

*The  
Lady  
Killer*

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**As the bomber hit the surface of the ocean a shock of water smashed into the cockpit and wings. The right wing screamed a metal on metal scream, breaking off entirely and sinking slowly into the briny depths. The left one bent backwards awkwardly with a terrible groaning noise. The creak and strain of the planes breaking superstructure was deafening. Water pouring into the Havoc Bomber through its bullet holes and shrapnel tears began to force the plane deeper and deeper into the bay. Terrified screams from the gunner on board could be heard over everything. Steam from the hot engine parts hissed and fizzed as the electrical wiring snapped and sparked in the salt water that was fast becoming our coffin. I could see my co-pilot Jake Johnsen was shot up pretty bad, bullets holes in his chest and shoulder were leaking blood down his chest, dripping into the rising water. I didn't know if he was going to make and I was scared for him, hell, I was scared for myself. Jake and I had been pretty close since flight school and the thought of losing him made me sick and my head swim.**

**The plane seemed to be sinking faster. The shelling from the on shore batteries had been intense. As the lead plane we were caught in a seeming meat grinder, the rest of the flight had veered to the port and starboard as they saw the firestorm we were in and mostly avoided what had happened to us. There was nothing in our briefing that indicated that the guns were there, they must not have known.**

**I punched my seat belt release, nothing happened. One of the shell fragments had bit into my five point buckle and fused it shut. I smashed the buckle with my hand over and over again screaming at it. I couldn't get me or it loose. I swore at the plane and its makers as the water continued to rise. Suddenly I felt a searing pain in my calf. I looked down only to see blood pouring out of the gaping hole turning the already pink water crimson around my leg.**

**"I can't get out, I can't get out... Goddammit it, I can't get out!" I was going down and I couldn't do a damn thing about it. My thoughts fled back to Sharon and I wanted to call out for her.**

**I screamed aloud and nearly alone in the olive drab cockpit of the A-20, "You**

**bastard let me go!" The rising water hit my wounded leg like a jackhammer. My head throbbed dizzily, my vision faded in and out...**

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**"Jake... Jake... Ja...ke," I gasped calling out to my unconscious friend.**

**The sun was hot on the beach & I could smell the coconut palms and hear their long fronds swishing in the wind. The gentle surf crawled up on the shore then retreated hissing over the sand and minute gravel. I could feel the hot sand under my back and arms.**

**"Jake... Michael... Jake... Michael...wake up you two!" I could hear a woman's voice but couldn't make it out. I opened my eyes & everything was black. I couldn't see what was wrong. Had I drown? Was I dead? Suddenly the bright light on the sun stunned my eyes. Flinching-I blinked them shut again.**

**"Are you flyboys going to sleep all day?" I re-opened my eyes squinting. I could just make out the figure of Sharon holding my straw hat in her hand. She dropped the hat back on me making it land half on my chin and half on my chest. Jake was resting on his elbows in the sand, blinking his big blue eyes at the brightness of the sun.**

**"Lunch is almost ready. Which of two is going to cook the burgers?" Sharon asked smirking at both of us. "Huh?" she said kicking a little sand at Jake. He was up chasing her down the beach almost before she could get away. Sharon shrieked as Jake eventually caught her just past the picnic table. They both tripped and fell into the sand laughing. I got up slowly and started towards the food.**

**"Come on you guys," I said beginning to put the patties on the barbecue. Sharon rolled Jake off of her and got up brushing the sand off of her curvaceous body. She slapped Jake's hand away as he tried to help. Sharon was no doubt one of the most intelligent & beautiful women Jake had ever been out with. She was witty and bright. Her dark auburn hair shone in the afternoon sun and her green eyes danced with laughter and merriment. I was already in love with her and I'd only known her the few months Jake had been with her. I felt her arms around me giving me a little kiss on the cheek and ear.**

**"Well big guy, how's your meat doing?" she asked playfully, watching me flip the burgers over.**

**"If you're not good I'll tell you just how it's doing!" The twinkle in her eye made me more in love with her than I thought I could ever be with anyone. But she was Jake's girlfriend and I had a hard time breaking the trust we had between us.**

**"Hey you two stop that and fix lunch!" Sharon threw a bun at Jake mischievously.**

**"You'll get your lunch when we're done. By the way you can help you know. After all, your arms not exactly broken," she said scolding him. Reluctantly he began to help, fetching plates from the picnic basket handing them to her. She spread the buns out on the plates putting lettuce mustard and mayonnaise on them.**

**Sharon was one of those special girls that you meet once in a lifetime. We first thought she was just a groupie for the pilots, but found out later she worked for an aircraft design company. She actually spent most of her time around bomber aircraft and their crews. The Douglas Aircraft Company sure knew what they were doing when they hired her. She was an expert in so many ways in the design and function of all the Douglas planes that it was amazing. Sometimes she made me feel like just a plane jockey.**

**"Jake, get me a beer will you this is going to take a little while." Jake opened the beer with the small can opener he always had hanging around his neck with his dog tags. He handed me the cold brew. It was only a matter of time before Jake and I got shipped out and we knew it. It had been a long tough haul through the army's flight school and we were glad it was over. Bomber school had left us knowing that no matter where we would be sent it would be somewhere in the thick of things.**

**"Come on Michael, we're hungry, give us some of those burgers will you?" Jake said.**

**"They won't be done for at least a few minutes, you don't want to eat them raw do you?" I responded. Sharon watched me often, particularly when I drifted off in deep thought, like I had just done.**

**"Then I'm off for a pit stop." Jake trudged off through the sand towards the**

head. Sharon looked at me with those incredible green eyes of hers.

She smiled and asked me, "Where do you go when you drift off like that?"

I looked at her longingly. My voice softened as I spoke, "I don't know if I can answer that right now, not the way things are." She got up from the picnic bench where she had been sitting next to Jake. Walking up so close beside me that I could feel the heat of her body next to mine as she looked into my eyes and rested her hand on my lower back.

"Maybe I'll get you alone sometime and ask you again," she said warmly.

I turned from the barbeque looking deeply into her eyes, "There are a lot of things I would like to tell you, like that I'm in lo..."

"Well are they done yet?" yelled Jake loudly as he came back up the sandy path towards the barbecue.

"They are now!" I replied turning back to the grill. I glanced back at Sharon who had removed her hand from me and smiled. Inside my heart ached with longing. Fighting back my emotions, I piled the hamburgers on the buns. We all sat down at the picnic table, Jake beside Sharon and me facing them both on the other side of the table. I drained the last of my beer in my can tossing it in the trash barrel some ten feet away.

I smiled at Jake, "Did I tell that you're in charge of the garbage?"

Jake protested, "Why am I always in charge of the garbage?"

"Because I outrank you Bub and more importantly you're so eminently qualified for the job." Sharon laughed at the joke and the funny expression on Jake's face. He knew that rank didn't matter between us, it never had and it never would.

We were all laughing together.....

.....when the jarring of the sinking plane and the throbbing burning pain in my leg awakened me.

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**Oohhhh--I groaned in pain. God, if I can't get out I'll never see her again to tell**

her-the ache in my heart for her only compounded my problems.

**'Whoa-Mikey, you ain't got the time now to worry about her now,' I said to myself. The cool water in the cockpit was to my knees but I was sweating. Jakes face was pale and I knew him close to death but there was nothing I could do.**

**"Come on Mike think!" The ache in my leg pulled on me, making me sick and nauseous as I grappled with the seat belt. Two of the shoulder straps gave way under my continuing assault. My head swam as I pulled and twisted on those that were left. My head swam as I pulled and yanked the remaining ones. Was it coming loose? The fabric belt pulled and tore on the metal grommets.**

**"No...!" I screamed. "No...ooo...oo...o!" my head swam back into the darkness.**

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**The bar was dark and cool as I rotated the tall cold drink in front of me. Cold drips of water flowed down the glass onto the wooden table making a wet ring around the bottom. The soft strains of Moonlight Serenade floated on the hot tropic air like wisps of clouds through the palms. Jake was on the dance floor with Gloria. Gloria was one of those blond bombshells that you could find in most tropic bars. She had contributed more time to servicemen on her back than any girl I knew of. Jake was insatiable when it came to women. Like a cat dragging a mouse into the house, he seemed to bring women to anywhere the Army let him call home. My thoughts still drifted back to Sharon and her beautiful smiling face. I could still smell her perfume and feel her warmth deep down permeating my soul. I knew she wasn't mine to have because of Jake. I hated him for doing to her what he did to the rest of the women in his life. She was special and wasn't one of his normal floozies.**

**Jake and Gloria returned to the table searching for their lost drinks. Both of them plopped down in their respective chairs playing little lovers games. Gloria kept**

her hand rubbing up and down Jake's leg giggling at him over her drink, while he played with the strap on her dress.

"I'm going for some smokes, anybody want anything?" Jake asked as he pushed his chair back and stood up.

"Just you baby," Gloria replied licking her thickly rouged lips.

"Go dance with Mike will you, and give me a breather!" he said in a playful tone. With that he pulled Gloria out of her chair flinging her into my lap. "Looks like you two were made for one another." Jake laughed as he stumbled across the floor to the cigarette counter.

"Come on honey, let's dance," Gloria insisted. I got up helping her to the dance floor. She smelled of gin and cheap perfume. Her dress was some older satin affair which barely held in her enormous tits. Dancing with her was like driving a bus around New York City during rush hour.

"So you're the Captain huh?" she asked in a boozy tone.

"Yep," I replied.

"Don't talk much do you baby?"

"Nope, not much."

"Ooooo... look at the pretty bars on your uniform. Right next to those big shoulders." She ran her hand down my arm and around to my back pulling me into her. I glanced around the room for Jake. He was hovering around the bar talking to some cute brunette. It was just like Jake, too many women was one short of enough for him.

"Gloria, who is that pretty girl that Jake is with?" Perking up, she stopped dancing and began to look around. I pointed to the bar.

"Why that bitch, he's mine!" Gloria stomped over to the bar grabbing Jake's arm. As I turned my back I could hear a heated discussion beginning. I could also hear the tropical rain beginning to play its little staccato notes on the tin roof above. Rain droplets leaked through the roof in several locations hitting the floor inside making little puddles around the scattered tables. The staff quickly placed buckets under the most predominant of them. I walked towards the front door looking back at Jake laughing. He threw his hands up in the air in a manner of mock frustration. I saluted good by

and walked out of the bar and into the wet rain.

"Wet rain... wet... wet... water... My God I'm still here... this is a damn nightmare!"

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The remaining belts pulled at my body, weighting me down. The cold water covering my thighs, made me shiver almost uncontrollably. As the plane filled with water the body of the bomber creaked and groaned in its own misery. I could feel the chop of the waves hitting the olive drab sides of the Havoc. A thought burst into my head, my pocket knife.

"*My pocket knife!*" I yelled in joy. "Where is it, *dammit*, Where did I put it?" My hands began to search my pockets for it. I felt a lump in my pocket under my flight pant's and belt.

"*Dammit...God Dammit!*" My cold fingers worked frantically ripping at the flight suit. I swore every blaspheme I could remember and probably remembered a few more. Nothing was going right nothing...I felt my head beginning to swim as the blood drained down my pant leg from my wound. The lump in my pocket dissolved and crumbled away as the role of mints melted into the seawater around my waist. Sweat rolled off of my forehead dripping into the sea water now covering the lower half of my body. There had to be a way to get out.....

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Blackness filled the cockpit. I could hear the hum of the two seventeen hundred horsepower Wright engines. My Havoc Attack Bomber was the fastest of the group, at three hundred and fifty miles per hour she could get out of trouble as fast as she could get into it. The cockpit lights glowed with a dull yellow orange in the dark, making it

look almost eerie. I didn't need any light to know just where everything was though. I was more at home in the Lady Killer than I was back home, in my Chevy.

"Want some more coffee skipper?" Jake asked.

"That's affirmative," I replied. "How about the gunner? It's cold enough-I'm sure he'll want some too." Jake un-strapped his belts and pouring me a cup, then went aft to give the gunner a cup of Joe. I wondered what Sharon was doing just now. Pulling back my sleeve I looked at my watch it was 0318 hours so that should make it about 0648 or 0700 hours in Honolulu. I suppose she would just be getting up. I wonder if she thought about me at all and what she would do with the letter I had written to her? I should have told her before I left.

"Ok, he's all set sir." I could see the two other Havocs along side of us. Their sparking engines giving them away in the early morning blackness. Trying hard to block her from my mind I thought about the plane and our mission.

*'Two more and baby makes three!'* I said to myself mocking the lyrics of an old tune. The crew had affectionately named the bomber, "Lady Killer". I think Jake had bribed the crew with several bottles of Four Roses to vote his way when we selected the name.

"Yes sir, she was a lady killer alright," she had destroyed more Japanese shipping than most of the other A-20's had altogether.

"What time do you think we'll be back tonight, skipper?"

"You're the navigator Jake-I think you can figure it out. Whatsa' matter, got another hot date?"

"Pamela Sue how do you do! She has the softest skin and the prettiest green eyes you've ever seen. She's Admiral Finches daughter, wow what a gal!" Jake was almost deliriously happy.

"There's only one gal with pretty green eyes you've been out with and she's in Hawaii," I responded a little too angrily.

**"If I didn't know better skipper, I would say you have something going on with Sharon," Jake said smugly. "Besides, she's in Honolulu and I'm here."**

**"That's right Lieutenant you're right here with me."**

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**Jake was here with me alright, right here beside me.....trapped. I could feel the cold blue water just beginning to push against my chest making it harder to breathe. My eyes began to focus and clear a little as the salt water rose up from my stomach to my chest. I struggled in the blue blanket of liquid that surrounded me. Jake's face was half in the water and half out of the water. I reached over and felt for his pulse.**

**There was none.**

**An unwanted tear rolled down my cheek as I tried to push him upright. The clanking and glimmer of Jake's silver dog tags washing back and forth in the water was hypnotic. The water was at my chest and I could think of no other way to escape the clutches of my Bomber seat. I began to pray. The freezing water in the cockpit was crushing, forcing the last hint of air from Jake's lungs.**

**"Caaaannnnnnn...," the word hissed out eerily. I would have jumped but I couldn't move out of my seatbelts. Jake's last word, can, he's dead but he still wants a beer. "Me too Jake, make it two beers!" I laughed, chocking on the salty water, spitting out briny water and drool.**

**"Still got your opener?" I paused, thinking about the can opener. Frantically I grabbed at the shiny dog tags and opener. I ripped them from my dead friend's neck.**

**"God, please... help me!" I murmured in the deep cold. I began to carve on the fabric belts with the sharp end of the opener. I was coughing out salt water with every other breath. One seat belt began to break away. My mouth was covered with sea water. I had to tilt my head back to breathe.**

**"God... Oh God... I don't think... I can... make... it!"**

**Only the bubbles gave away the location of the Lady Killer and a small black oil slick. The bubbles brought up loose wood, burnt fiber, and one torn life jacket. In the distance, only the hum of the retreating A-20 Havoc bombers could be heard and one lone P-38 Airacobra, circling high above attempting to survey the damage.**

**The brown stained covering of a parachute bubbled to the surface attached to the body of Jake. The holes in his chest and arm were now black with coagulated blood. The body bobbed up and down in the choppy oily water.**

**Suddenly, the surface of the water *erupted* with a hand, a head--and finally a body. A palm clutched two shiny dog-tags--and one very bent can opener.**

**Gasping for air, spitting out seawater, a creaking voice yelled out loud, "Sharon, I'm alive... *\*gasp\**...and I love you!"**

**It was my voice.**

**The End**