



The Inquest (Hardscrabble Books-Fiction of New England)

Jeffrey Marshall

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In 1830, Experience "Speedy" Goodrich died after undergoing an abortion in Burlington, Vermont. This tragedy and the resulting inquiry provide the foundation for Jeffrey D. Marshall's meticulously researched first novel. From the vibrant intellectual life of the University of Vermont to the public outcry over grave-robbing medical students in search of subjects for dissection, and from the progressive social movements of the day to the commercial bustle of a thriving inland port, Marshall offers a compelling portrait of the city and the era. Speedy's death and the subsequent inquest are described by three narrators: Charles Daggett, a student at the UVM medical school who is accused of procuring - and some say actually performing - the abortion; Stephen Decatur Parker, an undergraduate who is drafted to serve as scribe for the inquest into Goodrich's death; and Nancy Goodrich Proctor, the sister of the deceased. Daggett and Proctor were real, while Parker is entirely fictional. Marshall gives them distinct and compelling voices as they recount the events of the tragedy and its personal consequences for each of them. The 1830s were a time of great social, political, and religious upheaval. As in our own time, abortion, religious fundamentalism, and civil liberties were topics of heated debate. Marshall places Speedy Goodrich's story in the context of these enduring controversies in a work of fiction that is both dramatic and historically plausible.

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