

Chapter XLII

The Divine Wind

December 3, 1944 – January 8, 1945

Kossol Roads is a tremendous lagoon almost completely surrounded by a subsurface coral reef that forms a natural anchorage. Since being seized from the Japanese in September, it had become an important base of operations in the Western Pacific. When the task force arrived, the anchorage was already full of ships, with more on the way. They were gathering for the next push against enemy positions in the Philippines. That operation would include Sheffield's task force. Upon arrival, Admiral Brason reported for duty with Vice Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet, known as "MacArthur's Navy" since General Douglas MacArthur was the supreme allied commander of the Southwest Pacific Area.

In the meantime, the ships of the task force would have several days to rest up from their long passage from Norfolk. Within hours of arrival, Ensign Gover brought Sheffield a large bundle of mail. Morris always sorted it according to priority, and right on top were two letters from Ramona. He eagerly opened them and began reading. The first one was dated November 10th and was a response to his letter from Algiers. In it she admitted that she had gone ahead and voted for FDR after all and rubbed his nose in the fact that Dewey lost. It talked about Ruth Ann and how she simply told people that she was her niece and that the baby's father was in the military. It also contained news about other things that she had going on. The other letter was more recent, dated the day after Thanksgiving.

November 24, 1944

Dear Sheffield

You were right, I still haven't heard from you. I have written twice before this, I trust that you eventually received both of them. I think at this point, I'll wait until I hear from you before I write again.

Your birthday is coming up here in just under two weeks now. So I'll take the occasion to wish you a happy birthday now. I'll send a card later through V-mail since it will be more bulky, that way you'll be more likely to get it.

I like to send my letters to you first class. It might take a little longer, but I don't like the idea of someone else reading them. Nearly all of your letters come to me through V-mail. They've been censored and by the time they're reprinted from the microfilm, they're so small that sometimes they're hard to read. I know they save shipping weight and all.

I did manage to find addresses for both the Shorts and the McDowans and wrote to them but haven't heard back yet. According to the information I got, the Shorts are in Oakland and the McDowans are in San Diego. I'm sure both Shorty and Freddy are somewhere out in the world, but I hope to hear back from

Wilma and Susan.

I don't know where you had Thanksgiving, but I had it with Harvey and Marcella. It was special treat because Grandma Erhart and Aunt Susannah had come up from Texas. It was so nice to see them again. I took Ruth Ann with me since she didn't have anywhere else to go. With both Ruth Ann and Marcella being pregnant, naturally that seemed to be the dominant theme of the conversation, something I couldn't relate to.

I also got to meet Harvey's oldest son from his first marriage, Joseph who is a Second Lieutenant in the Army Air Force and just completed his advanced flight training. His younger son Frank, is a senior in High School living in California with his mother.

Joseph, who was actually named after his mother, Josephine, is a fine young man. Ruth Ann sure latched on to him. At nearly five months pregnant, it is obvious. At first he was uncomfortable by the way she came on to him because he thought that she was married. After she told him that she wasn't, he warmed up to her, especially when she told him that she was going to give the baby up for adoption. In the end, he gave her his address and agreed to write back and forth.

I mentioned in my last letter that she was seriously considering giving it up. Well she has decided that it would be the best thing for both her and the baby. I agree as does the family. Shenan has settled down but Emily still refuses to talk about it. Things had calmed down with them to the point that we are going home to Roanoke for Christmas.

Anyway, I have been doing a lot of thinking myself. I have always wanted children and could never have any of my own. What if we were to adopt Ruth Ann's baby? I'm still young enough to be a mother. A lot of women in their forties have small children.

I know that I'm hitting you out of the blue with this, but what do you think? Your mother thinks its an excellent idea because it would keep the baby in the family. Take some time to at least consider it and let me know what you think. I know that you were a wonderful father to Sandy and Austin. You have so much to pass along that it would be a shame not to.

I can't think of anything that would make my love for you more complete than to have a family together. But if that will never be, I'm content to just have you. I have loved you for such a long time, and now that we have each other, I'm happier than I ever thought possible.

Just be careful out there and come home to me. That's on order Admiral. (I bet there aren't very many Commanders who can give orders to an Admiral are there.)

*Love, always and forever, madly, truly, deeply,
Ramona.*

The notion of adopting Ruth Ann's baby caught him off guard. That was something he would have to give some thought to before responding. He just accepted the fact that she couldn't have any children and left it at that. He decided to sleep on it before responding.

December 4, 1944

Aboard the USS Reprisal, Kossol Roads, Palau

Dear Ramona

I take it that you haven't got the letter that I wrote from Ceylon.. We have come a long ways in the last six weeks and few days. Here we are, halfway around the world from where we started. On the way we socked it to both the Germans and the Japanese. We get a few days rest and we'll be going back out again on another offensive.

Palau is part of Micronesia. If you look at the globe, find Western New Guinea and go straight north for 575 miles. Then find the island of Mindanao at the southern end of the Philippines and go straight west for 550 miles. Palau is where those two lines intersect.

These Islands were first discovered by Magellan in 1522 and were under Spanish control until the end of the Spanish American War in 1899. At that time, they were sold to Germany. Japan seized them from Germany in 1914 during the First World War and we took them from Japan back in September.

When we got here yesterday, there were two letters from you waiting for me, the one was dated the 10th and the other the 24th. Evidently there is another letter somewhere between here and there. I'm glad that you got together with your family for Thanksgiving. That must have been a real treat for you. We had Thanksgiving dinner at sea, after crossing the equator two days earlier. The crossing is always a fun time!

Now about Shorty and Freddy, thanks for trying to find them. Hopefully you'll

hear something back from Wilma and Susan.

I also want to thank you for looking after Ruth Ann. You seemed to really connect with her, like you did with Emmaline. Now in response to your proposal. Wow! You really caught me off guard there. I miss having the kids and I really enjoyed being a father. I guess I thought that I'd never have that opportunity again. I hadn't thought about adoption.

I know how happy it would make you, but I'm half a world away. How am I going to sign all of the papers and everything that we'd have to go through. The timing just isn't right.

I'm not sure it would be fair to Ruth Ann. Every time she came around, there would be the child that she gave up looking back at her. Can you imagine how painful that would be for her? I'm sure my mother loves the idea. But the way I see it, I'm not sure that it would be the best for Ruth Ann or the child. If you were to ask either my father or Walt, I'm sure that they would say pretty much the same thing.

Perhaps after the war when we settle down, we can consider adopting some older children and still have a family. There you asked me what I thought, there you have it. I think it's a great idea but the wrong circumstances.

I agree that having children would just sweeten the deal. But if not, I'm content to spend the rest of my life with just you. We have a lot of good years ahead of us. I promise that I'll be careful and I will come home to you. But first, I have job to do.
Love Sheffield

P.S. Thanks for remembering my birthday.

For the next few days, the Reprisal, the other ships of the task force, and those gathered for next operation rode at anchor in the lagoon. Since Kossol Roads was a temporary base of operations, there were no shore installations. Various store ships with everything from dry stores to refrigerated stores to spare parts resupplied the ships. Tankers were available to fill their fuel tanks.

In such a primitive setting, the crews had to remain aboard since there was no place to go for shore leave. Even the carrier retained its air group aboard since there was no place for them to land.

Sheffield and his staff, having received their orders, were busy planning their move for the upcoming

mission. On Thursday as they concluded their staff meeting, Reggie brought in enough cake and ice cream to serve everyone. He thought he was going to escape a public celebration, but too many people knew his birthday, including Captain Owen, Ensign Gover, and Petty Officer Jackson. They weren't going to let the occasion of Admiral Brason's forty sixth birthday go unnoticed.

Sheffield had reflected on it privately all day. It was also Geannie's birthday as well and he thought about her a lot and missed her terribly. It was the third anniversary of the day that she, Sandy, and Austin were taken from him.

He thought about Ramona and how she had filled the void in his life and how much he loved her. Perhaps her suggestion of adoption wasn't a bad idea. He now had a new wife, perhaps someday there could be children again too. But now wasn't the time, and Ruth Ann's baby wasn't the child.

On Sunday Morning, December 10th, Admiral Brason took his task force, now designated Task Force 77.5, including the Willamette and her escorts, out of Kossol Roads, bound for the Philippines. They were followed by Admiral Theodore Rudder's larger Task Force 77.12 consisting of three battleships, four cruisers, Rear Admiral Felix Stump's six escort carriers, and eighteen destroyers.

Sheffield's task force, being faster, quickly out distanced the other groups and reached their launch position in the South China Sea, east of Luzon on the 14th. In conjunction with Vice Admiral John McCain's three carrier task groups in the Philippine Sea to the east, planes from the Reprisal began making concentrated air attacks on enemy airfields on Luzon.

For the next three days, the Reprisal operated around the clock, constantly keeping planes in the air over enemy targets. As a result of the efforts of the Reprisal and the seven large and six light carriers under Admiral McCain, the occupation of Mindoro was accomplished unopposed. In the process, two Hellcats from the Wildcats, three from the Alleycats and two Avengers from the Night Hawks were lost. Not once during the operation did the task force come under air attack.

With their mission completed, the task force was joined by the Willamette and her escorts and spent the 17th refueling as they made their way east. Rather than return to Kossol Roads, the task force dropped anchor at Seeadler Harbor further south and east at Manus Island on Thursday the 21st of December, with the air group ashore at the Momote Airfield.

Seeadler Harbor is a large natural harbor located on the eastern tip of Manus in the Admiralty Islands, between the equator and Papua New Guinea. The facilities were much more developed than Kossol Roads and afforded opportunities for shore leave for the men.

During the port call, the ships took on supplies and fuel and rested up for the next outing. Among the things brought aboard the Reprisal were some spare planes to replace the ones lost. There were also two

specialized F6F-5Ps that were specially equipped for photo reconnaissance. Sheffield had hoped for a letter from Ramona. Instead, the missing letter finally caught up with him.

Ramona left work at noon on the Friday before Christmas and came home and loaded up the car for the drive to Roanoke. Ruth Ann was a little nervous about making the trip, but Ramona assured her that everything would be alright. As they traveled along, the two of them sang every Christmas carol they could think of, some of them twice.

Having Ruth Ann living with her, she got to know the young woman very well. She was not the kind of girl that her loose behavior would suggest. She had a good heart and wanted to do right. She had just got a little mixed up on what it meant to be loved and sought it out in the wrong way. She was painfully aware of the error of her ways. She knew that giving up the baby was the right thing to do and that it would give her a fresh start and was considering staying in Washington after the baby was born. Perhaps she would finish college, or maybe just find a job. And hopefully find love the right way. She and Joseph Morrison had already exchanged letters. They had seemed to hit it off at Thanksgiving, who knew what might come of it.

Ramona had received Sheffield's letter and she knew that he was right, now wasn't the time. She was happy to know that he was open to the idea sometime in the future. Having a family of her own was something she had missed out on and longed for. Perhaps Sheffield was right about older children, she seemed to connect well with all of the nieces and nephews.

It was evening by the time that they arrived in Roanoke. As usual, Ellen had supper waiting for them. Shenan and Emily were there as well. At first there was some nervous tension between them and Ruth Ann, but as the evening progressed, the atmosphere eased. When it was time to go home, she went with them.

On Saturday, Ruth Ann and her parents met with Walt in his office. Not wanting to face it alone, Ruth Ann asked Ramona to come with her. Walt, in his smooth ways, opened the discussion in such a way as to not put Ruth Ann on trial. His purpose was to reconcile their differences. Being family as well as their pastor, he knew them well and knew the pitfalls to avoid. The biggest challenge was to get Emily to open up. The two hour meeting ended with tears and hugs. It was a mutual agreement on the part of everyone that Ruth Ann was better off in Washington with Ramona for the time being, if nothing more than to avoid scandal. She had enough to deal with without having to endure gossip and rumors.

Much healing and forgiveness had taken place. Emily finally opened up. She had felt like she was the one who had failed and had built up a pile of unnecessary guilt that had become a barrier between her and her daughter. She felt that somehow she hadn't done all that she could have to keep her daughter on the straight and narrow. More than anything, she realized that it was her unwillingness to discuss the facts of life with her children that gave Ruth Ann a skewed impression of what love was. Fortunately the older ones

had figured it out on their own. She vowed not to make the same mistake with the younger ones, especially Wendalynn who was already nineteen. Hopefully it wasn't too late with her.

Christmas Eve was on Sunday and Ramona accompanied the Brasons to services; that is all those who were home for the holidays. Ruth Ann chose to stay home and out of sight for the reasons decided upon. As Ramona sat there, she missed having Sheffield with her and wondered where in the world he was at that moment and offered a prayer for his safekeeping.

She looked around at the family seated around her. The nieces and nephews were all getting older now. The youngest, Delbert and Curtis, were both sixteen. Many of the nieces and nephews had young families of their own. Seated directly in front of her were Danny and Melissa. Their little girl was now two and a half and they now had a six week old baby boy. This was the first time Danny had been home in some time as he had been deployed to the Pacific with his squadron. He was an accomplished fighter pilot with four kills to his credit, one away from becoming an ace. After returning to San Diego in August, most of his squadron had been reorganized and he was one of the few to remain with Fighting Sixteen. He had been promoted to Lieutenant and was the section leader over three other pilots, two of them fresh from flight school. Currently based at Norfolk, his squadron had been reassigned to the new carrier Bon Homme Richard and would be leavening for her shakedown cruise in three weeks.

She looked at other families of all ages seated about the sanctuary and observed them with their children, Not far away were Michael and Samantha Taylor and their children ages thirteen, eleven, and eight. Other than family, of all the people in the congregation she probably knew Sam the best. She had really gone out of her way to make her feel welcome the first time she came to Roanoke to meet Sheffield's family. She estimated Sam to be about five years younger than herself. They were such a nice family and the children were so well behaved, at least in public.

This time Ramona came prepared for Christmas. Last year she was not prepared for the way the family gave gifts. She had something for everyone and included Sheffield's name on the tags. She had found out how joyful it was to give and see the expressions on the faces of the recipients. Even without Sheffield there, she felt right at home with his family that she had made her own. On Tuesday morning, she and Ruth Ann returned to Washington.

On Christmas Day, Sheffield's thoughts were of home and family. He knew that Ramona had planned on spending it with his family. He was glad that she fit in so well and was accepted by them. That evening, he sat down and wrote to her.

December 25, 1944

Aboard the USS Reprisal, Seeadler Harbor in the Admiralty Islands

Dear Ramona

It is now 8:00 p.m. and Christmas day is almost over. According to my calculations, it is 5:00 a.m. in Roanoke. In a couple more hours, you'll probably be gathered around the Christmas tree with my family to open gifts. I wish I were there with you and had a gift for you to open this Christmas morning. Since I'm not there, I'll open your gift from me for you. It is my heart and it is full of love for you.

I hope you have a nice day there with my family. I'm so happy that have found a family of your own with them. They are some very special people, as you have found out for yourself.

Like every other man out here in this far away port, My thoughts are of home and family. Just like the brand new seaman on his first deployment, admirals get homesick every now and then too.

It hardly felt like Christmas today, other than the calendar saying December 25th. My good friend, Hank Jerry organized a special Christmas dinner for the crew that was held on the flight deck under the tropical sun. My staff and I were invited to join in on the festivities as their guests. It's still strange being a guest aboard the ship that was my home for so long.

When we got here four days ago, your missing letter was waiting for me. Have you ever got my letter from Ceylon yet? Since I last wrote to you, we have been out on a mission and are now getting ready for another. I wish I could tell you more about what I've been up to. It doesn't leave me much to write about.

I can assure you I am safe and well. You'll be relieved to know that on our recent cruise, we dished it out and weren't on the receiving end. Our only losses were acceptable attrition. It certainly wasn't acceptable for those who didn't come back and their families back home. It is a heavy responsibility to give orders that send men out, knowing that some won't come back. The only consolation is that we have hurt the enemy

a lot worse than they have hurt us.

Its a hard thing to do, but if we weren't out here hurting them, I'd hate to think of the the way they'd be hurting us back home. These people and their friends, the Germans, were bent on global conquest and this is the only way to stop them. The sooner we can finish what they started, we can all come home. There might not be peace on earth this Christmas, God willing, next year there will be. Unfortunately, no one knows how much longer it will take

Just know that my thoughts have been with you today, as they are every day, and I hope you have a Merry Christmas.

Grove Sheffield

The rest of the week was spent making preparations to sail. While the ships of his task force were taking on supplies from the various store ships, Admiral Brason called their commanders to a briefing in the flag ready room. The first order of business was instructions from the Operations Officer, Lieutenant Commander Cyrus Frankman concerning their specific orders for the coming operation.

When Commander Frankman was through, Sheffield addressed them directly. "Gentlemen," he began, "this is a different war than what we have been fighting in the Atlantic and we have to approach it differently. Don't let the recent victories fool you. Yeah, sure. Most of the enemy fleet and their air forces were destroyed at the Battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf. They were hurt real bad and just like a wild animal, they are more dangerous now than ever. These people don't think like we do. Life and all we hold dear doesn't mean the same to them. We are a peaceful nation, they are a nation of warriors and their Samurai heritage runs deep.

"Just because they don't have much left to fight with doesn't mean they won't fight. Their determination was made especially evident at Leyte Gulf when they introduced their kamikaze tactics. These people will pay the ultimate sacrifice for victory and they have devised something only they would come up with. The idea of purposely plunging an aircraft into an enemy target, knowing that it meant certain death is not in our way of thinking. But to them, it is a perfectly rational option.

"In the year twelve eighty one, the Mongols invaded Japan for the second time. This invasion was foiled by a large typhoon — known as a kamikaze, or a divine wind. It destroyed much of the invasion fleet numbering four thousand ships and killed over one hundred and forty thousand men. The 'Divine Wind' is revered in Japanese tradition to this very day. Their plan is to do to us with their kamikaze suicide attacks

what that typhoon did to the Mongol fleet.

“An enemy bent on such a mission has nothing to lose by pressing on with their attack. What our planes can't knock out of the sky, our anti-aircraft guns will have to shoot down. The ones that get through will most likely hit what they're aiming for. Just look at what they did to the Franklin and the Intrepid. They're still stateside undergoing repairs and won't be back for a while. Look at what happened to the escort carrier St. Lo. We all want to go home, but not that bad because a lot of us won't make it. Heaven forbid if one hit one of the destroyers.

“This operation will be much more involved than Mindoro and is certain to stir up a hornets nest, although our role in this action will be similar to the last one we have to be on our toes so enroute were going to conduct a lot of gunnery practice and every other drill we can think. We'll also take a swipe at the Japanese along the way. It will be a very busy cruise.

“Now, Lieutenant Commander Ira Daily my Intelligence Officer will brief you on their suicide tactics. Commander Daily.”

Commander Daily did a good job of putting fear into the hearts of those in attendance. He had facts and statistics, but it was the photographs and film footage that convinced them of what they would possibly be going against. The footage of the sinking of the St. Lo was particularly chilling

Sheffield's Task Force 77.5, including the Willamette and her escorts, departed Seeadler Bay on December 27th bound once again for the Philippines. Once at sea, as promised gunnery practice and drills were the order of the day, nighttime was no exception.

On New Year's Eve, the task force passed through the Balaboc Strait, between Palawan and Borneo. The new year was celebrated by attacking Japanese positions on either side of the strait. By daylight on New Year's Day, they were heading north through the South China Sea. The 2nd was set aside for refueling.

During the day on the 5th, while Admiral Barson was bringing his task force into position, the invasion force got a taste of what was to come. The day before the escort carrier Ommaney Bay was hit by a kamikaze and sunk. That day, two escort carriers, two cruisers, three destroyers, and some smaller ships were damaged in kamikaze attacks.

After leaving the Willamett and her escorts behind well before dawn on the 6th, Task Force 77.5 was in position and sent off the first attack of the day, ahead of the carriers of Task Force 38 on the other side of Luzon and the bombardment from the fire support ships just off shore. Despite heavy weather over the former American air bases, Clark Field and Angeles Field, the Reprisal's radar equipped Avengers and Hellcats, and those from the Enterprise and Independence had the assignment to destroy enemy aircraft on the ground before they could get in the air at dawn. Even with radar, the heavy weather limited their

success.

All through the day, the sole Seventh fleet carrier and the hoard of Third Fleet carriers attempted to suppress the hornets nest on Luzon. Despite their best efforts, several enemy planes, mostly kamikazes found the various elements of the invasion force and reigned down on them unmercifully. Sixteen ships were hit, half of them receiving moderate to extensive damage.

Late in the afternoon, as a strike group was returning from attacks on enemy positions on Luzon, six Japanese aircraft saw the planes heading out over the South China Sea. They had been aware of the large carrier force in the Philippine Sea but were unaware of any in the South China Sea. Judging from the small number of planes, they estimated it to be a single carrier and set out to eliminate it. They tagged along at reasonable distance behind the returning planes and on radar appeared to be stragglers returning to the carrier.

It wasn't until the strike group had all landed that their identity was discovered. They were already well within range of the anti-aircraft guns of the task force, so the combat air patrol were unable to intercept. As they enemy planes bore in on the Reprisal, four were blasted out of the sky by intense anti-aircraft fire. The two remaining planes began their fateful dives.

Captain Callister had increased speed to thirty one knots and was maneuvering erratically in an attempt to avoid being hit. The planes kept coming. As Sheffield watched from the flag bridge, it reminded him of the German guided bomb at Salerno. He told his staff to brace themselves. No matter how much the ship twisted and turned, they kept coming. Every gun that could come to bear was shooting at them. At the last minute, the closest plane veered away toward the Seattle. Seconds later it burst into flames and crashed into the aft deck of the cruiser, destroying the aircraft handling crane, both catapults and the hangar facility.

Still, the remaining plane drew closer and closer to the Reprisal. Captain Callister was unable to outmaneuver the Japanese pilot who was committed to sacrificing himself for the emperor. Finally the D4Y Judy burst into flames and exploded just a stern and a little above the level of flight deck. The cockpit and engine, the propeller still spinning, continued on its forward trajectory and crashed into the flight deck just forward of the aft elevator and rolled and tumbled up the flight deck, toward the parked planes. It came to a stop as it tangled in the arrestor gear.

Meanwhile the flaming fuselage sailed over the port corner of the flight deck, dousing it with burning aviation gasoline, and crashed into the sea only a few yards from the hull and began to sink. The burning fuel had spilled into the corner twenty millimeter battery, incinerating the four two man gun crews. It also covered the landing signal officer's platform, killing the LSO and severely burning two others.

Firefighters quickly converged and doused the fire before it could spread. Firefighters also hosed

down the cockpit and engine before it burst into flames. The Reprisal had been lucky, this time. The damage was negligible and casualties were at a minimum, nine killed and six others injured. The ships fighting ability had not been compromised and was able to remain on station. The Seattle had also been lucky. The casualties were slightly higher, but she too was able to remain on station, although she lost her aircraft capabilities.

Once the fire had been put out, Captain Callister ordered the cockpit of the plane opened to see if there were any documents or other information that would be of benefit. Chief Evans and his men found the cockpit to be sealed shut from the outside, giving the pilot no chance of escape. Once they got it open, they found that the body of the pilot had been secured to his seat with a chain and paddle lock. There was no way this poor chap was going to get out of this mission alive.

The body was extricated from the cockpit and taken to sickbay for examination while the remains of the plane was searched for any useful information. The only thing of value was a map, which was in Japanese, of course.

The map and other documents were given to Cryptologic Specialist 1st Class Lincoln Parks on Admiral Brason's staff, for translation and decoding. He had received extensive training to interpret Japanese writing. The map was found to contain the number of kamikaze aircraft at each airfield.

On the pilot's body was his personal information and photograph of him with his family. He was eighteen year old Corporal Isamu Matsuhara of the Imperial Japanese Army Air Service. Ironically Isamu means courage or bravery. From the documentation it was evident that he had only recently completed his flight training and had volunteered for the kamikaze corps. A hand written note said that he had made a vow to avenge the death of his brother who had been killed on Guadalcanal more than two years earlier.

Also found on his body was a copy of the kamikaze pilots' manual. Pilots were given the manual which detailed how they were supposed to think, prepare, and attack. From this manual, pilots were told to "attain a high level of spiritual training," and to keep their health in the very best condition. These things, among others, were meant to put the pilot into the mindset in which he would be mentally ready to die.

It said, "When you eliminate all thoughts about life and death, you will be able to totally disregard your earthly life. This will also enable you to concentrate your attention on eradicating the enemy with unwavering determination, meanwhile reinforcing your excellence in flight skills."

The manual also explained how a pilot may turn back if he could not locate a target and that he should not waste his life lightly. It was very detailed in how a pilot should attack. As the pilot dove towards his target, he was told to never to close his eyes. This was because if he did he would lower the chances of hitting his target. In the final moments before the crash, the pilot was to yell "*Hissatsu*" at the top of his lungs which translates to "Certain Kill".

Once the debris had been cleaned up and the damage repaired, a half an hour later, the Reprisal resumed flight operations and sent aloft the next strike. At first, the body of Corporal Matsuhara was going to be unceremoniously dumped over the side with the wreckage of his plane. When Admiral Brason got wind of it, he insisted that he at least be given a respectful burial.

For the rest of the day and all night and into the next day, sortie after sortie flew off the Reprisal's deck for targets on Luzon. At noon, Captain Callister called a halt to flight operations long enough to conduct the burial at sea for those killed the day before. After the crew was dismissed to resume their duties, without ceremony a detail conducted the burial of the young man who had killed their shipmates. The rest of that day and again that night, the Reprisal continuously launched and recovered aircraft as they delivered bombs, rockets, and fifty caliber machine gun bullets to the enemy.

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The invasion of Luzon and the action described is historical as are the kamikaze attacks, the Reprisal's role is fictional.

