

WAR SERENADE

**INSPIRED
BY A TRUE STORY**

*by
Jill Wallace*



**TSOTSI
PUBLICATIONS**

WAR SERENADE

by Jill Wallace

Copyright © 2018 by Jill Wallace

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews.

Print ISBN: 978-0-9997768-0-3

Ebook ISBN: 978-0-9997768-1-0

First edition

Cover by Sky Diary Productions

Published by Tsotsi Publications

www.jillwallace.com

WORTHWHILE CONSEQUENCES

Antonio was the busiest nurse south of the equator. He was entirely focused on the mission of mopping Pietro's sweating head and gently massaging the right side of his lower belly with some stinky gunk.

Pietro sniffed and opened one eye. "What the hell you doing, Antonio?"

"One of the Zulus gave it to me. Said it would take away your bruising."

"I hope you didn't trade anything valuable for it. It smells like regular horse shit."

Antonio sighed loudly. Oh, to be an unappreciated nurse. Pietro called loudly for Enzo. The elder's head bobbed between the flaps.

"Where is it?" Pietro yelled.

"Where is what?" Enzo teased from outside the tent flap.

"Enzo gave it to me, and I lost it." Stef's voice was somber, ending with a sob.

"Enough, you two! Can't you see I am in enough pain already?" He winced for effect as they ducked through the tent flap.

Stef laughed joyfully at the absurdity of it all. The innocence of Stef's laughter struck a chord in Pietro as he realized how much he'd missed the familiar sound. Stef laughed so little these days ... the note! Good God, nothing was more important than The Note!

"Enzo, damn it!"

Enzo took mercy and opened his clasped fist. Pietro sat up too fast and cried out in pain, causing Nurse Antonio to hover over him. Pietro grabbed his prize. He read it, then closed his eyes, trying to smell her, but too many hands had touched the grubby note. He read it again.

"Tell us," said Enzo. "We're in this together, remember?"

"Please, please," Antonio begged.

"All right, you horny bastards. Stef, read it to my bridesmaids, will you?"

Stef grabbed the note and cleared his throat: "I don't know why, I don't know how, I don't know where ... but I *must* see you. Iris."

"Again. Please. Please, my friend, it's the most beautiful lyric in the universe."

After five times, Enzo yelled, "Enough! What will you do?"

"So what *will* we do?" asked Antonio, wringing his hands.

"I must make Rogers take me to town again."

Stef stirred the pot. "Is that what she meant? A monitored minute, with a counter between you and a guard hanging on your arm?"

"Then what? Damn it. Then what. How?" Pietro felt desperate.

"All that matters is 'why.'" Stef the philosopher.

"Because I have loved her since I was born. Maybe before."

Leg extended and toe pointed with a lavish wave of his arm, Enzo bowed low. "This is where I come in. With your determina-

tion, and my good looks, as well as my excellent pre-army skills as a pussy thief ...”

“Pussy thief?” Pietro was perplexed.

“Cat burglar! It was *you* who was the *real* pussy thief, Pietro!” Stef’s guileless laughter rang out again.

“Stop. This is serious now. The most serious thing in my life!” Pietro suddenly felt hope surge in a hot flush from his toes all the way to the top of his head. His head was pulsing. “You can get me out of here?”

“More important, I can get you back in so nobody will know you’ve left,” Enzo bragged.

“You’re that good?” Pietro was impressed.

“I am only as good as my students are eager to learn. In your case, you have everything to lose, so I think your passing score will be off the charts.”

“What’s in this for you?”

“The biggest challenge of my life. An adrenaline rush so big it will rid the cobwebs.”

“And if I get caught, it’s only on me.” Pietro didn’t want anyone else to be in jeopardy.

“You understand the risk?” asked Enzo solemnly.

“Death by firing squad. The price of escape,” Pietro answered.

“Death would be the merciful punishment if Tap Tap has anything to do with it.” Stef’s voice was somber. Pietro noticed but was too excited to delve into Stef’s ominous tone.

“But what if Iris is caught with me? What will happen to her?” The thought churned Pietro’s stomach in fear.

“It’s treasonous to fraternize with a prisoner. It says so in the rules that are soldered onto the metal sheet in the mess hall for the guards to see.” Antonio was happy to contribute.

“What is the South African punishment for treason?” Pietro was afraid to hear the reply.

“Death or life imprisonment, depending on the extent of the crime.” Antonio had studied.

“*Dio mio*. Mia Cara Rossa,” Pietro whispered.

Enzo sobered. “You must prepare yourself for the worst consequences. It’s the only way your precaution will be at its optimum. You must prepare Iris the same way. She must know what she is getting into. This is not a game. This is your life and hers. And the end of both, if you’re caught.”

“I understand. I understand. But, goddamn it, Enzo, no matter what the price, she’s worth it. Nothing has ever mattered more, nor will it ever again.” Pietro’s voice was quiet.

“It’s true, Enzo.” Stef was earnest. “He could have any woman in the world. He charmed them, bedded them, and didn’t give a shit for any of them. Never seen him this obsessed.”

Enzo was unsmiling. “Just focus on the hell that will be yours if you are discovered. Tell me after you have digested the worst that can happen that you are still ready.”

Pietro lost no time in responding: “I have discovered hell. I have tasted it. I have smelled it. I have had it pushed down my throat, and I have swallowed it. All for this war. This time it will be for myself. I choose hell over complacency and have no regrets. But it is not about me. I must understand that my Iris knows the consequences. Only then can I move forward.”

And for the first time, Pietro’s passion and excitement was overridden by palpable fear. What if she was too afraid? What if she wasn’t afraid enough?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jill Wallace was born and bred in South Africa but has lived half of her life in America and often feels like a Baobab Tree with roots that look like branches: same but different. She began her writing journey as a screenwriter, and *War Serenade* was a twice-optioned script before it transformed into a novel. She lives on Florida's Space Coast with her husband and two over-pampered Aussie Shepherds who rule the roost.

Get vignettes, excerpts, news on her next book and more by signing up for her newsletter at JillWallace.com.



facebook.com/jwallaceauthor



twitter.com/jwallaceauthor



instagram.com/jwallaceauthor