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CAROLYN HART

BRAVE HEARTS

CAROLYN HART CLASSICS

*With a
New
Introduction
by the
Author*



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Inquiries should be addressed to
Seventh Street Books
59 John Glenn Drive
Amherst, New York 14228–2119
VOICE: 716–691–0133 • FAX: 716–691–0137
WWW.PROMETHEUSBOOKS.COM

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AUTHOR'S NEW INTRODUCTION

B*rave Hearts* is a true picture of the fate of American forces and civilians in the Philippines after the Japanese invasion. The fighting was brutal, the treatment of civilians capricious and often deadly. Though the characters in the book are fictional, *Brave Hearts* offers a realistic and often heartbreaking picture of what happened in the Philippines. My hope is that readers who know little of that past will be touched by the heroism of the “battling bastards of Bataan,” the gallant nurses on Corregidor, and the American civilians who plunged into jungles and scaled mountains to seek freedom.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

These historical figures appear in this book: General Douglas MacArthur, his wife, Jean, and their son, Arthur IV; President of the Philippines Manuel Quezon, his wife, Aurora, and their children, Maria Aurora, Manuel Jr., and Zeneida; U.S. High Commissioner to the Philippines Francis B. Sayre and his wife, Elizabeth; Financial Adviser to the High Commissioner Woodbury Willoughby Jr. and his wife, Amea; Major General Jonathan M. Wainwright; and U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James John G. Winant. All other characters without exception are creatures of fiction and purely inventions of the author's imagination.

The gold in the Philippines existed and was rescued by submarine from Corregidor. But, if part of the gold had been left behind and Spencer Cavanaugh had been a special envoy . . .

1

Catharine Cavanaugh paused at the top of the steps leading down into the River Room at the Savoy Hotel. She looked at the dancers, in the middle of an energetic rhumba, and saw beneath the gaiety a ferocious determination to have a good time. The laughter, the sensuous beat of the music, and the swirl of cigarette smoke combined into a familiar montage of wartime London, dancers and lovers waiting for the bombing to start, as everyone knew it would.

For an instant, the dancing couples became a huge gray pile of rubble and bones in her mind's eye. She willed away the image and started down the steps.

Her escort followed. He was a man with whom to spend an evening, another evening of laughter and bombs. The current escort, Captain Smithies, took her elbow and bent down to speak. She responded lightly, cleverly, not listening to his words or hers. Her smile touched her face but didn't touch her heart.

She knew that some she saw in the River Room that night felt emotion. A young couple sat at a side table, their hands interlocked over the snowy white linen as they stared into each other's eyes. Tears streamed down the girl's face. Were they a honeymoon couple and this his last night of leave?

Catharine slipped into her seat at a table beside the dance floor. Her heart ached for that couple, for all the frantic, intent merrymakers, for herself.

She shook her head impatiently and lifted a glass of champagne. This wasn't a moment to grieve; it was a moment to laugh and smile. Perhaps she was luckiest of all in that she didn't feel.

She sat at the luxuriously appointed table in a pool of quiet as her companions talked, a breathtaking, lovely woman with fine chiseled features, glossy soft black hair that hung around her face, and enormous violet-colored eyes. She wore a soft blue silk dress that clung to her with grace, revealing a slim, supple body.

Catharine drank champagne and had no sense of fate on this early evening in May 1941.



Jack Maguire ignored the others at his table. He stared at the reflection in the pillar opposite the table. It was made of some kind of reflective material, perhaps mica, masking the structural steel supports installed by the Savoy management to make the dining room safer in the event of a bombing. Jack didn't care about that; he cared only about the reflection so dimly but so strikingly seen. He watched the pillar without moving, almost without breathing. He could just glimpse her face, half the room away. Sometimes dancers moved between them, but, each time, he waited, and then he would see her again.

God, she was lovely: high cheekbones, deep-set eyes, and a soft mouth that looked both prim and vulnerable. She was American, too; he felt certain of it. American women had a certain flair even now with no new dresses in the shops. She had that casual elegance that set her apart from the other women at the table, who looked utterly British.

He turned, moving his chair back until he had a clear view across the dance floor. Yes, there she was. He felt a surge of excitement. She was even lovelier than she'd appeared in the shiny facade of the pillar. Her eyes were a deep violet like the color of spring wildflowers in the Albanian mountains.

Why had she caught his gaze? It wasn't just her beauty. There were more striking women around the room, women who looked quite approachable. But there was something about this woman, something about her face, something about her eyes . . .

She was with a vivacious crowd, women in evening gowns, the

men, of course, in uniform. There were few men in the Savoy or, for that matter, in all of London who weren't in some kind of uniform. Jack moved his shoulders restively. Odd to think he was in a uniform of sorts, too, though it was the plain uniform accorded all correspondents, with red shoulder tabs instead of insignia. Jack's uniform was crumpled and sloppy and didn't quite fit. That was fine with him. He wasn't a soldier; he was a writer and a damn good one—if that mattered, in a world gone mad. Even as his mind wandered, he kept on watching her, wondering about her.

She wasn't smiling. She sat in a grave repose despite the high, insistent wail of the saxophones and the dull shuffling of feet as servicemen danced with women they'd just met. Carroll Gibbons's band blared into "In the Mood." It wasn't Miller, but it wasn't bad.

The waiter stepped between Jack and the dance floor, and Jack couldn't see her any longer.

"Would you care for dessert, sir?"

"No, thanks." Jack waved him on and found her again.

She wore a pale blue silk dress. He knew from years of looking at people, and dealing with all kinds, that the dress was very expensive. Of course, only the rich could afford the River Room at the Savoy—the rich, the politicians, and the hard-drinking newspaper and radio correspondents who preferred to cover the Blitz in convivial surroundings. The Jerries hit the West End every night, and the Savoy, with its below-ground dining and temporary sleeping areas, was right in the heart of the action. Jack's table companions, a correspondent for *Time* and another for AP, were ordering their third drinks and well into a heated exchange on tactics.

The woman in blue didn't look as though she belonged in the loud and jazzy crowd. Unbelievably not one of the men with her was paying the slightest attention to her. Jack's eyes skimmed the three other women at her table, all expensively dressed, without interest. Three of the men were in RAF blue. The fourth wasn't in uniform, but Jack recognized him. Lord Laswell held an important post in the Ministry of Information. Lord Laswell was doing all the talking.

Everyone at the table listened intently to his every word, everyone but the woman in blue.

Jack felt the beginnings of a grin. She wasn't listening to the bombastic old fool. Her head was tilted a little to one side, and Jack knew she was listening to the music, "Begin the Beguine." Her hair fell softly on either side of her face in sleek dark waves like a calm sea on a moonless night. There was a timelessness and poignancy about her that touched Jack as nothing ever had.

The dance ended and the music paused. In the sudden quiet, he heard, ever so faintly, the up-and-down wail of the air-raid sirens, the strident warning rising and falling. The band immediately swung into "Itty-Bitty Fishies," and dancers flocked to the floor; no one even looked up. There might have been an instant, just an instant, when faces smoothed out and emptied, but it was gone before it could be noted. Dancers jitterbugged gaily, diners talked brightly, and laughter rose higher and higher.

The woman in blue looked toward the ceiling for an instant; Jack knew she was afraid. They were all afraid, of course, but the whisky, the music, and the bright, hard chatter masked the communal fear. All Londoners lived with fear now. It haunted their nights and corroded their days. No one ever spoke of it.

Jack saw fear every day, the lines of strain etched on the faces of the portly bartender, the girl in the tobacconist's shop, the housewife standing in a queue, clutching her ration card. He'd written about that fear and the terrible, bright courage of a great city withstanding the bloodiest siege of all time. He'd written about the burned-out blocks, the smoke and fire that roared like summer thunder as grimy-faced, exhausted men fought blaze after blaze in nights that never seemed to end. He'd written about the shattered homes and the shattered lives and a child's dead hand sticking up through the rubble, bone white in a misty autumn rain. He'd written his stories, drunk great quantities of Scotch, and tried not to feel the pain and the sorrow, but, tonight, something within him burned with a searing ache as he watched a woman's lovely face and saw that brief upward glance. He wanted to

hold her, to say it would be all right, to still the almost imperceptible flutter in her throat.

He picked up his glass and drank down the rest of the Scotch. What did he really see? A beautiful woman. A woman turning to her dining companion and smiling, hiding fear beneath that smile. A woman who was alone despite her companions. He knew that, sensed it. She was terribly alone.

Jack's mouth twisted in a self-deprecating grimace. What did he see and what did he invent? What was she really like, that dark and lovely woman? He wanted to know so much that he hurt inside . . . the feel of that soft and vulnerable mouth with its faint touch of scarlet. How would she make love? Would her hair, that thick and brilliantly black hair, sweep softly against her lover? Would her mouth open and seek and her hands reach out to caress? Or was she a lovely shell without fire or warmth, aloof, her soul a mystery even to herself?

Jack leaned forward a little, his gaze intent; then, suddenly, with no warning, she looked at him. Their eyes met and locked; he felt breathless, delighted. She was looking at him. Her eyes widened, and he thought of a startled doe in the Minnesota woods turning and slipping soft-footed between huge green firs. He held her gaze, willed her to look at him, and he felt her tense. It was there in the sudden lift of her chin, in the deliberate blankness of her face. Abruptly, she turned and spoke to the officer beside her, but Jack felt a rush of triumph. She had looked at him.

He had to know her.

He turned back to his own table and, reaching into his pocket for some pound notes, handed them to his friend. "Take care of the check for me, Sydney."

Sydney, still arguing about the role of De Gaulle, waved his hand absently.

Jack was already crossing the dance floor. He didn't know what he would do or say when he reached her table, but he had made up his mind. He had to know her.

Jack Maguire never counted on tomorrow and rarely thought

about yesterday, but he always played his hunches. He felt it now, certain as the beat of his heart; he had to know her.

He was midway across the dance floor when the lights flickered and went out. The crump of bombs was louder, closer. Jack knew a transformer had been hit.

The band kept on playing. The maître d' called out reassurances, his voice calm and resonant. "We'll have torches in a moment, ladies and gentlemen." Before he finished speaking, waiters were moving through the room and handing flashlights out to each table.

Jack peered into the shadowy mass of people forming orderly lines to move out. He hesitated. Would her party go to the bomb shelter and the rows of cots for those who would choose to spend the night? Or would they go upstairs and out into the raid? He waited a moment longer, then moved toward the stairs. She would pass there. He would find her.

He waited beside the stairs and strained to see the faces of the dark figures moving up the steps, following bouncing spots of light. Finally among the few remaining, he felt a sweep of disappointment akin to despair, knowing he'd missed her.



Catharine Cavanaugh pulled her raincoat tighter around her. The rain swept up the street in a thin gray sheet. It was miserably wet and cold for May, cruelly wet and cold. But that wasn't true, of course. April was always the cruelest month. Then she felt the old, familiar dull ache in her chest. Sickness welled deep inside her. Charles died in April. The memory came to her, and she tried to will it away, tried not to remember the thin, straggling line of crocuses that marched in an uneven row just past the new grave, the new and pitifully small grave. Catharine licked her lips. It was four years ago now. Would the pain ever stop?

Suddenly the sirens shrielled. She looked up, but she didn't see any planes, only the wet and bumpy barrage balloons that moved like sluggish whales against the leaden sky. She ducked her head and kept on walking. It wasn't far to the house now. She ignored the tattered placard

with the yellow arrow pointing toward the underground steps. She was terrified of being caught belowground, caught and crushed.

This was the first raid since that night at the Savoy. Unbidden, a face came into her mind, the dark, intent face of the man sitting on the other side of the dance floor. They had looked at each other for a moment. She felt a faint stain of color in her cheeks despite the fine, cold spatter of the rain. He'd looked at her so boldly.

It was odd how clearly she remembered him, how sharp the picture was in her mind. He had a beaked Roman nose, full lips, and a blunt, square chin. It was a tough face, a weary face, but his bright sapphire-blue eyes were brilliantly alive and unforgettable. Twice this past week, she thought she'd glimpsed him on the street. Once she followed a broad set of shoulders down Regent Street, which was extraordinarily silly of her. After she caught up with the man and looked up into his face, she wondered what in the world she would have said had it been the man from the Savoy. When she turned and started back the way she'd come, she felt a flutter of panic. What was wrong with her? What possessed her to follow strangers?

And here she was, thinking of him again.

Catharine picked up her pace—not that she was especially eager to go home. She pushed that thought away, too, and hurried up the steps to the house. The brass knocker shone from fresh polish, and she smiled. Trust Fontaine to ignore the rain. She slipped her key in the lock, but Fontaine was opening the door. He took her parcels. “There’s a fresh fire in the drawing room, Mrs. Cavanaugh.”

Catharine slipped off her gloves and let Fontaine take her raincoat and hat. She smiled. “Thank you, Fontaine. Are there any messages?”

“Yes, madam. Mr. Cavanaugh called to say that he has made plans for you to dine out this evening, if that is agreeable.”

Catharine nodded and turned toward the drawing room. She felt suddenly weary. What did Spencer have planned tonight? It wasn't like him to do anything on the spur of the moment, and it had been quite a while since they'd gone out together. Their usual schedule of entertaining was curtailed by the war. He spent most evenings at the

embassy, and she often went out to dinner or the early theater with friends she'd made through the War Relief work.

Catharine walked slowly into the drawing room. The fire crackled and hissed; she crossed to it, held out her hands, and realized she was chilled from the long walk in the rain. Again, desperately, she willed away memories and forced her mind to stay in this room, this room as it was today. It was a lovely room. Only the shiny black sateen of the blackout curtains reminded her of the war. This room had existed for more than two hundred years; she took great comfort in that and in the substantial Hepplewhite sofa and Empire chairs.

Abruptly, above the rain and the hiss of the fire, she heard the uneven rumble of the powerful German bombers and the thud of crashing bombs. Catharine jerked around, walked to the Steinway, and sat down. She began to play a polonaise, loudly, forcefully. As the music swelled and rose in a glittering cascade of sound, she lost herself in it, and the tension began to seep out of her shoulders. She felt at peace when she finished.

"That's very lovely, Catharine."

She paused just an instant before she turned and looked up at her husband.

"I didn't hear you, Spencer."

"I'm sorry. I hope I didn't startle you."

"Not at all." She closed the piano lid and stood. "Did your day go well?"

He frowned, a quick, nervous frown that she recognized. Spencer frowned so often now.

"It's touch and go. Touch and go," he said somberly.

Catharine wished she could say something to ease the strain in him, but she knew him well enough, for all their distance now, to know she couldn't help. He'd always been very ambitious, determined to succeed in the Foreign Service. Perhaps it was his very absorption in his future that first attracted her in Paris. He was so different from Reggie. She knew that no matter what happened, Spencer would plunge ahead, determined, intent on his goal.

It was much later, several years after they were married, that she'd realized clearly and dispassionately that Spencer would always move to his own advantage—and she'd realized also that her wealth was a marked advantage to his progress in the State Department. The MacLeish fortune made possible very lovely homes no matter where they were posted and exquisite dinner parties that put Spencer on an equal social footing with the scions of great families who often served as ambassadors.

Spencer had always put the first priority on his work, but, since Charles's death, he'd redoubled his efforts and worked harder than ever. Catharine didn't begrudge the long hours. Each of them had to grieve in his own way. He worked nights and weekends, coordinating American shipments of foodstuffs and arms across the Atlantic to England; now standing alone against Hitler. She knew that not even Spencer could separate in his mind how much pressure came from the war and how much from himself.

"Are the figures very bad?"

"Worse and worse." Spencer shook his head. "If the wolf packs keep it up, there isn't any hope. The tonnage loss is staggering—and Britain can't fight on if the supplies don't arrive." He pushed his hand through his thinning blond hair and managed a tight smile. "But we can't live with it every minute. We have a very special invitation tonight, thanks to you, Catharine. Lord Laswell wants us to join him at the Savoy."

Catharine's eyes dropped away from Spencer's. She looked down at the muted pattern in the dusty rose rug. It was at the Savoy . . .

"Lord Laswell said his wife found you very charming."

Slowly, Catharine looked up at Spencer. She wondered what he would say if she replied, "Oh, yes, that dreadful, empty-headed woman." Instead, she said quietly, "That's nice."

Spencer was smiling at her warmly. "You know, Catharine, I really do appreciate your efforts, the way you go out with our British friends. I know this night club business isn't your kind of thing, but you've been very good to cement relations."

No, nightclubbing didn't thrill her. She went, as part of a rather

desperately jolly young set, because it was harder to hear the sirens and the bombs when the music played.

She wondered what Spencer would say if she told him that. Would he understand?

He was still beaming at her. "In any event, it's turning out very well indeed. It could be important to know Lord Laswell."

Oh, yes, she understood Spencer. It never hurt an ambitious American diplomat to be on good terms with a powerful British peer.

"The Savoy," she repeated slowly.