



The Wives of Bath

Susan Swan

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In *The Wives of Bath*, Susan Swan penetrates the world of a girls' boarding school and tells a story - at once shocking and wickedly funny - that encompasses rebellion and murder, and stunningly evokes the pain, confusion, and humour of female adolescence and sexual coming-of-age.

It is 1963. Mary Bradford (a.k.a. Mouse) is thirteen when she is shipped off to Bath Ladies College. Mouse, motherless, a hunchback, enters the school feeling very much on its margins, determined never to fit in with the "normal" girls, never to succumb to the expectations of the elder role models: the spinster teachers, the elegant mothers of her schoolmates. She chooses her allies carefully: her hump, whom she calls Alice, and John F. Kennedy, to whom she writes long letters asking and giving advice.

But the school itself is stranger than Mouse ever could have imagined. A secret underworld of tunnels beneath the buildings, stolen love letters, King Kong worship, and ghostlike apparitions - a world where young girls sometimes refuse to be simply "good little girls" - all lead Mouse into experiences, both terrifying and exciting, of an alternate reality for her sex. What begins as experimentation spins out of control, ending in a death that only Mouse can fully comprehend.

Susan Swan has created in Mouse Bradford - wise, witty and vulnerable - an unforgettable heroine. *The Wives of Bath* is a novel that both moves the heart and astonishes the imagination.

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