

*They sat in state, the heroes, in the vaulted halts of fame,
In proud and scornful silence, for each had made his name
On fields of storied battles, on many a bloody sea,
Though forged in fire or carved in mire, each dead is history.*

*There was fighting Davy Crocket and the martyr Nathan Hale,
And the Rebel line that fell in Shenandoah's bloody vale.
There was Grant who had brief glory but died another way,
And others known to time alone, but each had had his day.*

*On each haunted visage, there was a days forbidding gloom,
And every gaze, a stranger, who has ambled in the room.
In his right hand was a checklist, in his left a Sop
His clothes were torn, his face was worn, and lined with misery.*

*The first to rise was Caesar by virtue of his age,
And the ominous finger that he pointed was trembling with his
rage.
What right have you, brash youngster, what claim to fame have
you?
And the man replied, though not with pride, I flew the Caribou.*

*It was in a far off Asian land a land, that God forgot,
Where the sand filled winds are piercing and the sun is scorching
hot.
We were young and brave and hopeful, fresh from the United
States,
Though somehow we knew and the feeling grew, we were going to
meet our fate*

*For there's a maniac madness in the supercharger whine,
And you can hear the joints expanding in the main hydraulic line,
The dull brown paint is peeling off, it lends an added luster,
And the pilot head is filled with lead, to help the load adjuster.*

*The nosegear rocks and trembles, for it's held with bailing wire
And the wings are filled with thermite to make a hotter fire.
The landing gear struts are twisted and the wheels are not quite
round,
This sorry state, arranged by fate, is to carry you off the ground.*

*The cargo doors are rusted and close with mournful shriek,
And the plexiglass is covered with oil from some forgotten leak.
The runway strips are narrow, rice paddies on either side,
And the crash trucks say in a mournful way, you're on your final
ride.*

*You taxi to the runway mid groans from the tortured gear,
And feel the check pilot's practiced teeth gnawing at your rear.
The rotting rice on the cargo floor induces a nauseous coma,
Mingling smell, like a stench from hell, with the ___ man's foul
aroma.*

*So it's off into the overcast yonder, though number one is missing,
And the leaking hydraulic fluid sets up a gentle hissing.
The compass dial is spinning in a way that broods no stopping,
And row by row the breakers blow with intermittent popping.*

*The airplane has been inspected and the maintenance records
signed,
It's been classed "airworthy" by some low and twisted mind.
There is no hope, no sunny day, to dry those tears of sorrow,
For those who land, and still can stand, must fly the thing
tomorrow.*

*The stranger stood in silence, a tear shown in his eye,
And from his honored audience, there rose a ghastly sigh.
Caesar rose to meet him with pity on his face,
And bowing low, he turned to show, the stranger to his place.*

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