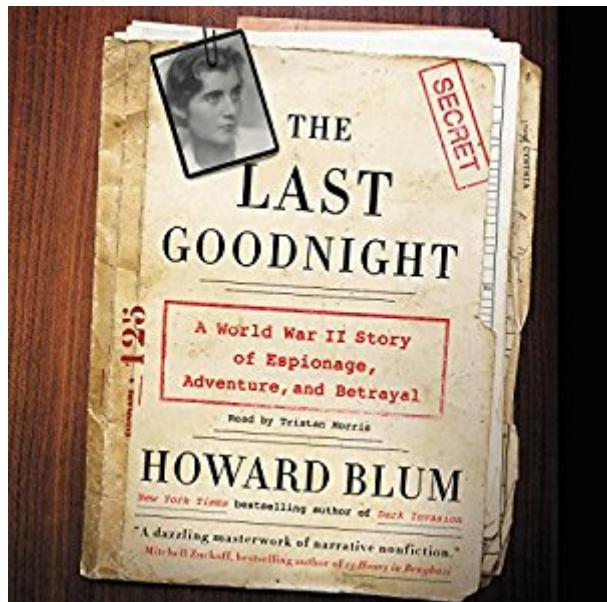


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The Last Goodnight: A World War II Story Of Espionage, Adventure, And Betrayal



Synopsis

The New York Times best-selling author of the acclaimed Dark Invasion channels Erik Larson and Ben Macintyre in this riveting biography of Betty Pack, the dazzling American debutante who became an Allied spy during WWII and was hailed by OSS chief general "Wild Bill" Donovan as "the greatest unsung heroine of the war". Betty Pack was charming, beautiful, and intelligent - and she knew it. As an agent for Britain's MI6 and then America's OSS during World War II, these qualities proved crucial to her success. This is the remarkable story of this "Mata Hari from Minnesota" (Time) and the passions that ruled her tempestuous life - a life filled with dangerous liaisons and death-defying missions vital to the Allied victory. For decades much of Betty's career working for MI6 and the OSS remained classified. Through access to recently unclassified files, Howard Blum discovers the truth about the attractive blond, codenamed "Cynthia", who seduced diplomats and military attachÃ©s across the globe in exchange for ciphers and secrets; cracked embassy safes to steal codes; and obtained the Polish notebooks that proved key to Alan Turing's success with Operation Ultra. Beneath Betty's cool, professional determination, Blum reveals a troubled woman conflicted by the very traits that made her successful: her lack of deep emotional connections and her readiness to risk everything. The Last Goodnight is a mesmerizing, provocative, and moving portrait of an exceptional heroine whose undaunted courage helped to save the world.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 14 hours and 33 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HarperAudio

Audible.com Release Date: April 12, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01AX30CJC

Best Sellers Rank: #196 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Politics & Current Events > Freedom & Security #223 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Espionage #251 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > True Crime

Customer Reviews

In his "Note on Sources", author Howard Blum states that THE LAST GOODNIGHT: A WORLD WAR II STORY OF ESPIONAGE, ADVENTURE, AND BETRAYAL is based on the archived papers

and documents of a British WWII spy, Harford Montgomery Hyde. Among these are "the Cynthia Papers", Hyde's research materials for his 1964 biography of a British/American WWII spy, Betty Pack (the "Mata Hari from Minnesota"). Betty, who operated under the code name "Cynthia", was highly successful during WWII at seducing diplomats and military attaches in order to obtain their top-secret war information. The Cynthia Papers included Betty's dictated memoirs, a childhood diary, boxes of her letters, and her address book. As Blum examined the materials, he decided that "I would not write an academic history" Instead, "I would dig deep into this firsthand source material and . . . I'd use my characters own words--their own private thoughts in fact!--to reveal human motives and the chaos of the interior reality of their lives." Unfortunately, this is exactly what Blum has done. *THE LAST GOODNIGHT* is definitely not a conventional biography--instead it is Blum's imagined account of Betty's life as she herself would have experienced it. Thus the narrative is permeated by passages that purport to detail Betty's innermost thoughts even as events were occurring. For example, from the beginning of Chapter 1 (regarding Betty's "mission" to meet with Hyde): "Betty had spent diligent months baiting the hook, then repeatedly recasting until it was firmly lodged, but now, just as the time had come to reel in her prey, she was suddenly anxious.

I have long believed that the glamorous side of espionage as described in novels and movies is very much overblown. Surely a spy's life is more often spent in tedious observation and in dreary analysis of data rather than in wining, dining, and bedding the great and powerful. I still believe that to be so for the great majority of spies, but then there's Betty Pack. The archetypal femme fatale, Pack's life was filled with incident. Howard Blum's biography of Pack is a lively and exciting read, often jaw-dropping in its revelations, and just as exciting as anything Ian Fleming or John Le Carre ever imagined. Amy Elizabeth Thorne was born to an American military family in Minnesota in 1910. Raised by an affectionate father and a coldly ambitious mother, Betty, as she was known, grew up vivacious, intelligent, and extremely beautiful. Determined to rise high in the world, she selected a British diplomat named Arthur Pack and inveigled him into matrimony. But Pack turned out to be a dead end, from a poor family and without the social connections necessary to rise high in the diplomatic service. Betty basically abandoned her husband and their two children while still in her twenties while the Packs were based in Spain during the Civil War, engaging in a series of affairs with prominent Spanish politicians as well as with a Catholic priest. Brave as well as bold, she undertook dangerous journeys to bring much needed supplies to hospitals. Such derring-do brought Betty to the attention of the British spy service, which recruited her and used her cover as a diplomat's wife to undertake several hazardous missions in Poland and Nazi Germany during the

late 1930s.

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