**CRIMES OF THE HEART**by Beth Henley  *BABE*

I can't tell you what happened right before I shot on account of I'm protecting someone. *(after a moment)* Well, do you remember Willie Jay? Cora's youngest boy? Well, Cora irons at my place on Wednesdays now, and she just happened to mention that Willy Jay'd picked up this old stray dog and that he'd gotten real fond of him. But now they couldn't afford to feed him anymore. So she was gonna have to tell Willie Jay to set him loose in the woods. Well, I said I liked dogs, and if he wanted to bring the dog over here, I'd take care of him. You see, I was alone by myself most of the time 'cause the Senate was in session and Zackery was up in Jackson. So the next day, Willie brings over this skinny old dog with these little crossed eyes. Well, I asked Willie Jay what his name was, and he said they called him Dog. Well, I liked the name, so I thought I'd keep it. Anyway, when Willy Jay was leaving he gave Dog a hug and said "Goodbye, Dog. You're a fine ole dog." Well, I felt something for him, so I told Willie Jay he could come back and visit with Dog any time he wanted, and his face just kinda lit right up. Anyhow, time goes on and Willie Jay keeps coming over and over. And we talk about Dog and how fat he's getting, and then, well, you know, things start up. Like sex. Like that. I know he's fifteen and a black boy. I was so lonely. And he was good. Oh, he was so, so good. I'd never had it that good. We'd always go out in the garage and....anyway, we were just standing around on the back porch playing with Dog. Well, suddenly Zackery comes from around the side of the house. And he startled me 'cause he';s supposed to be away at the office, and there he is coming from round the side of the house. Anyway, he says to Willie Jay, "Hey, boy, what are you doing back here?" And I say, "He's not doing anything. You just go on home, Willie Jay! You just run right on home." Well, before he can move, Zackery comes up and knocks him once right across the face and then shoves him down the porch steps, causing him to skin up his elbow real bad on that hard concrete. Then he says, "Don't you ever come around here again, or I'll have them cut out your gizzard!" Well, Willie Jay starts crying--these tears come streaming down his face--then he gets up real quick and runs away, with Dog following off after him. After that, I don't remember much too clearly; let's see...I went on into the living room, and I went right up to the davenport and opened the drawer where we keep the burglar gun...I took it out. Then I heard the back door slamming. So I waited for Zackery to come on into the living room. Then I held out the gun and I pulled the trigger, aiming for his heart but getting him in the stomach.. *(after a pause)* It's funny that I really did that.