



The Reluctant Empress: A Biography of Empress Elisabeth of Austria

Brigitte Hamann

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Empress Elisabeth of Austria, known to her family as 'Sisi', belongs to a famous love story of European royalty. In 1853 the Emperor Franz Josef, the most eligible bachelor in Europe, fell in love with her at first sight when she was 15. They were married the next year. On the surface, it was a fairy-tale marriage, all the more poignant, with hindsight, because her tragic death augured the twilight years of the Habsburg Empire. First published in 1988, Brigitte Hamann's definitive biography tells Elisabeth's story from her birth into Bavarian nobility to her assassination at the hands of an Italian anarchist. In her lifetime she was idolised solely for her grace and beauty; but Hamann shows us a stronger character, bitter at her marriage, seeking independence, and struggling against the powerful influence of her mother-in-law, the Archduchess Sophie.

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