

Star Pilot
(Prologue)

Logine wasn't particularly bright. He was an average high school student, not athletically inclined, and was universally classified as a nerd. There was one thing he excelled at. He was a wizard at video games. If there was an Olympic sport called "Galactica" he would be a shoe-in for a gold medal. He consistently topped the leader board at the game emporium similar to the old "Dave and Buster's". Besides video games, his other interest was pursuing Charlene. The beautiful debutante every guy in school was chasing. Even with all the offers, she remained single, only interested in her grade point average, and getting through high school to go on to college. As far as Logine was concerned, as long as she was unattached, she was fair game.

As was typical of most young people, they were only concerned about their immediate needs. What is on TV, when is the next meal, and how long before I can make my own decisions and don't have to listen to my parents? If Login had been paying attention, the news airways had been filled with increasingly unusual stories of UFO sightings. Not to worry. UFO stands for unidentified flying objects. He figured there was no worry until something got identified. That happened a couple of weeks later.

Unaware by earthlings, an alien race had landed on the Moon and was preparing for an invasion. Their planet had become uninhabitable and earth was a suitable substitute. Although they had conquered space and time travel, their weapons ability were not much more advanced than the US. In the past, they were a peaceful society. Their need to manufacture aircraft was put on the back burner. Still, their surveillance of earth's defenses gave them a feeling of superiority.

Logine's relatively boring life was about to take a giant step forward.

Star Pilot
(Chapter 1)

Rather than wait for an unfavorable deployment, Logine volunteered for flight school.

Chad, a rival for Charlene's affection, also joined. Even in the induction line, Chad started his harassment of Logine. What are you doing here nerd wimp? This group is for men only. Logine knew how to defend himself at least verbally. So what are you doing here then? I thought you were gay? Chad could not hold back his temper reached out and struck Logine, knocking him down. The drill Sargent shouted to them, save your aggression for the enemy. Get to the back of the line, both of you. This began a rivalry that continued throughout the training period. Logine knew he would get his revenge later in a manner that was much more important.

It would be months before either of them ever set foot in a real combat fighter. The training sessions amounted to computer simulations of real battle situations. It wasn't long before Logine's video game skills transferred well to the simulations. Chad did not do poorly either, but Logine was consistently at the top of the leader board. In fact, no one else was even close. The simulations now changed to one on one battles. Logine beat everyone he went up against. Still smarting from their initial confrontation, he stepped up his game whenever he faced Chad. He annihilated Chad so quickly, that Chad got knocked down to the middle of the standings.

After boot camp, upon graduation all the cadets were granted a week's leave. News of the standings was put up on social media. Logine was no longer the video game nerd. He was a potential star fighter pilot. During boot camp, Logine also discovered a hidden talent. For his entire life he was indeed a nerd wimp. But boot camp uncovered a previously untapped potential. With the physical endurance routines and eating hearty meals, Logine developed muscle bulk and weight gain that hid his real potential. His quick response to video games transferred to real speed and movement in hand to hand combat.

A social event was planned after the graduation ceremony. Nothing official, but some kids from the graduating class organized an off campus gathering. Chad and Logine both attended as did Charlene. Charlene had never really seen Logine in this light. The physical changes to his body did not go unnoticed by her or many of the other girls present. Logine was suddenly

appealing to her and to all the others. His status on the leader board added to his allure.

As the party progressed, he spotted Charlene over at the side in what looked like a heated discussion with Chad. He sauntered over. He overheard some of their conversation. Chad was promoting himself as a potential star fighter and was asking Charlene to be his girlfriend. She was adamant in her response. Logine walked up and said, it seems like the girl is not falling for your line. Get lost nerd. You remember what happened the last time you mouthed off? Ya, I remember. I said I thought you might me gay. Maybe I hit too close to the bone eliciting your anger. Chad still could not control himself. He started to take a swing at Logine. Logine grabbed his fist and turned it sideways causing Chad to yell out as he bent down to the ground. Logine whispered in his ear, I can take you out at anytime. Why not retreat when you can and save face? Chad got up and said, I am sorry to Charlene and limped away. Instead of complimenting Logine on his strength, she said, I don't like violence of any kind. And abruptly walked away. Logine was left speechless. Understanding women was not as easy as video games. He had a lot to learn.

Another girl, who had a reputation as a vixen said, I am not so picky bad boy. Charlene continued her exit, but a surprising streak of jealousy suddenly took hold of her. It was OK for her to reject Logine, but it was not OK for someone else to intervene. Actually she wanted to thank Logine for his intervention, but she didn't want to be seen as easy. She had a lot to learn about men too. Not uncommon among teens trying to navigate early adolescence.

Both Logine and Chad returned to combat flight training. The war was not going well for the earthlings. The alien fighters were very adapt at aerial warfare. Time was running out. Instead of allowing for the proper training period to finish, the new recruits were pushed forward to actual star fighter training. Even this was going to be shortened. This is what Logine has been waiting for. To be in an actual star fighter was his dream come true. He was not the first to envision combat as some glorious quest. Many young men and women met their demise in their first encounter with real combat.

Shooting at video targets was not the same. Return fire only wasted a life symbol in the game. In real combat, there was no second chance. Logine and Chad now faced their first real threat. Logine didn't waste anytime though, on his first encounter, he treated the enemy fighters just like in a video game and he was successful until one of the alien fighter ships did a loop-d-loop and ended up on his tail. Still, his video skills saved him once again. Extremely adapt a maneuvering, he made a move that only World War I veterans made in the English Sopwith Camel airplane. They were capable of making extreme right turns. It had something to do with the torque in the powerful engines. He veered left then made a sharp right turn. As he completed his turn, he was right behind the alien and nailed him from behind. Up ahead, he saw that Chad was facing the same situation he had just gone through. Although, Chad did not know of this particular move. Chad was about to become a fatality when Logine shot the alien down at the last second. As he sped by Chad, he saluted him and keep going into the fray.

Logine and Chad both made it safely back to combat headquarters. After each battle, there was always a briefing meeting. Logine had shot down a record number of enemy fighters. After Chad's nearly fatal encounter, he had gone on to shoot the second highest number of alien fighters behind Logine.

The high commander asked Logine to relive his experience against the first alien. Where did you get that move? I read about it in ancient history books. I want you to teach all the other cadets how to do that.

After the meeting, Chad approached Logine. Maybe Chad was jealous of Logine's record and wanted to chastise him for taking all the glory. That was not the case. Chad reached out and shook Logine's hand. Sorry for past grievances, thank you for saving my life. After that, Chad became Logine's wing man.

Star Pilot
(Chapter 2)

Logine continued to be a stellar pilot with enemy kills totally more than 300. He was promoted to squadron leader. Chad was also promoted and was no

longer able to be his wing man. He had his own squadron to direct. The war against the alien aggression was starting to turn in earth's favor.

To prevent burnout, Logine was given a week's leave. It was time to settle things with Charlene. If she was still distant, he would abandon his pursuit. He asked to meet her for soda's and ice cream at the 50's dinner the students often congregated at during high school. This was a low stress place where they could talk just as friends without any pressure. Logine had not forgotten how lovely Charlene looked, but seeing her again reminded him of how he felt. In command of fighter pilots, he was self-assured and confident. In front of her, his shyness returned. Charlene did not possess that trait. She had always been confident. Before Logine opened his mouth, she said, I like you. Sorry for seeming uninterested before. I was experiencing my own immature moment. There was nothing for Logine to say after that. He just smiled and the tension melted away. They talked of former shared high school events, what she had been doing while he was at war, and what was it like to engage the enemy in mortal combat. As they finished their meeting, Logine ask Charlene if she would like to visit his favorite spot. It is a serene place where I always go when I need to relax and contemplate my future. She immediately said yes. So it was set. Tomorrow, he would pick her up a 9 AM. Private auto transportation was a thing of the past. Robo taxi's were the prime method of getting around. No burning of fossil fuel, all powered by solar panels with built-in batteries. The water engine had been perfected and using solar power, split water molecules into hydrogen and water vapor. Zero pollution. Even after fossil fuels were no longer used, the earth continued to heat up. A cooling trend was in the future. All those climate change alarmists were finally pushed to the closet. The earth continued its cycle as it had done for millennia.



This is the spot I was telling you about. Occasionally, I would bring my fishing pole and catch some trout for dinner. This is indeed a nice place. I can see why you would come here often. It was at this moment that they cemented their relationship. No longer just friends.

His week of relaxation was all too short. There was a war to finish. Back at command headquarters, Logine continued to dominate in air combat. At the next meeting, where they go over the weeks statistics, Logine interrupted one of the star fighter designers. He had been feeling something was missing that would give them a superior advantage. He suggested that the star fighters needed more armament. The designer was an arrogant sort. His response was, I know you are a valued pilot, but what do you know about fighter design? Not much, but if you will give me a few minutes of your time, I can show you something. I don't have time to waste on you. The General in charge of combat operations was not as arrogant. He said, Logine is our #1 pilot, would it hurt to appease him with a little of your time. Reluctantly he agreed. Later, after the meeting, Logine brought him to a game console. I just want to show you something. He launched the game Galactica. This was one of his favorites. Just watch. He went through several fighter phases easily killing the opponents. As the phases advanced the difficulty increased. It looked like Logine was about to lose his last life. I don't see anything useful so far. OK, watch this. He had accumulated enough credits to add Gatling guns and missile launchers to his arsenal. The next swarm advanced quickly. Using his added fire power, he eliminated the enemy fighters within three seconds. He expected the designer to say, big deal, these are only video game targets. Instead, he noticed a subtle change in his demeanor. I think you are on to something here. Let me go back to our design center and consult with my colleagues. A month later, the star fighters were equipped with an added rotating nose rotating cannon and extra missiles. They made the planes lighter by taking out some of the heavy fuel tanks used for long range flight. They resembled the old Navy Warthog fighters but with supersonic speed and laser accuracy.



The next group meeting showed massive improvements in enemy losses.

Star Pilot
(Chapter 3)

The aliens had established a base in a nearly impenetrable mountain valley. The General had come up with a plan to annihilate their base. This would bring a quick end to the war. The only problem was getting access. It required a low level flight below the enemy missile launchers through a tight canyon corridor. In addition, the strike had to be executed within 5 minutes, or the enemy would detect the incoming star fighters. Logine and Chad were selected to lead the small fighter contingent. On paper, this looked like a suicide mission. The General gave the odds of completing the mission about 50/50. The speed required to fly and the many turns would put the pilots at extreme g-forces.

To disguise the real plan, an array of cruise missiles were to be sent ahead of the star fighters hitting the enemy's launch runway. The enemy would think that was the only assault.

Logine and Chad led their squadron through the low level channel. They could see the missile launchers high up on the cliffs as they sped by. So far so good. The clock was ticking. The real target was fast approaching. Both Logine and Chad nailed the center of the target. An enormous explosion signaled a successful strike. Thinking their escape was secured, neither saw the two enemy aircraft that had been on patrol. The onboard computer signaled missiles launched toward them. Logine veered left and Chad veered right. Both missiles tracked Logine. One missed, but another struck his left wing. Chad was out of ammo and could not assist. Logine signaled Chad to return to home base, I am going down. He parachuted safely to the ground. One of the enemy fighters spotted Logine on the ground. He was about to strafe him when Chad rammed his own plane into the fuselage of the enemy's plane exploding both. Chad had bailed out just in time. He landed not far from Logine. What the hell did you do? I ordered you to return to base. I am just returning a favor. Now we are even. I don't like owing anybody. The rest of the squadron had safely returned to base. Logine and Chad were now deep in enemy territory without a plane to escape in. Similar to the axiom, "Up shit creek with no paddle". What should we do? Why not get us another plane? Where would we get that? How about over there. They had landed not far from the enemy's main base. Even though their target was successfully hit, there were still remnants of enemy equipment that had survived. The aliens were now aware that their attempt at taking over earth had failed. They were not the type to surrender. In fact, the hit was like throwing rocks at a hornets nest. The aliens were scattered all around and were extremely pissed. Logine and Chad peered over a rise and saw a fully intact enemy fighter sitting on what was left of the runway. There is our ticket home. Do you even know how to fly that thing? Didn't you get briefed on the enemy's equipment? We had captured a downed plane and most of it was still in one piece. I guess I was not in the loop on that one. It won't be easy to take that away from the alien who is guarding it. We both have our side arms. Lets make a plan to use them and get out of here.

Logine came up with the plan. Chad was not thrilled with it. He was to be bait and distract the alien while Logine entered the cockpit. Keep him occupied long enough for me to start the engines.

Chad approached the guard with his hands raised high in the air. Not sure if the enemy followed NATO protocol. If he could have interpreted the alien's expression, he would have guessed surprise. Logine successfully hid his approach and managed to climb up on the far side unnoticed and into the cockpit. The alien's surprise expression was replaced with what looked like anger as he raised a weapon aimed at Chad. Chad was once again fated to depart this world when the alien was struck down from behind with Logine's sidearm bullet. He quickly climbed up and into the second seat behind Logine. They successfully flew out of there. Logine said, I guess you are back on the hook. You owe me again. That didn't count me putting my life on the line for you. It is you who owe me.

Their ordeal was not over yet. They still had to get out of enemy airspace and land safely back at their own base. Flying an enemy ship toward the base without any way to communicate wasn't a walk in the park.

Star Pilot
(Chapter 4)

While Logine and Chad were discussing how to go about returning to the base without being shot down, a more immediate threat came up. Two returning patrol planes intercepted them, made a u-turn and approached along side. They heard some gibberish over the radio and guessed they were being asked for some identity code. The only code response Logine knew was to bank away and try to high tail it. Both alien planes followed in pursuit. Logine was unparalleled in his own star jet, but not in this one. He was in a real dog fight and at a distinct disadvantage. There in nothing like running for your life to pump adrenaline into your blood stream. It didn't take long for his former gamer ability to re-surface. He was learning fast. Why not try his Sopwith Camel maneuver. He was sure the aliens didn't know about it. Those that did, were not longer around to tell.

Author's comment:

In case you're thinking I made up that story about the Sopwith Camel. Here is an image of the real plane.

Sopwith Camel is a famous British single-seat biplane fighter that entered service in July 1917 during World War I and was credited with shooting down 1,294 enemy aircraft—more than any other Allied fighter of the war.

I knew about it because I built a model of it when I was only 9 years old.



As he banked first left than right, the alien aircraft did not perform quite as well as his own jet, but it was enough for him to circle around and fire at the two now in front. His bullets hit the rear fan guide and caused the left plane to veer into the right one. Both planes collided in a fiery ball.

Now only one hurdle left. Even though the alien plane had a radio, the frequency was not tuned to the base. So they were still flying blind or deaf as you might say.

Logine had an idea. If he could get close enough before being shot down, he would buzz the tower. As we fly by, use those light switches to send SOS via Morse code.

That might work if we don't crash first. Do you see that indicator flashing? It has continually been reducing as we flew. I think it is a low fuel indicator. With that in mind, Logine altered his approach. He remained at high

altitude. As expected, the base sent up star fighters to intercept them. Instead of backing off, Logine aimed the alien craft right at the on coming squadron. He weaved his way through and of course did not fire at them. Are you ready with those light switches? Yes, but they are on the top front of the ship. The tower might not be able to see them. Don't worry, I've got this. Logine ascended from high altitude in what looked like a dive bomber move. At the last second, he pulled up and flipped the craft upside down. They buzzed the tower just as they had planned flying upside down at 300 mph. Chad performed his SOS signaling and they took off again. One of the star pilots, who had accompanied Logine and Chad on the enemy base run, called to the General. Sir, I have never seen an alien pilot fly like that. There is only one pilot I know of that is that good. At the same time, a message reached the combat command. That plane just sent an SOS signal. The crew that had returned to the base had reported loss of contact with Chad and Logine. Both were presumed dead. The General gave the order to call off the squadron. This time, as Logine flew by the tower, his fuel finally gave out and his engine quit. Fortunately, the alien craft was built like a sting ray and he glided safely to a stop. Emergency trucks followed in their wake. When we get out of the cockpit, raise your hands like a surrender. We don't want some trigger happy newbie to end this in tragedy.

Back at command center, both were hailed as heroes. The General said, son I have never witnessed flying like that. Were your ancestors members of the Navy "Blue Angels" or The Air Force "Thunder Birds"? Not that I am aware of Sir.

With the war over, Logine was granted an honorable discharge. He also received the Air Force Cross and so did Chad.

Air Force Cross: The second-highest military decoration and the highest award exclusive to the Air Force for extraordinary heroism in combat.

The Medal of Honor is the highest decoration, but it most often is awarded posthumously.

So what became of Logine and Charlene? And what about Chad?

Star Pilot (Epilogue)

Logine decided to cash in on his notoriety as the best star pilot. He partnered up with some investors and opened his own gaming center. He called it “Logine’s Game Emporium”. It was not unlike the old “Dave and Buster’s” from the past that featured circus like game consoles like those shown here.



In addition, they also served food. Burgers and fries mostly.



To bring in more customers, he offered free lessons, hints, and secrets to improve one's video skills.

What about Charlene? He partnered up with her too. As his wife, she ran the food concessions.

Many war heroes turned their fame into lucrative enterprises. Audie Murphy became a movie star. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroics in WWII. What did he do to get that?



The Heroic Action

The Attack: Second Lieutenant Murphy commanded Company B, which was reduced to just 18 men. They faced an assault by six German tanks and waves of infantry.

The Burning Tank Destroyer: Murphy ordered his men to retreat to the woods for safety while he stayed behind. He climbed onto an abandoned, burning M10 tank destroyer.

Single-Handed Defense: Exposed to direct enemy fire, he used the tank destroyer's 50-caliber machine gun to fire continuously at the advancing enemy.

Calling Artillery: While firing, he used a field telephone to direct an artillery barrage dangerously close to his own position, eventually wiping out a German infantry wave.

The Counterattack: Despite suffering a leg wound during the barrage, Murphy ignored the injury, walked back to his men, and led a successful

counterattack that forced the Germans to retreat. He killed or wounded roughly 50 enemy soldiers during the fight.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower turned toward politics and became the 34th president of the US.

Chad was content to open a hardware store and try to get over the nightmares he suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

He married that vixen from high school. She was feisty and demanding. He continued to be arrogant and stubborn. A match made in heaven.

The End