



The Purple Diaries: Mary Astor and the Most Sensational Hollywood Scandal of the 1930s

Joseph Egan

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The Purple Diaries: Mary Astor and the Most Sensational Hollywood Scandal of the 1930s Joseph Egan 1936 was on its way to being a great year for the movie industry. Theatre attendance was up; the financial setbacks experienced during the early years of The Great Depression had subsided. Americans everywhere were sitting in the dark watching the stars, and few stars shined as brightly as one of America's most enduring screen favorites, Mary Astor.

But Astor's story wasn't a happy one. She was born poor, and at the first sign that she could earn money, her parents grabbed the reins and the checks. Widowed at twenty-four, Mary Astor looked for any port in a storm, and found one in Dr. Franklyn Thorpe?or so she thought.

The marriage was rocky from the start, destined for divorce from the moment the two stepped off the altar. Both were unfaithful, but the relationship did not dissolve before Mary Astor gave birth to little Marylyn Thorpe.

What followed was a custody battle that pushed The Spanish Civil War and Hitler's 1936 Olympics right off of the front pages all over America. Although Astor and Thorpe were both ruthless in their fight to gain custody of their daughter, Thorpe held a trump card: the two diaries Mary Astor had kept for years. In these diaries, Astor detailed her own affairs as well as the myriad dalliances of some of Hollywood's biggest names. The studio heads, longtime controllers of public perception, were desperate to keep the juiciest details from leaking.

With the complete support of the Astor family and unlimited access to the Mary Astor estate, Joseph Egan has painted a portrait of a great film actress in her most challenging role; an unwilling but determined mother battling for her daughter regardless of the harm that her affairs and her most intimate secrets would do to her career, the careers of her friends, or even Hollywood. *The Purple Diaries* is a look at Hollywood's Golden Age as it has never been seen before, as Egan spins a wildly absorbing yarn about a scandal that threatened to tarnish forever the dream factory known as Hollywood.

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