



The Secret Life of the Lonely Doll: The Search for Dare Wright

Jean Nathan

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A glamorous, haunted life unfolds in the mesmerizing biography of the woman behind a classic children's book

In 1957, a children's book called *The Lonely Doll* was published. With its pink-and-white-checked cover and photographs featuring a wide-eyed doll, it captured the imaginations of young girls and made the author, Dare Wright, a household name.

Close to forty years after its publication, the book was out of print but not forgotten. When the cover image inexplicably came to journalist Jean Nathan one afternoon, she went in search of the book—and ultimately its author. Nathan found Dare Wright living out her last days in a decrepit public hospital in Queens, New York.

Over the next five years, Nathan pieced together a glamorous life. Blond, beautiful Wright had begun her career as an actress and model and then turned to fashion photography before stumbling upon her role as bestselling author. But there was a dark side to the story: a brother lost in childhood, ill-fated marriage plans, a complicated, controlling mother. Edith Stevenson Wright, herself a successful portrait painter, played such a dominant role in her daughter's life that Dare was never able to find her way into the adult world. Only through her work could she speak for herself: in her books she created the happy family she'd always yearned for, while her self-portraits betrayed an unresolved tension between sexuality and innocence, a desire to belong and painful isolation.

Illustrated with stunning photographs, *The Secret Life of the Lonely Doll* tells the unforgettable story of a woman who, imprisoned by her childhood, sought to set herself free through art.



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