



'As the author of a good book, and, rarer still, a good book about crime, Falkiner deserves both praise and respect.'

— *The Age*

# EUGENIA

A MAN

Suzanne Falkiner

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## Prologue

NEAR MOWBRAY ROAD the Lane Cove River flows smooth and olive green in a rugged chasm carved deep in a bed of sandstone. Among the giant trunks of the surrounding eucalyptus forest a liquid warble of magpies sounds above the song of currawongs and other smaller birds. Below, massive lichen-covered rocks are densely overgrown with ferns and shrubs. The floor of the forest is lightly carpeted with strips of shredded bark and fallen leaves. There is plenty of dead wood lying around, and delicate wildflowers grow here and there among the rocks.

On an early spring morning in 1917, Ernest Clifford Howard, an engineer's apprentice from the nearby Cumberland Paper Mills, was on his way to the mill manager's house when, beside the track, he noticed traces of a scrub fire. He left the path and, in a burnt-out patch of bush, discovered a charred human body. Scattered around were a mundane assortment of objects including a hatpin, the wire framework of a wide-brimmed hat, a table knife, an empty whisky flagon, an enamel mug and a drinking glass, and the remains of a cheap cardboard suitcase. On and near the body were some remnants of inexpensive jewellery.

The boy had taken the same path three days before and noticed nothing unusual. Now this piece of human refuse lay some little distance off the track in a manner that must have appeared horrifying. Parallel to the river, and face upwards, the blackened figure was contorted as if burnt alive. The right leg was sharply drawn up, the arms bent protectively over the chest, the fists clenched. The left side of the chest was so severely burnt that the heart and lungs were exposed. The torso and arms were badly charred and unrecognisable, but the shoes and the lower part of a pair of black stockings were undamaged, as was a strip of gabardine cloth below the buttocks.

To the north, and on the right side of the body, the vegetation was burnt away in a wide circle. To the south, and to the left, the direction from which a fresh southerly wind might have come in the late afternoon of a fine day, there was little burning.

On that morning there might also have been a smell of scorched eucalyptus leaves from a small tree completely destroyed, and a larger one on which the leaves had been seared up to seven metres from the ground. A whirr of grasshoppers might have broken the stillness. The area was sparsely populated, but by no means desolate. A little further on from the paper mills, and over the river, were the Chicago Flour Mills. It was 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday 2 October. On returning to the Cumberland Mills, Ernest Howard telephoned the police.

THE INVESTIGATING POLICE found little that was suspicious. One witness at the subsequent inquiry testified that he had on several occasions seen a woman

in a wide hat, carrying a suitcase, in the area. He had thought she might be mentally disturbed. A young female clerk from the Cumberland Mills, at home on her verandah in the late afternoon the day before, had seen smoke and flames coming from the direction of the river. There was no appearance of an attempt to burn the body deliberately, the police concluded. Although there were the remains of a picnic fire or campfire near the body, no fuel had been gathered, no funeral pyre arranged.

After an autopsy had been performed, medical experts gave evidence at an inquest, held before the Acting City Coroner on 31 October of the same year, that the incineration had probably occurred while the woman was still alive and shortly after she had eaten a meal. The empty whisky bottle lent weight to the idea of an accidental death; of a solitary alcoholic who had inadvertently set fire to herself while drunk. The body was thought to be two days old when found, although it was later hypothesised that the fire might have inhibited the appearance of maggots, by the size of which the time of death was estimated. But because the evidence before him did not precisely indicate how death had come about, the coroner gave an open finding. The woman had died of burns caused by her clothing catching fire, he stated, but whether accidentally or otherwise he could not say.

The police officers, Sergeant Maze and Constable Walsh of Chatswood, did not forget the matter of the unidentified woman, however. Three years later, a reopening of the investigation led them to arrest an Italian woman, Eugenia Falleni, who was charged with her murder.



# One

ON A COOL AUGUST DAY in 1985, while working as a freelance writer and editor, I found myself on the steps of a convent in Kings Cross, Sydney. By chance, I was to interview one of the nuns for a routine research job, and stood wondering which to press of some confusingly labelled bells. I knew nothing about nuns. The outfit I wore I had consciously chosen as serious and neutral: a black woollen skirt, a grey sweater; and in my leather shoulder bag I had a small tape recorder and a pad with a list of scribbled questions about the early history of one of Sydney's great Catholic hospitals. I felt unexpectedly nervous about what I might encounter. I rang at random one of the bells.

The receiving room of the convent was furnished with some old, polished wood cabinets, a variety of formally arranged antique chairs, some baroque glass and a picture of the Pope. I had never been in a convent before. I had an impression of dark wood and draped curtains, a certain airlessness and stillness of little-used rooms. I talked with the sister who was the convent historian, we shuffled papers on the surface of a polished table, and then I was guided through a labyrinth of passages.

I had expected to meet some form of religious propaganda, but the cheerful Irishwoman who gave me tea in a good porcelain cup, and two slices of homemade cake, and who kissed me on the cheek when I left, rather undermined my melodramatic presuppositions.

In the courtyard we passed through on the way to the archives, I noticed a motley assembly of the nuns' pot plants in highly informal containers, some of which were plastic ice cream cartons. Having impressed me with the good silver and the antique furniture, the historian cast this collection a worried look as she hurried me past.

Their hospital, once a gracious house where in the last century young Irish religious women in flowing veils had fulfilled their vows to serve the sick poor, had become a multimillion-dollar organisation. Some of their number, still wearing an abbreviated version of the veil, were already at home behind computer terminals.

In the early part of this century, I discovered, the hospital had on its staff an Irish doctor, Herbert Michael—'Paddy'—Moran. This man had written a book of memoirs containing an affectionate portrait of the hospital's founders and mainstays, which the historian told me I should read. I had already talked to a retired surgeon, an old raconteur in his Macquarie Street rooms, and he too had mentioned the memoir. It was regarded as quite scandalous at the time, he remarked. Dr Moran had not failed to point out the unsanitary practices and lack of medical expertise of some of the nuns that ran the hospital. The book had caused a sensation on its publication. A wealthy society

woman of Irish descent, active in charitable causes, had attempted to buy up the entire edition to protect the reputation of her beloved Mother General.

The sister who was the convent's historian smiled slightly. She had read it herself, she told me. Twice.

When I walked back to my car through the familiar late afternoon streets of Kings Cross, where the seedy sex shows and fast food shops looked a little dispirited in the bright daylight, I felt somewhat curious about this unexplored world of the nuns. Tucked away in the shaded back streets of what had once been a semi-genteel, semi-Bohemian area, many of them continued an antiquated existence of religious ritual behind high walls, and the junkies, voyeurs and tourists in the surrounding streets were barely aware they were there. I had a sense of having ventured into exotic territory.

When I found the memoir, with its stiffened pages and faded cloth covers, H. M. Moran revealed himself as an acerbic middle-aged surgeon with an inquiring mind and some of the prejudices of his generation. His book, *Viewless Winds*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1939, was a mixture of personal experience and medical case studies that had interested him, all interspersed with his own sometimes eccentric opinions, judgements and philosophies. A curious and intelligent sympathy was still fresh in its setting of sometimes mannered prose.

Among his recollections was a brief outline of the story of Eugenia Falleni.

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1 H. M. Moran, *Viewless Winds*, Peter Davies, London, 1939.



## TWO

EUGENIA FALLENI, according to Dr Moran, was born in Italy in 1875. In 1877 her family migrated to New Zealand. Moran offered no explanation for this. After traversing half the world to reach a small, isolated, cold island in the Pacific inhabited by Anglo-Saxon sheep farmers and a race of warrior Maoris, they settled in Newtown, a suburb of Wellington in the south of the North Island. But whatever had led them there, they made a go of it. Later police reports stated that the family were law-abiding and held in high esteem.

Eugenia seems to have been the odd note in the success story. Two years old when the family made the long sea voyage, she grew up restless, wilful and undisciplined. She wore boys' clothes when she could and repeatedly ran away from home. On one occasion on 16 September 1891, when 'Nina'—as her family called her—was fifteen, her parents were forced to put an advertisement in the *Wellington Evening Post* asking for information as to her whereabouts. Dressed as a boy, on one occasion she got a job in a brickyard, at another time in a laundry. Small, wiry, strong, dark, unable or unwilling to stay at school or learn to read and write, she was considered 'simple', but her tomboyish

eccentricities were regarded as harmless. In her teens, and again dressed as a boy, she ran away to sea.

Eugenia's family did not hear from her again until some years later when she turned up in Newcastle, a seaport on the north coast of New South Wales, having apparently worked in the intervening time as a cabin boy. In her arms was a baby girl, born, again according to Moran, at sea—although a birth certificate from the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages indicates that Josephine Falleni was born to 'Lena' Falleni in Double Bay, a suburb of Sydney, on 19 September 1898. The father's surname was not given, and Eugenia's birthplace was entered as 'Leghorn' (or Livorno) in Italy. Her stated age was 23. Moran recounted that Eugenia had been 'violently used' by the captain of the ship and, once pregnant, discarded when the ship docked in New South Wales.

Whatever the facts, Eugenia gave the baby to be fostered by Mariana and Ludovico De Angelis,<sup>2</sup> the Italian couple in whose house in Pelham Street at Double Bay she had borne it, and from then on, for nearly twenty years, she continued to live as a man. It was this same Eugenia Falleni, wrote Moran, who some years later was accused of the murder of the dead woman found near the Lane Cove River.

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2 Usually given as 'De Anglis'.

## Three

I WAS AT SOMETHING of a loose end at the time I came across Moran's version of Eugenia's story. The job I was doing was nearly finished; I had nothing lined up to do next. The house was tidy and the cat stared at me as I sat at the table reading the *Sydney Morning Herald* for too long in the morning. The royalty cheque for the last book I had worked on came in. It was enough to buy me and the photographer lunch. I should have been looking for more work, I knew. But Eugenia niggled at a corner of my mind.

Even before I began to piece it all together, often from contradictory sources, I found my thoughts returning to her against my will. I felt there was something wrong with the story. As I typed up my notes on the Catholic hospital and polished the final piece, I tried to work out what it was. Beyond their obvious oddity, there seemed no internal logic to the events as they were described. The explanation for Eugenia's actions given by Moran, and by the court that convicted her of murder, did not add up. And Eugenia, it appeared, had nowhere offered any explanation herself. Always she was somehow absent from the account. Illiterate, she had written nothing; alone, she had confided in no one.

In addition, how had she survived for as long as she had? It seemed impossible. The society of her time and place denied the existence of those whose gender did not match their sex, allowing, with few exceptions, only for a conventional male or female role. In an Australian working-class milieu—Eugenia was no vaudeville actor or George Sand in a world of posturing bluestockings—her deception had of necessity to be complete. Her life was surrounded by pitfalls. The only question was which might eventually entrap her, despite any amount of vigilance and attention to detail.

Yet, somehow, the impression conveyed—although it was hard to pinpoint on what in Moran's account it was based—was that Eugenia had never thought much about what she was. Her existence was a given; at no time the result of a conscious decision, but a state in which she was born. Like the birds in the garden outside my study, unaware of their birdness.

Some time later I went back to the State Library of New South Wales, where I had found Moran's memoir. I parked my car by the Art Gallery, and carried my folder and pens across the sunlit grass of the Domain. Behind me the shiny glass of the gallery's modern extension leaned solidly against the mellowed stone of the original building, constructed in 1835 by an earnest group of purveyors of false history who called themselves the New South Wales Academy of Art. I could see in my mind's eye the familiar, misleading paintings within: the plump, white-fleshed women with English eyes; the romantic landscapes of harmless golden sunlight and eucalypts beneath hazy skies.

The State Library, built of the same yellow-brown stone, balanced ponderously at the other end of the green lawn, which was punctuated with seagulls. Inside the brass-handled doors, and across the echoing inlaid floors leading to the main gallery, elderly women in cardigans scribbled notes from bound volumes for who knew what arcane projects, safe in the pages of the past. I waited in insulated silence for the newspapers to be brought by an assistant from the stacks. Outside, unheard, cars tore past the brash glass towers on Macquarie Street towards Circular Quay, where Eugenia might have arrived on just such a sunny day, some 86 years before.

IN THE NEWSPAPER section of the library, the yellowing pages of the Sydney dailies revealed that, in the early spring of 1917, the press was mostly concerned with the progress of the First World War. On Wednesday 3 October the front page of the *Evening News* reported that in England the Germans were taking advantage of bright moonlight nights to press air raids on London and the south-eastern counties; while on the European front, despite violent attacks, the enemy was gaining little. The Russians were advancing in the Riga region.

On page four, among the *News's* usual accounts of the more sensational deaths, divorces and scandals, was a short item headed:

### WAS IT MURDER?

Chatswood Mystery Baffles Police  
What was Found in the Ashes

The paper explained that although there was insufficient evidence to say whether the woman whose charred body had been found the previous day at Chatswood had been murdered or had burned by accident, several circumstances indicated that another person might have accompanied her to the scene of the tragedy.

The only access to the place where the death occurred was a bridle path used by employees of the paper mills. The woman, who had apparently been lying beside a large rock when the fire took place, was described as being slightly built, and between thirty and forty.

In summary, the reporter detailed the scrap of fawn gabardine found under her body; the common black lace stockings she was wearing, and her half-soled shoes with small homemade patches on the edge of the soles. There was a small piece of floral voile still attached to the wire hat frame found nearby. The fire had apparently started near the woman's chest. Considered significant among the articles found near the body were two drinking vessels: a tumbler and an enamel mug. The police had also found a small piece of bread, and noted that the suitcase was made of compressed paper.

No report had been made of a woman missing.

The *Sun* of Wednesday 3 October, a family newspaper, announced in an almost identical story that, even after a post-mortem examination made by Drs Palmer and Stratford Sheldon, the police were still unsure as to whether they were investigating a murder mystery or an accidental burning. The woman in question was described as thinly built and in poor



condition, with brown hair, a piece of which had been found in the ashes.

At 4 p.m. on Monday afternoon employees of the mill had noticed a small fire, but assumed it was lit by picnickers, despite that the spot was unattractive and inaccessible. The body was said to be some 20 yards off the bridle track used by mill employees, and 200 yards off Mowbray Road.

The drinking vessels suggested the presence of more than one person. The stomach contained food, some of which was apparently chicken, and the woman was estimated to have been dead two or three days. There was no evidence of disease or alcohol in the woman's organs. The *Sun* also detailed the broken whisky bottle among the other items found at the site.

On 4 October the *Sun* reported that the body still had not been identified. Police officers had gone over the ashes again and discovered, in addition, a small kidney-shaped greenstone pendant with a short piece of fine chain attached, a number of false teeth from a lower set, two metal buttons and, about six yards away from where the fire had been burning, a bottle in which there was about a spoonful of kerosene.

A number of residents of the district who had female relatives missing had viewed the body, reported the newspaper, but in every instance the dead woman was not the person they sought.

Twelve days later, on Tuesday 16 October, the *Evening News* published a picture of the patched and much-nailed soles of a pair of women's shoes under the heading:

## CHATSWOOD MYSTERY

Woman Not Yet Identified

Who patched the Shoes?

Underneath, the paper stated that the investigating detectives had arrived at a dead end. The woman's identity had not been established, and the police wanted to hear from whoever had repaired the shoes.

For about ten days before the death, the report continued, a person thought to be the deceased had been seen about the Chatswood district. This woman was described as about 35, five feet six inches, well-built, wearing a greyish fawn-coloured skirt, white blouse and a large picture hat. She had carried a Japanese wicker suitcase.

As no further developments were immediately forthcoming, the newspapers dropped the story.

## Four

OF EUGENIA'S FIRST YEARS in Sydney, much was left unreported in Moran's twenty-page account of her life. Probably she came down from Newcastle by coastal steamer, although the railway line had been completed about ten years before. One can speculate that the slight girl made her way alone from the docks or Central Station—perhaps still dressed in male clothing, despite her pregnancy, and keeping to the identity of a deckhand or a cabin boy—but harbouring the terrifying knowledge of her undoing. Although inhabited by less than a quarter of a million people, Sydney must have seemed daunting after the provincial city of Wellington.

Photographs from the time show steam ferries plying the waters of Sydney Cove and the Parramatta and Lane Cove rivers, tying up at Circular Quay alongside tall-masted ships. The wharves were backed by brick and stone buildings and warehouses of no more than six storeys. From there, the racket of the fishmarkets and the crowded slums of The Rocks gave way to the central business district and the retail area, where the streets were dominated by the big family shopping emporiums. The Town Hall clock, one of the highest

structures on the skyline, overlooked streets traversed by horse-drawn cabs, drays and buggies. In the centre of the main thoroughfares, newly electrified trams clanged and dinged over their jointed tracks, with extra passengers standing on the running boards. The streets were crowded with men riding to work on bicycles and boys pushing barrows. The working garb of the day for a man was in hues of heavy brown and grey, with a cheap cotton shirt, the sleeves rolled up, thick-soled work boots and a cloth cap.

Beyond the city centre, with its newly completed monuments to public architecture, working-class suburbs fanned out haphazardly. Sprawls of low, weatherboard and corrugated iron houses with brick chimney pieces, their backyards jammed with outside laundries and water closets and clotheslines, were crammed in beside rows of brick and plaster Victorian terraces. Beyond its industrial fringes, the city petered out into market gardens and farms, and beyond that again were the mountains and the endless plains of the interior. The well-off built their gracious, new English-style mansions on bushy estates in the hills above the sea in the eastern suburbs and to the north, and left the broiling lower areas, considered unhealthy, to the rest. It was a dirty city. In 1900, two years after Eugenia's arrival, there would be an outbreak of bubonic plague, probably due to inadequate drainage and sewerage. Areas like The Rocks, Balmain and the 'North Shore' of the Parramatta River had evil reputations.

Eugenia found herself in a city where bottle-ohs and ice-men with horses and carts made their rounds along with Chinese market gardeners selling door to door.

Shops had tin awnings supported by wooden pillars and upper verandahs decorated with wrought iron lace, and aproned shopkeepers swept the dung from the streets off their shop floors and back out over the footpaths with straw brooms. There was a yellow-tiled pub on every corner, crowded and rough, and open till late at night. In reaction, the temperance movement was strong. In the city centre, the gentry in lace and boaters gathered in Hyde Park on Sundays to listen to the military bands. In three years time, 1901, with much pomp and ceremony and declarations of loyalty to the British Empire, the city elders would celebrate Federation.

From the King Street Wharf in the city a tram ran through Rushcutters Bay to Ocean Street, Edgecliff, on the eastern outskirts. Just below its terminus was the little village of Double Bay. It seems likely that the elderly Italian couple who lived there were known to Eugenia's family in New Zealand. And so it was to Mrs De Angelis's house at 131 Pelham Street—now demolished, but probably a small brick cottage in a row of others, not far from the sea—that Eugenia made her way for shelter.

The basic wage for unskilled workers in the inner city industrial areas was around seven shillings a day or 42 shillings a week for a 48- to 56-hour week. The average wage for women was half that. The age of consent for females in New South Wales was fourteen, and not until 1902, after Federation, would they receive the right to vote. According to a photograph taken some time after this, Eugenia was a slim youth with pale skin, close-cropped hair, large, sensitive eyes and a slightly melancholic mouth.

Shortly after the birth of her baby, wrote Moran, Eugenia, calling herself Harry Crawford and wearing men's clothes, left Double Bay and took a series of menial jobs, usually as a factory hand or general 'useful' at city hotels.

NOW THE DETAILS became patchy. Harry Crawford stayed at nothing for long, Moran reported. For over a decade the young man meandered restlessly all over Sydney and its outskirts, living in boarding houses and on the premises of the pubs where he worked. In a later statement to police, which was marked by certain inventions and omissions, Crawford claimed to have worked initially for six months as a 'useful' at the King's Head Hotel, on the corner of Elizabeth and Park Streets, Sydney. From there he went to a hotel opposite the police station at Temora, where he stayed only a fortnight. He returned to Sydney and was employed at a boarding house near St Patrick's Church, Church Hill, for about three months. Other jobs of a similar nature followed, largely in the inner city. For a time he laboured in the meatworks.

Other sources reveal that occasionally during this decade Crawford visited the house in Double Bay and handed over some of his wages to the Italian woman. By 1910, at the age of twelve, Josephine was earning her own living. Ludovico De Angelis, jealous of his wife's affection for the adopted girl and angered by her refusal to give her up, returned to Italy alone, and both Josephine and Mariana De Angelis were forced to go out and get domestic jobs.

By 1910, too, Harry Crawford's direction had



changed. He found work in the respectable household of Dr Gother Robert Carlyle Clarke, a bachelor in his mid-thirties, at Wahroonga. In his position as a kitchen man and general useful, Harry lived above the stable and chopped wood and drove the doctor's sulky while he made his rounds. Twenty kilometres from Sydney on the northern railway line, Wahroonga, a scattering of gracious houses with large gardens and orchards linked by red clay roads and interspersed with eucalyptus forest, was then a settlement of less than 200 people.

Dr Clarke's house, 'Terranora', was one of two on a large block of land between Coonanbarra Road and Neringbah Avenue on the Lane Cove Road (now part of the Pacific Highway) just opposite a select Church of England school for young ladies. Close by were the railway station and a little cluster of shops.

At Terranora, Harry Crawford met the doctor's general domestic, or cook/housemaid, Annie Birkett. Annie was a 32-year-old widow with one son, also called Harry, then about ten years old. A neat, apparently pleasant-natured woman, she had been at Dr Clarke's for three years. Sometimes Crawford would take the two of them for a drive in the sulky, and he and Annie were often together. He seemed to be courting the widow, bringing her flowers from the garden, taking her on an outing to see a travelling circus that made a one-night stand at nearby Waitara. When, by some accounts, Annie Birkett rejected his advances, complaining of his heavy drinking and improvident ways, he swore he would reform. He reminded her that a growing boy like Harry needed a father's guidance and companionship.

Three years later, in 1913, Annie Birkett had saved enough money to start up a business of her own. She found a confectionery and soft drink shop in a row of little Victorian, corrugated-iron canopied commercial premises in Darling Street, the main thoroughfare of Balmain, and bought it for £75. Opposite the sedate flower beds, pigeon-covered lawns and palm trees of Gladstone Park, and next to St Andrew's Church, Annie's new home above the shop was in a quite respectable part of the crowded industrial suburb, with its narrow streets of workmen's cottages and foul-smelling factories. According to a statement made later by Annie's son Harry Birkett, Harry Crawford also left Dr Clarke's and followed her.

Crawford took lodgings in Darling Street a little further down the hill from the shop, and frequently visited. He made it appear to the other residents of the street that he was helping Annie with the business. When the neighbours gossiped, Annie apparently felt compelled to accept Crawford's proposal of marriage. About six weeks later, an unsuspecting Methodist clergyman, Mr Hynes, married Harry and Annie at his parsonage in Balmain. Mrs Hynes and Annie's sister Lily Nugent witnessed the ceremony, and Harry gave his father's name as Harry Leo Crawford and his mother's as Louisa Buti.

By this time Harry Crawford was in his late thirties, although he looked a little older. His skin was more weathered than one might expect in a man of his age. He had thickened somewhat, and appeared, at five foot four inches (or 163 cm), a short, stocky man, but not heavily built, with grey eyes and a beardless face. His hair was dark brown, short, brushed straight

back, and usually hidden under his grey felt hat. His hands were broad and blunt. He customarily dressed in the ordinary grey trousers and jacket—long enough to cover his buttocks—worn by most working men of the period. He walked with short, quick, nervous steps, swinging his arms from the shoulders.

To a casual observer his dark hair and his colouring might have suggested Gaelic origins, but his English was rough, often profane, with some of the incorrect tenses often associated with a foreigner. However, there was something about him that seems to have made women lower their guard to him—the middle-aged women battling with domestic drudgery who lived in the working-class suburbs through which he drifted from job to job. He was always willing to talk. Conceivably, to them, he possessed a certain uncharacteristic softness, an understanding, a certain persuasiveness of character, although he was as much a drinker and swearer as most of the other men in the pubs and meat packing factories in which he worked.

**SUZANNE FALKINER** is a Sydney writer. The author of twelve previous books of fiction and non-fiction, her most recent titles include the biographies *Joan in India*, 2008, and *The Imago: E. L. Grant Watson & Australia*, 2011. She has been shortlisted in the Vogel Award, the Kibble Award, the Queensland Premier's Literary Award, and the NSW History Awards.  
[www.suzannefalkiner.com](http://www.suzannefalkiner.com)

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*Mrs Mort's Madness* (2014)

*Note from the publisher: due to a severe shortage of cream paper stock, this book has been printed on white paper instead of the usual cream paper.*

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In the spring of 1917 an apprentice from the Cumberland Paper Mills, just outside Sydney, was walking along a bush track beside the Lane Cove River when he discovered the partially burnt body of an unidentified woman. The arrest three years later of a 45-year-old Italian, Eugenia Falleni, for murder, led to an investigation that fascinated Australia.

Known in the newspapers as the 'Man-Woman Case', the trial revealed that from the time she had left New Zealand and gone to sea as a cabin boy, Eugenia Falleni had lived at least twenty years of her life in the guise of a man.

Suzanne Falkiner has written a remarkable story that follows the course of her own efforts to accurately reconstruct Eugenia's extraordinary life, and provides an intriguing account of her subsequent trial.

Exploring questions never able to be answered at the time, the author also examines the plight of working-class migrant women, and reveals some of the secrets of a transgendered existence in an era when leading such a life was dangerous and unacceptable.

First published in 1988, this updated edition includes new information that has come to light since then.

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