arrived in England with her mother, determined to put the war behind him and make a life for himself as a jeweler and silversmith.

In spite of her precipitous arrival nine months later, he had done well. Better than some of the other men in the café, she knew, but still he clung to the things that reminded him of the old country: the smell of borscht and pierogi, the dark paneling hung with Polish folk art, and the company of buxom waitresses with hennaed hair.

"No, nothing's wrong," she answered, sliding onto the banquette beside him. "And I'm not little. I wish you wouldn't call me that, Poppy."

"So, why does my very grown-up daughter come rushing through the door like a dervish?"

40 "We have new neighbors in the house next door."

"And what's so special about that? " he asked, still teasing.

"They're West Indian," she whispered, aware of the turning of heads. "A father and mother and two children, a boy and a girl, about my age."

Her father considered her news for a moment in his deliberate way, then shook his head.

45 "Trouble, it will mean trouble."

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"But they look very nice-"

"it doesn't matter. Now you go home and wait for your mother, and stay away from these people. I don't want you getting hurt. Promise me."

Hanging her head, she muttered, "Yes, Poppy," but she did not meet his eyes.

Deborah Crombie, And Justice There Is None, 2002