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THE WINDS OF WAR

HERMAN WOUK



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**HERMAN
WOULF**

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OF WAR**



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Foreword

The Winds of War is fiction, and all the characters and adventures involving the Henry family are imaginary. But the history of the war in this romance is offered as accurate; the statistics, as reliable; the words and acts of the great personages, as either historical, or derived from accounts of their words and deeds in similar situations. No work of this scope can be free of error, but readers will discern, it is hoped, an arduous effort to give a true and full picture of a great world battle.

World Empire Lost, the military treatise by "Armin von Roon," is of course an invention from start to finish. Still, General von Roon's book is offered as a professional German view of the other side of the hill, reliable within the limits peculiar to that self-justifying military literature.

Industrialized armed force, the curse that now presses so heavily and so ominously on us all, came to full flower in the Second World War. The effort to free ourselves of it begins with the effort to understand how it came to haunt us, and how it was that men of good will gave—and still give—their lives to it. The theme and aim of The Winds of War can be found in a few words by the French Jew, Julien Benda:

Peace, if it ever exists, will not be based on the fear of war, but on the love of peace. It will not be the abstaining from an act, but the coming of a state of mind. In this sense the most insignificant writer can serve peace, where the most powerful tribunals can do nothing.

Herman Wouk

PART ONE

Natalie

1

COMMANDER Victor Henry rode a taxicab home from the Navy Building on Constitution Avenue, in a gusty gray March rainstorm that matched his mood. In his War Plans cubbyhole that afternoon, he had received an unexpected word from on high which, to his seasoned appraisal, had probably blown a well-planned career to rags. Now he had to consult his wife about an urgent decision; yet he did not altogether trust her opinions.

At forty-five, Rhoda Henry remained a singularly attractive woman, but she was rather a crab. This colored her judgment, and it was a fault he found hard to forgive her. She had married him with her eyes open. During an incandescent courtship, they had talked frankly about the military life. Rhoda Grover had declared that all the drawbacks—the separations, the lack of a real place to live and of a normal family existence, the long slow climb through a system, the need to be humble to other men's wives when the men were a notch higher—that none of these things would trouble her, because she loved him, and because the Navy was a career of honor. So she had said in 1915, when the World War was on, and uniforms had a glow. This was 1939, and she had long since forgotten those words.

He had warned her that the climb would be hard. Victor Henry was not of a Navy family. On every rung of the slippery career ladder, the sons and grandsons of admirals had been jostling him. Yet everyone in the Navy who knew Pug Henry called him a comer. Until now his rise had been steady.

The letter that first got him into the Naval Academy, written to his congressman while in high school. can be

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adduced here to characterize the man. He showed his form early.

May 5th, 1910

Dear Sir:

You have sent me three kind answers to three letters I have sent you, from my freshman year onward, reporting my progress in Sonoma County High School. So I hope that you will remember my name, and my ambition to obtain appointment to the Naval Academy.

Now I am about to complete my senior year. It may seem conceited to list my achievements, but I am sure you will understand why I do so. I am captain of the football team this year, playing fullback, and I am also on the boxing team.

I have been elected to the Arista Society. In mathematics, history, and the sciences, I am a candidate for prizes. My English and foreign language (German) marks are not on that level. However, I am secretary of the small Russian-speaking club of our school. Its nine members come from local families whose ancestors were settled in Fort Ross long ago by the Czar. My best chum was in the club, so I joined and learned some Russian. I mention this to show that my language ability is not deficient.

My life aim is to serve as an officer in the United States Navy. I can't actually explain this, since my family has no seafaring background. My father is an engineer in the redwood lumbering business. I have never liked lumbering, but have always been interested in ships and big guns. I have gone to San Francisco and San Diego often just to visit the naval ships there. Out of my savings I have bought and studied about two dozen books on marine engineering and sea warfare.

I realize you have only one appointment to make, and there must be many applicants in our district. If one is found more deserving than I am, I will enlist in the Navy and work up from the ranks. However, I have seriously tried for your consideration, and trust that I have earned it.

Respectfully yours,
Victor Henry

With much the same directness, Henry had won his wife five years later, though she was a couple of inches taller than he, and though her prosperous parents had looked

for a better match than a squat Navy fullback from California, of no means or family. Courting Rhoda, he had come out of his single-minded shell of ambition to show much tenderness, humor, considerateness, and dash. After a month or two Rhoda had lost any inclination to say no. Mundane details like height differences had faded from sight.

Still, over the long pull it may not be too good for a pretty woman to look down at her husband. Tall men tend to make plays for her, regarding the couple as slightly comic. Though a very proper woman, Rhoda had a weakness for this sort of thing—up to a point short of trouble—and even coyly provoked it. Henry's reputation as a bleak hard-fibered individual discouraged the men from ever getting out of hand. He was very much Rhoda's master. Still, this physical detail was a continuing nag.

The real shadow on this couple was that Commander Henry thought Rhoda had welshed on their courtship understanding. She did what had to be done as a Navy wife, but she was free, loud, and frequent in her complaints. She could crab for months on end in a place she disliked, such as Manila. Wherever she was, she tended to fret about the heat, or the cold, or the rain, or the dry spell, or servants, or taxi drivers, or shop clerks, or seamstresses, or hairdressers. To hear Rhoda Henry's daily chatter, her life passed in combat with an incompetent world and a malignant climate. It was only female talk, and not in the least uncommon. But talk, not sex, constitutes most of the intercourse between a man and his wife. Henry detested idle whining. More and more, silence was the response he had come to use. It dampened the noise.

On the other hand, Rhoda was two things he thought a wife should be: a seductive woman, and an adroit homemaker. In all their married years, there had been few times when he had not desired her; and in all those years, for all their moving about, wherever they landed, Rhoda had provided a house or an apartment where the coffee was hot, the food appetizing, the rooms well furnished and always clean, the beds properly made, and fresh flowers in sight. She had fetching little ways, and when her spirits were good she could be very sweet and agreeable. Most women, from the little Victor Henry knew of the sex, were

vain clacking slatterns, with less to redeem them than Rhoda had. His long-standing opinion was that, for all her drawbacks, he had a good wife, as wives went. That was a closed question.

But heading home after a day's work, he never knew ahead of time whether he would encounter Rhoda the charmer or Rhoda the crab. At a crucial moment like this, it could make a great difference. In her down moods, her judgments were snappish and often silly.

Coming into the house, he heard her singing in the glassed-in heated porch off the living room where they usually had drinks before dinner. He found her arranging tall stalks of orange gladiolus in an oxblood vase from Manila. She was wearing a beige silky dress cinched in by a black patent-leather belt with a large silver buckle. Her dark hair fell in waves behind her ears; this was a fashion in 1939 even for mature women. Her welcoming glance was affectionate and gay. Just to see her so made him feel better, and this had been going on all his life.

"Oh, HI there. Why on EARTH didn't you warn me Kip Tollever was coming? He sent these, and LUCKILY he called too. I was slopping around this house like a SCRUB-WOMAN." Rhoda in casual talk used the swooping high notes of smart Washington women. She had a dulcet, rather husky voice, and these zoomed words of hers gave what she said enormous emphasis and some illusion of sparkle. "He said he might be slightly late. Let's have a short one, Pug, okay? The fixings are all there. I'm PARCHED."

Henry walked to the wheeled bar and began to mix martinis. "I asked Kip to stop by so I could talk to him. It's not a social visit."

"Oh? Am I supposed to make myself scarce?" She gave him a sweet smile.

"No, no."

"Good. I like Kip. Why, I was flabbergasted to hear his voice. I thought he was still stuck in Berlin."

"He's been detached."

"So he told me. Who relieved him, do you know?"

"Nobody has. The assistant attaché for air took over temporarily." Victor Henry handed her a cocktail. He sank in a brown wicker armchair, put his feet up on the ottoman, and drank, gloom enveloping him again.

Rhoda was used to her husband's silences. She had taken in his bad humor at a glance. Victor Henry held himself very straight except in moments of trial and tension. Then he tended to fall into a crouch, as though he were still playing football. He had entered the room hunched, and even in the armchair, with his feet up, his shoulders were bent. Dark straight hair hung down his forehead. At forty-nine, he had almost no gray hairs, and his charcoal slacks, brown sports jacket, and red bow tie were clothes for a younger man. It was his small vanity, when not in uniform, to dress youthfully; an athletic body helped him carry it off. Rhoda saw in the lines around his greenish brown eyes that he was tired and deeply worried. Possibly from long years of peering out to sea, Henry's eyes were permanently marked with what looked like laugh lines. Strangers mistook him for a genial man.

"Got a dividend there?" he said at last.

She poured the watery drink for him.

"Thanks. Say, incidentally, you know that memorandum on the battleships that I wrote?"

"Oh, yes. Was there a backlash? You were concerned, I know."

"I got called down to the CNO's office."

"My God. To see Preble?"

"Preble himself. I hadn't seen him since the old days on the *California*. He's gotten fat."

Henry told her about his talk with the Chief of Naval Operations. Rhoda's face took on a hard, sullen, puzzled look. "Oh, I see. *That's* why you asked Kip over."

"Exactly. What do you think about my taking this attaché job?"

"Since when do you have any choice?"

"He gave me the impression that I did. That if I didn't want it, I'd go to a battlegroup next, as an exec."

"Good Lord, Pug, that's more like it!"

"You'd prefer that I go back to sea?"

"I'd prefer? What difference has that ever made?"

"All the same. I'd like to hear what you'd prefer."

Rhoda hesitated, sizing him up with a slanted glance. "Well—naturally I'd adore going to Germany. It would be much more fun for me than sitting here alone while you steam around Hawaii in the *New Mexico* or whatever. It's

the loveliest country in Europe. The people are so friendly. German was my major, you know, aeons ago."

"I know," Victor Henry said, smiling, if faintly and wryly, for the first time since arriving home. "You were very good at German." Some of the early hot moments of their honeymoon had occurred while they stumbled through Heine's love poetry aloud together.

Rhoda returned an arch glance redolent of married sex. "Well, all right, you. All I mean is, if you must leave Washington—I suppose the Nazis are kind of ugly and ridiculous. But Madge Knudsen went there for the Olympics. She keeps saying it's still wonderful, and so cheap, with those tourist marks they give you."

"Yes, no doubt we'd have a gay whirl. The question is, Rhoda, whether this isn't a total disaster. Two shore assignments in a row, you understand, at this stage—"

"Oh, Pug, you'll get your four stripes. I know you will. And you'll get your battleship command too, in due course. My God, with your gunnery pennants, your letter of commendation—Pug, suppose CNO's right? Maybe a war is about to pop over there. Then it would be an important job, wouldn't it?"

"That's just sales talk." Pug got up and helped himself to cheese. "He says the President wants top men in Berlin now as military attachés. Well, okay, I'll believe that. He also says it won't hurt my career. That's what I can't believe. First thing any selection board looks for—or will ever look for—in a man's record is blue water, and lots of it."

"Pug, are you sure Kip won't stay to dinner? There's plenty of food. Warren's going to New York."

"No, Kip's on his way to a party at the German embassy. And why the hell is Warren going to New York? He's been home all of three days."

"Ask him," Rhoda said.

The slam of the front door and the quick firm steps were unmistakable Warren sounds. He entered the porch greeting them with a wave of two squash rackets in a fist. "Hi."

In an old gray sweater and slacks, his tanned lean face glowing from the exercise, his hair tousled, a cigarette slanting from his thin mouth, he looked much like the lad who, on graduating from the Academy, had vanished

from their lives. Pug was still not used to the way Warren had filled out on shipboard food. The boyish weediness was changing into a tall solid look. A sprinkle of premature gray in his dark hair had startled his parents on his return. Victor Henry envied Warren the deep sunburn which bespoke a destroyer bridge, tennis, green Oahu hills, and above all, duty at sea thousands of miles from Constitution Avenue. He said, "You're off to New York, I hear."

"Yes, Dad. Is that okay? My exec just blew into town. We're going up there to see some shows. He's a real Idaho farmer. Never been to New York."

Commander Henry made a grouchy sound. It was no bad thing for Warren to be friendly with his executive officer. What bothered the father was thoughts of a woman who might be waiting in New York. A top student at the Academy, Warren had almost ruined his record with excessive frenching-out. He had ended with a bad back attributed by himself to a wrestling injury; by other reports, to an escapade involving an older woman and a midnight car crash. The parents had never raised the topic of the woman, partly from bashfulness—they were both prudish churchgoers, ill at ease with such a topic—and partly from a strong sense that they would get nowhere with Warren.

The door chimes rang. A gray-headed houseman in a white coat passed through the living room. Rhoda stood up, touching her hair and sliding slim hands over her silk-clad hips. "Remember Kip Tollever, Warren? That's probably Kip."

"Why, sure. That tall lieutenant commander who lived next door in Manila. Where's he stationed now?"

"He's just finished a tour as naval attaché in Berlin," Victor Henry said.

Warren made a comic grimace, and dropped his voice. "Jehosephat, Dad. How did he ever get stuck with *that*? Cookie pusher in an embassy!"

Rhoda looked at her husband, whose face remained impassive.

"Commander Tollever, ma'am," said the houseman at the doorway.

"Hello, Rhoda!" Tollever marched in with long arms outstretched, in a flawlessly cut evening uniform: blue mess jacket with medals and gold buttons, a black tie, a

stiff snowy shirt. "My lord, woman! You look ten years younger than you did in the Philippines."

"Oh, you," she said, eyes gleaming, as he lightly kissed her cheek.

"Hi, Pug." Smoothing one manicured hand over heavy wavy hair just turning gray, Tollever stared at the son. "Now for crying out loud, which boy is this?"

Warren held out his hand. "Hello, sir. Guess."

"Aha. It's Warren. Byron had a different grin. And red hair, come to think of it."

"Right you are, sir."

"Rusty Traynor told me you're serving in the *Monaghan*. What's Byron doing?"

Rhoda chirruped after a slight silence, "Oh, Byron's our romantic dreamer, Kip. He's studying fine arts in Italy. And you should see Madeline! All grown up."

Warren said, "Excuse me, sir," and went out.

"Fine arts! Italy!" One heavy eyebrow went up in Tollever's gaunt handsome face, and his cobalt-blue eyes widened. "Well, that is romantic. Say, Pug, since when do you indulge?" Tollever inquired, accepting a martini and seeing Henry refill his own glass.

"Why, hell, Kip, I was drinking in Manila. Plenty."

"Were you? I forget. I just remember what a roaring teetotaller you were in the Academy. No tobacco either."

"Well, I fell from grace long ago."

Victor Henry had started to drink and smoke on the death of an infant girl, and had not returned to the abstinences his strict Methodist father had taught him. It was a topic he did not enjoy exploring.

With a slight smile, Tollever said, "Do you play cards on Sunday now, too?"

"No, I still hold to that bit of foolishness."

"Don't call it foolishness, Pug."

Commander Tollever began to talk about the post of naval attaché in Berlin. "You'll love Germany," were his first words on the topic. "And so will Rhoda. You'd be crazy not to grab the chance."

Resting his elbows on the arms of his chair, legs neatly crossed, he clipped out his words with all the old articulate crispness; still one of the handsomest men in Pug's class, and one of the unluckiest. Two years out of the Academy,

while officer of the deck of a destroyer, Tollever had rammed a submarine at night in a rainsquall, during a fleet exercise. The submarine had surfaced without warning a hundred yards in front of him. It had scarcely been his fault, nobody had been hurt, and the general court-martial had merely given him a letter of reprimand. But that letter had festered in his promotion jacket, sapping his career. He drank two martinis in about fifteen minutes, as he talked.

When Victor Henry probed a bit about the Nazis and how to deal with them, Kip Tollever sat up very erect, his curled fingers stiffened as he gestured, and his tone grew firm. The National Socialists were *in*, he said, and the other German parties were out, just as in the United States the Democrats were in and the Republicans out. That was the one way to look at it. The Germans admired the United States, and desperately wanted our friendship. Pug would find the latch off, and the channels of information open, if he simply treated these people as human beings. The press coverage of the new Germany was distorted. When Pug got to know the newspapermen, he would understand why—disgruntled pinkos and drunks, most of them.

"Hitler's a damned remarkable man," said Tollever, poised on his elbows, one scrubbed hand to his chin, one negligently dangling, his face flushed bright pink. "I'm not saying that he, or Göring, or any of that bunch, wouldn't murder their own grandmothers to increase their power or to advance the interests of Germany. But that's politics in Europe nowadays. We Americans are far too naïve. The Soviet Union is the one big reality Europe lives with, Pug—that Slav horde, seething in the east. We can hardly picture that feeling, but for them it's political bedrock. The Communist International is not playing mah-jongg, you know, those Bolos are out to rule Europe by fraud or force or both. Hitler isn't about to let them. That's the root of the matter. The Germans do things in politics that we wouldn't—like this stuff with the Jews—but that's just a passing phase, and anyway, it's not your business. Remember that. Your job is military information. You can get a hell of a lot of that from these people. They're proud of what they're accomplishing, and not at all bashful

about showing off, and I mean they'll give you the real dope."

Rhoda asked questions about the Jews, as Pug Henry mixed more martinis. Tollever assured her that the newspaper stories were exaggerated. The worst thing had been the so-called Crystal Night when Nazi toughs had smashed department store windows and set fire to some synagogues. Even that the Jews had brought on themselves, by murdering a German embassy official in Paris. As an embassy official himself, Tollever said, he took rather a dim view of that! He and his wife had gone to the theatre that very night, and on the way home had seen a lot of broken glass along the Kurfürstendamm, and the glow of a couple of distant fires. The account in *Time* had made it seem that Germany was ablaze from end to end, and that the Jews were being slaughtered en masse. There had been conflicting reports, but so far as he knew not one of them had really been physically harmed. A big fine had been put on them for the death of the official, a billion marks or something. Hitler did believe in strong medicine. "Now as to the President's recalling our ambassador, that was a superfluous gesture, utterly superfluous," Tollever said. "It only made things worse for the Jews, and it completely fouled up our embassy's workings. There's just no common sense here in Washington about Germany."

Drinking two more martinis, the erect warrior began dissolving into a gossipy, slouched Navy insider, reminiscing about parties, weekends, hunting trips, and the like; about the potato soup he had drunk with Luftwaffe officers in the dawn, while recovering from a drinking bout after a Party rally; about the famous actors and politicians who had befriended him. Great fun and high living went with an attaché's job, he chuckled, if one played one's cards right. Moreover, you were *supposed* to do those things, so as to dig up information. It was dream duty. A man was entitled to get whatever he could out of the Navy! He had sat in a front seat, watching history unfold, and he had had a glorious time besides. "I tell you, you'll love it, Pug. It's the most interesting post in Europe nowadays. The Nazis are a mixed crowd, actually. Some are brilliant, but between you and me, some are pretty crude and vulgar. The professional military crowd sort of looks down

on them. But hell, how do we feel about our own politicians? Hitler's in the saddle and nobody's arguing about *that*. He is boss man, and I kid you not. So lay off that topic and you'll do fine, because really you can't beat these people for hospitality. In a way they're a lot like us, you know, more so than the French or even the Limeys. They'll turn themselves inside out for an American naval officer." A strange smile, rueful and somewhat beaten, appeared on his face as he glanced from Rhoda to Pug. "Especially a man like you. They'll know all about you long before you get there. Now if this is off the reservation say so, but how on earth did a gunnery redhot like you come up for this job?"

"Stuck my neck out," Pug growled. "You know the work I did on the magnetic torpedo exploder, when I was at BuOrd—"

"Hell, yes. And the letter of commendation you got? I sure do."

"Well, I've watched torpedo developments since. Part of my job in War Plans is monitoring the latest intelligence on armor and armaments. The Japs are making some mighty healthy torpedoes, Kip. I got out the old slide rule one night and ran the figures, and the way I read them our battlewagons are falling below the safety margin. I wrote a report recommending that the blisters be thickened and raised on the *Maryland* and *New Mexico* classes. Today CNO called me down to his office. My report's turned into a hot potato. BuShips and BuOrd are blaming each other, memos are flying like fur, the blisters are going to be thickened and raised, and—"

"And by God, Pug, you've got yourself another letter of commendation. Well done!" Tollever's brilliant blue eyes glistened, and he wet his lips.

"I've got myself orders to Berlin," Victor Henry said. "Unless I can talk my way out of it. CNO says the White House has decided it's a crucial post now."

"It is, Pug, it is."

"Well, maybe so, but hell's bells, Kip, you're wonderful at that sort of thing. I'm not. I'm a grease monkey. I don't belong there. I had the misfortune to call attention to myself, that's all, when the boss man was looking for