



Alone Together: My Life with J. Paul Getty

Theodora Getty Gaston, Digby Diehl

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It was 1935. Flame-haired Teddy Lynch finished singing "Alone Together" at the swanky nightclub the New Yorker and left the stage to find a charming stranger at her friends' table. It was Jean Paul Getty, enigmatic oil tycoon and America's first billionaire.

In her passionate, unflinchingly honest memoir of two outsize lives entwined, Theodora "Teddy" Getty Gaston—now one hundred years old—reveals the glamorous yet painful story of her marriage to Getty. As formidable as he was, Teddy was equally strong-minded and flamboyant, and their clutches and clashes threw off sparks. She knew the vulnerable side of Getty—he underwent painful plastic surgery and suffered terrible phobias—that few, if any, saw.

A vivid love story, *Alone Together* is also a fascinating glimpse into the twentieth century from the vantage point of one of its most remarkable couples. This is how the other half lived—dinner dances, satin gowns, beach houses, hotel suites, first-class cabins on the *Queen Mary*. Teddy's extra-ordinary life story moves from the glittering nightclubs of 1930s New York City to Mussolini's Italy, where she was imprisoned by the fascist regime, to California in the golden postwar years, where Paul and Teddy socialized with movie stars and the elite.

But life with one of the world's richest men wasn't all glitz and glamour. Though terrifically charismatic in person, Getty grew more miserly as his wealth increased. Worse, he often left Teddy and their son, Timothy, behind for years at a time while he built planes for the war effort in the 1940s or brokered oil deals—he was the first American to lease mineral rights in Saudi Arabia, which made him, at his death, the richest man in the world. Even when Timothy was diagnosed with a brain tumor, Getty complained about medical bills and failed to return to the United States to support his wife and son. When Timothy died at age twelve, the marriage was already falling apart.

Teddy's unrelenting spirit, her valiant friendship, and her winning lack of vanity transform what could have been a sob story into a nuanced portrait of a brilliant but stubbornly difficult man and the family he loved but left behind, as well as an enchanting view into a bygone era. This was a life lived from the heart.

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Sonya Ewing:

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Connie Pauls:

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