

Book Review: The Second Sun
By P.T. Deutermann

Thanks to NetGalley and St. Martin's Press for this advance reader's copy, in exchange for an honest review. "The Second Sun" has an expected publication date of March 18, 2025.

Questions have circulated for decades over the United States' use of an atomic bomb over Japan to end World War II. Was Japan also in the process of developing a nuclear weapon? And if so, how might it have been used?

Those questions and more are examined in P.T. Deutermann's "The Second Sun," a suspenseful World War II thriller that is informative, engaging, and doesn't shy away from the moral issues facing the decision-makers back in 1945.

After a career of commanding destroyers in the Pacific, Captain Wolfe Bowen now works in Washington, DC, in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations. A phone call from the commander of the naval shipyard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire alerts Bowen that a German U-boat (the Germans had recently surrendered) has been captured and brought to port. Not unusual, perhaps, except that two of the passengers are Japanese civilians. And what they tell Bowen sets in motion a race against time to discover whether Japan has the technology to produce an atomic weapon.

Bowen teams with Captain Villem Amherst Van Rensselaer, a leader of the Manhattan Project, and Lieutenant Commander Janet Waring, a naval intelligence officer and skilled translator of Japanese, to address the question few have asked to this point in the war: Does Japan have a nuclear weapons program? All prior attention had been focused on Germany.

Awaiting the answer to that question is Harry Truman, recently ascended to the presidency after Franklin Roosevelt died. There are military issues to be considered, for sure. But Truman also wrestles with the moral dilemma of launching a nuclear attack over cities occupied

by thousands of civilians. What Bowen and Waring discover will have a significant impact on the war, and the world going forward.

Deutermann's writing is vivid. His description of a nuclear detonation is frightening. And the narrative of the devastation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is bone-chilling. Character development is thorough, with ample backstory to give them depth and dimension. It's easy to understand the catch-22 felt by career naval officers like Bowen, torn between hatred for the enemy and compassion for the thousands of innocent victims of war.

At 304 pages, "The Second Sun" is a quick and captivating read that I'm happy to highly recommend and give it a full five stars.