



# **Big Trouble: A Murder in a Small Western Town Sets Off a Struggle for the Soul of America**

*J. Anthony Lukas*

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Anthony Lukas

Hailed as "toweringly important" (Baltimore Sun), "a work of scrupulous and significant reportage" (E. L. Doctorow), and "an unforgettable historical drama" (Chicago Sun-Times), "Big Trouble" brings to life the astonishing case that ultimately engaged President Theodore Roosevelt, Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the politics and passions of an entire nation at century's turn.

After Idaho's former governor is blown up by a bomb at his garden gate at Christmastime 1905, America's most celebrated detective, Pinkerton James McParland, takes over the investigation. His daringly executed plan to kidnap the radical union leader "Big Bill" Haywood from Colorado to stand trial in Idaho sets the stage for a memorable courtroom confrontation between the flamboyant prosecutor, progressive senator William Borah, and the young defender of the dispossessed, Clarence Darrow.

"Big Trouble" captures the tumultuous first decade of the twentieth century, when capital and labor, particularly in the raw, acquisitive West, were pitted against each other in something close to class war.

Lukas paints a vivid portrait of a time and place in which actress Ethel Barrymore, baseball phenom Walter Johnson, and editor William Allen White jostled with railroad magnate E. H. Harriman, socialist Eugene V. Debs, gunslinger Charlie Siringo, and Operative 21, the intrepid Pinkerton agent who infiltrated Darrow's defense team. This is a grand narrative of the United States as it charged, full of hope and trepidation, into the twentieth century.

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