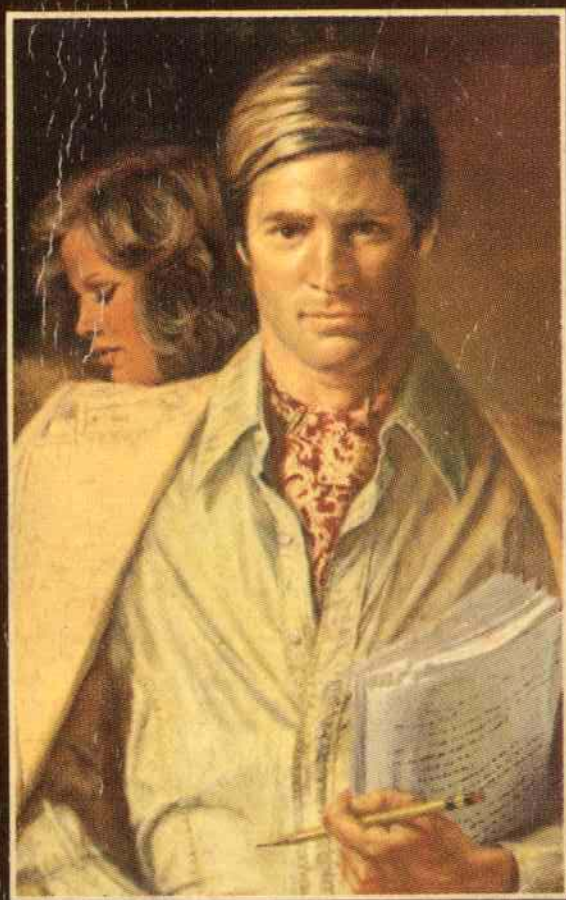


HERMAN WOULF

AUTHOR OF THE WINDS OF WAR AND
WAR AND REMEMBRANCE



Youngblood Hawke

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HERMAN WOUK

**Youngblood
Hawke**



PUBLISHED BY POCKET BOOKS NEW YORK

NOTE:

The accidental use of the names of living people in a long novel is virtually inevitable nowadays, when literary manners shut out unrealistic coined names. Moreover, the author, in naming scores of characters, now and then pulls a name from the air, and then finds imbedded in his printed book the first or second names of people he has known. Any such inadvertences in this work are wholly without meaning. If there are actual people in the land bearing the full names of any of the phantoms in this work of fiction, they are unknown to me, and no reference is intended. In this novel there are no attempted portraits of any actual people, living or dead. Finally, the various industries which capitalize literature in the United States have seen many minor changes since the end of the Second World War. Some business details of this story, in the earlier passages, are not the same as they would be today. They are accurate for the years in which they are represented as occurring. The general picture presented by the novel is, I believe, a true one as of the present hour.

THE AUTHOR



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*This novel is dedicated
to my wife,
with all my love*

Part One

1946

CHAPTER ONE

1

HAVE you ever known a famous man before he became famous? It may be an irritating thing to remember, because chances are he seemed like anybody else to you.

The manuscript loomed on the desk between the two men, a high pile of torn and dented blue typing-paper cartons. The yellow labels on the boxes had been scrawled over with thick red crayon, *Alms for Oblivion, Part 1, Part 2, Part 3*. Two of the boxes, overstuffed with manuscript, had split open. Dog-eared dirty sheets of typewritten manuscript showed through, mostly white, with sprinklings of yellow and green. Waldo Fipps had never seen a larger or more untidy manuscript—or for that matter, a larger and more untidy author.

He stared at the young man with peculiarly stirred feelings. The young man, who looked more like a truck driver than a writer, stared back. He had big piercing brown eyes, and the lower lip of his full wide mouth was curled and pressed tight over the upper, as though to say, "Try and stop me!" This part of Hawke's attitude was unconscious. He presented the usual agitated surface of the new author, bashfulness and fear struggling with pride, hope, and greed for praise, all this covered by stammering modesty and awkward shifts in the

hard yellow chair. Young authors were all afraid of Fipps. Under the business-like smiles of the editor lay the fishy chill of a man who had read too many novels, and criticized too many. The odd thing was that Fipps felt a little afraid of Hawke, this hulking sloven of twenty-six who had written an ugly bellowing dinosaur of a novel, amateurish as it could be, full of imitation, crude, slopped-over, a horror of an editing task, the kind of writing Fipps least admired.

"Cigarette?" Fipps leaned toward Hawke, offering him the pack.

"Mand ef Ah smoke uh see-gaw?" said Hawke. It was the thickest Southern accent Fipps had ever heard.

He said, "Not at all. I'm sorry I don't have any. But I think Mr. Prince—" he broke off, seeing Hawke draw a glossy leather cigar case from the breast pocket of his shabby wrinkled blue suit.

"Ma one vass," said Hawke. It took Fipps a few seconds to realize that what Hawke had said was, "My one vice." Removing the cedar wrapping from an enormous cocoa-brown cigar, Hawke held a flaming match to the end until it was well scorched, then lit it up with expert puffs. A wisp of blue drifted to the nostrils of Fipps, reminding him unpleasantly of his employer, Jason Prince. This preposterous pauper, this scribbling hillbilly, smokes dollar cigars, he thought. He decided then and there that he did not like Youngblood Hawke. "Well, first things first," Fipps said amiably. "Everybody in the house likes the book. Or at least is impressed."

Hawke's attempt to be impassive was pitiable. The big cigar shook in his fingers. The joy that crossed his face was like a wave of powerful heat; Fipps almost felt it. Perhaps it was real animal heat given off by the blood that rushed into the broad thick-featured rustic face. Hawke stammered a little, trying to say lightly, "It's a—a little too long, isn't it?"

Fipps said, "Well, you are a very exuberant writer. I'm reminded of Dickens, of Dreiser. Perhaps a bit of Dostoevsky?" He paused, smiling.

Gloom, joy, fear, uncertainty: Hawke's look changed almost with every word Fipps uttered. "Mr. Fipps, you've nailed me. My three gods. The three D's."

"Yes. Well," Fipps said in a dry cutting tone, stabbing two fingers at the manuscript, "I think possibly we want a good strong dose of Flaubert. The art of leaving out, you know! From the first page to the last. Practically in every paragraph. Whole sections would have to go."

He savored the quenched, the staggered look of Hawke. No determination in the big mouth now; the open hanging

pain of a man punched in the stomach. Fipps' mood improved, and he was ready to forgive this big, possibly profitable oaf for his power of tumbling out exciting scenes and vivid portraits in a muddy torrent of verbiage, full of recognizable flotsam and jetsam from standard authors. "We want to publish your book, Mr. Hawke," he said. "We're really enthusiastic. Providing, of course, that you'll meet us in the matter of revising."

Hawke stood. "You—you want to *publish* mah book? You *goin'* to publish it?"

Fipps was drawn to his feet by the fierce excitement in the young man's voice. "Of course we want to publish it. We expect to have a lot of fun with it, and we think—"

Youngblood Hawke put down his cigar, strode around the desk, and folded the elegant Waldo Fipps in a crushing hug. He bawled like a bull, pounding the editor's back. "Mr. Fipps, god damn it, you're a brilliant goddamn bastard. I've read about you, heard about you, read your books, you know everything about novels, everything, and you want to publish *mah novell*!" Fipps was astonished and not at all pleased to find himself being hugged and pounded, his face jammed against rough blue serge reeking of cigar smoke. Hawke was half a head taller than Fipps, and half again as broad. He was pasty-faced, he needed a haircut; there were flecks of dandruff on his suit; he had cut himself near his ear shaving, and dried blood stood on the gash. Fipps was skinny, brown, his suit was tweedy brown, he was immaculate to the last hair of his sandy little mustache.

"My dear fellow—" murmured Fipps.

Hawke shook him like a doll. "I'll write forty books, Mr. Fipps, forty goddamn wonderful truthful books and every one better than the last, and you'll publish them all. And we'll make millions. You'll see. I'm not just talking. I'm a goddamn genius, Mr. Fipps, or I'm nothing. God, I'm so happy? *ee-yowww!*"

Throughout the busy halls of Prince House, stenographers looked up from their typing, and shipping clerks halted in their tracks, and editors glanced at their secretaries, as the male bellow echoed down the soundproofed corridors.

Fipps disengaged himself from Hawke with a thin embarrassed smile. "Well, I'm glad you're pleased. I'd like to take you to lunch. We have a lot to talk about. First come and meet Jason." He added, at Hawke's puzzled look, in a humorous tone, "Mister Prince."

"Mr. Prince? I get to meet Mr. Prince?" said Hawke, retrieving his cigar and following Fipps humbly into the cor-

ridor. Fipps led the big clumsy young man through corridors and offices full of talk and typing clatter, a cut-up maze of partitions and desks, to a heavy door made of pearly wood, the only closed door Hawke had seen in the place. A girl at a desk by the door said to Fipps, "Mr. Prince is waiting for you."

Fipps opened the pearly door.

2

Take an ostrich egg, color it fleshy-gray, ink small shrewd features on it, attach a pair of large ears, and you have a fair likeness of what confronted Youngblood Hawke from behind the desk of Jason Prince. The egg hung between broad gray-clad shoulders, peering suspiciously upward. Very long powerful arms clutched a typewritten contract on an otherwise empty desk, the more strikingly empty because the desk top was a slab of glass, allowing a view of a huge empty leather wastebasket underneath, and of Mr. Prince's lolling legs. The office was very long and very wide. The windows were open, and the air was cold. Bare bleak modern furniture, and bookshelves too-smoothly lined with too-clean books from ceiling to floor on two walls, added to the cold emptiness. The other walls were mostly glass, looking out on downtown New York, the jagged skyscrapers in a gray midday haze under a low black sky that threatened snow, and the far muddy rivers, sloshing away the great city's dirt.

"This is Youngblood Hawke, Jay," said Fipps.

The suspicious egg changed into the face of a warm friendly man of fifty or so who happened to be very bald, whose pale blue eyes were not at all shrewd and veiled, but gay and candid. "*Alms for Oblivion, eh?*" he said in a strong throaty voice, all different from Fipps' controlled pipe. He stood and offered his hand. "No oblivion for you, my young friend. Quite an explosion of talent, that book. And only the beginning."

The long arms of the two men—Hawke's was a little longer—met in a powerful clasp over the desk; the two tall men looked straight into each other's eyes. There was a silence. To Fipps it seemed a long silence, and he was a bit surprised at the way Hawke met the glance of Prince. Then a blush spread over the young author's face, he shuffled his feet, and awkwardly dropped Prince's hand.

"Hope you get back the price of the printing job, sir," he said. "It's my first try."

"We'll get back more than that," said Prince. "And we're going to do a lot of printing, too." He pressed a button, and said into a voice box, "Bring me a box of cigars and the Hawke contract." He pulled a chair beside his desk, and motioned Hawke into it, ignoring Fipps, who lounged into a settee behind the publisher. "Long experience with artists," Prince said, "has convinced me that I can best minister to your sensitive spirits by discussing dough." Hawke laughed uproariously. The publisher smiled and went on, "Advances for a first novel generally run around five hundred to a thousand dollars. I've advanced fifteen hundred for a sure-fire first book." He named a best-seller of a few years back. "Turned out to be right. Been spectacularly wrong on occasion. Right often enough to stay in this chair and keep the rent paid. Why haven't you got an agent?"

"Should I have one?" Hawke said. "I don't know anything about all this."

Prince shrugged. "I can't advise you to give away ten percent of your bloodstained earnings to an agent. I can't advise you to trust yourself to my tender mercies, either." A girl came in with a box of cigars and a contract, put them on the publisher's desk, and left. Prince thrust the cigars toward Hawke. "I get these sent up to me from Havana. Try them."

Hawke opened the plain wooden box, and saw an array of unbanded brownish-green cigars, longer and thicker than his Romeos. He took one, slid the box to Prince, and found it abruptly pushed back at him. "All for you," Prince said. "The contract's ready. It's our standard form. The only blank in it is the amount of the advance. Take it away with you and have a lawyer or an agent look over the fine print. Or sign it and take our check away instead. Suit yourself. It's a good contract."

Hawke looked at the publisher for a long moment, his lower lip pressed over the upper one. Then he pursed his mouth like an old lady and shrugged. "I'll sign it. Your business isn't to skin authors."

"No it isn't. Our business is to make them rich and pay our bills in the process. How about the advance?"

"I'd like five thousand dollars," Hawke said.

The suspicious egg briefly reappeared where Prince's affable head and been. It turned and glanced at Fipps, but by the time the glance came back to Hawke the egg was gone and there was a pleasant face again, wryly surprised.

"I'm sure you would like five thousand dollars," Prince said. "But it's ten times the going advance for a first novel. The chances against your earning that much in royalties are slim,

in fact prohibitive. You'd better get an agent. He'll explain all that to you."

The young man said, "The thing is, Mr. Prince, I'm halfway into my second novel, a war book. It's called *Chain of Command*. It's much better than *Alms for Oblivion*. But I'm wasting time working on a construction job by day. I only get to write a few hours at night, and I'm tired." He spoke reasonably and winningly, with no hesitation, the soft Southern cadences giving his speech almost the beat of poetry. (Ah only get to *rat* a few ahrs at *nat*, an' Ah'm *tahd*.) "I figure I can finish it and start on a third—which I've got all blocked out in my head, a political novel—inside of a year if I do nothing else. You feel like gambling on me, fine. Otherwise let me try another publisher. Though I sure would like my first book coming out with the imprint of Prince House. To me that's always been a magic name."

Prince looked over his shoulder at Fipps again, his glance uncertain and amused. "Waldo, move around here where I don't have to break my neck to talk to you."

Fipps picked up a chair, brought it forward of the desk, and sat. Prince said, "What do you make of all this?"

The editor pressed his fingertips together, appraising Hawke like a dean looking at a delinquent college boy. "If I understand Mr. Hawke, he's actually asking for an advance on three books. But even at that the figure is absurd, Jay." He turned to Hawke. "Look here, it's always better to be candid. Mr. Prince cast the deciding vote for your novel. Several of us had strong reservations, though we all of us, myself included, admire your promise. You'll get your book published elsewhere—though they'll want you to work on it just as we do—but I very much doubt that anyone else will give you a bigger advance than a thousand, if that much. We're not the movies."

Hawke said with sudden boyish good humor, odd in a big man with such an intense look, "Well, look, Mr. Fipps, why don't I just try another publisher? I'm might encouraged by your interest, and grateful to you, and there's no reason to—"

Jason Prince had been sitting hunched over his desk, large knobby fingers interlaced, the knuckles blue-white. Now he sat up. "Hawke, five-thousand advance against three novels. Is that what you want?"

"I want five thousand advanced against this one."

"Suppose this one doesn't earn back the advance? If it does it'll be a real freak of a first novel. Do you want us to lose money on you? Your price is fantastic. You wouldn't ask for it if you weren't so inexperienced. Now look here. I'll give

you five hundred dollars a month for the next ten months. That's meeting your terms. But for that I want the second novel delivered and an outline of the third before the period is up."

"Okay," said Youngblood Hawke, as casually as if he were agreeing to go for a walk.

Fipps said severely, "You'll sign a contract to that effect?"

"Sure."

"But what is this optimism based on?" the editor said. "Can you show us the outlines of your next two novels?"

"I don't work from outlines, Mr. Fipps, I just sort of go along."

"Well, can we see what you've written so far on this war book?"

Hawke said, "The thing is it's in a big mess and it's simpler just to finish it."

Fipps rolled his eyes at the publisher in exasperation.

Prince said, "All right, Waldo." He pressed a button, and through the voice box asked for a check book. "The usual thing, Hawke," he said, "is for the check to be handed over when the contract is signed, but this contract will have to be revised. Meantime would you like to see the color of our money? Sort of an earnest of good faith? If you take the check you're tying up three novels."

"I'll take it."

The book came. Prince wrote a check for five hundred dollars, and handed it to Hawke. "The first of ten," he said.

Hawke stared at the stiff orange slip of paper. "Well, dog-gone. I've been paid for writing prose," he said. "I've been paid for English prose."

Fipps said, "Haven't you sold anything before?"

"Nothing."

"The wrong kind of prose isn't worth the paper it's written on," said Prince. "The right kind is worth its weight in diamonds. Remember that, as you pound the typewriter. It's a great era for writers. There has never been such an era."

"Dickens and Balzac did all right," Hawke said. "Adjust your currency and I bet Dickens did better than Sinclair Lewis. No taxes. I'd like to phone my mother. My mother's in Kentucky. Can I use the phone in your office?" he said to Fipps.

Fipps, who was having a little trouble catching his breath, nodded. Hawke walked out. He came back instantly, picked up the box of cigars Prince had given him, grinned at the two men, and left.

The editor and the publisher stared at each other. Waldo Fipps, in a lifetime of writing, had never received five thou-

sand dollars, or half that much, for a piece of work. At forty-five, at the top of his reputation, he had once drawn an advance of twenty-five hundred dollars for a clever but tenuous play which had remained unproduced. He said testily, "What on earth is this, Jay? So far as I'm concerned the main thing this man has is enormous energy. He has no style, no wit, just coarse humor, he's crude, imitative, in fact he frequently shades off into plagiarism. Possibly he has a good narrative sense, and a serviceable knack of caricature. You're being strangely generous with him."

Prince leaned back, cradling his head against interlocked fingers, his elbows spread out, one long leg crooked over a knee. "The thing is, Waldo," he said, "I think Youngblood Hawke is money."

3

The cigar box under his arm, Hawke strode happily down the long narrow corridor to Fipps' office, peeking into each open door that he passed, taking automatic note of what he saw. He had been keeping this mental inventory of every passing detail around him all his life, and was scarcely aware of the habit. It was the reason for his strange obtuseness to some things and his overkeen awareness of others. He had noticed, for instance, Waldo Fipps' way of blinking his eyes half a dozen times and then opening them wide before saying anything to Prince. But he was unaware that he himself had just scored a historic victory over one of the closest bargainers in the publishing trade.

Jay Prince was notorious for his meager advances. The most hard-bitten literary agent in New York in 1946 would not have tried to extract five thousand dollars from Prince for a first book, with a wild story of a second big novel coming in September and a third one the following year. But Hawke had experienced few business interviews. The entire process of testing for pressure, interest and advantage, the cautious hard game of words by which men of affairs came to grips over money, was unknown to him. While talking to Prince he had gone on with his inventory, noting the coldness of the room, the whiteness of Prince's knuckles as he clasped them on the desk, Waldo Fipps' quick change in attitude from acidly confident critic to hangdog employee, marked by an apprehensive stare at his boss and a wary tightness of the mouth. He had made the offer to go to another publisher in all innocence, not

realizing that this was the shot across the bow. Prince had scornfully told agents dozens of times to go down the street by all means, when they had ventured this warning shot. But to Youngblood Hawke he had meekly run up the white flag. Such is sometimes the power, or the luck, of ignorance.

A girl in a plain white shirtwaist sat hunched in Waldo Fipps' arm-chair, reading *Alms for Oblivion* and laughing out loud. A box of manuscript was in her lap and she was holding some sheets high in her left hand, scanning the top page in the box.

"Sit up straight," Hawke said as he came in. "Fellows don't like a girl who slumps."

She sat up, blinking at him through round black glasses like a startled owl. She had a lot of glossy reddish hair piled on her head, and she was very pale. "Gad, that's just what my mother says. I haven't heard it in years."

"What are you laughing at? There's nothing funny in the first chapter."

"Are you Mr. Hawke?" She put the papers back in the box, coughed in a grating convulsion, and lit a cigarette. "You have a comical way of putting things. I was reading the description of the aunt. It's sort of like O. Henry."

"O. Henry?" Hawke scowled horribly, turning his back on her, and picked up the telephone.

The girl said in a contralto rasp, "I meant that as a compliment. I admire O. Henry."

"Long distance, please."

"It's the finest beginning of a story that I've read in a long time," croaked the girl. "My name is Jeanne Green. I'm in the copy editing department."

"I see," Hawke said. "Operator, I want to call Kentucky."

The girl regarded his broad back despairingly, shrugged, and went out, coughing.

Waiting for his call to go through, Hawke sat in the editor's chair and read all the papers on the desk. He was a pryer and snooper without conscience. He read business letters, sales reports, office memoranda, advertising proofs, and a note about shopping to be done for Mrs. Fipps. He flicked through the editor's appointment calendar. Fipps had had lunch with John Marquand in November; two weeks ago he had gone to the theatre with Evelyn Waugh! And Hawke was going to lunch with the man who knew these luminaries! He was dizzy with exaltation. He began reading his novel at page one, this marvellous scrappy heap of paper that had become his passport into the golden world. He wanted to admire himself. He

also wanted to see what on earth the idiotic girl could have meant, comparing him to O. Henry.

Fipps came in, and noted with displeasure that his papers had been moved about. Hawke was sitting with one big shoe in a lower desk drawer, reading his own work intently. The air in the cubicle was gray with cigar smoke. Fipps said, "Congratulations on your contract. I hope you know how remarkable it is."

"Well, it was sure nice of Mr. Prince to give me what I asked for."

"Nice! It's unique in this house. You should be glad we went in to see him. You'd never have gotten it from me, and Jay is supposed to be the tough man here. I'm delighted, of course. I haven't the latitude to pay such advances. How about lunch?"

"Haven't gotten through to mama yet. There was a girl reading my manuscript when I came in here. Can anybody in this place read a manuscript who wants to?"

"I expect that was the stylist."

"Stylist?"

"Well, you know, we have staff people who see to grammar, punctuation, and all that. Some houses call them copy editors."

Hawke said instantly, "My grammar and my punctuation will stay as they are. Punctuation! My punctuation! That girl!"

Fipps laughed again, and stabbed two fingers at the manuscript. "My dear Hawke, you take terrific liberties with semicolons and you slop all over the place, if you'll forgive me, when you get into the subjunctive. Of course you have a veto over the stylist. You'll be very grateful to her, you'll see."

"But this girl looked like a file clerk. Stoop-shouldered, glasses, a kid!"

"That's Jeanne Green. Young, yes, but sharp. Since Jay is so hot on you, I think maybe we'll be using our head stylist instead."

"Let's not use this girl," Hawke said. "She said my writing reminded her of O. Henry."

A cruel pleased smile wisped over the editor's face. "Did Jeanie say that? Well, stylists aren't supposed to be critics."

"*Vare* is ze young genius? *Vare* is Youngblood Hoke?" It was a high voice with a European accent, and its owner swept into the office in a black fur coat, a tiny hat and nose veil, and a rolling wave of very sweet perfume.

"Right here, Fanny," Fipps said. "Mr. Hawke, this is Mrs. Prince."

The woman seized Hawke's hand. "We are going to be very good friends. You don't know me yet, but already I know you so well from *zis*!" She tapped the manuscript with one black-