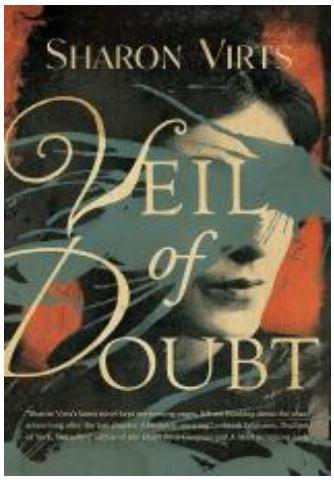
Veil of Doubt

by Sharon Virts



About the Book

When a mother is charged with murder in a town already convinced of her guilt, can defense attorney Powell Harrison find truth and justice in a legal system where innocence is not presumed?

Emily Lloyd, a young widow in Reconstruction-era Virginia, is accused of poisoning her three-year-old daughter, Maud. It isn?t the first death in her home --- her husband and three other children all died of mysterious illnesses --- so when Maud succumbs to an unexplained malady, the town suspects foul play. Soon Mrs. Lloyd is charged not only with poisoning the child but also with murdering her children, her husband and her aunt.

Enter Powell Harrison, a soft-spoken, brilliant attorney who recently returned to his Virginia hometown to help his brother manage their late father?s practice. Approached to assist in Mrs. Lloyd?s defense, Harrison initially declines, worried that an infanticide case might tarnish their family?s reputation. But as details about the widow?s erratic behavior and her reclusive neighbors emerge, Harrison begins to suspect that an even more sinister truth might lurk beneath the family?s horrible fate and finds himself irresistibly drawn to the case.

Based on a shocking true story, VEIL OF DOUBT is part true-crime thriller, part medical and legal procedural. Perfect for fans of Margaret Atwood?s ALIAS GRACE and filled with rich period detail gleaned from exhaustive research, VEIL OF DOUBT delves into the darkness of the South during Reconstruction, exposing intrigue, deception and death.

Discussion Guide

1. The story begins with the suspicion of foul play in the death of Emily?s child, Maud. How do you think this initial suspicion sets the tone for the rest of the book?

2. What are the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by Powell Harrison when deciding whether to take Emily Lloyd?s

case?

3. How does the setting of a small town in Virginia impact the events and characters in the story? How does the community?s mindset affect the outcome of the case?

4. In a society where women had limited rights and were often at the mercy of men, how do you view the treatment of Emily Lloyd throughout the story?

5. What roles do Lilith and Lara play in the story?

6. Powell made a bold decision in how to ultimately plead the case. If Powell had not changed his initial plea strategy, how do you think this would have played out?

7. How do the various legal and procedural challenges, such as the graveside autopsies of the children?s bodies and the prosecution?s failure to share evidence, impact the trial and the pursuit of justice?

8. Emily?s relationship with Dr. Randy Moore is a central plot point. How does their relationship evolve throughout the story, and what significance does it hold?

9. Does the final reveal impact your interpretation of the events in the story?

10. The book explores themes of justice, mental illness and the limitations of human understanding. How does the story?s conclusion, with Emily?s acquittal, address these themes, and what message does it convey about the pursuit of justice?

Author Bio

Sharon Virts is a bestselling historical fiction author, gifted painter and passionate preservationist. After more than 25 years as a successful entrepreneur, she followed her deepest conviction: that the past is not a subject to be studied at a distance --- it is a living force that shapes who we are, how we see the world, and what we choose to protect.

She has authored four novels: MASQUE OF HONOR and BARGAINS OF FATE (books one and two of the six-part *Fields of Honor* series), the macabre mystery THE GRAYS OF TRUTH (an International Book Award winner), and the true-crime thriller VEIL OF DOUBT (a finalist for Best Historical Fiction 2024), with four more *Fields of Honor* novels forthcoming. Her work spans Virginia drawing rooms, frontier Florida, and post-Civil War Baltimore --- always grounded in meticulous research and vivid, breathing characters.

Sharon is also a visual artist --- a landscape painter who captures scenes the same way she writes: quickly, in the moment, wondering who else has stood in that same place. Her paintings have been exhibited and collected across the country.

In 2016, Sharon and her husband, Scott Miller, rescued Selma Mansion --- a historic 1810 Virginia estate on the verge of

demolition --- and undertook a meticulous, top-to-bottom restoration that captured over 109,000 social followers and became one of the most-watched preservation stories in America. She has served as board chair of the Loudoun Museum for nine years and hosts a monthly TV segment, "Between the Lines," on Scripps stations, including WMAR Baltimore.

Every dollar from Sharon's books and paintings flows to the Virts Miller Foundation, funding education, health care and cultural preservation in Loudoun County. She lives at Selma with Scott and their three Labrador retrievers --- Polly, Cassie and Leda --- and is mother to four sons, stepmom to two, and "Nana" to Charlie, Bodhi and Aubry.

Veil of Doubt

by Sharon Virts

Publication Date: October 10, 2023
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Historical Mystery, Mystery, Suspense, Thriller
Paperback: 364 pages
Publisher: Girl Friday Books
ISBN-10: 195941125X
ISBN-13: 9781959411253