

Upright

by: Vixxy Fox

Peter's scream left his lungs empty, and for a second his eyesight began to fade. His body, kept from floating upwards by the seat straps, then inhaled all on its own, sucking in the 100% oxygen flow coming through his mask. His eyesight sharpened, going immediately to his instruments. They showed what his senses already knew thanks to the flashing warning lights and buzzers. FLAMEOUT!

Blue Fox Striker had seen the missile launch from far below. He was at angels 65, and the pinprick of flame came in his heads up display as exactly that coupled with a red capital letter 'M'.

At this altitude it would take approximately thirty seconds to reach him. Though he had trained for this, it still was a shock to his system to realize someone was actually trying to kill him.

"Randy," his grandfather had told him when he was just a kit, "There will always be a guard dog at yor heels lick'n and snarl'n, trying to catch you from behind. In all cases, you keep yor head together and stay upright. Never ever show'em yor belly. Nor should you, under any circumstances, snarl and snap back. That's wasted time, when you need to be concentrating on getting away."

They had feasted that night on a goose the old tod had stolen, and as they ate, he told them the story and then showed that the tip of his tail had been nipped clean off. With a wink, he added, "But I stayed upright, and he didn't get me."

"Slameye!" the pilot called out over frequency indicating a SAM launch, "Low and climbing to angels 65, evasive protocol six." He called six based upon the distance/time to intercept as called out by his heads-up display. Six was hypersonic which was still relatively new... and especially dangerous.

"Execute!" Control called back. "Good luck."

The Fox could have plugged in the aircraft AI for maneuvering, but instinctively he knew one computer chasing another was too similar, and he would just feel too vulnerable with a machine



controlling things. Logic was not always a good defense against logic. His mind quickly reverted to species. He was a Fox, and the incoming SAM was now the dog.

‘DON’T YAP!’ his grandfather’s voice yelled within his mind, causing him to blink, ‘YOU’LL DROP THE GOOSE.’

His aircraft’s warning system began to sound off at the ten second mark, and the pilot heard the dog barking, its hot breath hard upon his bung hole. He wanted to curse, but held his tongue and activated the chaff/flare system.

The missile continued on without deviation.

Randy almost verbalized his angst... almost... at the five second mark, he pushed his control stick all the way forward and activated the afterburners. The effects on his body were immediate, his body becoming light within the inverted ‘G’ evasive maneuver. Inversely to high positive ‘G’ maneuvers, the blood rushed to his head... and then he was headed towards the earth at near MACH 3.

The effect was ten times worse than falling down a very deep well, and his scream was instinctive... and then came the flame out. Though accidental, this was a good thing, as the SAM attempted a turn in continuation of its tracking. With the heat signature instantly gone in the subzero atmosphere of the high altitude, the dog became confused, continuing its turn, and then, at no less than MACH 5, streaked past the falling aircraft; blowing up when its proximity radar faintly sensed closeness.

Blue Fox Striker was riddled with shrapnel, and his tail soundly nipped. A hole appeared in the canopy on both sides of the pilot’s head as a large ball bearing like piece of the warhead passed through, missing the kill by less than an inch.

“BFS, status?” called control.

“Flameout, and fragged,” he called back, hardly even noticing the effort of doing so.

Though the engines were out, the battery backup system was still operating. Randy saw in his heads up the altitude quickly slipping away as he moved his controls ever so slightly testing aircraft integrity.

‘Air start checklist,’ he voiced, and this popped up to one side of his vision.

Not getting the response he desired, and following the check list, he armed the RAT (ram air turbine). When he was down to a safe speed, it would automatically drop, giving him proper electrical and hydraulics. With that, he began his slowing maneuvers, attempting to get his nose

up, and speed reduced so he could affect an in-air start. Following the list put up in the HUD, he reduced his throttles to the idle position, and made sure the igniters were on 'constant'.

He was about to call in a 'mayday' when his grandfather's voice again warned against it. "STAY UPRIGHT! DO NOT DROP THE GOOSE OR THE DOG WILL GET YOU!"

Kicking the rudder back and forth, he saw his airspeed bleeding down. With his nose coming up, he was now close to entering a flat spin, and that would not be a good thing.

THUNK... and the RAT dropped down into the airstream. Immediately he had full electrical power and his aircraft came back to life. Taking a deep breath of the 100% oxygen, he pushed the stick forward slightly, getting the engine intakes back to where a good amount of air was passing over the compressors, spinning them up. Glancing to his instruments in the HUD, he saw the engine indicators moving upwards, and then with a soft thump, the engines come back to life.

Glancing towards the place where the SAM had been launched, he saw the second part of his element, closing on the launcher, their backs towards the attacker as they waited for a 'kill confirmed' call in from their spotter units.

"Hound Dog," the other pilot voiced over the radio. (I see something I want to shoot.)

'Kill,' Control called back.

"Pickle, pickle, pickle," was called out and two air to ground missiles were fired, streaking in to a fiery resolution. A secondary strafing run was accomplished, with the aircraft's continued pass, and their mission was finished. Once past, Randy's wingman was coming back up to give him a look over.

"Control, Blue Fox Striker, engines up, RTB (return to base) requested. Pucker Factor 10."

There came laughter through his headset, and then, "Proceed... BFS... good job. We've got a clean uniform waiting for you."