"I heard the news, baby, all about your disease"



Machine Gun Street, Cosmic Mother, here's another idea for you to kill, or maybe you were waiting for me to say something, like I'm really that stupid. What will it take for you to pour the street light down like holy water on a vampire bite?



tHIS IS THE KILL'eM aLL--IET gOD SORt `eM oUT ISSUE







ou're not working 'til you get the burn. You're not burning 'til you taste the ashes and know it's some kind of screwball sacrament meant only for you and the amusement of a few close friends..... What could old Murphy do to keep from talking? He was cornered and he knew it, fresh out of choices. We're not talking petty shit here, but life choices, the heavy metal, set in stone, no turning back kind of inflection points. But he spilled his guts. Boy, did he spill. Ratted out everybody he ever thought he knew. Made up stuff when he ran short of facts. Bent the truth into shapes no God-fearing Calvinist would recognize. It wasn't pretty, no-sir-ee, Bill.



Ifred Coptf was in a coma, or so people thought. He had suffered a stroke six months earlier, a day after his sixtyfourth birthday. In fact, he was completely paralyzed but quite alert. He couldn't move, couldn't make a sound, couldn't even blink his eves. the nurses had to come in and administer eye drops to keep his eyeballs from drying out. At noon, six, and midnight, an orderly with huge, hairy arms would come in and turn him to his side or onto his back to prevent bed sores from forming. Believing him unconscious, few of them ever spoke to him as they did their chores. One nurse on the day shift, a young woman named Mindy with deep brown eyes, brown hair, and a body to die for, would talk to him when she checked his tubes and monitors in the morning. She was his angel, "Good morning, Mr. Copft. How did your evening go? Michael Jordan has come out of retirement and is going to play for the Bulls again. Billy, my boyfriend, bought me the cutest puppy yesterday, a golden retriever...are you staying warm enough at night? I'll put an extra blanket on your chart so night shift won't forget..."

I would give everything I've got for the chance to say one word to you, Alfred thought. He had no family. He was an only child and his parents were gone. He'd never married—never found himself willing to endure the complexity of having another person in his life. Instead, he wed himself to his work as a stock



BUT THEN I WAS PROMISING YOU SOME SHIT I PROBABLY WON'T DELIVER SO GET OVER IT.





analyst, and that's where he was when the stroke hit—at his desk, working out earnings projections for Intel and Motorola. It had been a decent life, a bit dull, but he'd never believed that passion and adventure were in the cards for him. He was plain-looking and cursed with a nervous disposition, not the best material for heroes and heart-throbs. At this moment, he wished somebody loved him, or had been moved by passion for him enough to come and see him, talk to him a minute, even if it were only empty chatter to fill the long silences.

He had a fantasy of Mindy—that one day she would come into his solitary room and close the door behind her, saying nothing. She would reach behind her head and let down her thick chestnut hair. Her hand would move to the top button of her white nurse's uniform. She would unbutton it slowly as she looked squarely into his eyes, her deep brown eyes smiling, but



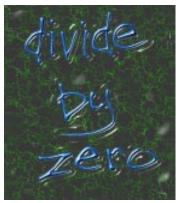
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smiling with an eerie wildness, a deep and unearthly humor and passion. Her hand would move to the next button, and then the next, each release revealing more of her white lace bra and velvety stomach. Light would fall softly on the small, perfect curves around her navel, and the uniform would fall to the floor, like a calyx shed by a most exquisite winged creature. Her hand would move to the snap between the cups of her bra, and releasing it, her flawless breasts would be revealed, the rose madder nipples erect and painfully enticing. Last to fall away would be the French lace bikini panties. She would walk to his bedside in a motion that would be fluid like a river and commanding like the sinuous ripple of a panther's stride. At this moment he would realize that his long night was over. She would reach into the broken old body and lift him from it, pulling him to those perfect breasts, lifting him away from the dark world of shadows and agony. They would fly away. He would never care again for anything, save the warm embrace which held him.



He wondered if some ancient war god had hijacked his soul on its way to a premature end. As if, perhaps, on one of those diving, twisting turns, he'd bought the farm and gone to the hell reserved for for fighter pilots. The only constant, the only unchanging thing was war. There was some poor son-

of-a-bitch in the crosshairs, or he was that poor son-of-a-bitch jinking and diving to get out of the crosshairs. That was the only thing he could count on. Life wasn't emptiness; it was target acquisition. It was a simple matter of who had the quickest twitch on the trigger, who could turn and burn an erg harder.

Even his dreams were no shelter. At night he wrestled unwieldy hunks of metal across the sky, always too slow to climb, too quick to spin, controls too heavy and guns too light. He would awaken suddenly in the darkness, and look around to see if he lay in twisted wreckage.

His thoughts usually found their way back to May 8, 1942 and the emerald green water of the Coral Sea. Eight hopeless Wildcats against

half the planes of the Imperial Japanese Navy. They say the Japanese invented the Kamikaze suicide pilot, but they're wrong. They learned it from us. The IJN, when given a choice, would always attack with overwhelming force. We'd send up eight planes to stop seventy five.

From ten thousand feet it could have been a flock of birds gliding along just above the waves, but, of course, it wasn't. It was a squadron of Kate torpedo bombers and their Zero escorts, nine Kates and a half dozen Zeroes racing toward the Lexington. He broke radio silence, "This is Nora leader. We've got a flight of Kates and escorts, twenty miles northeast,

heading 193 degrees, coming your way." He looked back over his shoulder at his wingman. "Buzzy, I'll try to scatter the Zekes. See what you

can do with the Kates."

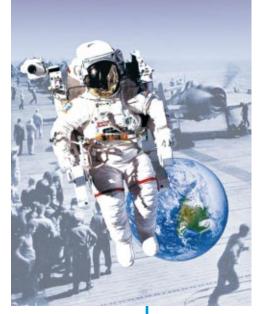
"Roger," Buzzy's radio voice crackled in his headset. "Bryan, you know these odds aren't so great."

"Yeah, 15 to 2. The poor bastards don't stand a chance."

He cut back the throttle and nosed the Wildcat over into a dive. The plane seemed to just hang in the air, unwilling to proceed into the punishing confrontation which waited eight thousand feet below. Ever so slowly the birds in the waves began to grow larger, the red circles on their wings becoming more distinct. So far the Japanese pilots hadn't noticed the angels of death screaming down from the sky behind them. The Zeroes were formed up in two chevrons of three planes each. Bryan banked to the right and then rolled left to give him a diagonal path across two formations, hoping to damage as many as possible with his initial burst because he knew full well that it might be his only shot.

> As he reached killing range, about a thousand feet above the enemy planes he opened up with all six of his .50 caliber guns. He badly crippled two right off. As he leveled out from the dive he applied throttle still raking the formation with gunfire. Zero pilots liked to climb when faced with American planes because their climb rate was twice that of the Wildcat, and this time was no exception. Bryan had the

momentum of his dive with him and he yanked the stick back, climbed and snap-rolled at the top



of the loop. Although he thought he was evading, the maneuver brought him bore to bore with another Zero and he fired. It was a lucky shot and both of the Zero's wing tanks erupted in flames. He was so close that he could see the Japanese pilot's face in the instant before the plane disintegrated. It was an moment of horror which joined him to that man forever. He dived to avoid the fireball, bringing the formation of Kates into his gunsight. He fired again with all six guns. Two began to burn, one spun out of control, but a half dozen more with their rear guns blazing, continued on toward their target. Time slowed to a crawl as his mind was forced to a decision. Nothing stood between the remaining Kates and the Lexington, and he might be able to get them. But he knew that three more Zeros were somewhere above and behind him. Pursuit of the Kates was a certain shoot-down whereas he stood a chance of surviving if he broke and ran. The Zeroes had orders to stay with the Kates so they might not pursue. He gave the shuddering Wildcat full throttle and turned it toward open sea. "Let's head for the hills, amigo," he radioed to Buzzy.

"I'm on your six and I'm not alone. Break right, Hotshot." Bryan slammed the stick over as bullets ripped into his wing and fuselage. Somewhere behind him, another Zero dissolved into fire. He made a broad turn to dust off anything else that might be following them, but the two remaining Zeroes had broken off and returned to the Kates. Buzzy came over the radio again, "What are we gonna do? We can't let the rest of them through."



Then they heard Paul Ramsey on the radio reporting a large formation of dive bombers fourteen miles from the carrier.

"Let's get some altitude." Climb. Climb, damn you. Climbing was something the Wildcat didn't do very well, barely 1800 feet in a minute. This was when he cursed the Navy and its obsession with building planes like tanks. So many guys had died already because their planes couldn't turn and climb with the Zeroes. Then something strange happened, something he never told anyone about. The cockpit began to shimmer, and the instruments went out of focus. When his vision cleared he looked at an array of instruments that were straight out of a Flash Gordon movie. Hundreds of little lights and numbers

and glass windows written with light. The struts of the canopy were gone. Only a clear glass bubble enclosed him. The whole front of the airplane was gone except for a thin gray needle, and he was moving at a tremendous rate of speed. He was on top of the carriers in a heartbeat. He got a Val in his sights and squeezed the trigger. The thing melted in a cloud of confetti. He yanked back hard on the stick for another pass and promptly passed out in the sickened blackness of too many g's. When he came to, his shot-up Wildcat was spinning crazily toward the sea. He pushed the stick down and lowered his gear, wrestling the plane into a dive. Still the plane spun. He gave it some throttle and resisted the urge to push the stick toward the



spin. Slowly it began to respond, and he pulled out of the dive barely two hundred feet above the water.

Bryan got two more Vals that day before fuel and ammunition ran out. It wasn't enough to save the Lexington, and he would spend endless hours wondering if one of the Kates that got by him had launched the fish that took her down. Buzzy got shot down between the Lexington and the Yorktown and watched the rest of the battle from his little yellow life raft, jumping up and down and cheering, oblivious to all the wild ordnance flying around.



The landing that day on the Lexington was the worst one he ever faced. The ship was shot all to hell. The smoke stack was gone. Medical corpsmen were all over the deck picking up the wounded. The ship was listing six degrees so Travis had to watch the gimbal to keep the plane level coming in. He was a little slow in getting his landing gear down, and a couple of nervous antiaircraft gunners opened up on him as he was making his approach. Tracers crossed the air in front of him but the landing control officer waved him on in and the guns were quickly silenced. For a moment he thought this was a payback for letting the Japanese planes chew them up. He knew he was going to get a serious chewing-out from Ducky Duckworth when he got in. The sense of failure was intense, as if all of those casualties and all of those mortal wounds were his fault. This was the feeling that he took with him. It stuck to him like a scar. If had had just fought a little harder, a little braver, shot a little better, and been more ready to die then all of those wounds to the proud old Lexington and her crew could have been avoided. This was irrational. The fact that any of them survived to fight another day was a miracle in itself, and he would later be decorated for distinguished service, but the

medals and the praise never took away the doubt.

The landing was tricky. His right aileron was shot up and sticky making fine attitude ajustments difficult, and the flight deck was at a crazy angle, something they'd never practiced in flight school. As he cut back throttle and extended flaps, he could see the deck was ragged and shot-up, adding the possibility of a blow-out on landing. A little flash of panic moved through him because he was going to bring the plane in against intuition. Training took over and he fixed his eyes on the landing officer, fighting the plane in the directions waved by the yellow paddles in the LSO's hands. At the last second, about a foot off the deck, he dropped the left wing, and both wheels touch down at about the same time. Then came the Yankhe'd caught the wire—and his body was thrown forward against the straps. The plane rocked forward and then stopped

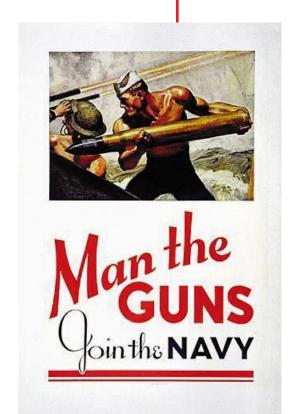
Boomer, the crew captain, hopped up on the right wing and yelled, "Is she air worthy?"

"Right wing's shot up but aside from that I think she's ok," Bryan yelled back.

"We're going to fuel you up and send you over to Yorktown. We've got problems here."

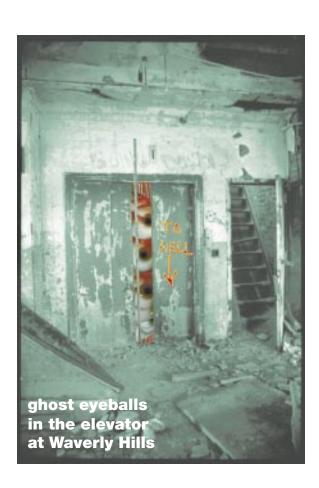
"What do you mean?"

"She's on fire." Boomer pointed to the smoke rising around the bow of the ship, "The Japs got a thousand-pounder into the forward battery." The crew swarmed around the plane grabbing the trailing edges of the wings and tail and pushed it over to the elevator. Thirty minutes later he was airborne again, knowing that his entire collection of Dinah Shore records would soon be at the bottom of the ocean.

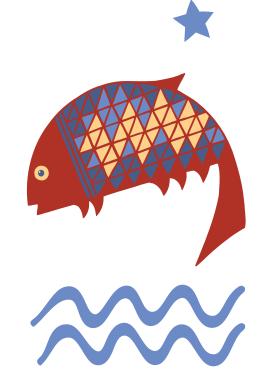




ot that I would be asking anything of you, because I'm not. I want to be clear about that. I wouldn't want to place any demands on you or anything as unkooL as that. Please don't feel that I am putting any pressure on you or expecting you to live up to even the most nominal standards of human existence. I wouldn't dream of it. That might stress you or something, make your carefully polished skin break a sweat and create a conflict with your sacred self-fulfillment. No, I'm not expecting you to do a damned thing.



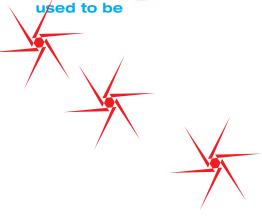


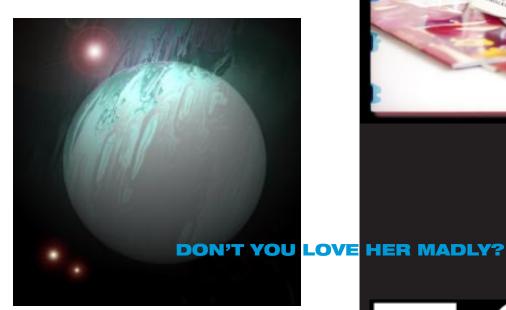




GRAPHIC DESIGN
PREPRESS
PRINTING
PHOTOGRAPHY
WEB PAGES

steel of my hand fires hot cool mechanized death release-the gates of hell are there leaping missiles drill holes of pain black oblivion revenge fear survival my right to live and yours to die when all the universe comes down to the point of a bullet, twitch of a finger darkness death freedom and nothing all collapsing in where a person





FEBRUARY was MY fIRST mAJOr klue THAT sOMEtHING WAS DE**e**PLY*fUCKeDuP* ABout THe uNIVERSE

mean like why in the hell does February have 28 or 29 days? If the universe were running right, it would have 30 or so.



