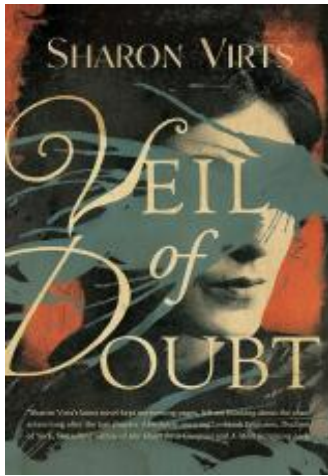


# Veil of Doubt

by Sharon Virts

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## 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 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 two books: *MASQUE OF HONOR* and *VEIL OF DOUBT*.

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 recently included in *Washington Life Magazine's* Philanthropic 50 of 2020 for her work with education, health and cultural preservation.

Sharon and her husband, Scott, 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 10-year-old Charlie and toddler Bodhi. She lives in Virginia with her husband, Scott Miller, at

the historic Selma Mansion with their three Labrador retrievers, Polly, Cassie and Leda.

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## **Veil of Doubt**

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