



Peninsula of Lies: A True Story of Mysterious Birth and Taboo Love

Edward Ball

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Peninsula of Lies is a nonfiction mystery, set in haunting locales and peopled with fascinating characters, that unwraps the enigma of a woman named Dawn Langley Simmons, a British writer who lived in Charleston, South Carolina, during the 1960s and became the focus of one of the most unusual sexual scandals of the last century.

Born in England sometime before World War II, Dawn Langley Simmons began life as a boy named Gordon Langley Hall. Gordon was the son of servants at Sissinghurst Castle, the estate of Vita Sackville-West, where as a child he met Vita's lover Virginia Woolf. In his twenties, Gordon made his way to New York, where he became an author of society biographies and befriended such grandes dames as the actress Margaret Rutherford and the artist and heiress Isabel Whitney, who left him a small fortune.

The money allowed Gordon to buy a mansion in Charleston and fill it with period furniture, providing a stage for him to entertain more great ladies and to climb the social ladder of the Southern gentry to its heights.

However, Gordon's world changed instantly in 1968, when at The Johns Hopkins Hospital he underwent one of the first sex-reassignment surgeries, returning to Southern society and scandalizing Charleston as the new *Dawn* Langley Hall. Dawn Hall furthermore announced that her surgery had been corrective, because she'd actually been misidentified as a boy at birth.

Three months later, Dawn raised the stakes in still-segregated Charleston when she arranged her very public marriage to a young black mechanic, John-Paul Simmons. In due course, Dawn appeared around town pregnant; finally, she could be seen pushing a baby carriage with a child -- her daughter, Natasha.

National Book Award-winning author Edward Ball (*Slaves in the Family*) has written a detective story that deciphers the riddle of Dawn Simmons, a once rich and infamous changeling who died in 2000, her sexual identity never determined.

Peninsula of Lies is an engrossing narrative of a person who tested every taboo, as well as the confidence of observers in their own eyes.

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