

ANGEL GIRL

By

Michel Poulin

ANGEL GIRL

Science-Fiction novel
by
MICHEL POULIN

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WARNING TO POTENTIAL READERS

THIS FICTION NOVEL CONTAINS GRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF WAR, VIOLENCE AND SEX, AS WELL AS COARSE LANGUAGE AND CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS THAT ARE UNSUITABLE FOR CHILDREN. WHILE THIS NOVEL DEPICTS SOME HISTORICAL PERSONS AND EVENTS FROM THE PAST, THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION AND WORDS OR DEEDS ATTRIBUTED IN IT TO PERSONS WHO EXISTED DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT HISTORICAL REALITY.

ABOUT THIS NOVEL

This novel is a sequel to RAISING NANCY and is the eleventh book of the Nancy Laplante Series. It is a mix of science-fiction, alternate history and fantasy and its story takes place in a parallel timeline I designated as 'Timeline C', which split from another parallel timeline, 'Timeline B', in 1941, while Timeline B itself split from the original historical timeline (ours) in 1940, due to the involuntary time travel of Nancy Laplante, a Canadian war correspondent and reserve army officer, from 2012 'A' to 1940 'A'. This story is centered on the adventures of Ingrid Dows 'C', the adopted daughter of Nancy Laplante, who has risen to the top of the United States military through her sheer abilities, courage and intelligence, and on the adventures of Ingrid Dows' daughter Nancy, a girl of haunting beauty with fantastic abilities and supernatural powers.

OTHER BOOKS BY THIS AUTHOR

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CHAPTER 1 – TAKING CHARGE



General of the Army Ingrid Dows, Commander of the United States combined military forces in 1993 'C', as she appears at the age of 67, after her latest rejuvenation.

09:06 (Washington Time)

Tuesday, July 06, 1993 'C'

Joint Chiefs Briefing Room (The Tank)

National Military Command Center (NMCC), The Pentagon

Arlington, Virginia, United States of America

The atmosphere inside the Joint Chiefs Briefing Room, commonly called 'The Tank', could be rightly described as 'mixed' when a very young woman dressed in a Space Corps uniform and wearing the rank insignias of a five-star general entered the room with Secretary of Defense John McCain, Under-Secretary of the Army Robert Parnell, Under-Secretary of the Air Force Helena Mercer and Under-Secretary of the Navy Charles Brubaker. One of the generals already sitting around the large conference

table of the room, General Charles C. Krulak then corrected himself mentally. That 'young woman' was actually 67 years old, despite having the looks of a very beautiful late teenager. Krulak's father, the legendary Victor 'The Brute' Krulak, had served and fought as a Marine Corps senior commander at the side of Ingrid Dows during World War 2, the Korean War and the Indochina War and had told Charles many stories about Ingrid Dows and her exploits as he grew up. Charles, who had been named only four days ago as the new commandant of the Marine Corps, in replacement for ousted General Mundy, thus knew well her story, including the fact that Dows possessed incredible supernatural powers and had been repeatedly rejuvenated by a mysterious spiritual being she called 'The One'. However, Charles Krulak admired her for being the incredibly brave and talented fighter pilot, aerospace designer and combat commander she was, and not because of her beauty or powers. Others around the table were however not so fond of her, to say the least, mostly because they had trouble accepting the fact that a woman (and apparent teenager) was now in command of all the American military forces and because the recent purge among the Joint Chiefs ordered by President Ross Perot had created much resentment among many old-school American military commanders.

Ingrid Dows, an athletic, fairly tall woman sporting reddish-brown hair and blue eyes, took a seat next to that of Secretary of Defense John McCain, himself a decorated ex-Navy veteran pilot, as the three under-secretaries took seats to the other side of McCain. It was the latter who then opened the meeting in a neutral but firm voice.

"Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! First, let me tell you that me, my under-secretaries and General Dows had a long discussion yesterday about our defense policies, procedures, organization and command structures. The reason for that discussion was that, while I believe that the United States still has the best and strongest armed forces in the World, the recent incident involving the loss of one of our reconnaissance aircraft over the Caucasus area has demonstrated that our forces suffer from some very serious flaws. Those flaws mostly concern our command-and-control structure but are not limited solely to that area. As a result of our discussion of yesterday, I have approved a number of measures and changes, which General Dows will be in charge of turning into facts and reality. I will now let General Dows present and explain to you those measures and changes planned for our armed forces. General Dows..."

"Thank you, Mister Secretary!" said Ingrid before having a junior officer switch on a retro-projector and make a text slide appear on a large wall projection screen. As the generals and admirals around the table read the text being projected, Ingrid spoke up.

"Lady and gentlemen, what you see now on the screen is what will be the motto describing the United States armed forces from now on. They will be, quote, a combined and unified mobile, flexible and powerful force able to prevent, deter and counter any threat to American citizens, territory and interests, as well as threats to the allies of the United States, unquote. Personally, I would have called this simple common sense but the Secretary of Defense insisted on calling it 'The Dows Doctrine'. Some of you may say that we are already that, but I would then strongly disagree. The loss of our reconnaissance aircraft over the Caucasus and the mad dash that resulted from it to rescue its crew via an improvised operation has proved that we are not a truly unified force. That same incident was in fact the latest manifestation of what has been undermining our military for decades: interservice rivalry. To measure how nefarious and costly this interservice rivalry has been to us, just think back to the disaster of Pearl Harbor, in December of 1941. The Japanese attack that morning should not have come as a surprise, as plenty of advanced intelligence warnings and even a few instances of detection of enemy activity had been received. Unfortunately, those warnings were either ignored or dismissed, while the Navy and the Army refused to share the information they received from their respective intelligence services or from Washington. The defense of Hawaii was then split between the Army and the Navy, with little to no coordination between those services. The result of all that was the disaster we endured that day. A few years later in that same war, only weeks before D-Day, I personally witnessed senior Army Air Force commanders in Europe insisting that a landing in Europe was unnecessary and that our bomber force would be enough to break the Germans' will and force them to capitulate. It took some forceful action by General Marshall, supported by President Roosevelt, to knock back some sense into the heads of those bomber commanders. If we jump to the First Korean War, the command structure in the Pacific was so stratified and split that it took days after the start of the North Korean invasion for me to obtain the permission to strike north of the 39th Parallel, because the various command elements in the Pacific had to wait for Washington to stop discussing and finally give the authorization to strike North Korea. If we switch to the present, we lost an aircraft over the Caucasus because the Air Force wanted to prove that it could do the mission as well or better than the Space Corps. Well, history

should have amply proved to us that combat decisions via committee discussions and debates are nonsense which result in unnecessary losses and even defeat. From now on, if the United States needs to go to war or to launch a military operation overseas, it will do so as one, with one voice in command, and I am not talking about the President's voice. President Perot named me 'Commander-in-Chief of the United States armed forces' but, since I felt that this title somewhat undermined his own legal authority over our armed forces, I convinced him to change it to 'Commander of the United States combined military forces'. That new title, which I will use from now on, better reflects what I will be, in my opinion. My job, as approved by the President, will be to prepare and ensure that our forces are fully ready for combat at any time and, if combat there will be, to lead and direct our forces against the enemy. That is the declared intention. Now, about how to turn that into reality..."

Ingrid paused then, giving time for the junior officer to change slides on his retro-projector.

"As recent past wars have shown to those ready to accept reality, war is a 'come as you are' business, and not a 'please wait while I mobilize' affair. The days of conflicts like the First World War, when the belligerents took weeks to mobilize, are long gone. Now, we have to be able to react instantly to threats that materialize around the World and to any attack against our citizens, territories, interests or allies, be they from hostile countries or from terrorist groups. Such a needed instant reaction implies a single, unified command in charge of all our armed forces, as well as forces that are always ready to go instantly into combat. As a consequence, our present National Military Command Center, in which we presently are, will stop being a simple coordination center and will be turned into a functional national combined combat command center, or NC4 in short, with me at the head of that new command center. On top of directing our forces in combat, it will also be my job to ensure that our forces are indeed ready for combat at any time. This implies many needed changes to our present forces, changes which will directly impact your services, gentlemen. After reviewing in depth the structure and operations of our actual armed forces, I have identified a number of areas which will need to be improved or even drastically changed. Know that I already discussed those needed changes with both the President and with Secretary of Defense McCain. Those areas needing improvement are: command structures and communications; strategic, operational and tactical mobility; concentration of force; flexibility and speed of use; superior training and morale of our personnel; early

identification and targeting of the direct causes of the threats to the United States; sustainability of combat operations and, finally, the elimination of wastage and duplication of resources.”

The seven service commanders present looked on at the slide on the screen with various degrees of dismay or confusion, with the brand-new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Herres, then asking a question.

“General Dows, what will be my role in all this? All this kind of implies that my present position has just become redundant, no?”

Ingrid gave Herres a sober look.

“In a way it has, General Herres. Your new title will be as ‘Deputy Commander of the United States combined military forces’ and you will work directly under me. The service chiefs will stay as they are presently and will concentrate on administering their respective services under the guidance of their Under-Secretaries of Defense, on top of ensuring that their services are ready for combat. Now, I do have a caveat about that last point.”

The six other generals tensed up to varying degrees at those words and they listened on intensely as Ingrid spoke further, while a new slide came on the screen.

“Combat readiness implies having the right kind of equipment and weapons to do the job, along with well trained and motivated personnel ready to operate that equipment and weapons. Now, in the past, each separate service issued their own requirements and specifications for the equipment and weapons they felt they needed to fulfill their tasks. That too often resulted into tremendous duplication of efforts, unnecessary increased costs for the development and acquisition of those weapons and equipment and also incompatibility in the field between our air, ground and naval forces’ equipment. Just the subject of our tactical radios will prove that point. Too often, our fighter-bombers tasked with supporting our ground units can’t even communicate directly with those ground units because of incompatible radio frequency ranges, forcing them to use skip-echelon communications and thus wasting precious time and possibly costing lives. That has to change! My command office will thus from today rationalize, coordinate and, if necessary, modify the various requests for development and acquisition for weapons and equipment coming from your respective services, with the Secretary of Defense then signing on to those massaged requests before they go to the Congress for funding. This last point in turn will dictate a radical change to the way we handle defense contracts. Right now, lobbying by defense contractors and politicians, plus what I call

'gold-plating' of requirements and specification for our future equipment, weapons and infrastructures, has and still is resulting into tremendous waste and extra costs for our national defense budget. My solution to this is twofold: first, the various separate services directorates and commands in charge of equipment development and acquisition will all be unified under a single National Defense Equipment Development and Acquisition Command, with the General in charge of that command answering directly to me and to the Secretary of Defense; second, lobbyists and members of the Congress will no longer be allowed to influence the choice of equipment and defense contractors we will use. We will acquire what is best for our combat forces, not what will fatten specific defense contractors in states with influent senators and congressmen. Our forces main goal is to protect the United States, not to be a milk cow for politicians and their friends."

General Edward White, the Commander of the Space Corps, wiggled his right hand at that.

"You are going to make a lot of senators and congressmen squeal and scream about this, General."

That was when John McCain jumped in, his voice firm.

"Let them! I will personally make sure that those senators and congressmen understand that this is for the greater good of the nation and I will also make sure that our citizens understand that, which should help calm down those senators and congressmen. The President will also veto any defense bill from the Congress that will contain what is called 'pork-barreling' or blatant lobbying influence that could result in unnecessary or unjustified costs to our defense budget. As for distributing equitably the various defense contracts for new equipment, infrastructure or services, our criteria will be simple: we will go for the best quality available at reasonable cost. We wasted literally billions of dollars in the past on equipment that then proved either inadequate or deficient. The unification of our various development and acquisition departments into one command will also prevent the unnecessary duplication of equipment and weapons that has cost us so much up to now. If an air-to-air missile, for example, is good enough for the Navy fighters, then it will be good enough for the Air Force and, in modified form as a surface-to-air missile, for the Army. As for you and the other service chiefs, new rules about contacts with lobbyists and politicians will apply, starting today. General Dows..."

On a sign from Ingrid, a new slide appeared on the projection screen, with a list of bullet points which made more than one general or admiral stiffen as she spoke, taking the relay from McCain.

“As of today, all direct contacts between you and your officers with defense industry lobbyists, senators and congressmen will be prohibited, if those contacts concern the development or acquisition of new weapons, equipment, infrastructure construction or service contracts at national level. You will of course be able still to get through the normal bidding process local contractors who provide services like food and fuel supplies to your various bases but, if we are talking about the selection of a contractor to acquire new equipment at national level or to initiate a major infrastructure project, then our new Development and Acquisition Command will take care of it. If a lobbyist or congressman invites you to a lunch or supper paid out of their own pocket, then politely refuse that invitation. The same goes for so-called ‘gifts’ from the same people, like golf club memberships and free family vacations at private resorts. If I hear about any officer accepting such invitations or gifts, then that officer will be in trouble with me. I will be very firm about this point. We work for our soldiers, airmen, sailors and citizens, not for politicians and fat cat industrialists.”

As the men around the table digested all that, Helena Mercer, the under-secretary for the Air Force and a veteran combat pilot, asked a question to Ingrid.

“General, you mentioned a number of times the training and morale of our military personnel. While I perfectly understand the need for our people to benefit from the best training available, could you explain what you meant about their morale?”

“With pleasure, Madam Under-Secretary. Captain Biddle, put on Slide Number Eleven!”

A chart with columns of numbers appeared on the projector screen, with the generals and admirals staring at it as Ingrid spoke.

“This, lady and gentlemen, is the pay scale chart for the members of our military, showing basic pay per rank and years of experience, plus the various allowances that go with them. Right at the bottom of the slide, you will see a dollar number in bold red. That number corresponds to this year’s official national poverty line for a family of four persons. You will see that such a family earning a total of 14,763 dollars or less this year is considered at or below the poverty line. Now, take for example the case of a young married soldier with two children and who has the rank of E-2, our second lowest rank. Even with the daily subsistence premium and the quarters allowance for enlisted

members with dependents, that E-2 member earns an annual grand total of 17,416 dollars. If you do a quick calculation, you will then see that this E-2's income is barely eighteen percent above the official national poverty line. Even though our young officers are better paid, with a second lieutenant with dependents earning 25,501 dollars a year, all premiums included, those junior officers are expected to maintain a higher standard of dress and appearance, including the purchase of expensive mess kits that cost hundreds of dollars."

"And what exactly is your point, General Dows?" asked Admiral Normand Klasser, the new Chief of Naval Operations, attracting a dubious look from Ingrid.

"My point is that we should stop treating our military personnel like cheap labor while also treating their families like simple camp followers, Admiral Klasser." she replied in a rather stern tone. "On top of being paid barely enough to provide adequately for their families, we also make those families move constantly between posts, often providing them with either substandard family quarters or, when not enough quarters are provided on base, force them to find civilian accommodations they can hardly afford. When some of my combat pilots and ground personnel, who had just lived and fought in two successive combat zones, followed me to new postings in Germany in 1953, they had to mostly make do with antiquated barrack accommodations and civilian accommodations with prices way out of their means. If anything, the situation for our lower rank sailors is even worse. Yes, they earn extra sea pay when on sea deployment, but they have then to live for weeks and months on ships with extremely cramped living conditions while away from their families. Hell, our sailors aboard our nuclear submarines still have to practice 'hot bunking' because there are less bunks available than there are crewmembers aboard! It is high time in my opinion to start treating our junior personnel and their military dependents in a more caring fashion."

"Our sailors knew what they were enlisting for, General Dows. It was their choice if they got married and had children while they knew what kind of salary they would earn."

Klasser's reply positively infuriated Ingrid and she had to restrain herself not to shout back at the head of the Navy. Instead, she slammed one fist on the table and stared hard at him.

"You still believe in the saying that if a military member needed a wife, the quartermaster would assign one to him, Admiral? You personally earn more than seven and a half times the salary of a simple sailor, and I am not counting your special perks

as a general officer, which include a chauffeured car, an official residence and the use of military-provided aides and servants, while you rate a personal suite when at sea. Our present priorities need to change in order to help our lower enlisted members, and they need to change right now! With the way they are treated presently, we should not be surprised to see how low our retention rate is for our lower ranks. In turn, that forces us to constantly recruit and train large numbers of new military recruits, something that costs us a pretty penny in the long run.”

“What specific measures do you have in mind to help our junior ranks, General Dows?” asked softly Helena Mercer as Ingrid’s eyes still were shooting lightning bolts at Klasser. Ingrid took a deep breath to calm down before looking at the female under-secretary.

“Among other things, I intend to switch and reallocate funds from within our military budgets in order to implement significant pay raises for our lowest-paid members and to start a widespread construction program of new family military quarters destined specifically to help our junior enlisted personnel and our more junior officers. Family accommodations at our overseas posts would get top priority in that program. I also intend to put a brake to this mad, senseless practice of constantly moving our personnel around the country and overseas, supposedly to help their advancement in the ranks. There are ways to reassign our people to higher positions without having to force them and their families to move out every two to three years. Our present system of career ticket-punching also has to go! It may help fill the service files of our personnel but it also prevents them from staying long enough in a given job to become true masters of their trade.”

“And from which parts of our budgets will you take the money for these programs, General?” asked General Edward White, the Commander of the Space Corps, who had worked for many years under Ingrid.

“From the fat I will cut from various programs and expenditures which richly deserve to be looked at closely, Ed. To name only one such type of expenditure, I am cancelling as of today and until further notice all renovation projects to our officers’ messes and clubs in our bases in the United States and overseas. Only the renovations needed to correct deficiencies which make those messes and clubs either unsafe to use or render them a health risk will be authorized...after I personally will have revised those individual claims.”

Edward White forced himself not to grin in response, while a number of generals and Admiral Klasser showed both shock and disapproval. Thanks to the over two decades during which Ingrid Dows had been at the head of the Military Space Command, which had then become the actual Space Corps, the kinds of priority changes advocated today by Ingrid had already been put into effect through the Space Corps years ago, with the service conditions and base accommodations for the personnel and their family dependents now being the envy of the lower ranks from the other services.

While he was staying silent for the moment, Secretary of Defense John McCain was taking notes on the various reactions to Ingrid's announcements and on who had what reactions. As an ex-Navy fighter pilot who had served repeated tours both onboard aircraft carriers and at overseas bases, he was well aware of the kind of living and working conditions endured by sailors on American Navy warships. If you had the bad luck of serving on a ship whose captain acted like a martinet or a tyrant, then you ended up living months of quasi-hell while you were separated from your family, which too often would have to make do as well as they could with often substandard housing and strictly limited family budgets. He thus had only sympathy for Ingrid's envisioned programs and was intent on fully backing her up. If Admiral Klasser was displeased by what he was hearing today, then he better batten down his hatch, as a lot more was to come in the next few weeks and months. And if Klasser did the mistake of either resisting Dows changes or of complaining about them, then McCain would be too happy to push him out.

18:09 (Washington Time)

The Dows residence, 326 South Grove Street Aurora Hills, Arlington

Ingrid, as per her habit, landed her Hiller AIR BIKE on the hard surface of the small landing pad set in the courtyard of her house in Aurora Hills, situated a mere few kilometers away from the Pentagon, then rolled it inside its custom-sized garage before shutting down its engine and stepping out of the compact machine. Walking out of the garage and locking it, Ingrid then walked to the back door of her two-story bungalow. Her stomach growled as she was about to open the door, reminding her that she had only eaten a light lunch at noon in order to return quickly to work. Today had been a very busy day for her and she expected the coming days and weeks to be equally busy,

as there was so much she needed to plan, direct and supervise at the Pentagon. A tempting smell hit her nostrils when she entered her home by the backdoor, which was not far from the kitchen. She also could hear the voices of her three living-in teenage children, also coming from the kitchen. Ingrid thus went straight into the kitchen before going to change out of uniform, finding Nancy, Leonardo and Lucy there, all apparently working on preparing supper. Nancy, who was standing in front of the deep fryer set on a counter, was the first to turn her head and smile to Ingrid.

“High, Mom! You worked a bit late today, no?”

“I did! Unfortunately, I may stay very busy for a while during the next few weeks.”

Ingrid then stepped forward and kissed in succession her three teenage kids on the cheek. Nancy was her natural daughter and was biologically ten years-old, but had the appearances and sexy body of a sixteen-year-old, the result of herself morphing her body in order to look older than she was in reality. That, and many other fantastic things about her was due to the fact that, while Ingrid was her mother, her father was Archangel Michael, an angel of The One who had inseminated Ingrid aboard the U.S.S. PROMETHEUS, during her five-year space trip to the Jupiter and Saturn systems. That made Nancy a very special girl, half-Human and half-Celestial, with a number of supernatural powers. A girl of fascinating beauty with a well-curved teenage body, dark blond hair and deep blue eyes, Nancy was also a highly-intelligent, kind and compassionate person who made Ingrid most proud of having her. Ingrid kissed Leonardo and Lucy, her two adopted children, who were both sixteen years-old, after kissing Nancy. Ingrid had adopted Leonardo five years ago, when he was ten-years-old, after his whole family, which was deeply involved in organized crime, had been murdered by a rival gang. Leonardo himself would have been killed then if not for the protection of both Ingrid and Nancy, who was the girlfriend of Leo at the time and still liked him a lot. Leo was in fact a very handsome teenage boy, with an athletic body, a smooth face and curly black hair. He also happened to be a most likeable, bright, kind boy. As for Lucy, earlier named Lucy Wong, she had also been adopted by Ingrid after her parents had been assassinated by the Chinese Triads a mere ten months earlier. A very pretty ethnic Chinese-American girl with long silky black hair, Lucy loved music, like Nancy, and was a near-virtuoso with a violin. Less obviously, Lucy also loved Nancy, as she was a closet lesbian. Nancy, who was a bisexual thanks mostly to her ability to remember her past incarnations, both as a man and a woman, also loved Lucy. Ingrid,

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