



# **The Devil Amongst the Lawyers: A Ballad Novel (Ballad Novels)**

*Sharyn McCrumb*

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# The Devil Amongst the Lawyers: A Ballad Novel (Ballad Novels)

Sharyn McCrumb

## The Devil Amongst the Lawyers: A Ballad Novel (Ballad Novels) Sharyn McCrumb

In 1935, when Erma Morton, a beautiful young woman with a teaching degree, is charged with the murder of her father in a remote Virginia mountain community, the case becomes a cause célèbre for the national press.

Eager for a case to replace the Lindbergh trial in the public's imagination, the journalists descend on the mountain county intent on infusing their stories with quaint local color: horse-drawn buggies, rundown shacks, children in threadbare clothes. They need tales of rural poverty to give their Depression-era readers people whom they can feel superior to. The untruth of these cultural stereotypes did not deter the big-city reporters, but a local journalist, Carl Jennings, fresh out of college and covering his first major story, reports what he sees: an ordinary town and a defendant who is probably guilty.

This journey to a distant time and place summons up ghosts from the reporters' pasts: Henry Jernigan's sojourn in Japan that ended in tragedy, Shade Baker's hardscrabble childhood on the Iowa prairie, and Rose Hanelon's brittle sophistication, a shield for her hopeless love affair. While they spin their manufactured tales of squalor, Carl tries to discover the truth in the Morton trial with the help of his young cousin Nora, who has the Sight. But who will believe a local cub reporter whose stories contradict the nation's star journalists? For the reader, the novel resonates with the present: an economic depression, a deadly flu epidemic, a world contending with the rise of political fanatics, and a media culture determined to turn news stories into soap operas for the diversion of the masses.

A stunning return to the lands, ballads, and characters upon which she made her name, *The Devil Amongst the Lawyers* is a testament to Sharyn McCrumb's lyrical and evocative writing.

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