

Eternity

First book in a series of
science fiction/romance short stories

by

tayloralexander

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Captain Kimberly Colleen Terry, KC to her friends, a six year veteran of the Rowdizian Earth-Alliance Wars, cursed the dim yellow glow from the persistent caution light. Resetting the Master Caution did nothing to extinguish the indicator. She tried, but she still didn't believe the low level indication of the ship's Weapons Energy Stores. How long had her squadron, well what was left of it, been in battle, 25 minutes? Something was terribly wrong. She had engaged four, and destroyed three enemy fighters. Add that to the two strafing runs on separate battle cruisers, and she shouldn't have depleted her ship's stores so fast. A quick look over her right shoulder confirmed her wingman was still in position. Terry pressed the transmitter button with her thumb, "Hey, Jeff. Still no visual on any leak?" The fleet and the battle grew smaller in her rearview mirror.

Lieutenant Jefferson Andre Norton, Terry's Wingman for the last year answered, "Negative Captain. No leak detected, and I still have... aahhh... 65% Weapons Energy Stores. I guess you're just a little trigger happy." Jeff strained again to get a better look at lead's fighter exterior, even though his position was less than a meter from Terry's Cobra.

Terry shook her head and barked, "Damn... whatever. Doing no good out here. Besides... I still have missiles. The war's behind us about 5 clicks and the Rowdizians look hell-bent to kill us all... Give me some room... we're coming about... Check Zero thrust, 160 degree positive pitch, then kick it with a 150% burn..."

"Roger." Jeff acknowledged.

Terry continued, "On my mark... 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, Mark..."

The pair of Cobra close quarter attack fighters off the Galaxy Class Heavy Cruiser, *Nova Wind*, pitched nose up in unison and pivoted about their central axis. One hundred and sixty degrees into the maneuver both craft fired their main engines until they reached 150% thrust. Terry and Jeff strained at the g-force pinning them to their seats. With the power of the 150% burn arresting their away speed and then accelerating the crafts toward the desperate battle, their lives would soon be again at risk.

Terry thought, "We'll need a butt load of luck to win the day. We're evenly matched in technology, but the Rowdizian forces outnumber us 3 to 1." She ordered, "Jeff,.. set maneuvering thrust in... 3, 2, 1, Mark.... You take the lead Buckwheat. Captain Trigger Happy will cover your ass for a change."

Jeff's excitement of having the responsibility of lead was openly displayed as his voice pitched higher and louder with each spoken word, "Aye, Captain... Let's kick some Rowdick ass!"

The pair quickly closed the distance to rejoin the battle. Enroute, a blinding white flash obscured the distance. Lt. Norton yelled, "Can't see. What the hell was that?"

Terry shot back, "Shit Jeff, I can hardly see, but on my radar there's a debris field where the Rowdizian battle cruiser *Urrpvic* was positioned." She explained.

Lt. Norton whistled, "Damn, Captain. That's one of their capital ships. Over 8000 crew and 250+ fighters. With her gone that gives the Alliance the upper hand."

Terry observed, "I've got multiple bogies, and looks like they're running. Check three at 2 o'clock, P negative 25, hot damn."

Lt. Norton whooped and yelled, “Weeee Haaaaa, Military Power on my mark,” in each cockpit, hands danced on selected switches, “We got your ass now... 3, 2, 1, MARK.”

Both fighters, with engines increasing to military power, banked right and pitched 25 degrees nose down, overtaking the three enemy fighters running for the safety of their mother ship. Jeff’s first shots destroyed his intended target, the lead craft. The other two fighters split and the starboard ship was tagged by one of the Captain’s Mark 23 smart missiles. As Jeff continued a hard left turn to reengage the third target, Captain Terry, positioned off Norton’s starboard, was able to maintain a perfect formation as if both fighters were one. She, acting as wing, monitored the radar and especially watched the space to their flanks and rear for any threat.

As Jeff became fixated on the target, Terry became concerned, “Watch out Lieutenant, we’re getting too close. Suggest Maneuvering Thrust on my mar....”

Lt. Norton, too focused on the escaping fighter, fired his pulse cannon the very second his helmet toned a target lock. The juking enemy craft darting starboard exploded from a direct hit. Thousands of fragments obscured the path of both Terry and Norton. Neither could help but fly through the debris with Captain Terry penetrating the greater concentration.

The body of the dead Rowdizian pilot splashed on her windscreen. Her ship violently shook from the multiple impacts of debris and Terry yelled to no one, “OH, CRAP,” after several red warning lights and yellow caution lights joined the lonesome persistent “ENERGY STORES” on the annunciator panel. An irritating, wailing, warble sound pierced her skull. This time she didn’t playfully sing, “YOU’RE... FUCKED.... YOU’RE... FUCKED.... YOU’RE... FUCKED.... YOU’RE... FUCKED....” like she would during the systems warm up and self test of preflight. Terry’s ship was stricken. She methodically surveyed her situation. As luck would have it, things could be worse, and they were. The automatic synthetic foam fill had fired from the sudden loss in cockpit pressure. She reasoned a portion of the destroyed fighter must have penetrated the sealed life support chamber of her single seat Cobra gunship. But that wasn’t the worst thing that had happened.... Terry looked to her left and noticed the port elevon and thruster cluster missing. But... she figured things could be even worse, and they were.... Whatever punctured the cockpit seal had ripped a four inch gash in her survival suit below her left bicep and just above the crook of her elbow. Now, she was screwed. On the positive side, cabin pressure was back up, so the synthetic patch was holding, but for how long? The bigger the hole, the less permanent the seal. At the first sign of systems failures, Terry had shut down all unnecessary power, but her ship was spinning counter-clockwise on the Y axis at about 100 RPM and the spin had to stop. Noting Thruster Fuel was at 19%, she thought, “How much would it take to arrest the spin while wasting gas through the missing port array?” Her helmet hissed....

“Hey captain, you alright?” Lt. Norton called, worried about her prolonged quiet and the ship’s extensive damage. When his call went unanswered he became more serious, “Avenger Zero Six, this is Avenger One Nine....”

Terry responded as she sat transfixed, watching drops of her blood exit the tear in her suit in the weightless environment. The drops floated up, then slowly accelerate to

splat on the cockpit walls and instrument panel. Terry answered, "One niner, this is zero six, I have to stop this spin before I can really assess my situation, standby." Terry transferred what little remained of the Energy Stores to the Thruster Fuel. The fuel gauge now read 22% and that would have to do. She fired the thrusters and the spin quickly slowed, but the thruster gasses exhausted first and the ship still remained spinning at about 8 RPM. She looked at the gauge and cursed to herself.... SHIT.... ZERO....

Terry now had a grand view of the closing scenes of the current battle. The Rowdizian fighters were recovering to their carrier ships as the enemy fleet maneuvered and accelerated to retreat. Allied fighters and quick, maneuverable, light cruisers and destroyers gave chase, hoping to take out a few more craft. The fight was now very much one sided. Terry's ship drifted toward the fleet, but she had no control. Her helmet hissed again....

"Captain, from what I can see, your Cobra's toast. Not sure if there's any salvage potential, plus you have two un-stowed Mark 81 Vipers. Not sure salvage can safely capture your ship and return it to hangar. Your rotation barely exceeds the safety envelope." Lt. Norton had positioned his craft to within a few feet of her spinning wreck.

Terry's reply was unenthusiastic, "AAhhh, roger, Jeff... . Might want to stay back a bit. Besides the warnings on the un-stowed missiles, I have an over-temp warning on the ship's battery, port engine, and life support failure. I need to figure..."

Lt. Norton interrupted, "Damn it, KC just punch out. I'll call rescue and we can be eatin' dinner and having a hot shower within the hour."

Terry measured her predicament and said, "I prayed this morning and after meditation just knew this wasn't my time to die. I..."

"Hell Captain, get out! Rescue will be here in 30 seconds. Noooo prob...."

A defeated voice cut in and answered, "Jeff... my suit's torn."

Lt. Norton's heart sank. After a short pause he keyed his mike, "Well Captain, you do offer somewhat of a challenge." he released the transmit button and pounded the instrument panel.

Terry continued, "Jeff, I thought it through. I don't have enough life support to make the hangar deck, even if you could negate most of the other problems. My Life Pack is damaged and what's left of this ship has more leaks than a colander. Besides, I still can't land with two hot missiles..." She switched her intercom to the fleet channel and broadcast, "All ships, this is Captain Terry, a.k.a. Avenger zero six. Systems over-load imminent, stand clear."

The rescue and salvage ships coming to her aid did an immediate about face upon hearing her news. She saw the ships running except there was Jeff, a few feet away, holding formation.

Jeff was at a loss of what to do, "KC, I..."

Terry switched back to the unit channel, "Jeff, back off, I'm sequencing the Auto Destruct system.... Please."

"Hold on.... Just like you, I had no premonition of death during prayers earlier."

Terry cut in, "You don't pray."

"Good time to learn. Last night's briefing was a tad bit melancholy, more so than most, so I thought... I've survived this long, someone or something has my back."

Terry chuckled and keyed her transmitter, "That would be me."

"Look, just stop whatever you're doing... I got an idea."

"What the hell... speak.... Oh, and by the way, the battery and engines just went critical."

"Okay, We'll use the spin."

With each revolution, Terry could see Jeff backing off.

Jeff transmitted his plan, "Duct tape the hole in your suit; might buy ya some time. Jettison your engine packs first and then the battery. Then use your survival radio to communicate."

"Wasn't going to make a difference," thought Terry, "in the end there were those two damn missiles." She ejected the systems as Jeff instructed and watched as the engines and battery slowly drifted away. All ship's power was down. Even the Master Caution system. She chuckled, "Well that's one way to ignore the lights." She sighed, switched on the survival radio and transmitted, "I did what you asked, now what?"

Jeff measured her spin, "Aaahhhh... You have to ask. Fire those nasty little Vipers into deep space."

"Can't... system fail. Probably the same reason I couldn't stow them. Besides, genius are you having a blonde moment? I have no power.... That little explosion to your nine o'clock was my jettisoned battery."

Jeff cursed himself for not thinking. "Okay then, how's the suit?" He willed some good news.

"Your trick worked somewhat. It re-inflated a tad and I think you might have bought me a few more minutes." Terry saw nothing but wasted time and energy saying, "Come on, Jeff... drag-up and go home."

Jeff became terse, "Would ya give me a second, a plan's coming through."

With her life support failing she offered, "It's getting cold, very cold. Just..."

Jeff maneuvered his ship to be somewhat perpendicular to her spinning craft thinking, "I don't need that radome." He waited until their ships were at right angles to each other, then thrust forward and lightly bumped her port side just forward of the cockpit. The selected location containing the reinforced oxygen tank kept his pointed nose from penetrating too deeply into her fuselage. As Jeff backed off immediately and smiled seeing her spin had almost completely stopped.

The fleet frequency boomed with, "Lt. Norton to Salvage 21. Spin has stopped. Come grab Captain Terry's ship and return it to the hangar deck of the *Nova Wind*."

A sad voice replied, "Sorry sir, protocol. Can't with the two hot missiles"

Jeff thought, "Screw this!" He repositioned his fighter behind his leader's stricken craft. Noting the two gaping holes where the engine packs had been attached, he nosed his fighter into one of the voids. Scraping and screeching filled the interiors of both ships as they joined. "You okay, KC?"

"We still can't land, I have no skids to deploy."

Jeff joked, "No worries, If we make it, you get to scrub my back tonight, deal?"

"Jeff, you pull this off, I'll scrub your whole body."

"Aye Captain, then it's a must do."

Both joined crafts, now as one, slowly approached the *Nova Wind* flight deck.

Controllers ordered them to stay clear, but Jeff ignored the warnings. This action was famously characteristic of Jefferson Norton and one reason he was still a lieutenant. He reported the Captain injured. At 200 meters from the hangar, Jeff rolled both ships to land upside down. The warnings changed to words of nervous encouragement when hangar control realized the crazy plan. The conjoined fighters gently touched down and skidded only a few feet before stopping. Space suited ground crews moved in the vacuum of space and carefully attached safety pins in the missiles to make them safe. An overhead gantry lowered lines to lift the damaged ships so their crew could escape. The immediate area was made secure and sealed so an atmosphere could be obtained.

Captain Terry released her harness and tumbled to the reduced gravity flight deck. She struggled to regain her breath. Lt. Norton arrived in time to help her slide from under the suspended fighters. The PA boomed, "Lieutenant Norton report to operations, Captain Terry to sickbay." The message repeated as Jeff helped Captain Terry to her feet.

Jeff steadied Terry by her shoulders and asked, "I wonder how much trouble I'm in this time? I'll see ya in the mess."

As Jeff stepped to Ops, Terry called, "Jeff, I'll wait, and thanks!" She waved away a pair of litter bearers and took a few minutes to look over the extent of damage to her ship. Her arm was starting to throb. She watched the repair crews pour over both fighters and listened to the ground crew's main debate of how to get the fighters apart without causing more damage. Captain Terry took hundreds of pictures when she overheard one mechanic say, "She's not worth the trouble."

Incredulously, Captain Terry demanded, "What are you talking about?"

Seeing he was misunderstood the Chief of the Deck begged, "No Sir. I mean, the ship is too damaged to repair. Salvage some parts, yes, but look here," he motioned her to the left wing, "not only is the port tip and elevon missing but a good portion of the main spar is gone. And the spar's one piece tip to tip. That's the first thing laid, then they build the ship around it."

Terry laughed, "Well hell, Chief, put your hand in the hole by the spar to give me some scale for a picture."

The Chief did as instructed, then asked, "Shit! Captain Terry, I have a better one. Ya seen this yet?"

The warbling wail of the Master Caution screamed for a few seconds before a tech, reinstalling a battery, located and pulled the circuit's electrical breaker. The missiles had been removed and the landing gear was being extended as the ship was righted.

The Chief continued, "Look here!" He splayed his fingers to give dimension to the damage, and slowly swept his open hand through a massive gash in the port ventral fuselage. "Whatever it was, penetrated the cabin just under the forward left console. Hell Captain, if you don't own stock in EmergiSeal, you should. That, or do a product endorsement. Shit's only good for up to golf ball size damage. That hole of yours is bigger than a softball." The ground crew erupted in laughter. Terry rolled her eyes and the Chief, realizing his misinterpreted comment, turned bright red.

"I understand Chief." Terry slapped his shoulder, "Thanks." Seeing some more of her blood had escaped the duct tape patch, she felt a little light headed and decided it was time to make for the infirmary.

The passageways were filled with crew running materials and bodies to their point of need. The *Nova Wind*, she would learn, was heavily damaged and had over 1500 casualties out of her present crew of 6300. Captain Terry stepped gingerly. The decks were awash with a mixture of leaking lubricants and blood throughout the spaces. She chose 'right' to go to the Sick Bay near the flight deck, because she would also learn the main infirmary was choked with hundreds of wounded and suffering. The hangar decks were heavily reinforced, designed to protect the ground crews and fighters from attack. The extra reinforcement also protected the main part of the cruiser from damage should an accident or hit in the hangar set off the munitions and volatile fuels. 'Aircraft Sick Bay' was small and generally treated minor ailments because wounded flight crews usually didn't make it back for treatment. Entering sick bay, Terry was happily greeted by a flight nurse in an OD flight suit.

"Good afternoon Captain. What can we do for you today?" The nurse passed a scanner over Terry's right neck retrieving vitals, labs, and Terry's medical history.

"Got this scratch out there this morning." Terry tugged at the tape and blood gushed from the hole and ran down her sleeve. A pool of the crimson tissue splattered on the floor and their legs. Seeing what she had caused Terry said, "Sorry."

Noting the amount of blood, the nurse quickly guided the wounded captain to a stretcher. "No need to be sorry, Captain. That's more than a little blood." The nurse called for help and an orderly arrived as she was cutting off the survival suit's sleeve. "Run and get Doctor Carter!" she instructed the acne faced youth. "Tell him, possible nicked brachial artery." The nurse slapped an old sphygmomanometer above the wound and pumped. As the cuff inflated, the flow decreased to a drip. She then started an IV in her patient's right hand, cut off the rest of the survival suit, and waited for the doctor. "Well that explains the rapid heartbeat and the low blood pressure." She offered to herself.

"Is everything okay?" asked Terry, she was beginning to feel lightheaded.

The nurse looked into Terry's beautiful green eyes and said, "I'm surprised you made it off the hangar deck."

Captain Terry was surprised by the answer, "Please call me KC. What do you think?"

"Only if you call me Tracy.... I think whatever tore your suit entered your arm just above the elbow and damaged your brachial artery. Your little patch kept you from bleeding out. Keep your arm still. Let it hang dependent. There you go, just let it hang by your side.... Whatever is in there is continuing to cause damage whenever you bend your left arm."

The flight surgeon entered and looked at the two women. "Which one is the patient?" He noted both women were in flight suits and both had a fair amount of blood on their hands, arms, and legs. At the same time, he watched both women point to KC, identifying her as the patient.

Tracy explained her theory to the doctor, and added the fact that soon after the injury the patient reported there was very little bleeding and she had not applied a bandage. KC, moving the arm, must have driven the object deeper into the tissues and probably damaged the artery later.

"Yeah, I saw the blood trail.... I'm Doctor Carter.... Like the tourniquet. How

long's it been on?"

Tracy answered, "About 8 minutes."

Dr. Carter retrieved a pair of gloves and said, "Fine.... Let's start a unit of whole blood, but first I want to take a look at this little scratch."

Tracy maneuvered to help remove the bandages. Dr. Carter carefully looked under the dressing, and studied the wound. Blood continued to ooze from a 1 inch cut to the inner aspect of her bicep near the elbow.

Taking a deep breath, he instructed, "Terry, release a little of that restriction from the blood pressure cuff... little more..." he listened to the hiss of air escaping from the valve. Suddenly, he commanded, "Stop, stop, stop." Blood spurted from the cut, and just as quickly stopped. The spray caught Dr. Carter on the chest. He looked to the two women while he thought through the challenge of the procedure, and after several seconds, said, "Shit, I can do this. We need to prep a clean room in sick bay and call in a scrub nurse from the backup crew. Tracy, can you help?"

Tracy said, "Sure, but what about the operating theaters?"

Dr. Carter answered, "Be tomorrow before she's seen. There're casualties all over the place. Captain Terry, this isn't an emergency that will get you to the head of the line. You may have to wait 24 hours to have that taken out."

KC suspected there was another unspoken option, "But... what other choice do I have?"

Dr Carter scratched the side of his nose and said, "This is really a simple, straightforward surgery. I can inject anesthesia into your armpit and do a regional block; you'll be awake. We'll keep the blood flow restricted, find the damage, and throw in a little stitch or two. After that, we sew up the muscle and work our way out. Probably leave a small tube in for a few days to help drain any leakage. You'll be as good as new and back to flight status in a few weeks."

Wide eyed KC asked, "You're kidding, it's that bad?"

Dr. Carter patted her on the shoulder and reassured her, "I would call the injury serious. You could bleed out, or if we keep the pressure up to reduce the bleeding, we could kill the lower arm."

KC had an apprehensive look, "I would call that very serious, and I really don't want to be awake while you're working on my arm."

Dr. Carter worked to reassure his reluctant patient, "Look Captain, with the drape and the anesthesia, you won't feel or see a thing... Aaahhh... You'll hear us talking, and if you want, you can use your personal music player for a distraction. We should have no problems. All you have to do is relax. Want something to relax?"

KC paused for a few seconds to weigh her options. After a large sigh she said, "Sure.... What the hell. Let's do it."

Dr. Carter announced, "Great! Tracy, give our good Captain here two milligrams of Ativan IV, and prep the room."

The surgical theater for outpatient services became a flurry of activity to prepare for KC and her surgical team's use. Tracy gathered the instrument packs and other supplies, and another nurse from the backup staff assisted. As planned, the procedure went smoothly; without any complication. Recovery was uneventful. A two inch sliver of

decking from under the forward left pedestal was retrieved from her upper arm. Aside from that, good old Lortab eased the pain.

Later that night, Jeff knocked on the wall outside KC's hospital berth.

A tired KC beckoned, "Enter."

"Hi Captain, how ya doin?" Jeff smiled a toothy grin. He could see her well proportioned figure under the thin sheet and her injured arm was protected against the far wall. Her flaming red, shoulder length hair was askew on the pillow. He also confirmed, through the thin sheet, she was a true redhead.

Hearing Jeff's voice, KC brightened, "I found out what happened to my Energy Stores. Chief said there was a malfunctioning sending unit that read full when the fighter was only 60% filled. I told him to use it as a teaching aid because any Cobra purges all of its plasma before recovery and should always require a specific amount of plasma to refill the tanks. This wasn't a little mistake."

"Damn... KC!" Jeff tensed, ran his fingers through his hair, then said, "Thousands of lives could have been effected by such an oversight."

Jeff seemed distracted. Puzzled at his display, KC asked, "You seem to have gotten away with something, what's up?" She pulled the privacy curtain further back to give herself a better view of his striking features.

"The Colonel called me on the carpet to chew me out for that stunt I pulled bringing you in. About half way through the ass chewing, he started laughing. Couldn't blame me for what I did and said he'd put me in for a Distinguished Flying Cross...." Jeff shrugged his shoulders, "Go figure." Jeff then grabbed a chair, magically spun it around with one hand, and planted himself in the seat, inches from her berth.

KC countered with, "I, for one, am glad you did what you did," her right hand reached across the distance and took Jeff's hand, giving him a warm squeeze, "I prayed for help, I prayed for your steady hand, and I prayed those damn missiles wouldn't fire."

Jeff reared back, "That's an awful lot of praying, KC. Do you believe we were guided by my skills, or helped by divine providence?" Jeff, feeling a closeness he had never experienced, returned the shared tenderness.

KC closed her eyes, thinking of the last 24 hours. A tear formed and ran down her face, before she confided, "Jeff, I told you earlier today, this wasn't my day to die. I... we've had some really close calls. Hell, both of us have been amazed we lived through some missions. Through my studies and beliefs, I've embraced the Ancient Eastern philosophies. I can't seem to get behind the traditional Christian belief of a Heaven and Hell... no.... Too many religions, too many different philosophies. I ask myself, can they all be right?" KC's fingers lightly traced the back of Jeff's hand and inner thigh.

Noticing and enjoying KC's tender advances, Jeff asked, "Okay, today wasn't your day to die. We both agreed a long time ago that our presence on this plane of existence would be ended at any time. Hate to say it, but I'm about three years beyond a pilot's life expectancy and your about five years tempting fate. So, you think you've used up your allowance?"

KC carefully rolled to her right side to better talk with her wingman. The sheet slipped, revealing her firm, ample breasts. Her nipples were taugth with desire. "Are we

alone?” She smiled and waggled her eyebrows upon seeing his reaction.

Jeff, was confused, “Yes, ma’am, the bay is empty.” Jeff soaked in the chance to witness her lovely, naked features.

“Tell me of your family’s spiritual beliefs.” She had trouble covering herself with her stiff left arm and her right arm supported her position. “Do you mind helping cover me before someone comes in and gets the wrong idea?” Her smile was an invitation.

Jeff stammered his answer, “Yes, I mean, No. It’s just, I agree we need to cover you before someone comes in and sees the two of us.” Avoiding the bandage, Jeff gently drew the sheet and accidentally rubbed her breast, bare shoulder, and hair. “I’m sorry, I’m a klutz. Excuse me, maybe I should go.” He started to leave.

“Wait, you didn’t answer my question.” She also noticed his growing interest.

He stammered over the one syllable word. “What?”

“Your family’s spiritual beliefs.”

Jeff offered he was raised in a morally responsible home, but his family wasn’t big on organized religion. There was belief in a supreme being; the family celebrated Christmas and Easter, but that was about it. No formal church. He couldn’t remember even one day anyone in the family attended church. But his family was spiritual in the sense that they didn’t tempt fate and only treated others as they wished to be treated.

KC was really interested, “I was brought up with a belief in the individual spirit, and how that spirit never dies. We, our spirits, just use these bodies as a host for the time we spend in this conscious state, learning and expanding our knowledge... . Strange, Huh?”

“Not really. So, you believe in reincarnation? There is support of that belief in some Eastern philosophies.” Jeff asked leaning back in the chair.

“I guess... no, I would have to say every day my faith grows and more simply, I do.... You see, let me repeat.... I was taught the spirit lives on forever and only temporarily resides in a host’s body. When one dies the spirit is released. That spirit, over time, gains the knowledge of the universe. Can’t use the collective knowledge when in the body of a host, but when we enter the spiritual plane we... share... with others... are one... something like that. Bet you’d never guess I was odd girl out with my friends.”

“I would never think you odd.... Your family’s beliefs would then support *deja vu*... . Have you ever had a solid experience like that?” Asked Jeff. Now some of the deep talks they’d shared over the months since he was assigned as her second, explained yet added to her mystery and beauty.

“You won’t laugh?” she softly pleaded.

“Never, no ma’am. Thought would never cross my mind. Unless you get really far out there.” He laughed and she joined him.

“Serious though,” she adjusted again and the sheet fell, but this time her right arm was able to readjust the cover, “I’ve had visions of flying off the deck of the *Yorktown* to engage enemy aircraft.” She closed her eyes to relive the vision.

“Well, hell yes. We were both stationed on the heavy cruiser *Yorktown* for a short...”

“I was in a piston powered aircraft and taking off over water.” KC looked to Jeff with a knowing look and said, “It was so real, I felt I was there. Jeff... I could smell the

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