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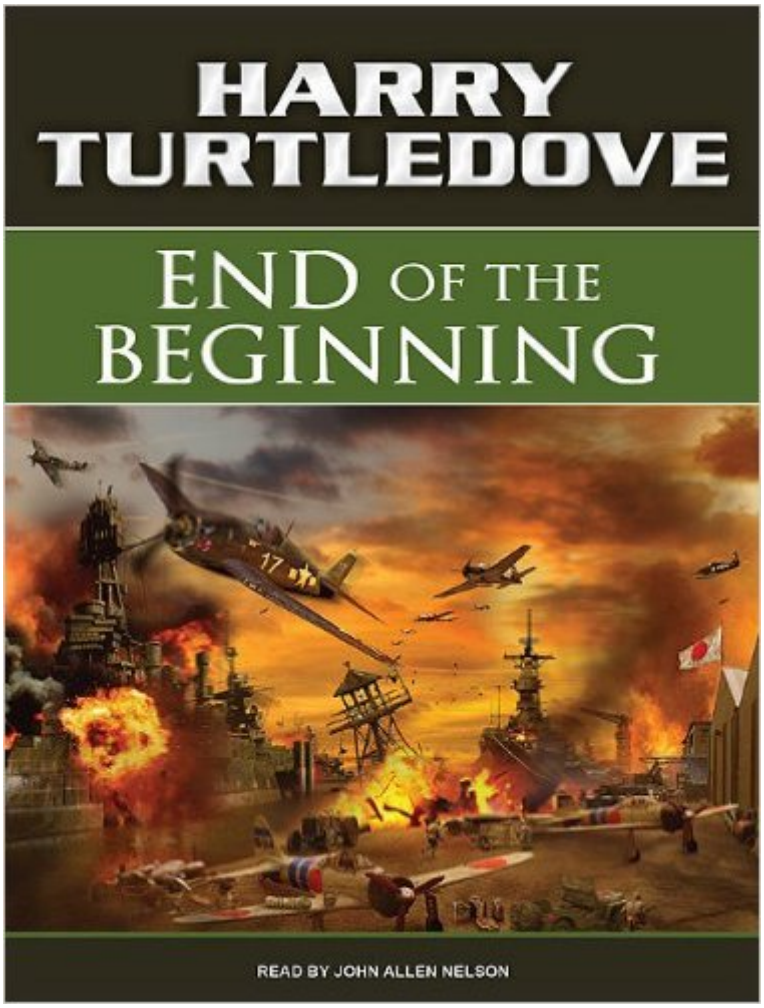
End Of The Beginning (Days Of Infamy)



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Synopsis

Six weeks ago, Imperial Japanese military forces conquered and occupied the Hawaiian Islands. A puppet king sits on Hawaii's throne, his strings controlled by the general of the invasion force. American POWs, malnourished and weak, are enslaved as hard laborers until death takes them. Civilians fare little better, struggling to survive on dwindling resources. And families of Japanese origin find their loyalties divided.Meanwhile, across the United States, from Pensacola, Florida, to San Diego, California, the military is marshaling its forces. Steel factories and fuel refineries are operating around the clock. New recruits are enlisting and undergoing rigorous training exercises-all for the opportunity to strike back and drive the enemy from American soil...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I recently reviewed Days of Infamy: A Novel of Alternate History and while I thoroughly enjoyed the book, I complained that author Harry Turtledove perhaps understated the brutality of the Japanese during World War II. End of the Beginning picks up where Days of Infamy left off, and this time, I think the true horror of living in a Japanese occupied territory during World War II is clearly illustrated.Perhaps it is just me, but I am more horrified by violent rape than I am by death. Death can be horrible, but with death, the horror ends. In End of the Beginning, some of the characters that I had learned to identify with and had grown fond of find themselves in increasingly desperate straights. Hawaii's civilians are slowly starving. U.S. prisoners of war are on a program of accelerated slow death. Their hunger is punctuated by random beatings and grueling manual

labor.Fletcher "Fletch" Armitage, a U.S. POW, is a walking skeleton and his wife Jane, who had been in the process of divorcing him when the war began, is forced to work in a Japanese "comfort house" as a sex slave. She is beaten and forced to satisfy numerous Japanese daily. The writer does an excellent job of bringing home the shame and horror of being forced to surrender your body repeatedly to other humans who do not perceive you as human but as an object to be used. This is not a book for children. I felt queasy reading certain passages, and I am perhaps one of the most jaded Americans I know.Despite or perhaps because of the discomfort I felt as the stories of characters I had come to care about unfolded and took turns for the worse, this book had me hypnotized throughout. It was better than Days of Infamy mostly because I was rooting for America to retake Hawaii the whole time.

Here is a suggestion. Try reading this book when you are hungry. It will put you into the right mood to empathise with the most common theme pervading the book. Hunger. Turtledove depicts Hawaii under Japanese occupation during World War 2. There is extensive treatment of a collage of characters, in the manner familiar from many of his books.He shows the privations endured by civilians and captured American soldiers. The experiences of the latter were far grimmer. Though keep in mind that while specific incidents are fictional, the general experiences are not. He draws upon actual events in our timeline, in places like China, Hong Kong, Philippines and Singapore, that underwent occupation. The bitter passages in the text about the POWs are no exaggeration of what actually transpired at Bataan and Burma.As you surely know, Turtledove has produced several long series of books. When I started reading this book, I thought it might be at least the second in a trilogy. But after reaching its end, I am not so sure. The last pages could be a very apt ending to this series. I am not going to reveal this. Read the book and see if you agree.What if there is to be another text? The narrative describes the European theatre as basically unchanged from our timeline. And the US focuses its effort there first. So Germany falls in May 1945. But Japan has essentially bought up to two extra years, in which it shores up its defenses, between the Home Islands and Hawaii. There is repeated reference to this in the text. So both the Japanese and the Americans take far heavier casulties, across the Pacific. Now suppose the Manhattan Project continues on the same schedule as historically.

In Days of Infamy, Harry Turtledove presented an alternate World War II where the Japanese followed the Pearl Harbor attack with an invasion. While the attack was good, the rest of the book bored me to tears. Now, Turtledove completes the series with End of the Beginning, and

surprisingly, does an effective job of it. There are still massive problems with it, but they aren't the same as his usual ones. In fact, the book is quite gripping, the scenes that are normally plodding actually have a point, and we almost care for the characters.Believe it or not, I found End of the Beginning almost riveting, and I was able to overlook the usual Turtledove foibles: the endless repetition of character details, not to mention the repetition of plot points. I was going to scream if I heard one more time how new pilot Joe Crosetti is uncomfortable letting the landing guy on the carrier be in charge of landing his plane, rather than landing himself, for example. These kinds of things are forever in Turtledove's repertoire and will never leave. However, usually these points drag the book to a halt because many of the scenes don't advance the plot much. This time, they do. Not great strides, of course, but it's clear at the end of each scene why Turtledove included them. The events that Turtledove puts his characters through are actually interesting for once, rather than just having the overarching plot get your attention (the main reason I wade through his writing).I mostly cared about the characters, watching the PoWs waste away, horrified by what Jane Armitage is put through. In fact, I cared enough that it affected me when some of them died.

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