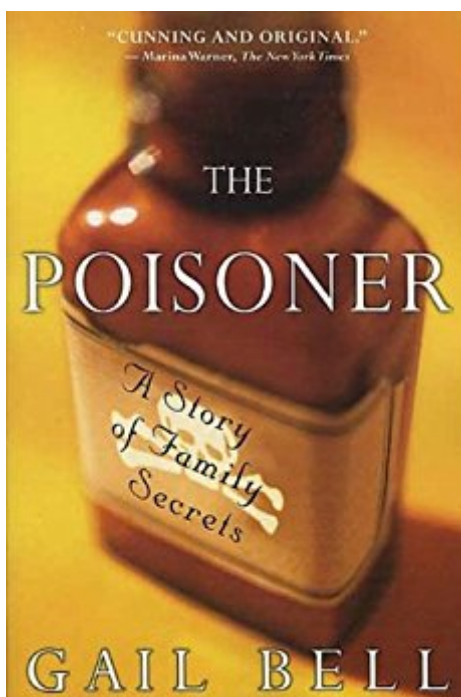


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The Poisoner: A Story Of Family Secrets



Synopsis

Years after Dr. William Macbeth died, his ornate medicine case passed to his estranged son. Over the protests of his family, the son buried it deep in the ground, out of sight and out of reach. Then ten-years-old, Macbeth's granddaughter Gail Bell watched the mysterious case of elixirs arrive at her home. She watched her father treat it like a poison chalice. Only decades later would she understand why: the case concealed evidence of her family's deadly secret. In 1927, Macbeth was accused of poisoning two of his sons. He never stood trial. Bell, determined to discover how this "calm, warm, and caring" healer could become a cunning murderer-and evade detection-eventually uncovered the dark secrets that her father had tried to hide from the world. But as the unexpected twists of her investigation reveal, nothing is as straightforward as it seems. At the same time, she explores what the crime of poisoning reveals about humanity, through the perspectives of myth, history, fiction, and the great poison trials. A pharmacist by profession, and the granddaughter of a suspected poisoner by circumstance, she is perfectly placed to revisit the cases of Cleopatra, Emma Bovary, Napoleon's doctor, Harold Shipman, and Dr. Crippen, and she is equally well-suited to chronicle the devastating effects of poison's many forms, from hemlock and belladonna to arsenic and strychnine. Poison is at once a fascinating history of the science and sociology of poisoning, and a true, first-person account of one woman's struggle to understand its mysterious role in her own family's murderous history.

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