

R. CAMERON COOK

PRIDE RUNS DEEP



"Captures the
heroic highs and
hellish lows
of our **WWII**
submariners."
—W.E.B. Griffin



"A great submarine story, on a par with
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Praise for
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“Marks the emergence of R. Cameron Cooke as one of the most original new voices in suspense fiction. A great submarine story, on a par with *The Hunt for Red October*.”

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“Cooke powerfully captures the heroic highs and hellish lows of our WWII submariners—warriors who served valiantly and silently far beneath the sea.”

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Prologue

BLOOD stains never came out of cotton khakis, Russo thought, flicking at the dried blood on his sleeve. It was not his blood. The day was gray and the clouds were low, making the stains look almost black. Strangely, it was the only thing he could think about. The whole patrol had been a blur.

“Sir!” Chief Konhausen shouted from up by the bow, where several sailors stood on deck gaping over the starboard side of the ship. Two of them held a line for the diver whose bubbles broached the surface of the water near the hull.

“Captain!” Konhausen shouted again, this time from the deck just beneath the conning tower.

The cool North Pacific air whisked across the bridge and broke Russo’s trance. He leaned over the coaming and held his hand to his ear as if he had not heard Konhausen the first time.

“How’s it look?” he called.

“It’s worse than I thought, Captain. The torpedo’s fouled

in the shutter mechanism. We can't move her and I don't want to. The exploder could be armed, sir. Anything might set it off."

Russo nodded. There were a couple of officers on the bridge with him, but he felt very alone. Russo looked at the blood on his sleeve again. He couldn't stop looking at it. The submarine's rolling deck, the idling diesel engines, the dull hum of the rotating radar mast all disappeared from his senses and all he could see, hear, smell, or feel was the dried blood on his sleeve that was not his.

"Shit!" one officer muttered behind him.

"What do you want to do, Captain?" the officer next to him asked.

Russo gave no answer.

"Get Hunt out of the water, Chief, and get below," the officer called down to Konhausen. "We're sitting ducks up here."

"Aye aye, XO," Konhausen answered, looking puzzled at Russo's behavior.

"Bridge, radar," the bridge intercom suddenly squawked. "SD radar contact, range five thousand yards! Aircraft approaching fast, sir!"

Everyone on the bridge exchanged white-faced glances and Russo snapped out of his hypnotic gaze.

"Clear the bridge! Clear the decks!" he yelled. "Helm, bridge, all ahead flank!"

The two officers scurried down the bridge hatch, followed quickly by the lookouts who had dropped down from their high perches in the periscope shears. Within seconds Russo was the only one on the bridge, and as the resonance of the powerful diesels shifted to a higher octave, he could already feel the hull accelerating through the water.

The men on deck also scampered to get below. All of them bolted for the forward torpedo room hatch, the only open hatch on the main deck. All except for Konhausen,

who remained behind to pull Hunt, the diver, up from the water.

Russo scanned the low gray clouds above the submarine, but it was no use. The Japanese plane had the jump on them.

“Bridge, radar, aircraft at three thousand yards now, sir,” the nervous voice reported over the speaker.

Konhausen finally had Hunt out of the water and climbing up the submarine’s side. The rest of the men were now below and Konhausen and Hunt were the only two left on deck.

Russo desperately wanted to dive the ship. He was putting the ship and crew in jeopardy for the sake of two men, but the blood on his shirt kept catching his eye, and he couldn’t bear the thought of losing another man on this patrol. He decided then and there that he would not dive the ship until Konhausen and Hunt were safely below.

The submarine’s screws churned the ocean behind her and she quickly surpassed fifteen knots, leaving a white wake that would make it even easier for the Japanese plane to spot her. Her bow began to crash through the waves, spraying the two men on the bow with a cold salty mist.

“Aircraft at one thousand yards, sir!” the speaker intoned.

Konhausen had pulled Hunt up to the deck now. The big chief helped the diver rip off his fins and then both began to run across the rocking deck to the open hatch only thirty feet away.

Russo saw Konhausen get to the hatch first and disappear below. As Hunt reached the hatch, Russo pulled the diving alarm lever near his right hand and shouted into the bridge call box.

“Crash dive!”

On the second blast of the diving alarm he could hear the rushing water and see the spraying mist in the air as the sub’s ballast tanks vented and rapidly filled with the sea.

He also saw the wing-like surfaces on the sub's bow deploy from the vertical position to the horizontal.

He thought Hunt was home free and had almost turned to drop down the bridge hatch before he heard a rapid staccato sound that could only be one thing. In the blink of an eye, dozens of geysers shot up in the water around the bow. The 20-millimeter shells from the Japanese plane walked across the submarine's bow from port to starboard and made sickening sounds as they struck metal hull and then wooden deck, blasting splinters in all directions.

Russo started to shout to Hunt, who was leaping for the protection of the open hatch cover, but before he could say anything a 20-millimeter projectile sliced Hunt's left leg off at the thigh like it was made of putty. A shower of blood and cartilage instantly fountained up only to splatter down on the deck seconds later.

Russo instinctively ducked when the roaring engine of the low-flying Japanese fighter blared overhead. He looked up in time to see the silver-painted aircraft with the red sun on its fuselage pull up and disappear into the low clouds, obviously to prepare for another pass.

Down on the deck, Hunt was rolling around near the hatch, blood squirting from his stump and turning the wooden deck red. Several feet away his severed leg lay grotesquely twitching.

Russo stared at the grisly spectacle and froze. The horror had happened so fast, within seconds. And now he didn't even remember that the submarine was in the middle of a crash dive. As the water reached the scuppers of the main deck, he saw Konhausen emerge from the forward hatch and with lightning speed yank Hunt below. The hatch slammed shut just as the first wave swept across the deck and immersed it completely. The swirling water carried away Hunt's leg and it quickly disappeared beneath the foaming surface.

As the waves struck the conning tower and rose still further, Russo felt a hand on his arm. One of his officers pulled him toward the bridge hatch and forced him below without much care. He reached the safety inside the conning tower and heard someone slam the hatch shut above him. He clutched the cold metal rungs of the ladder and felt the deck tilt downward as the submarine rapidly descended to a safe depth where the circling plane would no longer be a danger.

Russo did not have the wherewithal to notice the blank and dejected faces of his officers and crew staring at him from every direction. They were looking to him for guidance. They were defeated and they needed their captain.

But Russo had trouble remembering their names. He simply fixed his eyes on the dried blood on his cotton sleeve and wondered if he would ever be able to get the stain out.

PART I



Chapter 1

THE attack had taken place over a year before but much evidence of that terrible day still remained. From his second-story window Captain Ireland could just see the ill-fated “battleship row” across Pearl Harbor. *Oklahoma* still lay rolled on her side, exactly where the Japanese bombers had left her. The shipyard engineers were making preparations to right her someday. Nearer to Ford Island, *Arizona*’s great funnel poked above the water marking her shallow grave, where over a thousand of those killed that day were still entombed. Oil from *Arizona*’s gargantuan fuel tanks still covered the water’s surface. Her great fourteen-inch guns would be removed and used in a newly commissioned battleship, but the *Arizona* herself would remain where she lay as a solemn reminder of what the Japanese were capable of and what they had done.

Ireland lost some good friends that day.

He tipped the blinds with one finger and sipped at his coffee as he scanned the pier just below his window. The

waterfront below was frantic with activity. A dozen submarines sat at their moorings while water and supply trucks drove up and down the pier providing their services like busy ants. Sailors worked everywhere and speckled the pier and the submarines with their blue dungarees and white “dixie cup” hats.

Ireland focused his attention on one of the submarines, halfway down the pier. Even from this distance, he could see the holes in her conning tower, left there by a Japanese heavy caliber machine gun. A sign loosely draped across the submarine’s brow identified her as the USS *Mackerel* SS-244. Ireland sighed and took another drink. This boat was his current problem and he had to fix it before things got out of hand. He had dealt with these kinds of things before but the solution he was about to enact made him uncharacteristically uneasy and he could not understand why.

Captain Steven Landis Ireland came from a navy family with a heritage as old as the navy itself. Several distant ancestors served on the old American frigates that the British feared so much in the War of 1812. His grandfather sailed with Farragut at the Battle of Mobile Bay and supposedly heard the admiral utter his famous “Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!” His father was with Dewey when he sank the Spanish fleet in the Philippines, which he recounted to young Ireland not less than once a week for every week of his childhood. And when young Steven Ireland came of age, he dutifully followed the call from his family’s naval tradition and accepted an appointment to Annapolis in 1906. Ireland’s first submarine assignment after graduation placed him aboard the USS *Skipjack*, captained by Lieutenant Chester W. Nimitz. Nimitz had been quick to note young Ireland’s ability to solve problems and had commended him on several occasions. On Ireland’s successive sea tours on other submarines, this quality was noted by all of his commanding officers. However, as he rose in rank,

his problem-solving ability became less and less admired and more and more a nuisance to those above him. When he stepped on the toes of some of the senior navy leadership, they blackballed him, and his career quickly became somewhat less than extraordinary.

Several years later, in 1937, the review board grudgingly acknowledged him to be “a trustworthy and skilled, if somewhat eccentric and manipulative, leader of men” and they eventually gave him command of his own boat. His command tour was highly successful and his boat won several unit citations, but when his tour ended in 1939, he was far behind the rest of his academy classmates and had no chance of receiving a higher command. So the navy sent him to a quiet desk job at the War Department in Washington D.C., where Steven Ireland was expected to spend the rest of his naval career.

Those plans, along with many others, changed on December 7, 1941, when the United States entered the war. After the devastating blow to the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, the navy department quickly determined that submarines would be a major factor in holding the “front lines” in the Pacific—until replacement ships and fleets were constructed to start America’s counter offensive. Commanders with submarine experience were desperately needed. Thus, Ireland was pulled from his desk job and sent to Pearl Harbor to take command of Submarine Division Seven.

Submarine Division Seven was a newly formed division. It had been created, along with several more divisions, to accommodate the arrival of newly constructed replacement submarines that were supposed to be arriving “soon.” For his new division’s headquarters section, Ireland had been given some of Submarine Division Three’s office space until a new building could be constructed. Three offices and a small waiting room were all Division Three could afford to give up. Despite the grumblings of his headquarters staff,

Captain Ireland had gladly accepted the offices and reminded his staff that their submarine brethren at sea were serving under far worse conditions.

Now Ireland had a far more serious problem to worry about than office space. He walked over to the great chart spanning most of the adjacent wall. Sipping his coffee, he shook his head. The chart showed the current patrol zones of his deployed boats. Of the six boats in his division, three were deployed. One of those boats was missing and presumed sunk. Of the three boats in port, one was in retrofit, one was two weeks away from its next patrol, and one was . . . his current problem.

He did not like this part of the job but it was perhaps the only part of his job that mattered. He had a problem in his division. A “problem child” so to speak. A boat with an unusually high number of “hard luck” occurrences. Using his keen problem-solving ability, Ireland had done the only thing he could do. He had determined the “root cause” of the problem and eradicated it. Unfortunately, the “root cause” of any large problem on any ship was almost always the ship’s commanding officer.

There was a knock at the door and an enlisted yeoman entered the room in the customary white “cracker jack” uniform of sailors assigned to shore jobs.

“Lieutenant Commander Tremain is here to see you, sir,” the yeoman said.

“Very well. Send him in, will you please.”

Ireland took a deep breath and sat his coffee cup on the desk. He hated being the bearer of bad news. This would be the second time today.

There was another brief knock before a smiling but worn-looking officer entered the room in service dress khakis. Jack Tremain held his hat under one arm. He looked youthful and inexperienced but Ireland knew better. If one missed the insignia of a lieutenant commander proudly displayed on his

uniform, one would certainly not miss the Navy Cross above his left breast pocket. Both marked him as a seasoned veteran of naval combat. Tremain had jet-black hair swept loosely to the side. His eyes bore the crow's feet brought on by many tours of duty spent squinting into the sun. He was trim, the result of extreme physical discipline and many years of physical exertion.

Ireland smiled and met Tremain in the center of the room with a heart-felt handshake.

"Hi, Jack. How are you? How was the flight in?"

"Good, Captain. Pretty uneventful. One helluva layover in New Guinea, though."

"Two weeks, wasn't it?"

"Something like that, sir."

"And how's Judy? Been able to get through since you hit Pearl?"

"No, sir. Lines were tied up this morning. I'll try again later. She was doing well in the last letter that caught up with me."

"Good, good. Go ahead and have a seat, Jack." Ireland motioned to the chair in front of his desk while he walked to the sidebar.

"Coffee, Jack?"

"Yes, sir, thank you."

Tremain's face immediately became stone. He had been in the navy long enough to know a "butter-up" treatment when he saw it.

"You're probably wondering why I asked you to come by, Jack. I know you have a flight scheduled back to the States tonight. Leaving from Hickam, isn't it?"

Jack took the steaming cup of coffee from Ireland. He did not answer the leading question but instead changed tack.

"I just assumed you wanted to say hi to an old shipmate, Captain. I was hoping this was a social call."

"It's not. You know me better than that, Jack."

"I most certainly do, sir. So why'd you send for me? And before you begin, might I point out that I have not seen Judy for over a year now. Also, may I remind you that I've been ordered to take command of a pre-commissioned submarine fitting out in New London. That's two damn good reasons I'm determined to be on that plane tonight!"

The captain raised his hand and sat down at his desk. "Now, don't get all excited. Hear me out."

"Right, sir."

"You know Sammy Russo?"

"Yes, sir. Spent some time together in the Asiatic. Last I heard he had command of a boat out here."

"*Mackerel*. One of my boats."

Ireland paused for a moment and took several sips of coffee.

"*Mackerel* just returned from a patrol last week, Jack. She had been assigned to a position off the northeastern coast of Honshu. From the get-go the patrol was Fubar. First week on station, they sighted what they thought was a freighter coming out of Tsugara Straight. They conducted a night approach on the surface and when they got within a thousand yards, you guessed it, their 'freighter' turned out to be a *Fubuki* destroyer. What's more, before they could submerge and get the hell out of there, the *Fubuki* saw them and opened up. The bridge was peppered with twenty-five millimeter shells. One lookout, up in the shears, had his head taken clean off. Another lookout, covered with the blood of his shipmate, panicked and jumped over the side. Russo had no choice but to dive and leave the poor boy to the mercy of the sea. Of course, once they were finally down, that *Fubuki* unloaded every one of its depth charges in a four-hour attack. Close ones, too. Light bulbs blown, valves ruptured—they even had some minor flooding. Eventually, Russo was able to give the *Fubuki* the slip and the flooding was brought under control. The lost sailor was never recovered."

“Could’ve happened to anyone, sir. A tough break for Sammy, though.”

“There’s more, Jack. After this brush, Russo assessed the damage, which was relatively light, and ascertained that the patrol could continue. Two days later, they did spot a freighter, a real one this time, and conducted a textbook submerged approach. They shot four fish inside one thousand yards and got no hits. One fish must have run under the target, because they didn’t see any explosion. Two fish exploded prematurely several hundred yards in front of the bastard. The last fish never left the tube and got fouled in the shutter door mechanism.”

“Rotten luck.” Tremain heard himself say this, realized he was being pulled into the story, and determined to himself to remain detached and emotionless.

“All efforts to dislodge it from the tube failed,” Ireland continued. “So they spent the rest of the patrol wondering if the torpedo’s exploder had armed itself—knowing that any heavy sea could set off the warhead and mean instant death for them all.”

“Those damn Bureau of Ordnance idiots keep giving us faulty torpedoes!” Tremain said. He hated that his anger had compromised his promise to himself to remain uninvolved. He told himself to clam up and concentrate on catching his hop back Stateside tonight. Let Ireland fix his own problems without sucking him into them.

“There’s more than that, Jack.”

When only silence followed this remark, Ireland continued.

“Yes. After the torpedo mishap, Russo decided to break off the patrol and head for Midway Island. Before making it out of Japanese waters, they were caught on the surface and strafed by a Zero. Russo submerged the boat and got away, but another man was seriously injured before they could clear the bridge, bringing their total casualty list up

to three. After this incident, Russo decided to bring the boat back to Pearl instead of Midway as his patrol orders stated. They arrived last Friday with twenty good torpedoes on board and well over fifty percent of their fuel.”

“Was Sammy okay?”

“He’s just fine . . . physically.”

Tremain eyed him suspiciously. Then he said, “Captain, I am almost afraid to ask, but why are you telling me all this?”

Ireland rose from his desk and walked over by the window. He said nothing and clasped his hands behind his back. Finally he said, “I lost a boat this month, Jack. She’s missing and presumed sunk.”

“Sorry to hear that, sir.”

“I’ve got another boat with a shell-shocked crew. Do you know what that means?”

“A load of bad luck, sir.”

“Wrong!” Ireland said, suddenly agitated, turning away from the window to face Tremain. “It means that two out of the six submarines in this division are no longer in the war! It means my fighting force has been reduced by one third! It means that this area of Japanese water,” he gestured to the chart on the wall, “which my squadron has been assigned to contain, now has only two submarines guarding it—instead of four!”

Tremain did not know how to respond and so he chose to remain silent.

“It means that Japanese shipping is getting through our submarine net, Jack. Japanese shipping to resupply the Japanese war machine and provide fuel, weapons, ammunition, food, and supplies to the hundreds of enemy outposts throughout the Pacific—outposts that young American soldiers and marines are going to have to land on and fight and die to take. Every ship that gets through means American lives lost.

“I’ll come to the point, Jack. You and I both know that this ‘bad luck’ line is bullshit. To claim “bad luck” is to simply shirk responsibility. It is simply a way to hide problems—serious problems lurking in the unit. The ultimate responsibility in any command resides with the commander. I don’t have to tell you that.”

“No, sir.”

“Well, here it is. I need *Mackerel*. I need her back in the war—fast. I need her and her twenty-four torpedoes out there sinking enemy ships.” Ireland drew a deep breath. “In peacetime we have the time and convenience to nurture and aid a commander when he’s not cutting it, even to give him a break. Hell, if we had enough boats to cover everywhere we could even give Sammy a break now. But this is not peacetime, Jack, and we’re definitely short on boats. Russo’s been in the war since the beginning. He’s made six war patrols and done more than his part for the war effort, but he’s all used up and his command is suffering for it.”

Tremain cringed inside at what he could see coming a mile off.

“I relieved Sammy of his command earlier this morning, Jack. It was one of the hardest things I’ve ever had to do. I hated to do it, but it had to be done.” Ireland shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. “So now I come to the reason you’re here. I need someone to take Sammy’s boat and crew and get them both back into the war. I’ve considered it long and hard. And come to the conclusion you’re that man.”

“Sir, there have to be plenty of qualified PCOs in the pipeline to—”

“Sure there are, Jack. I could put a green CO in Sammy’s place and chances are that things would work out just fine—but I don’t have the time or the resources to gamble on that green CO. I need someone who’s been there. Someone who knows how to pick up a crew that’s taken a beating and make them want to go out there for some more.” Suddenly he

clapped his hands. Then he leaned forward and wagged his index finger. "Now I know you've done your share and you're looking forward to seeing your wife and getting to that new boat of yours, but I need you here."

Tremain leaned back in the chair and breathed a long sigh. He thought of Judy's beautiful red hair waiting for him on the other end of that plane tonight. He wanted so much to see her. She wanted to see him, her husband that had abandoned her to go off and fight in this terrible war. Would she understand again? Or would this be the proverbial straw that broke the back of their strained marriage? Would this be the final blow to their war-blighted domestic bliss?

"Have my orders been changed, sir?" Tremain asked carefully.

"I haven't taken that step yet, Jack. I owe you that. I'm asking you to take *Mackerel* and turn her around. Just one patrol. After that, I promise I will personally speak to Com-SubPac about placing you on the priority list for the next pre-comm boat. Whatta you say?"

Tremain sighed as he ran his fingers once through his hair. He stared at the wall. He hated to be manipulated like this, by a call to duty, the same old trick his father had used on him all his life. He thought: This decision was not really his. His career pivoted on what he did here. Be a good sailor and his rising career was assured. Be difficult and his status was fixed as static for the duration. He would go no higher.

"By the way, Jack," Ireland said, suddenly in a somber tone. "I forgot to tell you. I'm sorry about the *Seatrout*. She was a good boat."

The remark struck a nerve in Tremain. He shot a glance at Ireland, whose eyes quickly went to the floor. Tremain knew Ireland had not really forgotten to tell him. Tremain knew how he operated. He had saved that little tidbit for just the right moment.

"What'll it be, Jack?" Ireland said, all business again.

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