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Randall Stargill lies dying on his southern Appalachian farm, and his four sons have come home to build him a coffin from the cache of rosewood he has hoarded for the special purpose. Meanwhile, mountain wisewoman Nora Bonesteel, Randall's sweetheart of long ago, prepares another box for his burial—a small box containing human bones...

The Rosewood Casket Details

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From Reader Review The Rosewood Casket for online ebook

Mary says

I was really disappointed in this book. It started out with a very intriguing premise, and the characters, at first, felt very realistic and with quite a lot of depth. But about halfway through, I realized that nothing was really going to happen plot-wise, and the one big "event" that does occur happens to one of the minor characters that I couldn't have cared less about. The book has meandering side steps, going into detail about things like the inner thoughts of a random paramedic or doctor treating a main character, which seemed to serve no purpose. The primary "mystery" of the story is only solved at the very end, and it's about what you'd expect. While the author does do a nice job of describing how beautiful this part of the country is, the story goes nowhere and has no real direction or purpose.

Catherine says

My introduction to McCrumb's Appalachian ballad series. Loved its intermingling of current life, Anglo-Appalachian history and Cherokee belief. Stumbled across the book as my Mother was undergoing gallbladder surgery and the complication of a botched surgery. She almost died and I waited until I knew she was okay before suggesting this title. I told her that I felt it would have been extremely insensitive for me to send her this book by a writer I had just discovered, given the title, until I knew that she was going to be okay. Mother's response was a laugh and suggestions to read the other books. She was as usual many books ahead of me. I miss that exchange of good book suggestions, especially mysteries, with her.

Amy says

I really liked this story. I loved the feel of the book--like I was sitting on the porch in a rocking chair watching the clouds in the sky, listening to an old southern grandmother tell the story. It just had a really pleasant, easy-going feeling. But it wasn't just a pleasant, easy-going book. The story really moved along and I was never bored or tempted to skim. I liked the flashbacks that interrupted the story for just a minute and told some of the backstory. Instead of just being distracting, they were a complete story in their own right, a story I wanted to hear more of. And parts of the story were harsh and forced me to face the worst in humanity. Some people didn't treat each other particularly well, which may have been a reflection of the hardness of life on the mountain. Other people were truly likable. I found myself rooting for them to survive and succeed.

I liked the ending a lot. There was some sadness, but overall I think it was happily-ever-after. I'll definitely be reading more by Sharyn McCrumb and I'm hoping to run into some of the characters from this book again.

Jackson Burnett says

A number of intriguing elements intertwined through this book. The narrative lost focus about a third of the

way through. McCrumb probably could have made this a masterpiece if she had set it aside and went back to it later for serious editing and reworking. It's really too bad she didn't.

Nigel says

In the Appalachian mountains, a man lies down to sleep and doesn't wake up. He isn't dead yet, but he isn't far off. A handwritten letter instructs his four surviving sons to build a coffin out of rosewood and bury him on the land. With their wives and partners in tow, they set to, but there are tragedies all around them. The ghost of a young girl whose bones are delivered to them in a rosewood box. The slow death of a way of life as a land speculator schemes and manipulates to drive people out of their homes. As the sons struggle to come to terms with their father's impending demise, more death lies in wait.

'More death lies in wait.' Heh, that's melodramatic, and accurate, but this isn't a melodramatic book, for all its gothic and thriller elements. The narrative hearkens back to the previous century, as one lot of people face disruption and displacement, to the present of the book, when another lot of people face the same. The latter-day land-grab may not be as bloody, but it is still protracted, painful and rife with injustice. McCrumb builds to a final, heartbreak, suspense-filled climax in a setting haunted by ghosts and secrets and terrible tragedies.

Beth says

The Rosewood Casket was recommended to me, for my love of magical realism. And I am very grateful for that recommendation! This novel is set in Appalachian Tennessee, basically a foreign country to me, but McCrumb details both the culture and the landscape in a beautifully poetic way.

At its heart, this is not just a story of the Stargill family, but of the timeless transition of land-tied creatures being forced to move, and indeed, of consequences. It's the story of Daniel Boone, the Cherokee, indigenous species that have been shoved out by invasive species, and the development of farm land into McMansions and planned communities in the 1980's.

But it's also the story of a collection of men and women that McCrumb paints as three-dimensional, realistically flawed, and equally broken. There is no sole protagonist or antagonist, though Clayte is most often the narrative voice- it's truly an ensemble piece. And one that plays with your expectations.

I highly recommend it for fans of magical realism, place-centric fiction, historical-influenced contemporary stories, those who enjoy the Appalachian culture, and adults who can relate to having dysfunctional families.

Thea says

Meh.

In a nutshell, this book is about how what goes around comes around; in the context of this novel, if you take someone's land, someone will eventually come and take your land (or the land of your future offspring). McCrumb uses the sad story of the Americas to illustrate a moral point, reaching back to Daniel Boone's

days of European settlers stealing land from Native Americans (though somehow he's revered, right?) and following this thread to 20th century America, where a family -- presumably offspring of the aforementioned sticky-fingered settlers -- in Appalachian Tennessee is on the verge of having their farm "stolen" (read: bought for cheap) by a greedy developer.

But there's more to the story than this, isn't there? Well, there is, but things become muddled. Just what is the point here? The moral lesson gets overshadowed by the story of an old, dying man who wants his four scattered (and, frankly, jerkish) sons to return to the family homestead and build his casket. Each son has a significant other, and trying to keep up with the plot lines of the four grown men, the women in their lives, the dying man, two little girls (one alive, one not), an old woman who has the gift of second sight, and the greedy land developer was a bit exhausting. Oh, I forgot: add to that list the old man and his daughter whose farm the developer wants to buy, Daniel Boone, and also a weird, out-of-place chapter from the point of view of Nancy Ward, an 18th/19th century Cherokee woman.

I see what McCrumb was going for, I really do. I just would have preferred a more simple telling of the story, and for that matter, maybe less of the story: narrowing the focus instead of casting such a wide net. To me, the most interesting plot line revolved around the ghost girl and the circumstances surrounding her life and death. Come to think of it, why was that plot line even included? It was a thread that ran through the entire book, but honestly, if it had been left out, I don't think it would have mattered.

I like spooky stories. I like stories about Appalachia. I like spooky stories about Appalachia, and I really wanted to like this book, but to me it was too disjointed. There's an awful lot going on, and I never knew where to "look," so to speak.

June Ahern says

My first time to read Sharyn McCrumb, but a favorite author of my sisters, so I read "The Rosewood Casket". The story starts out with clarity and promise. The prologue is intriguing enough to pull a reader in. Ms. McCrumb, very vividly, describes the wooded southern area and captures the people so well. I truly felt as though I was in the mystic and beautiful place. The story continues with an elderly man who lives alone and needs to be hospitalized. His family, all sons and their wives, come from here and there to care for his needs and prepare for his death. Then there is - confusion. Too much about each character and less about moving the story plot along. The plot actually becomes intertwining of personalities, purpose, and history that I found the story hard to follow. And throw in a devious real estate investor, a police officer, a neighbor and I'm like, really where are we going? Too many times. The author is an excellent writer but this book was long and took me months to finish. It ended up being the book I went to in between other books. I think I'll try another of her books though because she does write so beautifully.

The Skye in June

Bettie? says

Description: *Randall Stargill lies dying on his southern Appalachian farm, and his four sons have come*

home to build him a coffin from the cache of rosewood he has hoarded for the special purpose. Meanwhile, mountain wisewoman Nora Bonesteel, Randall's sweetheart of long ago, prepares another box for his burial—a small box containing human bones...

A story containing angels. Nice series this, what with the local folklore and indiosyncratic inhabitants.

3* She Walks These Hills (Ballad, #3)

3* The Rosewood Casket (Ballad, #4)

3* The Ballad of Frankie Silver (Ballad, #5)

DAISY DISNEY says

I almost gave up on this book. To be honest I found the first half to be very boring. Some of the historical parts on the mountains & the American frontier was interesting but some was just tedious to read. As I stated before on a past reading update: This author sure has an obsession with Daniel Boone! lol I will say that I learned about who he was and that was sort of interesting. I can also tell by the author's writing that she loves her mountains! I read more about the author after reading this book and read somewhere that she lives in the mountains where her family first settled over 100 years ago. That was an interesting fact all in itself.

The story was good. It took a minute for it to pick up speed and I am now glad that I didn't give up on this book. The mystery behind the bones that were in the box was intriguing. I did feel that once it was discovered who the bones belonged to, that it would have added more depth to the story if the author would have added more to the story of how the person's bones came to be and how that person died.

On a little side note: An annoying thing about the story was that the 2 main families in the story had very smiliar last names. It made it confusing when reading trying to keep up with who's family the chapters were pertaining to. I couldn't really keep track of this until a little over halfway through the book.

I am on the fence on whether or not I would recommend this book. I would say yes and no. Some might find the beginning boring as I did and some might love the mystery that comes halfway through the book. Pick this one up and see if it's for you!

Dennis Fischman says

This is a deeply resonant book about how secrets, silence, poverty, and war haunt two families and the whole Appalachian region. It's also a continuation of the story of Nora Bonesteel, seer. All that is wrapped up in an installment of a police procedural series. Come for the detective story; stay for the novel.

Edward Sullivan says

An engaging, intriguing mix of history, mystery and magical realism set in Appalachia.

Rachelle Kirby says

I love the way Sharyn McCrumb writes, her style is so unique and her stories always draw me in. I love the way she blends southern family drama, history, and supernatural elements. Nora Bonesteel is my favorite of all McCrumb's characters. My heart broke for Randall Stargill in this story at what it must be like to die sick and alone.

LJ says

THE ROSEWOOD CASKET - VG
McCrumb, Sharyn - 4th in Ballad series

Old man Stargill is dying, and his four grown sons are called home to the small mountain town where they grew up to say good-bye and carry out their daddy's dying wish: that his "boys" build him a rosewood casket. But a dying man's wishes aren't the only problems the splintered Stargills are forced to face. Emotions ride high, and tempers flare because if it isn't a vulture-like land developer going after the family farm, or old lady Bonesteel delivering a mysterious box she insists must be buried with Stargill, or a small child disappearing, it's a neighbor going berserk or a shocking, long-forgotten tragedy resurfacing to add more pain to the family's grief.

It's not much of a mystery but it is a wonderfully atmospheric story with a great setting. Sense of place of the people in Tennessee back country is wonderful. There is a well-done ghost and elements that make the story very compelling.

Bret James Stewart says

The Rosewood Casket by Sharyn McCrumb is a wonderful amalgamation of mystery, Southern Literature, and ghost story bordering on Southern Gothic. My mother recommended this book to me, and I did not think I would like it much as I am not overly fond of mysteries, but I was wrong.

The overall story is about a dying man, Randall Stargill, and the gathering of his four sons, who are tasked with working in cooperation to construct the eponymous casket for their father. A mysterious woman arrives with a box containing the skeleton of a child, requesting it be placed in the coffin when the latter is completed. I won't include any spoilers in this review, but I wanted to include the basic teaser plot.

The novel is written in a series of flashbacks and present sequences. This is well done and interesting. She provides a number of perspectives, too, which is nice as it allows the reader to really get into the head of the characters. The "present" sequences are in the 90s, so it is now the past, with the result that the book actually provides intriguing insights into two different time periods. More than that, really, because the sequences of Stargill's past involve a number of different times, notably the World War II era.

A number of themes are present in the book. The universal struggle with changing times (particularly marked in the rapidly-changing 20th century), the move from the agrarian society/culture of the time and the

corresponding issues such as the abandonment of the family farms as children leave to take urban jobs. Also present are struggles between siblings, the rich and the poor, the traditional and the modern, and industrialization and environmentalism. Moreover, morality questions, ethics, and the poignancy of love and death abound. These issues are timeless, and this novel is, too.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in any of the genres and/or characteristics mentioned above. McCrumb has worked magic in this work, and you don't want to miss it.
