

Mick Dever

by David Ackley

The P-36 used for gunnery exercises was twitchy and stubborn, a handful even for Mick Dever, who, if you put an engine on it, could fly a two by four through a culvert. He'd pancaked in a Mexicali cactus patch, the third from the squadron that week, but the only one who came down south of the border and was temporarily detained by the Federales. Still it looked like it would blow over until the exec, a groundling who hated fliers and Mick in particular, called him in just for the pleasure of chewing him out, and ordered Mick to recite the mission of the Army Air Corps. *Flying, golf, loose women and sour mash bourbon*, Mick said. *In no particular order*. The exec shot upright and leaned across the desk, so mad he couldn't speak, and while he choked on his spleen, Charles hustled Mick out the door. *He'll make your life hell*, Charles said. Mick said, *Nah. The army's got too much invested in me. Fuck him on general principles. Let's go get a beer*. That was Mick then, but it was really all the fliers, every swinging dick: the army might have custody of their young asses, but once it was dirt down and wheels up, they owned the wild blue yonder, all the way out to infinity it sometimes felt.

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