

Hero Hangs Self in Drunk Tank

GROVETON, Va. (UPI) - A highly decorated World War II Navy fighter pilot hanged himself in a holding cell shortly before he was to be released on drunk driving charges, Fairfax county police said today.

Is this the way it ends then?
eyes bulging, tongue swollen
like the faces of nazis
we used to paint on the noses
of our spitfires,
Adolph's jolly bozzos,
ain't that what we used to call them?
heart ka-thunking in our ribs
like the ratatat tat
of the machine guns burning our fingers,
splinters of pain under our nails
with ricochets into the white of the sun's eye -
stinking with our own smell
real as fear, real as gunpowder
burning its memory into our skin,
piss running down our leg -
is this the way it ends?

We were heroes then,
would have been again
if only they hadn't ended the war,
if only the enemy had remained clear,
someone out *there*, not so close -
if only all they'd asked of us was death,
something *we* could gamble

life itself was more than we could bear:
distant pounding of guns only we could hear,
flashes across sky for our eyes only,
pain for us alone, like bullets
whispering our names, learning
the proper way to pronounce them
and the roster, shorter every day,
the sky so distant -
so far from the sky, so close to the ground

— *Dave Margoshes*