

BLOOD Of atlantis

by Lycanthris

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chapter one

from the sky

Cap! Captain! Wake-up, sir!” A thick Brooklyn accent was shouting into Mike Kewish’s ear, trying to reel him in, back to reality. Though the voice was shouting, it was barely audible over the deafeningly loud, monotonous drone of engines.

Brooklyn? What the hell am I doing in Brooklyn? I wasn’t in Brooklyn a few seconds ago... There were trees, and... stone towers? A castle maybe...?

“Captain! You need to wake-up, sir!” the voice demanded again, and he was shook violently. “Damn air-sickness pills!” the voice added.

BANG!

The loud thrum of the engines was drowned out by an even louder explosion that shook Mike ten-times more violently than before, finally snapping him out of semi-consciousness.

Thunder? No... Flak! I’m in a plane. We must be over Normandy! the pieces finally came together in his head. “John!” the name belonging to the Brooklyn accent formed on his lips before his brain caught up. He reached up and clutched a uniformed shoulder. He looked up at a face that had brown eyes, wide with concern. He could barely recognize the face of his Company First Sergeant, John Caprinelli, underneath the black grease that smeared his face, and the helmet covered by a small net that had been stuffed with small bits of foliage.

“Cap! Thank God! I thought those damned air-sickness pills had put you out for good! Half the damn stick is unconscious!”

Mike looked around. Indeed, half of the paratroopers in the back of the C-47 cargo plane seemed to be slumbering, pleasantly unaware of the shaking aircraft. Mike could now hear less distinct explosions intermittently over the sound of the engines. Then another extremely loud, nearby one that shook the plane even more than normal.

“How long since the flak started?” Captain Kewish asked as he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes.

“Just a couple of minutes, sir. We just crossed over the Channel. We’re still a little ways from the drop-zone. At first, I thought it’d be alright to let you and the guys grab a quick snooze, but then the AA started, and nobody woke-up. It’s them damn air-sickness pills they made us take, sir! My mother took ‘em a couple years ago when she flew out to California to see my brother; said they made her sleep the whole damn flight!”

“You were right to wake me, Sergeant. Let’s get the other guys awake; if the flak gets worse, we may have to jump early.”

“Yes, sir!” Sergeant Caprinelli replied, and moved down the narrow aisle between the two rows of soldiers, shaking, and shouting at them one by one.

Mike was situated across from the jump-door at the rear of the plane. Clouds whipped by outside, interspersed by bits of deep indigo sky. When they weren’t obscured by clouds, he could barely make out the forms of other C-47s stretching out into the darkness in their staggered flying formation. Flashes of orange and yellow fire broke the darkness, quickly resolving themselves into puffs of black smoke as anti-aircraft shells exploded between the fleet of drop-ships.

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Mike looked down the dual rows of soldiers, and saw that Sergeant Caprinelli had gotten them all awake. He grabbed a hand hold on the ceiling, and hoisted himself up. "Equipment check!" he ordered over the combined rumble of the engines and the increasingly persistent anti-aircraft barrage.

Caprinelli made his way down the line, and took his seat opposite Captain Kewish, next to the jump-door, and checked his own harness, and other equipment. "Hey, Cap," the sergeant said, leaning across the aisle, so he could lower his voice. "Y'know I found another one o' them dirty comic books that's been floatin' around."

Mike chuckled. For several months now, homemade pornographic comic books had been surfacing among the company. While they were completely against regulations, they did seem to boost the morale of the men. They certainly boosted the morale of Captain Kewish, who was none other than the one drawing them. Though he had graduated college with a degree in chemistry the summer before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and the US entered the war, his real passions had been art, languages, and writing. He had been drawing and writing stories for nearly all his life, and had learned seven different languages. Of course, the fact that he was the author of these pornographic comic books was known to no one other than himself, since if he had been found out, it would likely have meant court-martial at worst, or a dishonorable discharge at best. It did make things easier, being the leader of the company, as whenever one of the comics found its way to battalion, he was the one tasked with tracking down its author.

"Was it any good this time?" he asked, jokingly.

"Oh yeah," Caprinelli grinned as he chewed a stick of gum loudly. "Full o' hot dames, doin' stuff that would make a hooker blush! Only..." he added with hesitation.

"Yeah?" Mike asked. He tried feigning only mild interest by continuing to check his own gear.

"Why do you figure that he... I mean the guy that's drawin' them books... Why do you figure that he draws all them hot broads as animals?"

Mike faked considering this for a moment. "Maybe... Maybe animals are easier to draw?"

"How do ya figure?"

"Well... We know what humans look like too well. When a person goes to draw them, it's too easy to spot minor imperfections in the representation. With animals, they aren't our own kind, so we don't notice the little things. A representation will seem perfect, even if it isn't."

"Ya think?" Caprinelli asked as he considered.

"I don't know," Kewish feigned guessing at the artist's thought-process. "Or maybe animals are more interesting to draw? You can do all kinds of different colors with them, but we're all just a bunch of pink blobs on a sheet of paper."

"Ah... I guess," John shrugged. "But, you don't think it's weird? Like... uh... whaddo they call it?" he paused as he searched for the word, "Bestiality?"

Mike again pretended to give consideration to this before responding, "No. No, I don't think so." Normally, this wasn't a topic of conversation that an officer would get into with an NCO; a non-commissioned officer; but Kewish and Caprinelli had become good friends. Perhaps more so than an officer and an enlisted man should be.

"Really?"

"No, 'cause it's not like they're four-legged, base-animals is it? They're anthropomorphized."

"Anthro-po-whatsit?"

Kewish chuckled, "Anthropomorphized; it means that they've been made human-like. They're drawn walking around on two-legs, with regular hands, and doing human stuff, with human thoughts and feelings."

Caprinelli scratched his chin, clearly confused by the whole matter.

"Think about this, John; would you fuck an alien?"

"Would I what?"

"Fuck an alien. If some hot dame from outer space landed in her flying saucer, and offered to screw you, would you nail her?"

"What? You mean like a broad from Mars?" Caprinelli asked, taken aback by the odd question.

"Yeah. Exactly."

"Whaddoes she look like?"

"Just like a human, only say, she's got green skin, 'cause she's Martian."

Sergeant Caprinelli considered the question for a few moments. "Yeah. Yeah, I suppose I would," he finally answered.

"OK. Now suppose that she's also got pointy ears, like an elf?"

"Yeah, I'd still screw her."

"Now suppose instead of green skin, she's got soft green fur over her whole body, but other than that, looks the same."

"Still hot, an' everything?"

"Yup."

"Yeah, I'd still do her."

"And if she had a tail too?"

Caprinelli again considered. "I dunno, I guess so."

"There ya go; you got yourself a hot, fur-covered dame with a tail, just like in those comic books."

Caprinelli chuckled, "You're a smart one, Cap. Did you learn all that while bangin' them cheerleaders in college?"

Mike smiled wryly, "A gentleman never tells." *But he does write it down and draw it*, he thought to himself. For indeed, many of the books were based on his exploits whilst a student.

They sat in silence for a good while, as the clouds outside the door continued to be illuminated sporadically by anti-aircraft fire. Another close burst rocked the plane, and many of the men murmured their apprehension. "I gotta tell ya, Cap," Sergeant Caprinelli shouted across the way, "me and the guys are glad to be jumpin' into this with someone who's been in combat before!"

Mike had fought with the 1st Army Division, The Big Red One, in North Africa in '42, before transferring into the 101st Airborne, The Screaming Eagles, to train with the paratroopers for what would turn out to be the invasion of Fortress Europe. Most of the officers and men of the division had been plucked straight from the recruiting office, and had been in training since '42. Very few, like Kewish, had served in combat before. They were all volunteers, though. Every single man had, of his own free will, decided to jump out of a perfectly good airplane, only to land on the ground with enemies on all sides, and fight his way out. It was either incredibly brave, or incredibly stupid, or perhaps a bit of both; Mike couldn't make up his mind which.

"It's like your first time with a girl, John," Mike shouted back across the aisle, "It's the leading-up to it that's the most nerve-wracking part. Once you get into it, instinct takes over. Then it's over before you know it. Don't worry, John. Your training will take over without you realizing it," he smiled reassuringly.

"I hope so, sir," Caprinelli said, as he turned around to look out the jump-door. The sound of exploding flak was almost constant now, their explosions illuminating the C-47s like a perverse strobe light. The planes began to bob and weave as best they could, to present a harder target to the Nazis bellow.

Suddenly, a huge fireball erupted from a plane about a hundred yards away, as it took a direct hit. The plane split in half along the fuselage; the front half with the wings began to slowly veer off down to the left, while the rear section with the tail whirled rapidly out of control in a flat-spin. No parachutes were seen as the front section exploded into a French field. The rear section clipped the wing of another C-47 on its downward spiral, causing the second aircraft to likewise plummet out of control.

"Dear, God!" John muttered as he saw the second plane impact with no chutes deployed.

Mike got to his feet again, "Everybody, on your feet! Hook-up!" he shouted, gesturing his finger in a hook motion towards the line running down the spine of the plane, to which the paratroopers attached their rip-cords. When all of the fifteen men in their stick had gotten to their feet, and hooked their lines up, he shouted, "Equipment check!" again, this time adding, "Sound-off!"

It started with the second-to-last man checking the gear of the last man. He patted the last man on the shoulder, who then shouted "Fifteen OK!"

The second to the last man then turned around, and was checked himself by Fifteen.

"Fourteen OK," he shouted when he was patted on the shoulder.

It was Fourteen's turn to check again, as he looked over Thirteen's gear.

"Thirteen OK!" came the call, then Thirteen checked Twelve, and so on down the line, until Caprinelli checked Captain Kewish, and patted him on the shoulder.

"One OK!" Mike shouted. "When you hit the ground, get your chute off quickly, and get your weapon out!" he reminded his men. "Link-up with the first man you come across, and make your way to the rendezvous-point! Remember your codewords! Flash!" he shouted.

"Thunder!" his troops responded.

Just then, the red light in the compartment came on, signifying that they were close to the drop-zone. It was their final warning, if they hadn't already had gotten ready to jump. Outside, the sky was thick with black smoke from the anti-aircraft shells. Mike saw another plane hit, erupt into flames, and peel off like the previous ones. Men came tumbling out of the rear door this time, but they were all in flames, and their chutes opened in useless, mini-fireballs as they plummeted to the ground.

Poor bastards! Mike thought, as he watched. He hoped John and the others hadn't seen.

The light turned green, "Let's go!" Mike shouted, and he stepped out from the plane. A blast of air from the propellers took hold of him, and he was ripped away. He felt a weight leave his left leg as he clamped them together, and folded his arms over his chest. His chute opened, jerking him violently. Then, the deafening sound of the engines and the wind were gone, and there was only the sound of explosions from the flak guns, and sporadic bursts of fire from machine-guns on the ground. He looked down, and realized the much-vaunted leg-bag that held his M-1 rifle had broken away due to the shock of the prop-blast. "Fuck!" he muttered to himself, as he came closer to the ground. *At least I still have my .45*, he thought, remembering his officer's pistol.

The closer he got to the ground, the more quickly it seemed to be coming at him, and finally he hit, letting his body go limp, and crumple as he absorbed the shock of impact. There was a thick fog on the ground that night, that helped obscure him once he landed. Captain Kewish quickly dragged in his chute, and unbuckled himself from his jump harness. He had to remove his helmet to get off his Mae West; the life-preserver the soldiers had nicknamed after the busty pin-up girl.

Drawing his sidearm from the holster on his belt, he crouched down, while he figured out his next move. He had landed in a wheat field, grown tall, that in addition to the thick fog, helped to provide him cover. There was a copse of trees not far away, and looking up, he saw more chutes coming down in that direction. He made up his mind to head for the trees. There, obscured by the foliage, he could hopefully get a look at his map with a flash light, and try to discern a landmark.

Mike crept along painfully slow, still crouching to help conceal himself, and ears perked for any sound of movement. He made it the hundred or so yards to the stand of trees without encountering either enemies or friends. Once inside the trees, he finally came across someone; however, this someone was dead.

One of his fellow US paratroopers, a man from the 82nd Airborne by the unit patch on his arm, was hanging lifeless by his parachute lines from a tree. It looked as though an anti-aircraft round had exploded close to him; his face was bloody and lacerated, and his neck had a huge gash in it, which had no doubt severed his carotid artery. Mike holstered his pistol, drew a combat knife from his boot-sheath, and cut the fallen soldier down. Fortunately for Captain Kewish, this man had *not* lost the leg-bag containing his M-1 rifle,

and so Mike scavenged that along with whatever ammunition he could find on the man. He pulled off one of the man's dog-tags; 'Chase, Aaron, Private First Class'; and concealed the body of the soldier as best as he could, hoping that he would be able to report his location at some point, so that Chase's body could eventually be claimed.

Kewish moved deeper into the trees, and when he thought he was well-obscured from view, he pulled a flashlight from his web belt, and a map and compass he had concealed in his underwear. He checked the map but he didn't see anything resembling the landscape that he had glimpsed on his descent to Earth. Given that Chase was from the 82nd, Mike figured that he could be almost anywhere. Either he had landed in the wrong drop zone, or Chase had, or they both had. He put away the map, flashlight, and compass, and continued to the other side of the trees. He would have to hope that he came across some more identifiable position that he could use to fix his location.

As he approached the edge of the copse of trees, on the far side from where he had entered, he heard a twig snap. "Flash!" he cried in a whisper, swinging his newly acquired rifle around to point at the noise.

"Thunder! Thunder!" came the urgently whispered reply, and a figure emerged from the fog-laden rushes beyond the trees. "Captain Kewish, is that you, sir?"

"Moore?" Mike asked, still whispering, as he squinted at the silhouette of the man.

"Yes, sir! Boy, am I glad to see you, sir!" Moore said in obvious relief as he rushed up to where Mike had half-concealed himself behind a large oak. Private Moore had been one of the men in Kewish's stick, that had jumped from the same plane as him.

"Got your weapon, Moore?"

"Yes, sir. Right here, sir," Moore said, holding up his own Garand Rifle.

"Good. Well, let's see if we can't find some of the other guys, and set to work pissing ol' Adolph off," Mike grinned.

"Yes, sir!" Moore grinned back.

Kewish led the way out into the rushes that lay beyond the trees. He and Moore each found a leg-bag that had broken loose from its original owner. They took the rifles inside with them, in case any of their own troops they might encounter might have lost their own weapons as Mike had. They found Sergeant Caprinelli and another private, Windbourne, crouched in a ditch alongside a road on the other side of the rush-filled field. Caprinelli was armed with the powerful Thompson sub-machine-gun, and Windbourne was carrying a Browning Automatic Rifle, a powerful, but very heavy weapon that had a limited ammunition capacity, given how fast it could spit rounds out at the enemy.

With Moore and Windbourne shielding him and his flashlight from view whilst Caprinelli covered them with his Thompson, Mike again checked his map and compass. With the road, the rush-filled marsh, the copse of trees, and the wheat field on the far side of the trees as land-marks, Kewish now could locate them on his map. They were several miles outside of their drop zone, and about ten miles from the objective they had been assigned to take that night.

He led his small squad towards their objective, staying in the ditch alongside the road as far as they could. About fifteen minutes later, they encountered two more soldiers from the 82nd, alive this time, though one was without a weapon. The other had lost the M-1 he had originally been assigned, and acquired a Thompson in the same manner as Mike had. The unarmed man was given Moore's spare M-1, and as the other man was more comfortable with the Garand than the Thompson, he traded weapons with Captain Kewish, so that Mike now had his pistol, the spare rifle he had found, and the sub-machine-gun. Kewish assumed command of the two men from the 82nd until they could find an officer from their own division. About an hour after that, they ran into four more men from their own company, all armed. Kewish's group of strays continued to make their way carefully to the small village and crossroads they had been assigned to take, and hold.

Three hours after his feet had touched dirt, Kewish and his rag-tag squad came upon some more of the men from their own stick who were being pinned-down behind an old stone wall by heavy machine-gun fire from a squad of Nazis occupying a half-ruined French farm house. There were six of their own men, and a seventh, dead one lying propped against the wall. The German MG-42 could spit out rounds so fast, that unlike other machine-guns, it was impossible to distinguish the sound of each successive round being fired. The unending roar of the gun was as much a weapon as the bullets it fired; paralyzing with fear the men who were faced with it. Captain Kewish had encountered this weapon before, in North Africa.

"Flash!" he shouted over the roar of the gun as he and his squad crept up to the men pinned behind the wall.

"Thunder!" several of them cried.

The pinned-down men were being led by a Sergeant Bailey. "Thank God it's you, sir!" Bailey gasped with relief at the sight of Kewish and his men.

"What's the situation?" Kewish shouted over the machine-gun fire.

"We think there's about a dozen krauts, holed-up in that farm house with the MG-42, sir," Bailey reported.

"Right. Caprinelli; you, Windbourne, and these boys from the 82nd will stay here and provide suppressing fire. Bailey, you take your men here, go right. Get across the road and into the ditch on the other side. Then make your way up to the farm house, and make an assault. Moore, you and the rest of you men," he said, indicating the other soldiers that had come along with him, "are with me. We're going to go up the left-hand side, along that field and then we'll squeeze 'em between your group and mine, Bailey."

"Yes, sir!" Bailey and his group of soldiers said. They were obviously relieved to have a plan, and enough men on their side to get the job done.

"How long since they switched barrels on that gun?" Mike asked. The one weakness of the MG-42 was that it spit rounds out at such a high volume that its barrel heated up to the point where it was unusable. The German's solution to this was to carry a spare barrel that could be quickly traded for the hot one, and to alternate between the two until their enemies were killed, or they ran out of ammunition. Unfortunately, there was no telling how much ammo the Nazis had, and they couldn't wait around all night for them to use it up. There was the cross-roads that they had been tasked with seizing and holding, so that the Nazis couldn't bring in reinforcements when their fellow soldiers stormed the beaches in the morning.

"They haven't let up since we first ran into 'em, sir," Bailey answered.

"Good, that means they're about due for a barrel-change. Get your men in position to break across the road. John, as soon as they let up, hit 'em hard!"

"You got it, Cap," Caprinelli nodded.

Mike led his assault team, crouching, as they made their way down the length of the stone wall to where it ended, and gave way to open field. He had saved the more daunting assault route for himself, knowing that Bailey and his men had needed to get moving to restore their morale, but that sending them into the open field would have quickly gotten the harangued men killed. The men he was leading into battle hadn't been bullied by the Nazi machine-gun for the last fifteen minutes, and were fresh, and ready for combat.

Then the roar from the German gun ceased, and Caprinelli's Thompson sounded its own fierce roar, accompanied by Windbourne's BAR, and the rifles of the two men from the 82nd.

"Move! Move! Move!" Captain Kewish cried as he led the five men in his team around the stone wall, and in a mad dash towards another stone wall at the opposite side of the field that lay between them and the farm house. That wall ran all the way up to the house, and looked to actually be worked into its construction. It would provide good cover for them to make their final assault on the ruined house.

They only made it about halfway, though, before the MG-42 roared back to life. Mike and his men did baseball-like slides for cover behind a large oak tree, and the corpses of two cows lying in the field. Red mist erupted from the cattle as the German bullets hit them. Moore and Ritter, the two fastest men in the

company, had outpaced Mike, and made it to the large oak tree. Mike was lying prone in mud saturated with cow's blood behind a cow about ten feet away from the tree. Next to him was Jones, and behind the other cow, another ten or so feet away, were Schnexayder, a rather portly Cajun; who was not surprisingly bringing up the rear; and Wilkes. Caprinelli, Windbourne, and the two riflemen from the 82nd were still attempting to keep their fire up on the deadly German gun, but they were now forced to shoot blindly over the top of the stone wall.

"We need to keep their attention on us, so that Bailey can make his assault!" Captain Kewish shouted. "Jonesie, I want you, Schnex, and Wilkes to lay down some fire from here. Moore; you, Ritter, and I will make a break for the wall. When we're there, we'll lay down fire, and the three of you," he gestured to Jones, Schnexayder, and Wilkes, "make your break."

"Yes, sir!" his men assented.

"Let's do it!" Mike cried. He rose up over the top of the cow and fired a quick burst from his Thompson before making a run for the wall. Moore and Ritter likewise fired a few shots from either side of the tree before making their own mad dash. Jones, Schnexayder, and Wilkes did as they were told and added a barrage of rifle fire to that of Caprinelli and his men. Moore and Ritter reached the wall quickly, skidding around it, and onto their bellies. Mike managed to dive over the wall, just as the Germans caught-on to their maneuver, and the ground just behind him was peppered with machine-gun rounds.

Now Captain Kewish, Moore, and Ritter began laying fire on the Germans, while the other three ran for the safety of the stone wall. As they were about halfway there, they heard a grenade go off, and then more rifle fire as Bailey's team made their assault. With the German squad distracted, Mike and his men abandoned caution, and ran along the wall to the farm house.

They were perhaps ten yards from the house, when a Nazi soldier burst forth from a door, a rifle in his hands. Mike slowed to bring his Thompson to bear on the German, but he skidded in the mud. The German spun on the spot to face them, bringing up his rifle. He only got off one shot from his bolt-action rifle before being brought down in a hail of gun fire by Mike's men, but that one shot was all that was needed.

A loud 'ping' sounded as the bullet struck Mike's helmet. He staggered on the spot, slipped in the mud, and fell backwards to the ground. He felt nothing. He could not tell if the bullet had actually entered his brain, or if he had merely been dazed by it impacting off his helmet at such close range.

"Sir!", "Captain!" came the cries of Moore and the other men. They sounded slow, and low-pitched; like a phonograph that was playing at a fraction of its normal speed.

Mike was on his back now, looking up at the indigo sky, streaked with clouds, as though by a paint brush. *It's beautiful*, he thought. Schnex's big, round Cajun face came into view; *Not so beautiful*. There were Moore's, Ritter's, Jonesie's and Wilkes's faces too, above Schnex's.

"Cap'n Kewish!" Schnex shook him. His Cajun accent sounded even more odd, slowed down as it was.

Then everything went black.