

5. From War and Remembrance, by Herman Wouk (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 1:333-334:

Over the horizon, after half an hour's flight, smoke pointed down at the victims. McClusky had three surviving torpedo planes in his group, but orders were to use torpedoes only if no AA was still firing. Seen through binoculars from ten thousand feet, the two vessels were unbelievably smashed up—guns askew, bridges dangling, torpedo tubes and catapults hanging crazily, amid drifting smoke and jumping flames. The Hornet fliers had reported them as battleships, but to Warren they looked much like a pair of ruined Northamptons. Both ships were putting up meager little squirts of AA tracers and a few black explosions.

"Well, that lets out the TBDs." McClusky's voice came in clearly. He assigned the dive-bomber sections to the two cruisers, and the attack began.

The first section, led by Galleher, did a businesslike job; at least three hits sent up smoke and flame in billows, and the AA fire died away. As Warren prepared to lead his section down to the fiery shambles far below, he looked back at Peter Goff, and held up a palm outward, in a last friendly admonition to take it easy; then he pushed over in the familiar maneuver, straightened into a dive, and there was the blazing cruiser squarely in his telescope sight.

When he had dived about a thousand feet through sporadic and feeble AA, Warren's plane was hit. At the alarming jolt, and the grinding, gruesome noise of tearing metal, and the queer sight of a ragged piece of his blue wing flying away, with cherry-colored fire licking out of the stump, his first feeling was stupefied surprise. He had never thought he would be shot down, though he had known the risks. With his death sentence before his eyes he still could not believe it. His future stretched before him for so many years—so well-planned, so real, so important! But he had only a few more seconds to pull off something miraculous and even as these vertiginous thoughts whirled through his shocked brain and he jerked futilely at the controls, the fire flared all along the broken wing, and in the earphones he heard Cornett screaming something frightened but incomprehensible. The plane fell sideways and began to spin downward, shaking fearfully, with fire shooting from the engine. The blue sea turned round and round before Warren's eyes, framed in flames. He could see white breaking wave tops not far below. He tried frantically to open his canopy, but could not. He called to Cornett to jump, with no response. The cockpit grew hotter, and in the intense heat his rigid body hanging there in his straps struggled and struggled. At last it involuntarily relaxed. There was nothing more to do, after all. He had done his best, and now it