

THE ONE WHO GRUMBLED

by

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The One Who Grumbled

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THE ONE WHO GRUMBLED

An electric latch on a cell gate clicked and a buzzer echoed across the cellblock stirring a sleeping old man in the cell. A guard stood at the open gate. "You have a visitor," he said. The old man had not had a visitor in thirty years.

The bunk at the United States Disciplinary Barracks in Leavenworth Kansas was not very comfortable, but the old man who lay upon it had known nothing else for over fifty years. Some inmates called this prison "the hot house". The old man's cell was always cold; he stayed under the covers most of the time. It was all he could do to make it to meals and back three times a day. If it were up to him he would only go to breakfast. He had been at Leavenworth for so long that most of the guards didn't know why he was there.

He turned back the covers, sat up, and slipped into his shoes. His arthritic hands fumbled with the laces. Finally he stood and shuffled out the gate, followed by the guard. "Do you know who it is?" he asked. "No, they didn't tell me," replied the guard. "He looks like a lawyer, or something."

In the visitation room the old man marveled at the beige cinderblock walls, the cubicles divided by thick plexiglas to separate the free from the incarcerated, and the neat rows of chairs placed against the back wall. It had not changed much in thirty years. The room seemed foreign and dangerous. The guard seated him at a window and handed him the telephone handset. The old man looked at it for a moment then took it from the guard. A young Asian man was seated on the other side of the glass. He picked up his handset and put it to his ear.

"Hello Mr. Holland," he said. "My name is Kuomo Musaki. I am a lawyer who is interested in your case. May I please ask you some questions concerning your involvement with the Navy during World War II, especially the events that led to your incarceration?" The old man sat silently for a moment, then said, "I suppose that will be fine."



It was a tough crossword puzzle by most standards, but Lt. Mike Holland filled in the squares as fast as his pencil could write. Today he had duty in the radio room. His job was to record Japanese naval transmissions. So far there had been nothing but static on

his headset. He would rather be working on decrypts, but there was no getting around the Navy duty roster.

Japanese Naval fleet code was called JN-25 by the American code breakers at HYPO in Oahu Hawaii. Lt. Holland knew JN-25 as well as anybody in HYPO. He had been there in the early days when JN-25 was still mysterious. Those were exciting times. Now it was 1943 and, unless the Japanese changed their code - which they did occasionally - it was business as usual. For now, the code was cracked, which meant HYPO's main job, until further notice, was to receive transmissions, decode transmissions, and disseminate the information. He turned the page and started a new crossword.

Again, his pencil danced across the grid filling in blocks. Minutes passed. Holland meditated on word structure and character probabilities. Much of the time he did not need to read the hints. He solved words through the process of elimination and deductive reasoning. His headset hissed white noise. More minutes passed unobserved until, from somewhere distant, like a voice whispering across the room, Holland thought he heard a pattern. His pencil slowed. He realized he had been hearing it for a while, but had not noticed. It was more a feeling than an actual transmission. His subconscious had recognized a series buried deep in the radio noise. He stopped writing and focused on the static from his headset, concentrating intently. Several minutes of normal static passed. Still, he couldn't shake the feeling that something was there.

The next day Lt. Holland returned to HYPO HQ a half-hour early, as usual. The static was still in his head. It was not unpleasant or overbearing, but it was there. He decided to ignore it. After pouring a cup of coffee, he sat down at his desk and began working on the JN-25 intercepts for the day. He was tired. The static had affected his sleep, and the coffee didn't seem to be working. His head was cloudy. Consciousness seemed elusive and fleeting, but he stayed awake, latched onto an image, hazy at first, but growing more lucid with each second.

He was under water. His body hovered above the Japanese aircraft carrier Kaga, sunk at the battle for Midway Atoll. Below him he saw a cavernous hole torn into the flight deck of the gigantic warship. Before him the massive wreck stretched into the darkness, and out of sight. He tried to scream, but there was no sound, nor could he move. Water filled his mouth. Salty, like tears. Many voices spoke at once, a loud cacophony in

Japanese. Each voice urgently trying to communicate. The boom of a single voice overpowered the others, a command. The voices fell silent.

With the silence came release. It emanated from Kaga, surrounding Holland like a blanket against the frigid waters. Again the voices, this time in unison. “We are not afraid.” The words echoed off the immense flight deck of Kaga and were amplified by the surrounding water. They sounded friendly. Lt. Holland tried to speak. He couldn’t.

He watched as small stingrays- or perhaps butterflies - ascended from the jagged hole on Kaga’s deck. Just a few at first, then many. They glowed yellow and orange and green. Their delicate wings flapped gracefully as they formed a line that extended into the darkness. The first in line broke away and approached Holland. It *was* a butterfly. It spoke in Japanese.

“I am Iroku Watanabe. My family lives at 2-11-5 Akasake, Minato-Ku, Tokyo 107 (, Japan).” It turned away from Holland and swam pleasingly back into the hole on Kaga’s deck. The next butterfly in line approached. It too recited its name and its parent’s address, then descended into the hole. This went on again and again until the last butterfly had descended into the cavern.

Holland looked down at the hole in Kaga’s deck. Warm light glowed from it and radiated from each of the portholes along Kaga’s smooth bulkhead, and from the broken windows of the island that jugged up near the stern of Kaga’s flight deck. The dark water that had previously obscured much of Kaga was illuminated. For the first time he could see the entire ship, immense, and beautiful.

Then the lights vanished. He sensed the butterflies had gone. All was still and silent except for a grumble from a single voice. He could not understand what it said, but there was no mistaking the hatred that propelled it. Kaga faded into darkness.

In the decrypting room, Lt. Holland laid down his pencil. On the steno pad in front of him were the names and addresses of eight hundred fourteen Japanese sailors and officers.



On the days that followed, Lt. Holland stopped at the Oahu public library each evening on his way back to the barracks. There, he seated himself at a small table, far away from prying eyes, and wrote in Japanese. He began at the top of his list.

Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe,

I am Michael Holland, a member of the U.S. Navy. This is not an official letter. I send it at great personal risk. Your son, Iroku, is no longer alive in the way that you and I are alive. Nevertheless, he has asked me to tell you that he is at peace and in communion with his ancestors. He wishes you to be happy for him, and for yourselves. I do not understand why I have been entrusted with this knowledge, but I know without doubt that it is true. Please find comfort in Iroku's words.

Sincerely,

Michael Holland

Each letter was different, some very short, others quite long, but Holland knew that the words he penned were not his. They belonged to the young men who died on Kaga. He was certain they would bring comfort to the parents and friends, wives and loved one's, of Kaga's sailors.

It took Holland one month to complete the letters. He put all eight hundred fourteen of them in a sea bag and took it to the commercial seaport at Oahu. He handed the bag to an Argentinean merchant sailor along with an envelope containing three hundred dollars.

A week later Lt. Holland sat at his desk in Decrypting. The static was gone from his head. He sealed a packet containing the day's decrypts that he had completed, then carried it over to the duty officer Lieutenant Commander Clyde Burger, a good officer and friend.

"How's it going Clyde?" He asked as he handed over the packet.

"Not bad, Mike." Burger stopped working and looked up at Holland. "You're done already?" he asked.

"All finished," replied Holland. "Unless you have something else for me to do."

"No. I'm just not used to seeing you leave this early. Normally we have to kick you out." Burger smiled. Holland smiled back and scratched his head.

"Yeah, I'm not feeling so good today. Didn't sleep well. I think I'll try to get some shut eye."

"Anything I can do?" asked Clyde.

“No, I’m fine, really. I need to stop hitting the coffee so hard before lights out, that’s all.”

“Okay Mike, get some rest.”

“Will do.”

Holland walked out of the decrypting room and down the hallway toward the white French doors that exited HYPO HQ. He couldn’t pinpoint what was wrong. It had to do with guilt, but for what? For Michael Holland, code breaking had always been a pure pursuit, incorruptible and immune to degeneration. It was innocent. After all, a solved puzzle was merely a solved puzzle. There had never been any consequences to consider. At least, not until recently. The sinking of Kaga was a direct result of HYPO intelligence. Lately, every time he decoded a JN-25 message he envisioned consequences. Each time he submitted a new packet of decoded intercepts he could not help wondering how many American and Japanese lives would be placed in danger by its contents.

He hitched a ride with an M.P. who was heading in the direction of his barracks. As they passed through downtown Oahu Holland saw something. He asked the M.P. to stop. He got out of the jeep, and thanked him for the ride.

A war poster hung in the window of a tailor’s shop. Holland had seen many of these. They never held much interest for him. Most were advertisements for war bonds. This one wasn’t. It looked hand drawn. In it, a sky view of a Japanese aircraft carrier, much like Kaga, was depicted. It sat on the surface of the ocean far off in the distance. In the close foreground, approaching the viewer at great speed, was an A6M Zero, a Japanese fighter plane. What caught Holland’s attention was neither the carrier nor the airplane, but the pilot.

From the cockpit of the airplane a leather helmeted man glared back at Michael through a glass canopy. His eyes smoldering, his face grimaced with determination, angry, unrestrained, monstrous, like that of a rabid dog preparing to bite. At the bottom of the poster a caption read: “America Sleeps”. Holland remembered the hateful grumbling voice he had heard emanating from Kaga. “If this pilot could speak,” He thought, “that grumble would be his voice.”

He turned from the poster and walked slowly back to his barracks. Along the way he considered the pilot’s hatred, the grumble from Kaga. A reason took form in his mind, a

reason to fight, to participate in the killing. He found a justified cause to rally behind, an unassailable argument to continue his work at HYPO. He would fight the Japanese because of their hate.



The fluorescent lights of the visitation room made the old man's pale skin look sickly. Kuomo Musaki sat quietly as Holland recovered from a fit of coughing. "This place is cold." Said Holland. "There is always a draft."

Musaki nodded, glanced down at the briefcase he had brought with him, then looked back at Holland.

"You hardened your heart," said Musaki. "Why?"

The question seemed to anger Holland. He glared through the glass. A few moments passed, and it appeared to Musaki that he was not going to answer. Musaki was about to change the subject when Holland spoke.

"I had a job to do." Said Holland.

"I see." Replied Musaki. "Yet, you risked everything to help those people, those families. They were your enemy, but you treated them with kindness."

"I helped no one!" Said Holland.

"So you say."

"So I know!" Holland took a deep breath and sat back in his chair. "Listen son, I had an episode. I snapped. Things went wrong in my head! That's why I'm in here. Get it?"

Musaki nodded. "Forgive me. I didn't mean to upset you. Please continue."



Weeks had passed since Lt. Holland had seen the war poster. He had forgotten about it, and Kaga, and the Japanese sailors. Something bigger had come along. The Japanese Navy had changed their JN-25 code. Lt. Holland was back in his element. He worked hard, and was soon put in charge of a small command responsible for deciphering five digit code groups called "Groups As Transmitted" or GATs by the Navy code breakers.

Chalk dust fell as Holland scrawled sets of numbers on a blackboard. He turned to face three officers and two enlisted men who sat quietly at their desks taking notes. "This is JN-40," he said. "The new Japanese Naval Code. Can anybody tell me how it differs from JN-25?" One of the enlisted men raised his hand. Holland pointed at him, but was

interrupted when the classroom door banged open. Lieutenant Commander Joseph Rochefort, the man in charge of HYPO cryptographers, entered the room followed by three military policemen.

“You’re under arrest Holland,” said Rochefort. The military policemen advanced on Holland. Two of them grabbed his arms while the third handcuffed his hands behind his back. They led him out the door and down the hallway. Lieutenant Commander Rochefort closed the door and walked to the front of the classroom. He studied Holland’s scribbling on the chalkboard for a moment, then he turned to the class and said: “Where were we, gentlemen?”

In the Navy brig at Oahu, Holland sat quietly and listened. “It doesn’t look good for you, Holland.” Said a clean-cut naval officer sitting across the cell from him. “Naval Intelligence captured your Argentinean smuggler. He spilled the beans on you. A court-martial is going to happen, so you’ve got nothing to lose. Why don’t you come clean? What was in the sea bag?”

Holland had already told the story at least ten times to several different officers during the night. He had not slept at all. He knew his story was crazy. If he were in their shoes he wouldn’t have believed it either. So, he did not blame them for being skeptical. Nevertheless, he had no reason to lie. He repeated his story again for the officer. When Holland finished his retelling, the questioner stood up. He looked sickened, like he had eaten rotten meat. “Suit yourself,” he said, then walked out of the cell. The door clanged behind him.

The next two years were a blur in Michael Holland’s memory. He was transferred from one Navy brig to the next. At each stop he retold his story over and over. It never changed. He never embellished or retracted any of it. The Navy questioners could find no holes in his story except for the fact that it was impossible. They began to suspect insanity. This led to a whole new regimen of questioning. Now instead of a naval officer grilling him twice a week, it was a head shrinker. This yielded no better results.

Finally, two years after his arrest, the Navy decided that they had better things to do. The United States Navy held a formal tribunal for Lieutenant Michael Holland. It took only three days for him to be sentenced to life in prison for espionage and other crimes against the United States of America.


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“That was 1945.” Said Holland. “They sent me to a high security VA mental ward in Florida. Soon after that the war was over. I stayed at the VA until 1950, then they sent me here. This place is better. They mostly leave me alone. Don’t know how I’ve lived as long as I have. Good constitution I guess.” Kuomo Musaki smiled. “Thank you for sharing your story Mr. Holland.”

“So, what’s it to you?” Asked Holland.

“Excuse me?” Replied Musaki.

“Why do you want to know about me? I’m sure they have everything I just told you in a file somewhere, probably a lot more. You’re not writing a book, because you didn’t take any notes. So, what’s your story?”

Musaki looked down at his briefcase, then back up at Holland. “Before I tell you why I am here, I should tell you that you are free to go.” He said.

Holland studied Musaki for a long time, then asked: “Free to go where?”

“You are no longer a prisoner.” Said Musaki. Holland’s eyes widened. He began to hang up the handset, changed his mind, then put it back to his ear. “What kind of gag is this?” He demanded.

“It is no gag.” Said Musaki. “I have arranged it with the Judge Advocate General. Your sentence has been shortened to time served.”

Holland covered the transmitter of the handset with one hand so Musaki could not hear. Musaki watched him through the glass. Holland waved to the guard. The guard approached and bent over the old man. Holland said something to the guard and Musaki saw the guard nod his head, and smile. The guard straightened, patted Holland on the shoulder, then returned to his position by the door.

There was a long silence. Holland sat quietly staring at the handset in his lap. Finally, he raised it to his ear. “Why?” he asked.

“Because,” said Musaki, “I need your help.” Holland winced, then said: “My help? Look at me, young man. I’ve been in prison for nearly sixty years. I’m old. I can’t even help myself.”

“The pilot.” Said Musaki.

“Huh?” grunted Holland. “What pilot?”

“My grandfather, he was a pilot on Kaga. He died when his ship was sunk near Midway Atoll. In my dreams he has spoken to me”

“So.” Said Holland.

“He was the one who grumbled,” said Musaki. Holland rolled his eyes, then looked back at the young man. “For chrissakes boy!” he said. “I was delusional when I heard that voice! It never happened.”

Musaki leaned toward the glass and said: “I believe it did happen, and I think you do to. If not, why did you write the letters?” he asked. Holland did not reply. Musaki continued. “Why you have been chosen to communicate with the spirits is not for me to know. But you have. You have hardened your heart, but you cannot deny this.” Musaki reached into his briefcase and extracted several tattered envelopes, yellow from age. From one he took a piece of paper, carefully unfolded it, and pressed it against the window so Holland could see what it said. When he finally took it away from the window, Holland’s face was wet with tears.

Holland wiped his face on his sleeve, then sat quietly, head down. Musaki waited patiently. After a while he spoke into the handset. “Mr. Holland,” he said. “Mr. Holland! Please pick up your handset.”

Slowly Michael Holland brought the handset to his ear. Without looking up, he whispered into it. “Yes?”

“Mr. Holland, I realize you have no place to go.” Said Musaki. “I have purchased a small home for you, and have set up a trust fund in your name. These things are yours, whether you help me or not. Your life has been hard. You deserve to be honored because you have found favor with the spirits. Yet, you have been treated with cruelty. You are free to live the rest of your life in comfort. I require no restitution.”

Holland remained still. He stared at the floor as if he had not heard. Musaki continued. “My grandfather is trapped by his hatred, but he no longer hates. He only wishes to be with the ancestors. I will ask once more, then I will leave you in peace. Please, will you help me?”

Holland looked up at Musaki’s face for a moment, then said: “He was your grandfather.”

“Yes.” Replied Musaki.”

Holland nodded his head. “What do you want me to do?” he asked. Musaki smiled. “You must somehow return to Kaga, Mr. Holland. You are needed there.”



Holland looked out over the sea from the balcony of his hotel room on Sand Island at Midway. When he and Musaki arrived here two days before he was very ill. Musaki stayed at his bedside the entire time, occasionally napping on the floor and ordering their food through room service. This was the first time Holland had gotten out of bed since their arrival.

Musaki had been kind to Holland since his release from prison. He helped him settle into his new home, set him up with appliances and furniture, stocked the refrigerator and pantry, and got his utilities going. The two met each night at Holland’s house. Musaki told Holland that the dreams of his grandfather were becoming less frequent, and when he did have them they were harder to understand. As each day passed, Holland grew ever more frustrated. He could not contact Musaki’s grandfather. He didn’t know how. Finally, in desperation, he suggested to Musaki that they travel to Midway to be closer to the wreckage of Kaga.

Now that Holland felt better, Musaki stepped out of the hotel room for a walk. Holland turned on the radio that sat on a nightstand next to the bed. It took him a while to figure out the digital controls, but he finally found a station that played the swing music he liked. The signal faded in and out, but it was better than nothing. He found a newspaper that Musaki had left laying on the table and rummaged through it until he located the crossword puzzle. Then he let his pencil dance across the grid.

Minutes passed unnoticed by Holland as he concentrated on the structures of the words, eliminating possibilities, calculating probabilities. He filled in block after block, almost randomly. Yet, there was a pattern emerging. It was just a feeling, but when it came to patterns he always trusted his feelings. His pencil slowed, then stopped. He looked at the grid he had filled with graphite symbols. The pattern was not there. He listened. In the air Count Basie’s ‘One O’ Clock Jump’ wafted from the small radio speaker. It flowed like a series of waves fading from music, to static, to music. Slowly, in his mind, he eliminated sounds from the pulsating signal. First the horns, then the woodwinds, and so on until he had eliminated the music entirely. The pattern was in the

static, he realized. He went to the radio and adjusted the tuner until he could hear only static, then sat down on the bed and concentrated. He was underwater.

His body hovered above Kaga. Everything was blurred. The light was weak. Its intensity flowed and ebbed like the Count Basie song on the radio. He could make out that Kaga had changed. It no longer looked like a warship. Only small areas of rusted metal were still visible. He could barely see the gaping hole in the flight deck during the moments when the light pulsed at its highest intensity. Deep inside of the hole he saw a very weak glow. It too pulsed bright, then dim. Holland tried to call out but he couldn't. His body shook, then Kaga disappeared.

"Michael! Michael! Wake up!" Holland opened his eyes. Musaki's worried face hovered above him. Musaki had found him lying on the floor, and was gently shaking him. "Michael, are you okay?" Asked Musaki. Holland sat up. "Yes," he said. "Yes, I'm fine."

"You had me worried," said Musaki. "Why are you on the floor?"

"I don't know," said Holland.

"I think you should see a doctor."

"No! No, please, I'm fine"

"Michael, I'm worried about y..."

"Shut up, Musaki." Interrupted Holland. "I saw your grandfather."

"You saw him? Where?"

"He is still on Kaga, but I don't think he can last much longer. He is weak. We have to go to him."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean we have to get on a boat, and go out to the wreck."

"You can't be serious, Michael! You're in no condition to do that. Besides, no one knows exactly where Kaga sank."

"We just have to get closer," said Holland. "I read somewhere that they've found a stern section of the ship. It broke off before she sank. We'll go there. That will be close enough."

"How did you find him?" asked Musaki.

"Static... something about static radio transmissions. I don't understand it, but that's

the communication medium.”

“Try again,” said Musaki.

“No. It’s no use. We’re not close enough.”

“But, Michael...”

“Musaki, time is not on our side. I need to leave as quickly as possible. Are you with me or not?”

“Of course, Michael.”

“Good! Let’s go find someone who can get us out there.”



They had been on the fishing boat for ten hours. It was cramped, and uncomfortable, and smelled like dead fish, but this was the only boat they could get. A squall was forecast to come in from the northwest, and no other boat captain would leave the marina until it passed. The location of Kaga’s stern was common knowledge among fishing captains at Midway. It was adjacent to a favorite fishing spot, about one hundred miles offshore. They were not making good time.

The swells had started about ten miles out. It got worse from there. The boat climbed the crest of each wave, then smashed down heavily on the trough of the next. Musaki watched Holland’s face grimace with pain from the beating. Several times Musaki had to catch him before he fell to the floor of the wheelhouse. Finally, Musaki laid some raincoats on the floor so Holland could lie down. Another hour passed, then the captain said, “We’re here.”

Holland opened his eyes. “Musaki,” he whispered, barely able to speak. Musaki crouched next to him. “Yes Michael.”

“Ask the captain to find an open channel on his ship to shore, something with static.”

“Yes.” Musaki’s request amused the captain, but he did as he was asked. “We can’t stop,” said the captain. “The waves will tear us to pieces. I’ll have to circle around.”

“That’s fine,” said Musaki. The captain moved close to Musaki and spoke quietly. “Your man isn’t looking so good. Is he going to be okay?”

“I don’t know,” said Musaki.

There was a lot of noise in the wheelhouse. Michael Holland concentrated on the static from the ship to shore radio. It was hard. His guts were churning, and he was dizzy.

He didn't tell Musaki, but he had cracked a rib a few hours before when he was slammed against a bulkhead by a large wave. For some reason he could not stop thinking about Oahu, and HYPO. He hadn't thought about these things for more than thirty years, but here were all of these vivid memories streaming back in from wherever he had locked them up so long ago. He loved that job. Life was good then. Now, his pain was gone. He floated above Kaga.

He could see clearly. Kaga teemed with life of all kinds. Schools of fish swam in and out of openings that were once portholes, now barnacle ringed vestibules for marine animals. Kaga was adorned with corals and anemones of every shape and color. Just like the first time he saw her, Kaga faded into the darkening water creating the illusion that she stretched on forever. He looked to the hole in Kaga's deck.

A butterfly glowed and hovered just inside of its rim. Its luminosity vacillated from dark to light, as if it could blink out forever at any moment. It didn't move from its place. Holland thought it might be studying him. He considered trying to speak, but he knew from previous experience that wasn't possible. Finally the butterfly approached. Its wings undulated gracefully, slowly up and down until it was directly in front of him. It spoke in Japanese. "You have grown old, American."

"You're no spring chicken either." Thought Holland.

"Is that a joke?" asked the butterfly.

"You heard that?" thought Holland.

"Of course."

"I'm sorry," replied Holland.

"Don't be, It was amusing, and very relevant," said the butterfly. "What is your name?" it asked.

"Michael Holland."

"And your rank?"

"I no longer have any rank. I used to be a Lieutenant."

"An officer, good. Are we still enemies?"

"No."

"That is good." A comfortable silence passed, then the butterfly asked. "Did my grandson bring you here?"

“Yes, he is a good man,” said Holland. “He brings honor to your family’s name.” At this, the butterfly brightened for a few moments, then dimmed again.

“You are like me, Michael.” Said the butterfly. “My time is short, and I have slept for far too long.”

“Yes,” thought Holland. “I am like you.”

“I would like to go home now,” said the butterfly.

“That is why I’m here,” thought Holland.

“Thank you, Lieutenant Michael Holland,” said the butterfly. Holland bowed. The butterfly dipped gracefully, then spoke. “My name is Miroku Musaki. My family lives at 4-15-5 Tsukui, Chigao-Sta, Yokohama 115 (, Japan).” With that, the butterfly turned, and descended into the hole on Kaga’s deck. Soothing light emanated from Kaga, illuminating the entire ship. It was the most beautiful sight Holland had ever seen. Then, the light vanished. Holland opened his eyes.

Pain wracked his body. He saw Musaki staring down at him. “Michael?” said Musaki.

“Musaki.” Whispered Holland.

“Yes Michael?” Musaki leaned close to Holland so he could hear him speak.

“Your grandfather doesn’t grumble any more, Musaki. He is proud of you.” Musaki turned his head away for a moment. When he turned back to Holland, tears ran down his face, and dripped onto his shirt. “Thank you Michael,” he said. “How do you feel?”

“I’ve been better,” whispered Holland.

“We will get you to a doctor,” said Musaki.

“Don’t worry about me, Musaki,” groaned Holland. Musaki turned to the captain and told him to return to Midway as quickly as possible.

“Musaki.”

“Yes, Michael.”

“My heart,” Said Holland. “... it’s not hard.”

“No Michael, it is not,” said Musaki. Michael Holland smiled, then closed his eyes.

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#### **About the author:**

Jeff Miller is a Saint Petersburg, FL based author and artist. This is his first published

book.

To learn more about the author please visit his website at:

<http://jefferymiller.webs.com>

Or at his Smashwords page at:

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If you enjoyed "The One Who Grumbled", read Jeff's story, "Canady Park". What follows is a sample of the first few paragraphs:

### **Canady Park (excerpt)**

by Jeff Miller

Kevin Landstreet, ex-computer programmer, climbed the stairs to his apartment with his head down and his hands in his pockets. At the top of the stairs he saw a piece of paper taped to his apartment door that screamed “Notice of Eviction” in bold black letters, facing outward so that everyone who passed by could read this declaration of irresponsibility. Kevin snatched the notice from the door, shoved it into the pocket of his jeans then rushed inside his apartment, locking the door behind him. He exhaled, groaned, then wondered how long it had been there. He was gone most of the day so it was conceivable that he was the pariah of the apartment building by now.

He ran a mental inventory of the residents on his floor. There was the older lady in apartment two-twenty-three, and a young couple in two-twenty-seven. These, at least, were certain to know of his shame by now. And the pretty young lady in two twenty nine probably saw the notice too. He didn’t know any of these people. He only saw them when they passed in the hallway, coming or going.

Technically, homelessness posed a greater threat to Kevin’s well-being than the threat of derision from his nebulous neighbors. Strangely though, Kevin was not concerned with technicalities at the moment. He just wanted to be liked. He could have let it go at that. It was a well-defined conclusion. However, Kevin's brain thrived on crafting paradoxes from incomplete data and creating enigmas out of the obvious. His mind acted like a supercomputer generating bad data due to faulty programming. With his backside planted firmly against the inside of his apartment door, he stared blankly into his living room and pondered.

Before long a new paradox thrust itself under the electron microscope of his



analytically conscious mind to be reverse engineered until it was dis-assembled into its constituent parts. This paradox took the shape of the following circular statement: “The harder I work to make people like me, the less they do.” Thus, his thoughts devolved into even more convoluted circularities, each one based upon the one preceding it with only occasional permutations or new data sets introduced into the flow. If it were physically possible for one’s head to explode from too much thought, Kevin would have been a very dangerous person to be around.

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