

**[REDACTED]: THE MAGNIFICANT! /my big dog/**

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Double-U-Double-U-Two and as Hitler's crumbling axis is pounded to its knees the [REDACTED]-[REDACTED]-[REDACTED]th squadron of RAAF Beaufort bombers is deployed nor-by-nor-east from Egypt to Italy to destroy Mussolini's industrial manufacturing powerhouses and decimate their labor pools.

The navigator/radio operator/middle turret gunner logs wind speeds and conditions and dead reckonings and tuned into Div. Int's operational frequency he jots quickly the dit-dit-dah-dit dit-dit dah's and check-check and triple check he calls the co-pilot on the intercom.

Cchhhhhhhhhzzzzzzzzz.

"You there [REDACTED] over?"

Cchhhhhhhhhzzzzzzzzz.

"Twenty-four-Seven [REDACTED] over"

Cchhhhhhhhhzzzzzzzzz.

"Div-Intel has us at blue skies and little to none resistance over"

Cchhhhhhhhhzzzzzzzzz.

"Roger that [REDACTED]. Nothing but blue skies. Over"

Such babes in the woods coming in late at the end of it all jolly-jolly hockey sticks after a training run that took them, these late comers to atrocity, all spiffy in their dress blues from Australia through Canada and England [well after the blitz] and Egypt on the grand tour . I have his wartime photo album of camel hide with embossments of pyramids and the jug-eared smiling snaps of the aesthete himself, one leg in a sarcophagus, sitting up floating in the dead sea reading the armed forces times and the before and after bombing raid shots where entire neighborhoods existed then ceased to be.

He said when I asked him; "I never fired a shot in anger" and welled with tears when asked if he ever thought of the neighborhoods destroyed.

Cchhhhhhhhhzzzzzzzzz.

"You there [REDACTED] over?"

Cchhhhhhhhhzzzzzzzzz.

"Roger [REDACTED] over."

Cchhhhhhhhhzzzzzzzzz.

"Got an ETA on the target zone over?"

Cchhhhhhhzzzzzzzz.

“Zero four hundred hours over.”

Cchhhhhhhzzzzzzzz.

“Any news from Div. Intel. over?”

But under the panoply of [G]ods heavens and lost in wonderment at his handiwork █ has lost track of the steady stream of dit-dit dahs echoing in his head set and struggles to sort the dots from the dashes to make sense of the codex in front of him and reciting under his breath a litany in Morse he is confronted with the awe filled responsibility of fallibility.

Cchhhhhhhzzzzzzzz.

“Standby █ over.”

[dit dit dah dah dit dit dit dah?]

[dah dah dah dit dit dah?]

[‘In the stars his handiwork I see’?]

Cchhhhhhhzzzzzzzz.

“No change █ over?”

Cchhhhhhhzzzzzzzz.

“Say again repeat say again █ you are very hard to read over.”

Cchhhhhhhzzzzzzzz.

“No change repeat no change over.”

My mum told me once, in one of those all too infrequent Friday night phone calls where the wear and tear of my work-a-day world have been salved with libations and medications and herbal remedies and we are grown up friends who chat, that it was this raid that was the start of the fear and inability to commit that marred █’s life. She told me that █’s best friend █ had told her that whilst encountering heavy ground resistance on a bombing mission near the end of the second world war that █ had ceased to function and that he had to flog him back to his post and his senses.

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My big dog.

My big dog, pound puppy, once the toughest dog on our street and well worthy of the dangerous dog collar he never got for biting posties and near killing other dogs, is fucked. Old age and blindness and a hardening of the spine have taken their toll and he falls down when he walks and shits everywhere and

even the little dog that we got him as a fuck toy to stop him chewing through cyclone fences pays him no never-mind and eats his food and chews his ears [where once he held her whole head in his mouth like ‘anytime bitch, anytime I want to’; her ear still ragged and tagged from back in the day].

He still lumbers round the yard barking when she does but he falls down coming back up the stairs and needs help and looks at me, though he smells me more now than sees, and I read in his eyes pain and humiliation.

I argue with my partner about his condition and worry that we are keeping him more out of our needs than his. She’s only had one pet ever, a cat that lived for 18 years, where-as we had a constant menagerie and every single house we lived in had a plants and trees named for favorite pets and sunken graves for those less loved.

Will she keep me too, just like that when I’m old and fucked, pumped up on steroids and pain killers to salve her needs or will she let me go to face my [G]god. Can I have him back just for one day Lord to run with me again, wild and savage, before I set him free and name his tree?

Manna big dog Manna!

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“Hell is to be without [G]god.”

I asked him once with all the arrogance and ignorance and fleeting beauty of youth all the hard questions. I asked where is heaven, what is [G]god, how is salvation and when is hell?

I remember he paused as if to give it thought then answered simply; “If you think that I believe in the same Calvinistic hell of fire and brimstone that your mother so gleefully condemns all that don’t agree with her to; I don’t.”

He said,

“Hell is to be without [G]god.”

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Succubus.

All quiet on the ward with the dementia patients tucked in hard with sedatives and restraints; hard of hearing and blind in the dark they barely notice the shadowy figure amongst them, this succubus, this incubus, this shade of pain and rage and tears, as it picks its’ way amongst them searching their faces for the familiar. A withered crone opens her eyes in fright and says out loud, ‘We are pitiful old things in here’.

Something akin to a grin passes through the shifting faces in the smoke until she is wrenched back to the dreamless dark of enforced sleep.

Shadow hands in the dark.

A firmly held pillow.

Breathing ragged then still.

This shade transformed to pure light.

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Double-U-Double-U-Two.

The [REDACTED]-[REDACTED]-[REDACTED]th squadron drops down out of nothing but blue skies into a maelstrom of [un?]expected ground fire and consumed in cloudbursts of smoke and ack-ack fire they take heavy casualties with planes exploding and falling from the skies screaming and screeching like molten plastic. Fuselages are peppered with shrapnel and bodies melted in flame as this milk run, this home in time for tea for two transubstantiates all Armageddon and the tortures of Shiloh are casually inflicted. Pilots push the button and drop loads of high explosives and incendiaries with scant regard as they take evasive actions and scream down the intercoms to their navigators;

Cchhhhhhhhzzzzzzzzz.

*'GET US OUT OF HERE FOR CHRIST SAKE GET US THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!!!'*

But there is no response as the navigator cowers on his knees, keening and praying, awash in the elemental and excremental as he cries; 'ABBA, ABBA [why hast thou forsaken me?]' over and over until the co-pilot fearing the loss of the navigator comes aft to take his post and finding the navigator transported in a Boschian Damascus moment ,awash in piss and shit and tears, and pummels him viciously back to his post and his senses.

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Friday night lights.

"[REDACTED] ward?"

Friday night lights and with the managing director away I am unaccompanied by an adult and banging one on; the wear and tear of my work-a-day world have been salved with libations and medications and herbal remedies!

I have staved off confronting the issue of him, though periodically informed of his decline, till he too did time, again, on the ward.

Old age and blindness and a hardening of the spine have taken their toll and he falls down when he walks and shits everywhere and the last thing he remembers is working for the bank of New South Wales as a clerk before the war; this man of peace with sometimes 3 weddings, 2 christenings and 6 funerals a week [attending to all-comers spiritual needs]. I thought that if he had lost his faith then he was literally in hell.

I libated and medicated and remedied harder.

"May I speak with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] please?".

"Can I enquire whose calling?"

"His son".

“Hold please”.

I am left on hold in the dead air on the dementia ward where the keening and caterwauling is muzak and I wait, hearing coaxing, until;

“Hello? Who is this?”

“Don’t you know my voice?”

“Well I would if you rang more often!”

Never scared to score; tennis whites.

“How are the bitches\* treating you?” [\*I had heard this through my sister: that he railed against them]

Slyly again; “Quo Vadis?”

“I just want to know one thing █.”

Tears.

“Do you still have your faith; does [G]od still love you?”

This man of watch the ball and Sunday afternoon quietly snuck Cornettos and radios tuned on Saturday’s job lists to football:

“How could you ever have doubted it!”

*<Then sings my soul; my savior unto to thee>*

*How great thou art*

*How great thou art*

*{Dedicated to the very reverend man who raised me.}*

**WJP Newnham** has had stories published the seminal Melbourne literary magazines ‘Nocturnal Submissions’ and ‘Overland’ and in ‘Full of Crow’ and ‘Gapped Tooth Madness’ magazines out of California making him an internationally published author. Ben John Smith is a big fan and has published 4 stories on his ‘Lits and Tits’ website ‘[Horror Sleaze Trash](#)’. Meanjin has accepted one of his stories for publication in its March 2014 edition. He lives in Brisbane with his partner and 2 blue-heelers.

