

The Grays of Truth

by Sharon Virts



About the Book

From bestselling historical true-crime author Sharon Virts comes a gripping tale of murder and deceit.

In Reconstruction-era Baltimore, members of the city's elite keep turning up dead. Below the polished surface of high society, there are illicit affairs, jilted lovers, financial hardships and countless motives for murder. When Jane Gray Wharton's husband, Ned, dies unexpectedly while overnighing at his brother's home, Jane has no reason to question the circumstances of his death. But on a visit to the same house a few weeks later, both Jane and her daughter fall gravely ill, and Jane begins to suspect foul play.

Though a trained chemist and former nurse, Jane is haunted by a history of delusion, loss and institutionalization. As the unexpected and devastating deaths begin to multiply, Jane's grip on reality starts to slip. When a respected army officer falls terribly ill after visiting the Whartons' Baltimore home, Jane's greatest fears become all too real. The time has come to act. But who will believe her? And can she even trust her own mind?

Inspired by true events involving one of Baltimore's most powerful families, *THE GRAYS OF TRUTH* is the story of one woman's quest for answers in her fight for redemption --- and to save the man she loves.

Discussion Guide

1. Jane Gray Wharton is depicted as an amateur chemist and former nurse with a history of delusion and institutionalization. How does her past shape her actions and decisions throughout the novel? Do you find her to be a reliable narrator, or do her experiences make you question her perspective?
2. Why do you think General Ketchum, despite knowing about Jane's suspicions, continued to maintain a relationship with Ellen? Do you agree with the idea that men in the 19th century underestimated women's capacity for poisoning and

murder, or do you think there could be another explanation?

3. The novel presents a blurred line between reality and delusion, especially from Jane's viewpoint. How does Sharon Virts use this ambiguity to build suspense? At what points did you find yourself questioning what was real versus what was imagined?

4. Set in the Reconstruction era, the book portrays societal constraints on women, particularly through Jane's experiences. How does Jane's struggle for autonomy and credibility reflect the broader challenges faced by women during this period?

5. As the novel unfolds, numerous motives for murder come to light, involving love, betrayal and financial troubles. Which motive did you find most compelling, and why? Did you sympathize with any of the potential suspects?

6. Do you think Ellen Wharton's beauty, charm, political influence and family name played a role in her treatment by the police? How much do you think these factors influenced the outcome of the trial, and how might things have been different without them?

7. Unlike traditional detective stories, Jane herself is a suspect in her own mind, constantly doubting her sanity. How does this affect your engagement with the story and your empathy for Jane?

8. The Wharton family, like many others in the book, is filled with secrets and hidden motives. How do these dynamics drive the plot forward? Were there any family members whose intentions you questioned more than others?

9. The novel is set in Baltimore during the Reconstruction era, a time of great social upheaval and change. How does the setting influence the events of the story? Could this story have taken place in another time or place, or is it uniquely tied to its setting?

10. The novel is described as a story of one woman's quest for answers in her fight for redemption. Do you think Jane achieves redemption by the end of the book? What does redemption mean for her character?

11. Even though *THE GRAYS OF TRUTH* is set in a historical context, are there themes or issues within the book that resonate with contemporary readers? How does the novel speak to today's social or psychological issues?

Author Bio

Sharon Virts is a successful entrepreneur and visionary who, after more than 25 years in business, followed her passion for storytelling into the world of historical fiction. She has authored three books: *MASQUE OF HONOR*, *VEIL OF DOUBT* and *THE GRAYS OF TRUTH*.

Sharon's passion truly lies in the creative. She is an accomplished visual artist and uses her gift for artistic expression along with her extraordinary storytelling to build complex characters and craft vivid images and sets that capture the heart and imagination.

She has received numerous awards for her work in historic preservation and has been recognized nationally for her

business achievements and philanthropic contributions. She was included in *Washington Life Magazine*'s Philanthropic 50 of 2020 for her work with education, health and cultural preservation.

Sharon and her husband, Scott Miller, live at Selma, a prominent historic residence that they saved from destruction and restored to its original stature. She is mother to four sons --- James, Lucas, Zachary and Nicholas --- a stepmom to Ben and Avery, and "Nana" to Charlie, Bodhi and Aubry. Sharon and Scott live in Selma with their three Labrador retrievers: Polly, Cassie and Leda.

Critical Praise

"Inspired by a true story and meticulously researched, the underbelly of high society Reconstruction Era Baltimore is brought brilliantly to life in Sharon Virts's atmospheric and deeply absorbing murder mystery *THE GRAYS OF TRUTH*. I loved it!"

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Publication Date: October 29, 2024

Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Historical Mystery, Mystery

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Flashpoint

ISBN-10: 1959411721

ISBN-13: 9781959411727