HERMAN WOUK

War and Remembrance

REMEMBRANCE Herman Wouk



BOSTON TORONTO

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Books by Herman Wouk

Novels

AURORA DAWN
THE CITY BOY
THE CAINE MUTINY
MARJORIE MORNINGSTAR
YOUNGBLOOD HAWKE
DON'T STOP THE CARNIVAL
THE WINDS OF WAR
WAR AND REMEMBRANCE

Plays

THE TRAITOR

THE CAINE MUTINY COURT-MARTIAL

NATURE'S WAY

Nonfiction

THIS IS MY GOD

WAR AND REMEMBRANCE

WAR AND

a novel by

Little, Brown and Company

In Remembrance

Abraham Isaac Wouk
"Abe"
firstborn son of
Betty Sarah and Herman Wouk
September 2, 1946–July 27, 1951

בלע המות לנצח

He will destroy death forever.

Isaiah 25

Foreword

War II, the viewpoint American.

A prologue, *The Winds of War*, published in 1971, set the historical frame for this work by picturing the events leading up to Pearl Harbor. This is a novel of America at war, from Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima.

It is the main tale I had to tell. While I naturally hope that some readers, even in this rushed age, will find the time for both novels, War and Remembrance is a story in itself, and can be read without the prologue.

The theme of both novels is single. The last words of Victor Henry's commentary on the Battle of Leyte Gulf give it plainly enough:

"Either war is finished, or we are."

I have put this theme in the colors and motion of the fiction art, so that "he who runs may read," and remember what happened in the worst world catastrophe. As to the history in both tales, I trust that knowing readers will find it has been presented responsibly and with care.

These two linked novels tend to one conclusion: that war is an old habit of thought, an old frame of mind, an old political technique, that must now pass as human sacrifice and human slavery have passed. I have faith that the human spirit will prove equal to the long heavy task of ending war. Against the pessimistic mood of our time, I think that the human spirit — for all its dark side that I here portray — is in essence heroic. The adventures narrated in this romance aim to show that essence in action.

Herman Work

The beginning of the end of War lies in Remembrance.

Washington 23 March 1978 Purim, 5738

PART ONE

"Where is Natalie?"

1

A LIBERTY boat full of sleepy hung-over sailors came clanging along-side the U.S.S. *Northampton*, and a stocky captain in dress whites jumped out to the accommodation ladder. The heavy cruiser, its gray hull and long guns dusted pink by the rising sun, swung to a buoy in Pearl Harbor on the incoming tide. As the boat thrummed off toward the destroyer nests in West Loch, the captain trotted up the steep ladder and saluted the colors and the quarterdeck.

"I request permission to come aboard."

"Permission granted, sir."

"My name is Victor Henry."

The OOD's eyes rounded. In his starched whites with lacquered gold buttons and his white gloves, with the ritual long glass tucked under an arm, this fresh-faced ensign was stiff enough, but he stiffened more. "Oh! Yes, sir. I'll notify Captain Hickman, sir — messenger!"

"Don't disturb him yet. He isn't expecting me. I'll just mosey around topside for a bit."

"Sir, I know he's awake."

"Very well."

Henry walked forward on a forecastle already astir with working parties in dungarees, who were dodging the hose-down by barefoot deckhands. The iron deck underfoot felt good. The pungent harbor breeze smelled good. This was Pug Henry's world, the clean square world of big warships, powerful machinery, brisk young sailors, heavy guns, and the sea. After long exile, he was home. But his pleasure dimmed at the tragic sight off the starboard bow. Bulging out of the black oil coating the harbor waters, the streaked red underside of the capsized *Utah* proclaimed the shame of the whole Pacific Fleet in one obscene symbol. Out of view in the shambles of Battleship Row, the ship he had come to Hawaii to command, the U.S.S. *California*, sat on the mud under water to its guns, still wisping smoke ten days after the catastrophe.

The *Northampton* was no *California*; a treaty cruiser almost as long, six hundred feet, but with half the beam, a quarter the tonnage, smaller main battery, and light hull far too vulnerable to torpedoes. Yet after his protracted shore duty it looked decidedly big to Captain Henry. Standing by the

flapping blue jack and the anchor chain, glancing back at the turrets and the tripod mast, with bridge upon bridge jutting up into the sunlight, he had a qualm of self-doubt. This ship was many times as massive as a destroyer, his last command. Battleship command had been a dream; getting the *California* had never seemed quite real, and after all, it had been snatched from him by disaster. He had served in heavy cruisers, but command was something else.

The roly-poly gangway messenger, who looked about thirteen, trotted up and saluted. Altogether the crew appeared peculiarly young. Pug had at first glance taken for junior lieutenants a couple of young men sporting the gilt collar leaves of lieutenant commanders. Surely they had not served the grinding fifteen years that two and a half stripes had cost him! Fast advancement was a sugar-coating of wartime.

"Captain Henry, sir, Captain Hickman presents his compliments, sir. He's taking a shower, is all. He says there's mail for you in his quarters, forwarded from the *California*'s shore office. He invites you for breakfast, sir, and please to follow me."

"What's your name and rating?"

"Tilton, sir! Boatswain's mate third, sir!" Crisp eager responses to the incoming captain.

"How old are you, Tilton?"

"Twenty, sir."

Ravages of age; everybody else starting to seem too damned young.

The captain's quarters enjoyed the monarchical touch of a Filipino steward: snowy white coat, round olive face, dark eyes, thick black hair. "I'm Alemon, sir." The smiling astute glance and dignified head bob, as he handed Captain Henry the letters, showed pride of place more than subservience. "Captain Hickman will be right out. Coffee, sir? Orange juice?"

The spacious outer cabin, the steward, the handsome blue leather furnishings, the kingly desk, elated Pug Henry. Capital ship command would soon be his, and these perquisites tickled his vanity. He couldn't help it. A long, long climb! Many new burdens and no more money, he told himself, glancing at the batch of official envelopes. Among them was a letter from Rhoda. The sight of his wife's handwriting, once such a joy, punctured his moment of pride, as the overturned *Utah* had gloomed his pleasure at walking a deck again. In a wave of desolate sickness, he ripped open the pink envelope and read the letter, sipping coffee served on a silver tray with a Navy-monogrammed silver creamer.

December 7th

Pug darling —

I just this minute sent off my cable to you, taking back that *idiotic* letter. The radio's still jabbering the horrible news about Pearl Harbor. Never in my life have I been more at sixes and sevens. Those horrible little yellow monkeys!

I know we'll blow them off the face of the earth, but meanwhile I have one son in a submarine, and another in a dive-bomber, and you're God knows where at this point. I just pray the California wasn't hit. And to cap it all I wrote you that perfectly ghastly, unforgivable letter six short days ago! I would give the world to get that letter back unread. Why did I ever write it? My head was off in some silly cloudland.

I am not demanding a divorce anymore, not if you really still want me after my scatterbrained conduct. Whatever you do, don't blame or hate Palmer Kirby. He's a very decent sort, as I think you know.

Pug, I've been so damned lonesome, and — I don't know, maybe I'm going through the change or something — but I've been having the wildest shifts of moods for months, up and down and up and down again. I've been very unstable. I really think I'm not quite well. Now I feel like a criminal awaiting sentence, and I don't expect to get much sleep until your next letter arrives.

One thing is true, I love you and I've never stopped loving you. That's something to go on, isn't it? I'm utterly confused. I just can't write any more until I hear from you.

Except — Natalie's mother telephoned me not half an hour ago, all frantic. Strange that we've never met or spoken before! She hasn't heard from her daughter in weeks. The last word was that Natalie and the baby were flying back from Rome on the 15th. Now what? The schedules must be all disrupted, and suppose we go to war with Germany and Italy? Byron must be wild with worry. I have never held it against him, I mean, marrying a Jewish girl, but the dangers, the complications, are all so magnified! Let's pray she gets out, one way or another.

Mrs. Jastrow sounds perfectly pleasant, no foreign accent or anything, except that she's so obviously a New Yorker! If you get news of Natalie, do send the poor woman a telegram, it'll be a kindness.

Oh, Pug, we've plunged into the war, after all! Our whole world is coming apart. You're a rock. I'm not. Try to forgive me, and maybe we can still pick up the pieces.

All my love Rho

Not a reassuring letter, he thought, if wholly Rhoda-like. The passage about his daughter-in-law deepened Pug's sickness of heart. He had been burying awareness of her plight from his mind, laden with his own calamities and, as he thought, helpless to do anything about her. He was in a world crash, and in a private crash. He could only take things day by day as they came.

"Well! Is Alemon treating you right? Welcome aboard!" A tall officer with thick straight blond hair, a froglike pouch under his chin, and a belly strained into two bulges by his belt burst from the inner cabin, buttoning a beautifully ironed khaki shirt. They shook hands. "Ready for some chow?"

Alemon's breakfast, served on white linen with gleaming cutlery, was better than anything Victor Henry had eaten in months: half a fresh pineapple, hot rolls, steaming coffee, and a rich egg dish with ham, spinach, and melted cheese. Pug said, by way of breaking the ice, that he had short-circuited protocol and come aboard this way because he had heard the *Northampton* might be leaving soon with a carrier task force to relieve Wake Island. If Hickman wanted the change of command before the ship left, he was at his service.

"Christ, yes. I'm mighty glad you've showed up. I hate to go ashore with a war starting, but I've been putting off minor surgery and I'm overdue for relief." Hickman's big genial face settled into lines of misery. "And to be frank, Henry, I have wife trouble back home. It just happened in October. Some deskbound Army son of a bitch in Washington —" the thick shoulders sagged in misery. "Oh, hell. After twenty-nine years, and her a grandmother three times over! But Ruth is still gorgeous, you know? I swear, Ruth has got the figure of a chorus girl. And left to herself half the time — well, that's been the problem right along. You know how that is."

So often, Pug thought, he had heard such plaints before; the commonest of Navy misfortunes, yet not till it had struck him had he remotely imagined the searing pain of it. How could Hickman, or any man, discuss it so freely? He himself could not force words about it from his throat; not to a minister, not to a psychiatrist, not to God in prayer, let alone to a stranger. He was grateful when Hickman turned prominent eyes at him, ruefully grinned, and said, "Well, the hell with that. I understand you've had duty in Berlin and in Moscow, eh? Damned unusual."

"I went to Moscow with the first Lend-Lease mission. That was a short special assignment. I did serve in Berlin as naval attaché."

"Must have been fascinating, what with all hell breaking loose over there."

"I'll take the Northampton."

At Victor Henry's harsh tone of disenchantment with his years ashore, Hickman cannily winked. "Well, if I do say so, Henry, she's a good ship with a smart crew. Except this big fleet expansion's bleeding us white. We're running a goddamn training ship here these days." Hickman pulled the ringing telephone from its bracket on the bulkhead. "Christ, Halsey's barge is coming alongside." Gulping coffee, he rose, put on his gold-crusted cap, and snatched a black tie.

Pug was astonished. The *Northampton* was the flagship of Rear Admiral Spruance, who commanded Halsey's screening vessels. It was Spruance's place to call on Halsey, not the other way around. Straightening the tie and cap, Hickman said, "Make yourself at home. Finish your breakfast. We can get started on the relief this morning. My chief yeoman's got the logs and

other records all lined up, and luckily we just did a Title B inventory. The registered pubs are up-to-date and the transfer report is ready. You can sight the books anytime."

"Does Halsey come aboard often?"

"First time ever." His eyes popping, Hickman handed Pug a clipboard of messages. "Something's afoot, all right. You might want to look over these dispatches. There's a long intercept from Wake."

Through the porthole Pug could hear Halsey piped aboard. As he glanced through the flimsy sheets, his pain over Rhoda faded. The mere look and feel of fleet communications, the charge of war electricity in the carbonblurred dispatches, stirred life in him. Hickman soon came back. "It was the Old Man, all right. He looks madder than hell about something. Let's go to the ship's office."

Impeccable inventories, account books, and engineering records were spread for Victor Henry's inspection by young veomen in spotless whites, under the glaring eye of a grizzled chief. The two captains were deep in the records when the flag lieutenant telephoned. The presence of Captain Victor Henry, he said, was desired in Admiral Spruance's quarters. Hickman looked nonplussed, relaying this to his visitor. "Shall I take you there, Henry?"

"I know the way."

"Any idea what it's about?"

"Not the foggiest."

Hickman scratched his head. "Do you know Spruance?"

"Slightly, from the War College."

"Think you can relieve me before we sortie? We're on seventy-two hours' notice."

"I intend to:"

"Splendid." Hickman clasped his hand. "We've got to talk some about the ship's stability. There are problems."

"Hello, Pug," Halsey said.

It was the old tough wily look from under thick eyebrows; but the brows were gray, the eyes sunken. This was not Billy Halsey, the feisty skipper of the destroyer Chauncey. This was Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, ComAir-BatForPac, with three silver stars on his collar pin. Halsey's stomach sagged, his once-thick brown hair was a gray straggle, his face was flecked and creased with age. But the square-set jaw, the thin wide crafty smile, the curving way he stuck out his hand, the hard grip, were the same. "How's that pretty wife of yours?"

"Thank you, Admiral. Rhoda's fine."

Halsey turned to Raymond Spruance, who stood beside him, hands on

hips, studying a Pacific chart on the desk. Spruance was a little younger, but far less marked by time, possibly because of his austere habits. His color was fresh, his skin clear, his plentiful hair only touched with gray; he seemed not to have changed at all since Pug's tour under him at the War College. It was a Halsey byword that he wouldn't trust a man who didn't drink or smoke. Spruance did neither, but they were old fast friends. In Halsey's destroyer division, during Pug's first duty at sea, Spruance had been a junior skipper.

"You know, Ray, this rascal had the sassiest bride of any ensign in the old division." As Halsey chain-lit a cigarette, his hand slightly trembled. "Ever meet her?"

Spruance shook his head, the large eyes serious and remote. "Captain Henry, you worked on the Wake Island battle problem at the College, didn't you?"

"I did, sir."

"Come to think of it, Ray, why were you running a Wake problem in thirty-six?" said Halsey. "Wake was nothing but scrub and gooney birds then."

Spruance looked to Victor Henry, who spoke up, "Admiral, the purpose was to test tactical doctrine in a problem involving Orange-dominated waters, very long distances, and enemy land-based air."

"Sound familiar?" Spruance said to Halsey.

"Oh, hell, what does a game-board exercise away back then prove?"

"Same distances. Same ship and aircraft performance characteristics."

"Same doctrines, too — like seek out enemy and destroy him." Halsey's jaw jutted. Pug knew that look well. "Have you heard the joke that's going around in Australia? They're saying that pretty soon the two yellow races may really come to blows in the Pacific — the Japanese and the Americans."

"Not a bad quip." Spruance gestured with dividers at the chart. "But it's over two thousand miles to Wake, Bill. Let's even say we sortie tomorrow, which isn't very feasible. but —"

"Let me interrupt you right there. If we have to, we will!"

"Even so, look at what happens."

The two admirals bent over the chart. The operation to relieve Wake Island, Pug quickly gathered, was on. The aircraft carriers *Lexington* and *Saratoga* with their support ships were already steaming westward, one to knock out the land-based air in the Marshalls south of Wake, the other to deliver reinforcements to the Marines, and attack any Japanese sea forces it encountered. But Halsey's *Enterprise* was being ordered to a station less than halfway to Wake, where it could cover the Hawaiian Islands. He wanted to go all the way. He was arguing that the Jap fleet would not dare another sneak attack on Hawaii, with the Army Air Corps on combat alert; that carriers operating together vastly increased their punch; and that if the

Japs did try an end run for Hawaii, he could double back and intercept them in time.

The 1936 game-board exercise, Pug realized, had been prophetic. In the game, the Marines had been beleaguered on Wake after a sneak Japanese attack on Manila. The Pacific Fleet had sailed to relieve them and bring the Jap main body to action. The mission had failed. "Orange" air had clobbered "Blue" into turning back. "Blue" carrier attacks had not knocked out the enemy's island airfields, the umpires had ruled, due to bad weather, pilot inexperience, and unexpected Jap strength in AA and aircraft.

Spruance ticked off distances, times, and hazards until Halsey exploded, "Jesus Christ and General Jackson, Ray, I know all that. I want some arguments to throw at Cincpac so I can shake myself loose!"

Dropping the dividers on the chart, Spruance shrugged. "I suspect the whole operation may be cancelled."

"Cancelled, hell! Why? Those marines are holding out splendidly!"

His sympathies all with Halsey, Pug Henry put in that while flying from Manila to Hawaii on the Pan Am Clipper, he had been under bombardment at Wake Island.

"Hey? What's that? You were there?" Halsey turned angrily glinting eyes on him. "What did you see? How are their chances?"

Pug described the Marine defenses, and said he thought they could resist for weeks. He mentioned the letter he had brought from the Marine commandant to Cincpac, and quoted the colonel's parting words in the coral dugout: "We'll probably end up eating fish and rice behind barbed wire anyway, but at least we can make the bastards work to take the place."

"You hear that, Ray?" Halsey struck the desk with a bony gray-haired fist. "And you don't think we're honor bound to reinforce and support them? Why, the papers back home are full of nothing but the heroes on Wake. 'Send us more Japs!' I've never heard anything more inspiring."

"I rather doubt that message ever came from Wake. Newspaper stuff," said Spruance. "Henry, were you stationed in Manila?"

"I was coming via Manila, Admiral, from the Soviet Union. I was naval adviser on the Lend-Lease mission."

"What? Rooshia?" Halsey gave Victor Henry a jocular prod with two fingers. "Say, that's right! I've heard about you, Pug. Hobnobbing with the President and I don't know who all! Why, old Moose Benton told me you went for a joyride over Berlin in a Limey bomber. Hey? Did you really do that?"

"Admiral, I was an observer. Mostly I observed how frightened I could get."

Halsey rubbed his chin, looking roguish. "You're aboard to relieve Sam Hickman, aren't you?"