

Flashback

by Larry Strattnr

I retired here. A conscious choice. Not like, I'm done working so I'll just stay here, type bullshit. Rather, it's quiet here. I like it. I can live. There's a hunting season but my house is inside the city limits so you can't discharge a gun; except during a family dispute. Even then it's fifty-fifty you'll get off.

During hunting season I hear guns go off outside the city limits. Most of the deer around here have a higher IQ than the hunters. Even if they happen to get shot the deer get more points in the spread because they're sober. So the word for this place is bucolic. Our town is well maintained. We mow the grass and plant flowers when the snow melts. All that. Kind of like Oregon; we don't wish you were here.

In addition to hunting season, the other loud thing we have is Fourth of July. There are three fireworks displays in easy driving distance. I don't go. I hear the distant subsonic thumps. Been there done that. Sometimes I see the sky light up with displays closest to me. Fuck that. That's close enough.

Last couple years we've had an air show. Our airport is regional. Regional means when you call in for weather the guy at the airport goes over to the door, looks out, says, "Yep I can see the water tower." This visibility check means it's OK to bring in whatever Maude Frickert shitbird you're flying.

I watched our regional air show for a couple years. I live out near the two strip airport. Sat outside on a folding chair. Had a cocktail. I'm partial to straight vodka but my wife made me cut that out. Anyway the air show was mostly Crop Dusters who couldn't get it

up. Harley Riders who came into some money. Wing walkers who hadn't fallen off. Shit like that. I lost interest.

This year I was mowing the lawn while the air show was going on. I sharpen the blade after every mow. You wouldn't believe how good the lawn looks.

How the fuck was I supposed to know they had a Tomcat fighter signed up for the show? It's hard for me to tell you about planes when you're a ground guy like me. A guy who likes the smell of dirt. It's hard for me to tell you about noise when you're a fucking dweeb that grew up in this town. For you, noise is the fourth of July.

The Tomcat came in from the Northeast. Me, mowing the front yard, didn't hear it until it was past me; a shattering BOOM. Going away the Tomcat pilot lit his afterburners, two evil red eyes. In the jungle the boom came just before the napalm storm. That boom was the four horsemen; the end of fucking days. Eyes of fire; looking at you.

I filled the gas tank on the lawnmower before I started mowing. It's why they found me so quick. I left it running on the front lawn while I dug a hidey hole under the bushes in my garden shrubs.

My neighbor across the street is a sweetheart. She told her kids when the flashing lights were here, "Mr. Bronson was looking for something in his garden and got stuck under the bushes. They had to help him get out." That's for fucking sure. I was looking for my former self. I was looking to not be caramelized.

Anyway, I'm better now.

