



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Great Balls of Fire and Little Green Men



Miracle Candidate #2. As far as I know, secrecy is no longer an issue for any of what you read in this chapter. US participation in the Vietnam War concluded in the early 1970s. The Pentagon has released period war secrets of a much higher level than anything I'm recounting. I've been neither instructed nor ordered to be silent about any of these events once the Nam war concluded. If I'm wrong about the secrecy issues, I hope those of you enlightened—or at least entertained—will kindly help out with my legal defense fund.

The load we least wanted to carry was the MK-4 chemical bomb. [*I may not have the correct weapon designation number, but my memory rings crystal clear regarding our experience.*] I hauled these babies only two or three times during my Navy career—more than enough, even for *my* ignorant bravado. These 4500-pound metal-caged monsters made us all nervous. Automatic cancellation of landing clearance (anywhere) should one of the monstrosities leak chemicals during flight, did nothing to ease our trepidation. With the bomb carriage open, we could see all the wires, tubes, meters, canisters, electrical switches, and relays in its assembly. Although we used secretive, Red-Label transfer areas for its loading and unloading, I was amazed so little effort went into camouflaging these behemoths of destructive power.

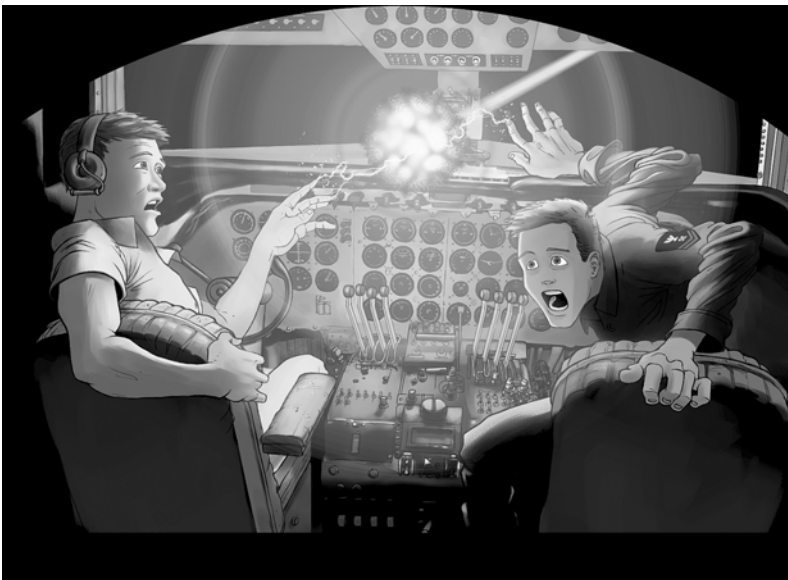
I choose not to recall where we delivered the devices, but more relevant was the mega level of non-communicated vulnerability we all felt. We repeatedly asked, "What do we do if a chemical canister leaks during flight?" The special couriers, who stayed with the weapons only until air transport was arranged, always had the same response. They closed their briefcase, handed us the top-secret manifest, and then—with a wry grin—turned and walked away. I'm

confident these ultra-secret weapons couriers were in-training for future positions as the infamous “*Men in Black*” we were destined to meet. All we knew for sure: any bomb springing a leak during flight would place us in *deep doo-doo*—again.



A New Reality

Half awake, with legs outstretched from the bottom bunk, I struggled to pull up my pants. Suddenly, I heard two blood-curdling screams and the words, “OH SHIT!” from the cockpit. None of my physical senses prepared me for what then followed. Alive in the cockpit danced a flashing, pulsating, sizzling, popping, absolutely brilliant yellow-white light. A sphere of fire, slightly smaller but a lot more menacing than a bowling ball, created a blinding light show. Concentrated, supercharged, and noisy, without doubt this was the most dangerous, malevolent looking force I’d ever seen. The previously harmless mass of static electricity now claimed a size and concentration larger than any of us had ever seen or possibly imagined. The worst part: it was now *up close and very personal!* Somehow this terrifying, conscious-acting energy had penetrated our aircraft and was spinning ominously between the traumatized cockpit crew. Pancaking their backs against respective side windows, they desperately tried to avoid the monster’s wrath.



I could not accept what I was seeing! Aircraft infiltration by this energy type was believed impossible! Although an occasionally discussed topic, perhaps the reason we'd not received any reports about this phenomenon was because the witnesses are no longer with us...I thought belatedly.

Come to Papa. The FUN was not over. The pulsating fireball, after its brief, *spirited* visit to the cockpit, resumed its aft motion. Three crewmembers waited up front to start their shift. They quickly stepped aside, as the white-faced cockpit occupants turned rearward to follow the Grim Reaper's path.

The supercharged, multi-colored fireball hopped and rolled down the aisle directly toward me. Still sitting on the bunk, frozen in horror and amazement, I thought, "Maybe there is a God and this is my punishment for screwing around with Mother Nature." All that wonderful confidence from a moment ago—gone. Only halfway into my trousers, I reflexively grabbed the upper bunk railing and swung my torso straight up into the air, as the bouncing lightning ball fortuitously dipped. Missing me by a scant few inches, my emotions flooded with relief! Short-lived, however, the Guinness record for *abject terror* immediately replaced my reprieve. Our charging, thrashing, St. Elmo Monster, obviously angered by its temporary confinement, jumped up and discharged—with an ear-ringing, metal-twisting, heart-stomping explosion—directly into the nose of the first bomb! My throat filled with burning stomach bile, as the crew spit out a chorus of four-letter words. I saw my life in review...regretting failed accomplishments and repenting my less-than-exemplary human behavior.

After the sobering flashback, I finally realized the bomb had not detonated—*yet!*



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