

# Bringing Him Back

By

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This fiction story is dedicated to all those men that served in the Armed Forces during World War II. Thank you for your service and sacrifice.

A special dedication goes out to all those families that lost a brother, father or husband while serving in World War II keep our freedom alive.

## *Prologue*

It was in the summer of 1943 with another beautiful clear night with the full moon shining down on Santa Monica.

It was Saturday night on the Santa Monica pier where it was a carnival atmosphere.

The Ferris wheel was packed tonight, as everybody wanted a bird's eye view of the lighted city of Santa Monica.

Carl Eastman, twenty-two years old, sat with his latest girlfriend, Sandy in one of the suspended seats on the Ferris wheel.

In the seat below him was Carl's best friend Ben Grayson, twenty-two years old, who held a camera in his hand, and by his side was his soul mate Diana Broward, also twenty-two years old.

While the Ferris wheel went around and around, Carl moved around to catch a glimpse of Ben and Diana, causing his suspended seat to swings back and forth.

Sandy quickly gripped the bar in front of them, scared she would fall out. "Stop that, or we'll fall out," she cried out in a panic while she gripped the bar tighter with white knuckles.

"I'm sorry, I'm just looking around. It's so beautiful up here," he replied, but he was really jealous when he saw Ben's arm around Diana and her head resting on his shoulder.

Sandy sensed his jealousy but didn't care since she was with him tonight. She placed Carl's arm around her shoulder and cuddled.

The Ferris wheel went around and around with everybody enjoying the ride.

The Ferris wheel stopped with Ben and Diana's seat at the top while the attendant assisted passengers out of their seats at the landing.

"Yes! I will!" Diana cried out, followed by a little scream of joy from the top of the Ferris wheel.

Carl, Sandy and the other passenger's all craned their necks to see what happened at the top of the Ferris wheel.

"Are you two okay?" Carl yelled, upward at Ben.

"We're doing great!" Ben yelled back, all excited.

Carl wasn't happy with the sound of his response, as he had a strong hunch of what just happened.

Five minutes later and it was Carl and Sandy's turn to disembark out of their seat. They walked out of the fenced area of the Ferris wheel and waited to see what happened with Ben and Diana.

Diana ran up to Carl all excited while she flashed an engagement ring in his face. "We're getting married!" she cried out in joy then hugged Carl.

Carl looked heartbroken with the good news.

People nearby them and people still on the Ferris wheel clapped when they heard the good news.

Ben had a huge proud smile while he looked at Carl.

Diana broke away from Carl, who remained speechless while he looked at Ben. "Congratulations buddy. I hope I'll be your best man," he finally said to break his silence then stuck out his hand to be polite.

"Of course you'll be my best man," Ben said while he shook Carl's hand.

Diana ran over and showed Sandy her engagement ring. Sandy held Diana's hand and looked jealous while she admired her diamond ring.

Ben looked over at an older couple that looked happy with their engagement news.

“Sir, could you please take our picture to capture this glorious day?” Ben asked the old man.

“It would be my pleasure,” the old man replied while he walked up to Ben.

Sandy, Carl, and Ben with Diana between the two guys, posed with the Ferris wheel in the background.

The old man snapped their picture then handed Ben his camera.

“Thank you, sir,” Ben said.

“Congratulations on getting engaged,” the old man said then shook Ben’s hand.

Ben and Diana held hands while they walked away from the Ferris wheel.

Carl tagged along with part of him happy for Ben and the other half sad.

Later that night, the four went out for a night on the town of swing dancing at a local nightclub in Santa Monica called The Boogie Woogie Dance Club. They drank and danced to further celebrate Ben and Diana’s engagement.

Later that night, Ben and Diana slept in a room at the Beachside Motor Court while Carl and Sandy slept in a separate room.

In Carl’s room, he lay in bed with Sandy cuddled by his side. Sandy reached under Carl’s tee shirt and ran her hand over his chest. She nibbled on his ear and then kissed his cheek. “We’ve been dating for six months now, Carl. I was wondering if you’ve considered giving me an exciting night like what Ben gave Diana?” she asked, then nibbled on his ear again.

“Maybe,” he replied, but all he could think about was Diana and Ben getting married.

Sandy looked disappointed; as that wasn’t the answer she wanted. “There’s something else that’s been bothering me,” she said while she fiddled with her hands.

“What’s that?” Carl replied a little irritated.

“Can we for once go on a date all by ourselves? I mean, I like Ben and Diana, but we’re always double-dating. I want to spend time alone,” she stated.

“Sure,” Carl replied but could care less.

She kissed him on his lips and made moves that indicated she wanted to make love.

“Not tonight, I’m really exhausted,” Carl said, then rolled over to his side and closed his eyes.

Sandy rolled over on her side, and her eyes welled up.

The next morning, Ben, Diana, Carl and Sandy headed back to their home up in Santa Barbara.

On Monday morning back in Santa Barbara, it was back to business when Ben and Carl reported back to work. They both worked on the construction of an office building being built by the Eastman and Grayson Construction Company that was owned by their father’s.

Ernie Eastman and Jack Grayson were partners in the construction firm they started back in 1928. Ben and Carl began working for their father’s firm when they were ten years old. First, they started out part-time picking up trash on the construction sites on the weekends and had slowly evolved into jobs that carried more responsibilities. They both were recently given jobs as an assistant foreman since they graduated, six months ago, from the Santa Barbara City College with business degrees. The boys were both slated to take over the business after their father’s retirement in the future.

Ben and Carl walked on the top floor of the building, which was nothing but steel beams and a concrete floor. Ben had some blueprints in his hand, and they both double-checked the installation of some plumbing.

Then an Army C47 Skytrain airplane flew over the building and caught Carl’s attention. He watched the C47 while it flew away and started thinking about his future.

“Ben, that Japanese submarine that fired at the oil refinery this past February got me thinking,” Carl said.

“Thinking about what?” Ben asked while he looked at the blueprints.

“Thinking that now we’re out of college, we should enlist. We need to do our duty and serve our country. I mean, what if more Japanese submarines try to blow up our home? If we help out Uncle Sam, we can prevent that from happening again. I’m thinking of the Marines,” Carl replied.

“Enlist in the Marines?” Ben said while he looked at Carl.

“Yeah. Remember, when we were boys and talked about becoming pilots?” Carl said.

“Yeah,” Ben replied with a smile while he remembered the makeshift airplane they made out of scrap wood from a construction site.

“I’m thinking we could join the Marines and learn how to become pilots,” Carl said while he watched the C47 that was now flying toward the coast.

“Marines, huh?”

“The Marines. We’re too tough for any other branch of service,” Carl replied while he puffed out his chest like a muscle man.

Ben thought about it for a few seconds then smiled. Then his smile suddenly went away the second he got concerned. “I don’t believe my future bride will be delighted with me joining the military,” he added.

“It’s our duty. Do you want everybody to think we’re cowards?” Carl replied with a serious look.

Ben thought about his comment. “I guess we’ll be Marines,” Ben said, as he never wanted to be called a coward.

“If we become pilots, one or both of us might not make it back home,” Carl said.

“You’re right. Who would take care of Diana?” Ben replied a little concerned.

Then Carl had a little smirk. “Well, my friend, I promise that if anything happens to you, I’ll take care of her,” Carl offered.

Ben thought about it for a few seconds then he stuck out his hand. “It’s a deal.”

Carl shook his hand to make the offer official.

Then Ben looked curious. “So buddy, are you going to pop the question to Sandy?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” Carl replied, as all he could think about was Diana.

They returned to their blueprints and continued to check out the installation of the plumbing.

That night was the toughest in Ben’s life when he broke the news to Diana that Carl and Ben were going to enlist in the Marines. Her eyes welled up, but she knew there was a war going on, and Ben had to perform his duty.

A month later, Ben and Diana got married in the backyard of his parent’s house. It was a small wedding since there was little time to prepare for a large ceremony. But Diana was still happy, as she was now Mrs. Ben Grayson, and she had dreamt of this day since she was thirteen years old. Sandy didn’t attend because Carl broke up with her two weeks ago. He didn’t want a bride at home while he was off to war, as this was the bullshit story he told everybody.

After a short honeymoon for three days down at Santa Monica, Ben and Diana returned home. It was time for him to leave for the United States Marine Corps.

Two days later, Ben and Carl’s parents said their goodbyes at the train station. Diana walked Ben arm in arm down the station, and she fought to hold back her tears. Carl trailed along behind them.

“I’m so scared you’ll be off in this war,” she said while her lips trembled while her eyes welled up.

“Don’t worry Diana, I’ll make sure nothing happens to Ben,” Carl said to comfort her.

Diana hugged Carl and gave him a kiss on his cheek.

“I know you will Carl, and I also love you,” Diana said, followed up with a little kiss on his cheek.

“And I also got Carl’s back,” Ben said.

“All aboard,” the conductor said while he walked alongside the train.

Diana and Ben engaged in a kiss by the train.

Carl felt out of place, so he waved at his parents and got on the train.

Ben tried to leave, but Diana clung to his arm, as she didn’t want to let him go.

The train started to move away.

“I have to go, honey,” Ben said then pried her away and gave her a quick kiss on the lips.

Ben jumped on the train and waved at Diana whose eyes welled up.

She watched the train while it pulled away from the station.

Ben and Carl took the train down to the Los Angeles airport where they later got on a DC-3 airliner that flew them to Washington, D.C.

Then after another train ride, they finally arrived at the Marine Corps training base at Quantico, Virginia.

They spent 10 weeks of grueling basic training in Quantico. They graduated and were now Second Lieutenants in the United States Marine Corps.

They were transferred to Texarkana for the Wartime Training School where they were evaluated by being checked out in a Piper J-3 Cub.

They were later transferred to Athens, Georgia where they attended a preflight school.

After Georgia, they transferred to Dallas, Texas for some primary flight training.

After Texas, they were sent to Pensacola, Florida for some immediate flight training. This place was perfect for Ben because Diana had an Aunt that lived in Tallahassee, so she moved there to be closer to Ben.

As soon as Ben arrived in Pensacola, he spent his first-weekend pass over in Mexico Beach with Diana. That was a very romantic weekend that resulted in them conceiving a child.

After Pensacola, Ben and Carl were transferred to the Corsair Operational Training Unit at Lee Field in Green Cove Springs, located south of Jacksonville, Florida. This provided more opportunities for Ben and Diana to have romantic weekends while he completed his training.

It was now 1944, and the boys got transferred to the Marine Corps Air Station at El Toro, California to wait for an assignment into a squadron for the war.

Before going to El Toro, Ben and Carl spent leave back at home in Santa Barbara. Carl moped around home while Ben spent precious time with his pregnant wife.

Carl went off to El Toro while Ben stayed home a few extra days.

The night before Ben left for El Toro, Diana cried fearing he would never return home.

“Don’t worry honey. I’ll be coming home,” Ben consulted her.

“I’m scared you won’t. Then who will take care of our baby and me?” Diana sobbed.

“Don’t worry, Carl said if anything happens to me, he’ll take care of you,” he said while he rubbed her back.

“But I want you to take care of me,” she said between sobs.

“I will, but just in case, Carl said he would marry you and take care of you for the rest of your life,” Ben told her while he kissed her cheek.

The next day, Ben left Santa Barbara and headed to El Toro, California.

After some time at El Toro, Ben and Carl were lucky to get the same assignment at Engebi in the South Pacific.

While at Engebi, things were going great for the two young men while they flew Corsairs. Ben was starting to

become an ace pilot while Carl lagged behind with the number of Zero's he shot down.

Then that horrible day happened on May 11, 1944. It was during a battle where the Japanese had the upper hand this time, and Carl and Ben's Corsairs were the only survivors.

"Catch up to me, and we'll head back to base," Ben told Carl over the radio net.

From inside Carl's Corsair, he saw Ben's Corsair all alone. He looked at the photo of Ben, Diana, Carl and Sandy at the Santa Monica Pier wedged between instruments on his console. "I'm on my way. Man, I can't believe what just happened. We lost everybody," Carl said into the radio net.

"We lost some good friends. But I'm glad you survived," Ben replied from the radio net.

"Me too, and I ran out of ammo, but I'm glad the remaining Zeros flew off," Carl responded into the radio net.

There were a few minutes of silence while they headed back to Engebi.

Inside Ben's Corsair, he looked around for Carl's plane and assumed he was behind him watching his back. The photo of Ben, Diana, Carl, and Sandy, wasn't wedged between some instruments on his to console, as he forgot it today.

"Ben! A Zero's coming back at you!" Carl cried out from the radio net.

Ben strained to see the Zero but couldn't see the threat. "I'll get rid of the bastard," Ben said into the radio net.

"He's at your six o'clock position," Carl cried out from the radio net.

Then Ben heard machine-gun fire from inside his cockpit.

Then machine gunfire sprayed across the nose of his airplane. The radio antenna snapped off from the nose section then it whipped around in the air.

“I’m hit,” Ben cried out from the radio net.

Carl didn’t respond to Ben’s radio call.

“Carl. Can you hear me?” Ben cried out into the radio net.

There wasn’t a response from Carl since Ben’s radio was inoperative.

Then more machine gun fire sprayed his engine compartment, and flames shot outward. Then his engine quit, and there was an eerie of silence while Ben stared at his propeller that stood still. Then oil sprayed out and splattered all over his canopy. Ben slid the canopy back and had to peek outside for visibility.

Ben performed his ditching procedures and headed toward the ocean.

Ben was able to safely ditch his Corsair into the water. He tried to unbuckle his harness and learned it was jammed.

Then he heard the sound of an airplane that approached.

He looked, and his eyes widened in shock. “What the hell?” Ben frantically tried to unbuckle his harness to escape, but it was too late. His Corsair was sprayed with machine-gun fire and instantly exploded into a fireball.

Later that day at Engebi, Carl landed his Corsair and was guided to his parking spot. He turned off the engine and slowly got out of his plane.

He climbed down the fuselage, and the second his boots hit the dirt, Carl dropped to his knees and sobbed.

A topless Sergeant rushed over to Carl. “Lieutenant, what happened?” he asked.

“They’re all gone!” Carl sobbed out.

The Sergeant assisted Carl to his feet and walked him to the debriefing tent.

Later that day, Carl told Colonel Weaver how the whole squadron was shot down and how a Zero came after Ben while they were headed home. He further told the Colonel that he ran out of ammo and couldn't save his best friends life.

Carl's eyes welled up in front of the Colonel, who hated these moments, as he had to write the letters to the family.

Colonel Weaver looked at Carl and saw he was shot in his groin by the huge bloodstain on his pants. He pointed it out to Carl, who looked down then passed out at the sight of his blood. Carl dropped to the floor like a sack of potatoes.

Carl was later discharged with a purple heart and returned home to Santa Barbara.

Two months after Carl arrived home, the remains of Ben's body were sent home for burial. That was the saddest day in the lives of Diana and Carl. Especially with Diana holding Ben's baby, Robert in her arms while she watched his casket being lowered into the ground. Diana sobbed and dropped to her knees. Carl stood by her side and assisted her back to her feet. She sobbed into his shoulder while he comforted her.

Two more years passed and life moved on, and like Carl promised to Ben, he proposed to Diana. She accepted as she always loved Carl, and he would have been her second choice in a husband if she never met Ben.

# *Chapter 1*

It was now October 1995, and it was a beautiful sunny, chilly October day in Santa Barbara.

Fifty-one years had passed since Ben Grayson lost his life in the South Pacific during World War II. Carl Eastman stayed married to Diana, and he raised Ben and Diana's son, Robert, who grew up into a wonderful man. Robert was now fifty-one years old and was married to Kathy, who was forty-eight years old, for the past twenty-nine years. They had a son, James Eastman who was now twenty-eight years old.

Carl and Diana never had any kids since Carl wasn't able to father a child. This was from a blunt testicular trauma and war wound he received while in the Marines.

When James was younger, Diana told countless wonderful stories about Ben, his real grandfather. James wished he had the chance to know Ben, but fate never allowed that to happen.

Jack Grayson and Ernie Eastman both retired from the construction business in 1975 and turned the company over to Carl.

Then when James graduated from UCLA, Carl gave him a job at the construction company per Diana's request. Robert didn't enjoy working in the construction business and became a Stock Broker and opened up his own office in Santa Maria.

James worked as the financial manager for the construction company since he had a business degree. And business had been great with Carl becoming financially independent.

He made so much money from all the construction jobs that per the request of Diana he purchased a Corsair F4U airplane and had it restored to USMC markings. She wanted him to restore the Corsair in honor of Ben.

Carl loved flying and became a certified flight instructor and taught James how to fly the Corsair. James had a private pilots license and enjoyed flying the World War II fighter. He became quite proficient with handling this beautiful aircraft.

It was October 20th, 1995 and Carl took the Friday off early to take his Corsair up for a spin. He wanted to practice some maneuvers since he was going to perform in an upcoming airshow at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Back in his office at the Eastman Construction Company, James worked diligently at his desk. Stuck to his computer monitor was a yellow post-it with a reminder to get the power turned off at the Bannister house on Monday. This was an action Carl assigned to James the other day.

While James worked, he heard the sound of a Corsair outside his office window.

He ran over to the window and saw Carl's Corsair while it flew over their office building.

Carl rocked the wings of the Corsair, as he knew James was probably looking out his window.

Carl flew the Corsair away over the city.

James walked back to his desk and looked at his watch while he sat down and saw it was 4:30 p.m.

He turned off his computer and walked out of his office.

James walked down the area of numerous cubicles.

"Goodnight, James. Have a great time at the airshow tomorrow," Roger, a male employee called out from his desk while was getting ready to head home.

"Goodnight, Roger, and thanks. We will," James replied while he walked by an "Office Halloween Costume Party - October 31st" poster tacked to the bulletin board.

James walked farther down the office area and went past Carl's grand office where the door was closed with a "Gone Flying" sign that hung on it.

Carl's administrative assistant, Mindy, was getting ready to leave for the day. "Goodnight," she called out when she saw him.

"Goodnight, Mindy," James replied then walked away.

James walked out of the building, and while he walked to the parking lot, he searched the sky for Carl's Corsair. The airplane wasn't in sight in the sky.

He must have landed. James thought to himself while he walked to his 1992 Mustang. He got inside his car and started it up then drove off.

James drove through the streets of Santa Barbara and parked along the street in front of some shops.

He got out of his car and walked down the sidewalk and stopped at a "Designs by Teri Eastman" office. He went inside Teri's office.

Inside the office was Teri Eastman, a twenty-seven-year-old beautiful Italian female, who worked on a graphic design on her Macintosh computer. She started this business three years ago after working for a local firm after she graduated from college. So far, the business was profitable for Teri, and she loved the feeling of being her own boss.

Teri and James had been married for two years now. They first meet when the Eastman Construction Company hired her services for some advertisement brochures. It was love at first sight.

"Are you ready, Teri?" James said then gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"In a minute, I want to wrap this up," she replied while she placed the final touches on a book cover design.

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