

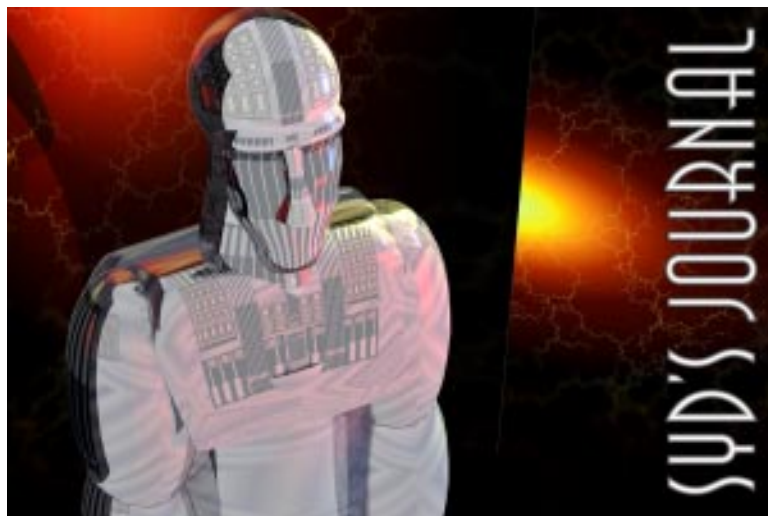
“I heard the news, baby, all about your disease”



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



You'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.



slander

Alfred Copft was in a coma, or so people thought. He had suffered a stroke six months earlier, a day after his sixty-fourth birthday. In fact, he was completely paralyzed but quite alert. He couldn't move, couldn't make a sound, couldn't even blink his eyes. 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.**



strange animals



abstraction

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



SYD'S JOURNAL

is published by
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Louisville, KY 40205
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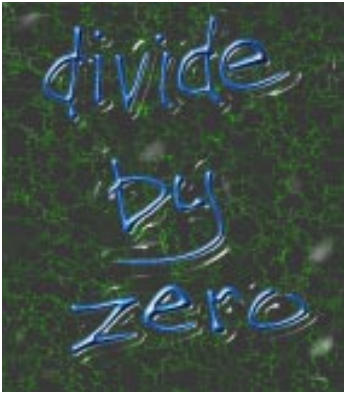
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fire



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



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 anti-aircraft 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 he had just fought a little harder, a little braver, shot a little better, and been more ready to die than 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 adjustments 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 touched down at about the same time. Then came the Yank—he'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.

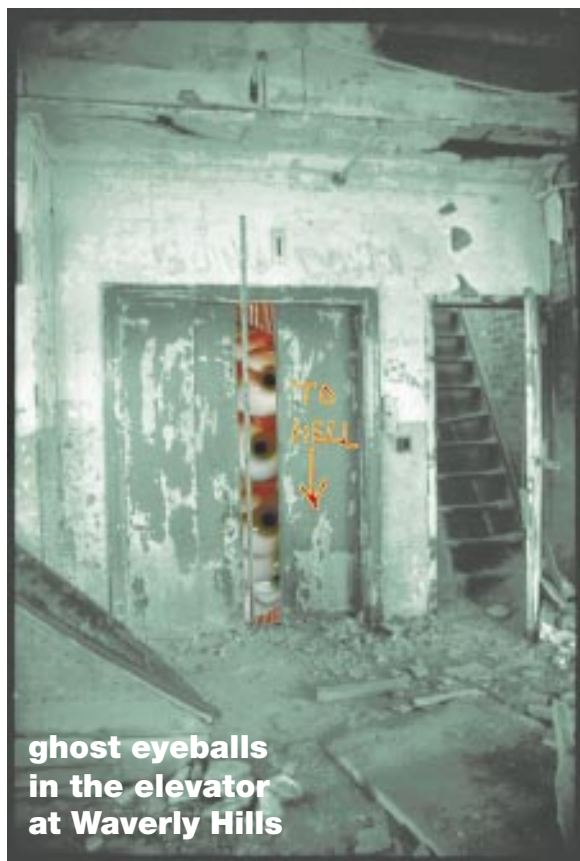
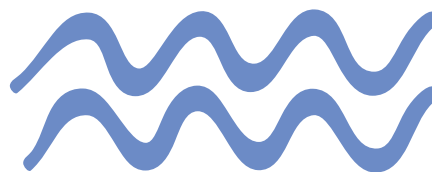
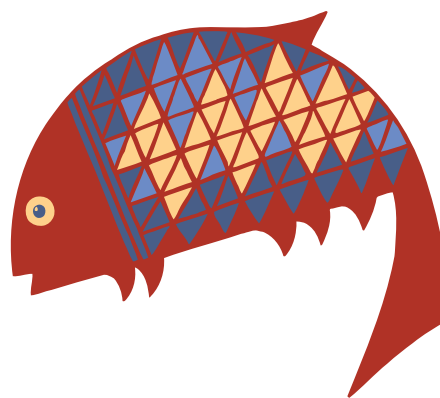


Man the
GUNS
Join the **NAVY**



protoplasm

Not 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.



**ghost eyeballs
in the elevator
at Waverly Hills**

WORDWORKS

<http://www.win.net/~sydwdn/wordworks/wordworks.htm>

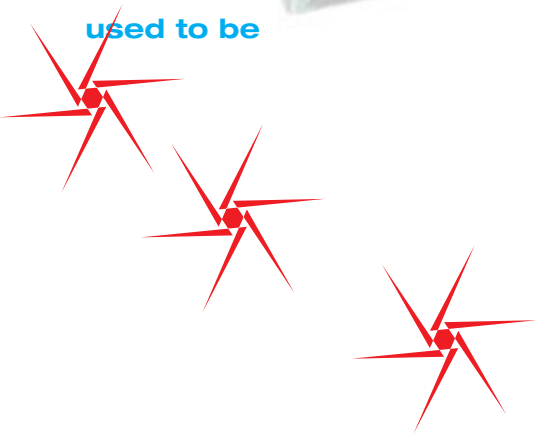
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steel of my hand fires
hot cool mechanized death
release—the gates of hell
are there leaping missiles drill
holes of pain black oblivion
revenge fear survival
my right to live and yours to die
when all the universe comes down
to the point of a bullet,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



DON'T YOU LOVE HER MADLY?

FEBRUARY was MY
FIRST MAJOR klue
THAT SOMETHING
WAS DEEPLY *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.



SVD'S JOURNAL

