

A Mission

by

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The mornings cold bleak darkness, black as darkest night,
Is broken by the C.Q.'s candle as he wakes us for our flight.
We bundle up in clothing, warm woolens, suits galore,
We're wearing all our G.I. stuff and look around for more.

We don't get dressed quite fast enough, but suddenly we're thru,
Once more we look outside our tent, and see the glistening dew.
In pairs we climb the hill so steep, our breaths are panting now,
We hold our mess kits o'er the pot, they're filled with steaming chow.

We gulp our food for time is short, to briefing we must go,
For briefing is the center hub; of all this whole big show.
We crowd into the darkened room, we stare up at the map,
One city is marked out plainly, this is the one we'll rap.

A Major tells the story, he tells us how we'll fly,
We're going up to altitude, away up in the sky.
This is an old, old story, to all these veteran crews,
But still each man can feel a thrill, as he listens to the news.

We're told where all the flak is, how many gun's we'll face,
We're told of fighter cover, and landing fields of grace.
We're warned about the enemy, fighters, ships, and men,
We're told just where to bailout, and how to live to fight again.

The Chaplain gave a short sweet prayer, the men had bared their head,
The Prayer would cover one side, the end of the tale might come with lead.
The time had come to travel, we climbed into the truck,
We rolled on down the hill, the path was full of muck.

Personal equipment was our goal, for here we'd cached our stuff,
Our harnesses, chutes, and winter suits, in all we had enough.
From here we rode out to our planes, each a silent beast,
The sun was just arising up away off in the east.

The gunners were quite busy, preflighting turrets and gun,
They had no time to view the sky, or even see the sun.
Day came along quite quickly now, the time had come to start,
The crews were at their stations, waiting with beating heart.

We taxied to the take off point, and took a final check,
The ballentine sign, an O.K. flash, and braced ourselves against the deck.
The engines roared in all their might, we raced along the ground,
The wings took hold of moving air, our ship in flight was sound.

We soared out o'er the valley, and o'er the nearest hill,
The air now grew less bumpy, soon it was quite still.
Our ship flew on in formation, a big and powerful sight,
We were on our way to Germany, to show the hun our might.

We flew around o'er Italy, in skies of azure blue,
Each knowing 'bout the target, and thinking of getting thru.
The R.O. checked his transmitter, the Engineer his gas,
The Pilot flew on serenely---following the flying mass.

The Gunners crawled into their turrets, and waited to test their guns
For if enemy fighters should appear, the gunners would halt the huns.
The trip up to the target was long, and cold, and drear,
And often we'd check our equipment, and test for a frost-bitten ear.

We flew up past the Adriatic, and over the Udine too,
The land looked dried and dusty, the water cold and blue.
We crossed over the Italian Alps, the Austrian Alps as well,
We were not quite deep in Germany, and ready to give them hell.

The enemies' towns passed by below, the crew were especially alert,
The Bombardier prepared the bombs, for when they should hit the dirt
We turned upon the I.P. the bomb run had now started,
The target lay before us, the bomb bay doors had parted.

The moment was upon us, the time of action here,
The Bombardier had pulled the switch, the bombs were in the clear.
They fell down to the target, in their long, curved, accurate flight,
Nothing could alter their precise aim, so the target felt their might.

But while we did our duty, the enemy was busy too,
His Ack- Ack guns were firing as they tried to get our crew.
The flak burst all around us, it scared us I'll admit,
For while it burst around us, several other ships got hit.

The wings of one tore completely off, another burst in flames,
A third spiraled quickly down, the crew soon left the plane.
Their parachutes showed quite plainly against the billowing smoke,
Their future lives in a prison camp were the subject for a joke.

Our ship got hit quite badly too, one engine smoked a bit,
We shut it off and flew on three, and soon we'd feathered it.
We struggled homeward all alone, the formation couldn't wait.
But home we flew and all intact, right past the Pearly Gate.

Now we could relax our vigil---and say a silent prayer,
For God had carried us thru hell, by a margin of a hair.
We circled the field and prepared to land, the Engineer shot a flare,
We glided down the landing strip, a bounce and we'd left the air.

We taxied back to the crew chief, and climbed out of the ship,
And then we counted flak holes, while we all shot off our lip.
We soon removed our combat clothes, and climbed into a truck,
It carried us on up the hill, to interrogate our luck.

They questioned us on all we'd seen, and then they let us go,
We ate some Red Cross doughnuts, and drank their coffee slow.
The mission now was over, the tension was going fast,
We then had a great Bull session, and talked about the past.

The war will soon be o'er I hope, and then I will go home,
I'll settle down quite peacefully, I guess, and never more will roam.

Fineeto