



Inventing Elsa Maxwell: How an Irrepressible Nobody Conquered High Society, Hollywood, the Press, and the World

Sam Staggs

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One of the twentieth century's most colorful characters brought back to life in this biography by the author of *All About All About Eve*

With *Inventing Elsa Maxwell*, Sam Staggs has crafted a landmark biography. Elsa Maxwell (1881-1963) invented herself—not once, but repeatedly. Built like a bulldog, she ascended from the San Francisco middle class to the heights of society in New York, London, Paris, Venice, and Monte Carlo. Shunning boredom and predictability, Elsa established herself as party-giver extraordinaire in Europe with come-as-you-are parties, treasure hunts (e.g., retrieve a slipper from the foot of a singer at the Casino de Paris), and murder parties that drew the ire of the British parliament. She set New York a-twitter with her soirees at the Waldorf, her costume parties, and her headline-grabbing guest lists of the rich and royal, movie stars, society high and low, and those on the make all mixed together in let-'er-rip gaiety. All the while, Elsa dashed off newspaper columns, made films in Hollywood, wrote bestselling books, and turned up on TV talk shows. She hobnobbed with friends like Noel Coward and Cole Porter. Late in life, she fell in love with Maria Callas, who spurned her and broke Elsa's heart. Her feud with the Duchess of Windsor made headlines for three years in the 1950s.

Inventing Elsa Maxwell, the first biography of this extraordinary woman, tells the witty story of a life lived out loud.

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