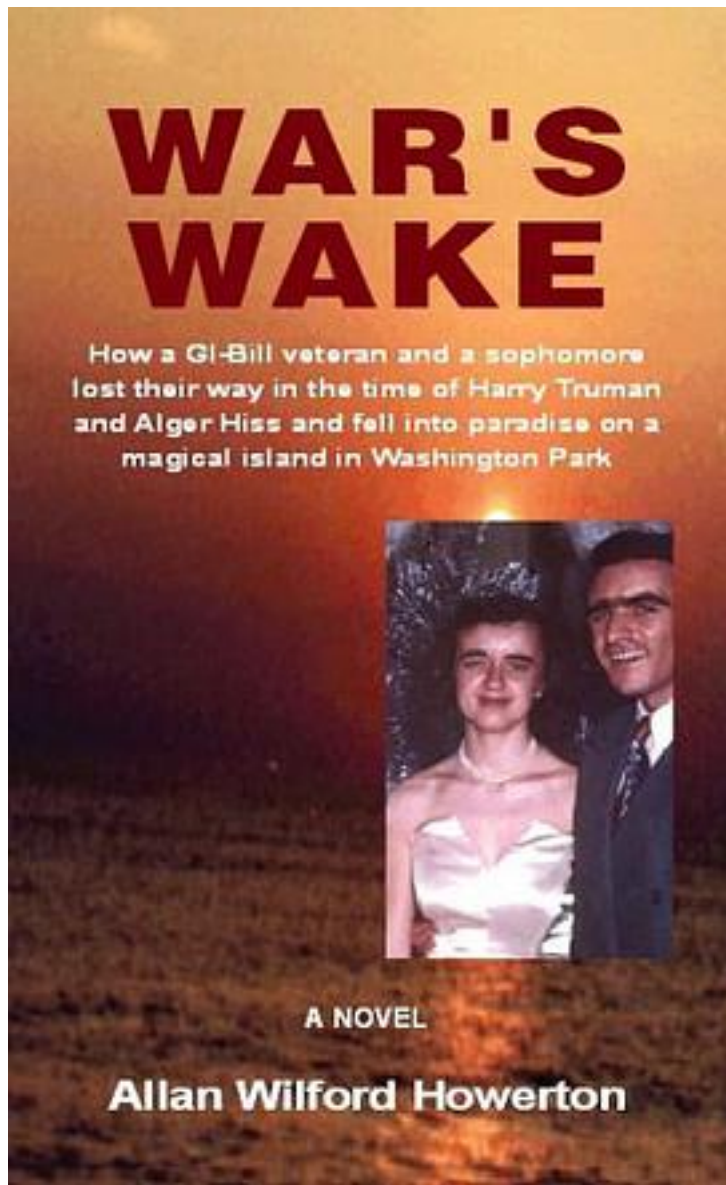


War's Wake



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出版者:Replica Books

出版时间:

装帧:Pap

isbn:9781413492101

Old photographs and ghostly remembrance empower an ethereal novel re-creating an obsessive romance in the aftermath of World War II. On a university campus bulging with ex-GIs, a traumatized combat veteran and a sophomore fell madly in love. Years later, the long-dead sophomore, invading his computer as he tries to make a novel of his life, lures him back to reprise what went wrong. Their bittersweet reassessments and besotted indulgences provide a wacky tour of Truman-era, greatest-generation morality, a sobering look at postwar USA, and a passionate time-travel love story about memory, commitment, and decisive decisions that frame our lives. Set on the campus of a western university and a magical island-a sort of Garden of Eden-in a nearby city park, War's Wake is a bittersweet story of lost love. As the tale plays out it is also a bit of subtle spoofing of compulsive romance and the manners, mores, and politics of the greatest generation's immediate postwar period. For the old infantry sergeant, reentry into civil society was not all beds of roses framed with white picket fences. Lost love, however, is not always to be lamented, particularly when transformed to a fairytale in the blurred light of a bygone time. Drawing upon imagination stimulated by a bevy of old photographs from his high school and college years before and after World War II, the author has created a seductive novel of autobiographic fiction taking the reader into fantasy worlds that never were but might have been. The photographs, appearing at the end of the narrative, give a powerful authenticity to the fiction, making it almost believable amid all of its bizarre fancies and contradictions. We accept because who among us has not envisaged lives different from those we have actually experienced? On one level the story is a wacky farce of fun and frolic set in a bygone time. Readers may, if they wish, revel in that alone. But, along with the breezy satire of Truman-era morality and the myth of 'the greatest generation,' there is a more serious side. It invites reflection upon a brief period just after World War II when world events hung in the balance and there was a chance, albeit slight, that the Cold War with the Soviet Union might have been averted. If so, much would have been different including, perhaps, the lives of Hattie and Will. At the end readers, unlike Hattie and Will, will know the secret of the failed romance. They will have had a jolly good time and perhaps shed a few tears. Somewhere along the way they may have paused for reflection on the nature of love and commitment and taken the measure of their own lives: Did it all really happen? Or was it only a fragment of a dream?

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