

Army Flying Museum, Online Exhibitions, Poetry submission:
“**Videmus delemus**” (“*We see and destroy*” motto for the 658 squadron)
by Estelle Phillips

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Captain Murray never spoke of it.

For many years after he did not go to church
and went instead to his allotment and dug.
The harder the frost the better it was,
sparks from the tip of his spade against flint
reminded him Hell was real
and he knew this because he’d seen it.
The kick of the spade into his hand
reminded him of the buck of the joystick
resisting descent to Bergen-Belsen:
they dropped from Heavenly azure skies through cumuli
and the clouds roiled in on themselves
with grief too great to expel.
Though the turbulence was ferocious, the air was dry
as if God had run out of tears.
The Auster pitched and yawed
and plummeted through black holes.
The stick bounced right and left, its metal neck split Murray’s thumb
and red bled through his overalls.

Beside Captain Murray the Brigadier sat in silence.
He knew more of what was to come
and spared his prayers for those who needed them.
The Captain achieved a textbook landing,
“Nicely done, Captain” the Brigadier said and did not smile.
They taxied to a standstill
and the smell of torture impregnated the cockpit.
The Brigadier and Captain-Murray entered Bergen-Belsen side-by-side.

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Captain Murray went into God’s house for his wife.
He stood at the altar and swallowed bile; his Adam’s apple went up and down
remembering what He had allowed.

Murray’s wife was kind
but horror ate Murray from the inside and diminished his life.
The anticipation of a child turned to fear
when Murray saw the rectangular shape of the hospital building –
it brought to mind Bergen-Belsen as seen from the air
and Murray did not expect his wife or child to come out alive.

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After a difficult delivery, Murray sat
in the chair by his wife’s bed.
He cradled his innocent son.
Murray’s baby’s heart beat into his palm
and declared a will for life.
Captain Murray hunched over his child,
vertebrae boned a curve through his shirt,
his shoulders shook

and he cried.

End

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