

THE WOMAN WHO SMASHED CODES JASON FAGONE

PERFORMED BY CASSANDRA CAMPBELL

In 1916, a young Quaker schoolteacher and poetry scholar named Elizebeth Smith was hired by an eccentric tycoon to find the secret messages he believed were embedded in Shakespeare's plays. She moved to the tycoon's lavish estate outside of Chicago expecting to spend her days poring through old books. But the rich man's close ties to the U.S. government, and the urgencies of war, quickly transformed Elizebeth's mission. She soon learned to apply her skills to an exciting new venture: codebreaking—the solving of secret messages without knowledge of the key. Working alongside her on the estate was William Friedman, a Jewish scientist who would become her husband and lifelong codebreaking partner. Elizebeth and William were in many ways the Adam and Eve of the National Security Agency, the U.S. institution that monitors and intercepts foreign communications to glean intelligence.

In *The Woman Who Smashed Codes*, Jason Fagone chronicles the life of this extraordinary woman who played an integral role in our nation's history—from the Great War to the Cold War. He traces Elizebeth's developing career through World War I, Prohibition, and the struggle against fascism. She helped catch gangsters and smugglers, exposed a Nazi spy ring in South America, and fought a clandestine battle of wits against Hitler's Reich, cracking multiple versions of the Enigma machine used by German operatives to conceal their communications. And through it all, she served as muse to her husband, a master of puzzles, who astonished friends and foes alike. Inside an army vault in Washington, he worked furiously to break Purple, the Japanese version of Enigma—and eventually succeeded, at a terrible cost to his personal life.

Fagone unveils for the first time America's codebreaking history through the prism of one remarkable woman's life, bringing into focus the unforgettable events and colorful personalities that shaped the modern intelligence community. Rich in detail, *The Woman Who Smashed Codes* pays tribute to an unsung hero whose story belongs alongside those of other great female technologists, like Ada Lovelace and Grace Hopper, and whose oft-hidden contributions altered the course of the century.

JASON FAGONE is a journalist who covers science, technology, and culture. Named one of the "Ten Young Writers on the Rise" by the *Columbia Journalism Review*, he is a contributor to the Huffington Post Highline and has written for *GQ*, *Esquire*, *The Atlantic*, the *New York Times*, *Mother Jones*, and *Philadelphia* magazine. Fagone is also the author of *Ingenious: A True Story of Invention, the X Prize, and the Race to Revive America* and *Horsemen of the Esophagus: Competitive Eating and the Big Fat American Dream*. He lives in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

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