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Opal: A Life of Enchantment, Mystery, and Madness

Kathrine Beck

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In 1920, readers across America fell in love with the childhood diary of Opal Whiteley, a young girl from a small logging town in the northwest. The diary, which chronicled Opal's adventures in the forests of Oregon at the age of seven, was hailed as a revelatory and mystical portrait of a child's relationship to God and the natural world. It became an overnight sensation, and Opal-beautiful, charming, and twenty years old-quickly became one of the first celebrities of the day. Though skeptics soon discredited it as a hoax and its author fell out of public view, the diary has since become an enduring classic that has won its place on many school reading lists, and Opal's story continues to touch the hearts of many devotees.

But almost a century later, the true story of the diary and Opal's identity remain a puzzle. *Opal* is the story of her legacy and of the various mythical roles she has embodied-from a New Age prophet and environmentalist to a mad genius and a long-lost princess.

Sifting through Opal's personal papers and letters, Kathrine Beck has for the first time brought to life the full story behind Opal's elusive and eccentric life. Part biography, part fast-paced mystery, *Opal* combines the quirkiness of *The Professor and the Madman* with the hypnotic aura of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. With beautiful photos from Opal's childhood, as well as her striking publicity shots, it is a delightful book for the holidays.

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