



# Hotel Florida: Truth, Love, and Death in the Spanish Civil War

*Amanda Vaill*

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**Hotel Florida: Truth, Love, and Death in the Spanish Civil War** Amanda Vaill

**A spellbinding story of love amid the devastation of the Spanish Civil War**

Madrid, 1936. In a city blasted by a civil war that many fear will cross borders and engulf Europe—a conflict one writer will call "the decisive thing of the century"—six people meet and find their lives changed forever. Ernest Hemingway, his career stalled, his marriage sour, hopes that this war will give him fresh material and new romance; Martha Gellhorn, an ambitious novice journalist hungry for love and experience, thinks she will find both with Hemingway in Spain. Robert Capa and Gerda Taro, idealistic young photographers based in Paris, want to capture history in the making and are inventing modern photojournalism in the process. And Arturo Barea, chief of the Spanish government's foreign press office, and Ilsa Kulcsar, his Austrian deputy, are struggling to balance truth-telling with loyalty to their sometimes compromised cause—a struggle that places both of them in peril.

Beginning with the cloak-and-dagger plot that precipitated the first gunshots of the war and moving forward month by month to the end of the conflict, *Hotel Florida* traces the tangled and disparate wartime destinies of these three couples against the backdrop of a critical moment in history: a moment that called forth both the best and the worst of those caught up in it. In this noir landscape of spies, soldiers, revolutionaries, and artists, the shadow line between truth and falsehood sometimes became faint indeed—your friend could be your enemy and honesty could get you (or someone else) killed.

Years later, Hemingway would say, "It is very dangerous to write the truth in war, and the truth is very dangerous to come by." In *Hotel Florida*, from the raw material of unpublished letters and diaries, official documents, and recovered reels of film, the celebrated biographer Amanda Vaill has created a narrative of love and reinvention that is, finally, a story about truth: finding it, telling it, and living it—whatever the cost.

\*INCLUDES 16 PAGES OF BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

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