

A Time of Innocence

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A Time of Innocence

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PROLOGUE

Untold until now, *A Time of Innocence* is a true story. Like all fiction based on fact, certain liberties have been taken with characters and events. Yet the essential elements are accurate in every respect.

A family of spies was instrumental in the success of the attack on Pearl Harbor. All were trained operatives, clandestine German agents on loan to the Japanese. One of them was young and beautiful, skilled in the art of seduction and intelligence gathering. She was the catalyst in all that transpired on the morning of December 7, 1941.

A Time of Innocence is her story.

Warren Burke
July 10, 1985

1

TOM GORDON COULDN'T wait to see her. All day she'd been the only thing on his mind. In fact, he had been thinking about her for the past month. A long, monkish month at sea.

Whistling tunelessly under his breath, Gordon disengaged the clutch and downshifted into second gear. The Ford coupe groaned, then took the steep incline with a surge of power. The road climbed steadily upward through the terraced streets of Halawa Heights.

Nowhere on Oahu was there a more commanding vista. To the north, the slopes of the Koolau Range loomed against a darkening sky. Below, along the southern shoreline, Pearl Harbor was ringed with lights. Some seven miles upcoast, the neon blaze of downtown Honolulu was visible. Dwarfing all else, like some magical backdrop, the opalescent waters of the Pacific swept endlessly to the horizon. It was a view that only the very wealthy could afford.

Gordon turned left on Manaiki Drive. The last house on the block was a palatial stone structure with white, stucco walls and terra-cotta tiled roof. Built on an oblique angle, it occupied the whole of a broad cul-de-sac. An upper story at the far end of the house abutted the mountainside. The lower floor was shaded by a Chinese banyan tree, and exotic flowers bordered the carefully manicured lawn. A Cadillac sedan, ivory with chocolate brown

interior, sat in the driveway. Gordon pulled in and braked to a halt. He killed the coupe's engine.

Stepping from the car, he tugged a naval officer's cap down over his eyes. Beneath sandy hair, his features were pleasant, lightly peppered with freckles. The trim fit of his dress white uniform indicated he kept himself in shape. On the porch, he pressed the door buzzer. A footstep sounded inside and the door opened. The man who greeted him spoke in heavily accented English.

"Lieutenant Gordon. How nice to see you again."

"Good evening, Dr. Hahn."

"Won't you come in."

"Thank you." Gordon removed his cap. "I believe Susan is expecting me."

"Of course. Shall we wait in the living room?"

Eric Hahn led the way with a brisk, determined stride. He was distinguished in bearing, always impeccably dressed. His hair was flecked with gray, and though he was approaching fifty, he looked ten years younger.

"May I offer you a drink, Lieutenant?"

"I . . ." Gordon checked his watch.

"Plenty of time," Hahn assured him. "Women believe clocks were invented for men. I fear the axiom applies equally to my daughter."

Gordon laughed politely. "A short one, then."

"Gin and tonic, as I recall."

"Yes, thank you."

"Perhaps Mama will join us."

"How is Mrs. Hahn?"

"Excellent, never better. She will be delighted to see you."

Upstairs, Susan sat before the vanity table in her bedroom. Her makeup, almost complete, accentuated the exquisite bone structure of her face. She finished applying a pale mauve eye shadow. Then, her head angled critically, she examined the results in the

vanity table mirror. Parted at the center, her thick, sable hair hung loose, turning under in a soft curl where it touched her shoulders. Deep violet eyes provided a striking contrast with her creamy complexion and sparkled with approval. She thought mauve, which complimented her outfit for tonight, added just the right touch. She looked mysterious, somehow unattainable.

Satisfied, she stood and shrugged out of her housecoat. For her height, almost five four in heels, she was perfectly proportioned. Her effect on men was something she'd learned to accept—and play on. She was, by turn, darkly vivacious, vulnerable, and a creature of bewitching sensuality. She sometimes felt older than her twenty-one years, much older.

From the closet, she took a crepe de Chine evening skirt. Banded at the waist, the skirt was dusky ultramarine with a slit up the side. The companion top was a skimpy swath of cloth, dyed a luscious shade of teal. A simple halter, it was wrapped from behind, crisscrossed over the front, and tied around the neck. Her midriff and shoulders, not to mention most of her back, were bare. She added earrings, a bracelet, and a flawless sapphire on her ring hand. She then moved to a full-length mirror.

The effect was stunning. She couldn't decide whether she looked half-dressed or half-undressed. Either way, it would create a sensation at the Officers' Club. Few of the naval wives would realize she was wearing the fashion hit of 1941, perfectly in vogue. Instead, green with envy, they would attempt to keep their husbands from staring too openly. She knew already that it would be a losing battle. And she found the whole idea vastly appealing. She enjoyed being the center of attention.

As she started toward the bedroom door, her thoughts turned to Tom Gordon. Not for the first time, a nagging question crossed her mind. She wondered how she might avoid going to bed with him tonight. That too, she concluded, was a losing battle.

"Another drink, Lieutenant?"

"No, I'm fine, Mrs. Hahn. Thanks anyway."

Gordon was seated in an overstuffed armchair. Greta Hahn and her husband were across from him on the sofa. Watching her now, Gordon was struck again by the dissimilarity between mother and daughter. She was in her early forties, plump and large busted, her hair pulled back in a severe bun. Everyone's caricature of the typical German hausfrau. He marveled that she had produced a daughter like Susan. It hardly seemed in the genes.

"Are you eating properly?" Greta inquired.

Her non sequitur took Gordon by surprise. "Pardon me?"

"You're much too thin." Greta clucked and shook her head maternally. "Do they feed you enough on that . . . what was the word you used?"

"A pigboat."

"Pigboat." Greta made a face. "The word alone ruins your appetite. I must ask Susan to bring you home to dinner some night. Young men need to eat properly."

"Yes, ma'am! Anytime you say. I never turn down a home cooked meal."

Gordon was executive officer on a submarine. His ship, the *Dolphin*, had returned from a long patrol only day before yesterday. His last date with Susan had been almost a month ago. He was somewhat flattered that her mother remembered his assignment, took such an interest. All the more so since Susan dated several officers besides himself. He felt singled out.

Gordon was also impressed for an altogether different reason. He thought it remarkable that the Hahns had become Americanized in such a short period of time. According to scuttlebutt, the family had fled Germany in 1937. He recalled hearing, as well, that their flight was prompted by religious problems.

Hitler was persecuting Jews, and there was speculation that Dr. Hahn was part Jewish. Gordon knew nothing of Jews, or their religious beliefs. Nor was he all that familiar with the manners

and customs of Germans. Yet he was thoroughly impressed by what he'd seen of the Hahn family thus far. They were high-class people and at the same time very down-to-earth. The fact that they were obviously quite wealthy made it all the more remarkable. They never put on grand airs or acted the least bit pretentious. They were just themselves.

"Hello everyone."

Susan swept into the living room. She was a vision of loveliness, and Gordon hastily got to his feet as she entered. The light evening wrap thrown over her shoulders did nothing to hide her exposed look.

"Wow," Gordon mumbled.

"Do you like it?" she inquired innocently. "I wasn't sure whether it was appropriate for the Officers' Club."

"You'll knock their eyes out."

"Oh, Tom. You really are a flatterer."

She moved across the room. Her father rose from the sofa and she kissed him on the cheek. "Good evening, Papa."

"Lieutenant Gordon is right. You look charming, my dear."

"You approve, then?"

"I do indeed."

"I'm glad."

"Enjoy yourselves," Hahn said, "and don't be too late."

Susan darted him a look. Then she turned to Gordon with a warm smile. "Shall we go?"

"You bet."

"Good night, Mama."

She linked her arm to his, hugging it to her. He flushed and his freckles turned a livid strawberry red. On the way out the door he called over his shoulder.

"Night, Dr. Hahn, night, Mrs. Hahn."

"Good night, Lieutenant."

Hahn waited until he heard the front door close. Then he walked to the far side of the room, where French doors opened onto a flagstone patio, and went outside.

The patio overlooked a sheer drop-off at the rear of the house, and afforded a panoramic view of Pearl Harbor and the ocean beyond. The lights of the naval base flickered with erratic brilliance, not quite a mile below Halawa Heights. Hahn stopped at a stone railing on the edge of the patio, his hands clasped behind his back. He stared down through the deepening night for a long while. His gaze was fixed on Pearl Harbor.

2

THE OFFICERS' CLUB was always mobbed for Saturday night's dinner dance, which featured a full orchestra. Tonight the crowd was in particularly festive spirits.

On the mainland that afternoon, the Annapolis football team had soundly trounced its opponent. Except for a handful of reservists, the officers stationed at Pearl Harbor were graduates of the Naval Academy. So an air of celebration and boisterous good humor pervaded the club. Loud cheers went up whenever the orchestra broke out in the Annapolis fight song.

Kathryn Ordway was one of the more exuberant rooters. Her father was Vice Admiral Thomas Ordway, class of '04. She prided herself on being a navy brat, and the daughter of Pearl Harbor's second in command. Moreover, her date tonight was Commander John Forster. He was class of '23 and chief of Naval Intelligence for the Pacific Fleet. She thought it ample reason to take the floor and exhort the crowd. She led every cheer with zesty, schoolgirl abandon.

Forster watched her antics with an indulgent smile. She was blond and tawny, a statuesque young woman with long lissome legs and high rounded breasts, bright eyes and a quick smile. She was surpassingly attractive. He had only one regret, and that was her age.

Kathryn was twenty-four while he was pushing forty. That,

added to the fact that he was divorced, presented what seemed an insurmountable problem. Her father was immovable on the subject of their marriage, refusing all discussion. The matter was further complicated by the fleet chain of command. Forster reported directly to Admiral Ordway.

The orchestra segued from the Academy fight song into a swing number. Kathryn sat down, her face flushed with excitement. She took a long thirsty drink of her Salty Dog. The icy blend of grapefruit juice and gin made her shudder.

"Whew, I needed that!"

"Cheerleading is hard work," Forster deadpanned.

"Is that a compliment or a wisecrack?"

"You can pep up my football team anytime."

"Funny man." Kathryn looked toward the foyer. "Where in the world is Susan? She's almost an hour late."

They were seated at a table for four. Kathryn had insisted on delaying dinner until Susan arrived. She considered Susan her best friend, her confidante. Forster was somewhat less enthusiastic about the relationship.

"Susan's always late," he noted dryly. "How else would she make her grand entrance?"

"Don't be catty, Commander."

"Who, me?"

Kathryn stared at him, thoughtful. He was a man of saturnine good looks and a strong, determined face. His voice was deep and resonant, and he was surprisingly gentle in their more intimate moments. Yet she sometimes thought his work in counter-espionage made him too cynical. It was a trait that bothered her.

"Aren't you being a tad unkind?"

"No," he said with a half smile. "In fact, she's about to prove my point."

The orchestra paused between numbers. A sudden hush fell over the crowd and everyone seemed to turn in unison. Susan stood poised in the doorway, her hand tucked in Gordon's arm. The evening wrap was off her shoulders, revealing the swell of

her breasts through the halter. Several women gasped, and every man in the room stared at her with undisguised admiration. She smiled serenely, leading the way to the table with her head arched high. She waited for Gordon to hold her chair, then sat down.

"Sorry we're late," she apologized. "I had a terrible time deciding what to wear."

"God, Susan!" Kathryn laughed out loud. "You're a riot."

"Why not? It'll give the old biddies something to talk about over dessert. Good evening, John."

"Susan." Forster looked faintly amused. He turned to Gordon. "How are things on the *Dolphin*, Lieutenant?"

Gordon still hadn't recovered from the entrance. His freckles betrayed his embarrassment. "Fine, sir. Out and back, strictly a routine patrol."

"You look like you could stand a drink."

"I sure could, Commander. A double."

Some while later, the orchestra played Glenn Miller's arrangement of "Sunrise Serenade." Susan and Gordon joined the rush to the dance floor. Forster offered Kathryn a cigarette, then took one himself and produced a lighter. Kathryn smoked in silence a moment.

"Have you ever noticed?" she mused. "Susan really is a marvelous dancer. She's very graceful."

"What I noticed," he remarked, "was her outfit. The boys at the bar look like they're ready to start shouting, 'Take it off!'"

Kathryn angrily puffed smoke. "Everyone at Pearl is stuck in a rut. And that goes especially for women!"

"Maybe that's why you don't have any friends . . . except Susan."

"What a horrible thing to say! I have tons and tons of friends."

"Where are they?" Forster smiled ruefully. "We always sit with Susan and her date. No one else has joined our table in months. Why is that?"

"You're so smart, you tell me."

"Susan," he said simply. "She's pure poison to other women."

"She's part Jewish," Kathryn sniffed. "That's the real reason. Common, ordinary prejudice! And I think it's disgusting."

"You're wrong, Kate. She's a threat to every woman on the base — married or otherwise."

One of the officers at the bar stood apart from the others. His shoulder boards indicated he was a lieutenant commander, and the expression on his face indicated he preferred the company of women to men. He slowly swigged a scotch on the rocks and watched Susan.

A tall man, his features were rugged and tanned. His eyes were a piercing blue, and a shock of tousled blond hair spilled down over his forehead. His smile was lazy, almost ironic, and there was an enormous air of confidence about him. He looked like a man accustomed to getting his own way.

As the orchestra went into a medley, he tossed off his scotch and turned from the bar. He moved to the dance floor, threading a path through the couples and approached Susan and Gordon, who were cheek to cheek in a close embrace. He tapped Gordon on the shoulder.

"Mind if I cut in, old man?"

Gordon looked up, startled. "Why —"

"Thanks ever so much."

He swept Susan out of Gordon's arms and glided her away in perfect tempo to the music. She had the impression of a man who was devastatingly handsome, and an absolute menace to virgins. He grinned down at her with the bold assurance of a pirate.

"I'm Harry Bendix."

"How nice," she said sweetly. "Are you in the habit of kidnapping strange young women, Mr. Bendix?"

"Only when her name is Susan Hahn."

"We haven't met before, have we?"

"Nope." His smile widened. "I asked your name at the bar."

"Did you? May I inquire why?"

"I'm new to Pearl. Only arrived a couple of days ago."

"I fail to see the connection."

"I don't know anyone here and you're the prettiest girl in the club. I always start at the top of the list."

"Well—" Susan's laugh was a delicious sound. "I must say you have quite a line, Mr. Bendix."

"Call me Harry. All my friends do."

"Are we going to be friends . . . Harry?"

Bendix winked. "We already are."

He pulled her close and smoothly whirled her away.

"See what I mean?"

Forster pointed a finger at Susan. By comparison, the other women on the dance floor looked rather dowdy. What was worse, they knew that their husbands and boyfriends were mentally making the same comparison. It seemed somehow unfair, an uneven contest.

"Watch their faces," Forster said. "They think she's a cross between Jezebel and a femme fatale. In short, they'd like to gouge her eyes out."

"Well, what of it?" Kathryn demanded. "It's just spite! They're envious of her, that's all."

"Maybe—" Forster suddenly stopped. "Well, would you look at that."

"What?"

"She's dancing with Harry Bendix."

"Who's Harry Bendix?"

"The slickest ladies' man ever to graduate from Annapolis. Wise men hide their daughters when he hits the fleet."

Kathryn turned in her chair. Her eyes narrowed and she studied the man who held Susan. She had the sinking sensation that she was watching a hunter stalk his prey.

On the dance floor, Bendix seemed to devour Susan with his eyes. He held her with one arm around her waist, his hand touching her bare back. The warmth of her body and the light

scent of her perfume were like an aphrodisiac. His smile was almost immoral, his voice a caress.

"Kismet was kind on this assignment."

"Oh, how so?"

"If I hadn't been sent to Pearl, I wouldn't have met you."

Her throaty laughter floated over the dance floor. "Do you flirt with all the girls so shamelessly?"

"No, I'm serious," he said with a rougish grin. "I believe kismet shapes people's lives. We were fated to meet."

"And where did kismet transfer you from, Harry?"

"Long Beach. I got a promotion and a new assignment all the same day."

"How marvelous!"

"Yeah, it really was my lucky day. I didn't know how much so . . . till I saw you."

"Behave yourself," she scolded. "Tell me about your new assignment. What ship are you on?"

"The *Nevada*," he said importantly. "Top battlewagon in the fleet. I'm the new gunnery officer."

"You sound pleased."

"Am I ever! Nobody makes flag rank unless they've served aboard a battleship."

"Then you hope to be an admiral some day?"

"Like I said, kismet's on my side."

The orchestra finished the last number in the medley. Bendix reluctantly saw her back to her table. He exchanged pleasantries with Forster and was introduced to Kathryn. As he turned away, Gordon approached from the direction of the bar. Bendix grinned like a cat spitting feathers.

Gordon gave him a dirty look.

The Officers' Club closed at midnight. Kathryn and Forster said goodbye outside and walked off toward the far end of the parking lot. Susan waved to them, then went along with Gordon to his coupe. In the car, she settled back against the seat and awaited the inevitable.

Gordon climbed in on the driver's side. He shut the door and leaned across the seat. His breath smelled of whiskey and stale tobacco. He kissed her hard on the mouth.

"How about a drive to the beach?"

"What happened to your friend's apartment?"

"Bad timing. His ship's in port, too."

"Oh, Tom."

"C'mon, have a heart. I've been out to sea almost a month."

"Well, okay. But just this once, Tom Gordon. Next time you make arrangements with your friend."

"I promise. Cross my heart and Scout's honor."

Gordon started the engine. He rammed the gear shift into low and drove out of the parking lot. Susan slumped against the seat and exhaled a long sigh. Her head turned toward the window, her gaze fixed on the starry sky. She tried not to think about the beach.