

# Sneak Thief Faith Harkey: Uncovering the Life of a Notorious Master Thief



**Sneak Thief** by Faith Harkey

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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In the annals of crime, few names command as much intrigue and fascination as that of Faith Harkey. Known as the "Sneak Thief," Harkey was a master of disguise, deception, and audacious heists. For over a decade, she outwitted the law, stealing millions of dollars in precious jewelry and leaving a trail of broken hearts in her wake.

Harkey's story is a captivating tale of a woman who defied societal norms and shattered expectations. She was a complex and enigmatic figure, both admired and reviled for her cunning and audacity. Her life is a testament to the power of determination, resilience, and the human capacity for both good and evil.

### **Early Life and Influences**

Faith Harkey was born in a small town in rural Alabama in the late 19th century. Her childhood was marked by poverty, neglect, and abuse. From a young age, she exhibited a rebellious streak and a keen intellect. She dropped out of school in her early teens and turned to petty crime to survive.

As she grew older, Harkey became fascinated by the world of art and jewelry. She spent hours studying books and magazines, educating herself

about different gemstones, metals, and craftsmanship. Her fascination soon transformed into an obsession, and she began to dream of a life beyond the poverty and hardships she had known.

## **Her Criminal Career**

Harkey's criminal career began with small-scale thefts from local shops and jewelry stores. However, it wasn't until she moved to New York City in the early 1920s that her true potential as a thief was realized.

In New York, Harkey quickly became known for her ability to disappear into crowds, blend in with different social circles, and change her appearance at a moment's notice. She targeted wealthy homes, galleries, and jewelry shops, stealing valuable items without ever leaving a trace.

Harkey's signature method of operation was to pose as a wealthy socialite or a domestic worker. She would spend weeks or even months studying her targets, learning their habits and routines. Once she had gathered enough information, she would strike, using her keen eye and nimble fingers to locate and steal the most valuable items.

## **Notorious Heists**

Harkey's most famous heists include the theft of the "Star of the Orient" sapphire from Tiffany & Co., the burglary of the Belmont Mansion, and the daring escape from the infamous Blackwell's Island Penitentiary.

In 1925, Harkey made headlines with the theft of the "Star of the Orient," a 97.3-carat sapphire worth over \$1 million. She posed as a wealthy socialite and gained access to Tiffany & Co. by presenting forged credentials. Once inside, she used her expert knowledge to locate the sapphire and slipped it into her purse.

Two years later, Harkey targeted the Belmont Mansion, the residence of wealthy socialite Consuelo Vanderbilt. She dressed as a domestic worker and gained entry to the mansion. Once inside, she stole a collection of jewels worth over \$200,000, including necklaces, earrings, and bracelets.

In 1928, Harkey was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison at Blackwell's Island Penitentiary. However, her time behind bars did not dampen her spirit. She befriended a prison guard, who helped her develop a daring escape plan. In a scene straight out of a Hollywood movie, Harkey disguised herself as a prison guard and walked out of the prison gates unnoticed.

### **Love Affairs and Broken Hearts**

Despite her criminal lifestyle, Harkey was also known for her romantic entanglements. She had a series of passionate love affairs with men from all walks of life, including a wealthy businessman, a police officer, and a fellow thief.

Harkey's longest and most intense relationship was with Harry Friedman, an art collector and fence. Friedman provided Harkey with information, resources, and protection throughout her criminal career. However, their relationship was also marked by betrayal and heartbreak.

### **Capture and Imprisonment**

Harkey's luck ran out in the early 1930s. She was arrested and charged with a series of high-profile thefts. Her trial was a media sensation, and she was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Harkey served her sentence at the Orleans County Correctional Facility in New York. She spent her time in prison reading, writing, and contemplating

her life choices. She eventually found redemption through religion and became a devout Catholic.

### Later Life and Legacy

Harkey was released from prison in 1945. She lived a quiet and simple life until her death in 1963. She never returned to her life of crime, and she became an advocate for prison reform and social justice.

Today, Faith Harkey is remembered as one of the most notorious master thieves of all time. She was a woman of extraordinary intelligence, cunning, and determination. Her story continues to captivate and inspire people to this day, reminding us that the human capacity for both good and evil is limitless.

The life of Faith Harkey is a testament to the power of human nature. She was a woman who defied societal norms, broke the law, and left an indelible mark on the world. Her story is a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked ambition, but it is also a celebration of the human spirit's resilience and capacity for redemption.



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