

May 19, 81

Stuart,

Yeah, I finally got your  
Van Brock. Took a couple months  
back. Like what you do, brother.  
Got no ~~shorts~~ <sup>other</sup> shorts new, but  
might can pick something from  
novel Hey Joe! Like this, maybe  
longer?

You do beautiful work —

Bam



John, This Plane's On Fire

Barry Hannah

I was sitting radar, actually doing nothing. We'd been up to 75, 000 to give the afternoon some jazz. I guess we were still in Mexico, coming into Miramar eventually in the F-16. It doesn't much matter after you've seen the curvature of the earth. For a while, nothing much matters at all. We'd had three sunsets already. I guess it's what you'd call really living the day. But then,

"John," I said, "this plane's on fire."

"I know it," he said. He was sort of short and angry about it.

"You thought of last-minute things any?"

"Yeah. I ran out a couple of things already. But they were cold, like. They didn't catch the water. Bad writing."

"You had the advantage. You've been knowing."

"Yeah. I was going to get a leap on you. I was going to smoke you. Everything you said, it wasn't going to be good enough. I was going to have a monster goodie, everything you said."

"But it's not like that."

"Nah. I got nothing, really."

The wings were turning red. I guess you'd call it red. It was a pink against dark blue that was mystical, very spacey-like, like living blood. The plane was bleeding, you see.



"You have a good time in Peru?"

"Not really. I got something to tell you. I haven't had a 'good time' in a long time. There's something between me and a good time, since, I don't know, I was twenty-eight or like that. I've seen a lot, but you know I haven't quite seen it, you know? Like somebody'd seen it already, it wasn't fresh, there were eyes that had used it up some."

"Even high up outside of Merida?"

"Even."

"Even Tibet, where you met your wife? Only two people American within--"

"Even."

"Even Greenland."

"Yes. Even Greenland. It's fresh but it's not fresh. There are footsteps in the snow."

"Maybe you think about in New Orleans like when we were little. Little tiny kids just a block away from each other. When you're a kid and you're the first up, and there's been nobody in the snow, no footsteps."

"Shut up."

"Look. Are we getting into a fight here at the--We going to mix it up, the plane on fire..."

"Shut up! Shut up!" yelled John.

"What's wrong?"

He wouldn't say anything. He wouldn't budge at the controls. We might burn but we were going to hold level. We weren't seeking the earth at all.



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"John, I--"

"Just shut up, God damn it!"

"What is it, John?"

"You son of a bitch, that was mine. That snow in New Orleans bit! Now it's all shit."

He'd been writing on his knee pad and all I could see was paper being thrown all over the cockpit.

"It was mine, mine, you rotten cocksucker! You see what I mean? Get out of here!"

"What about you, John?"

"I'm staying. Just let me have that one, will you?"

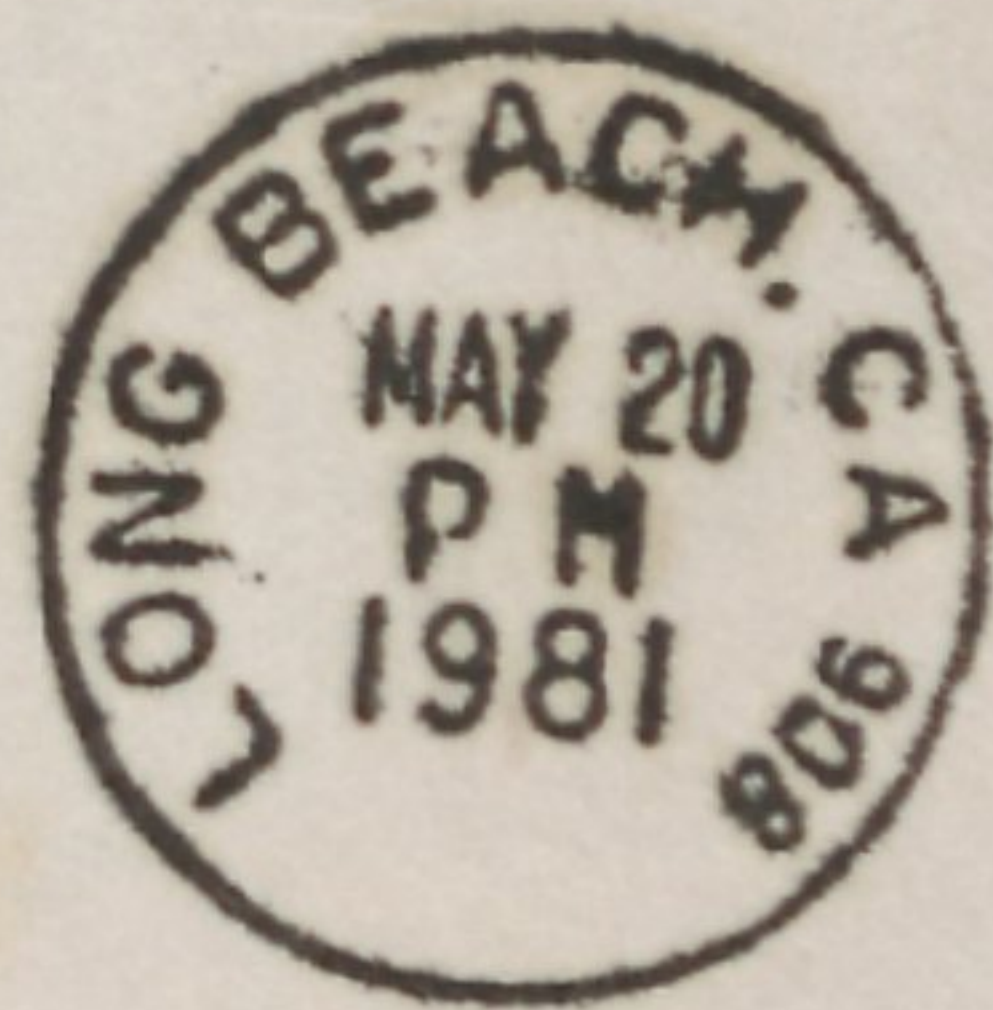
"But you can't--"

But he did.

went down hard, citizens. Everything worked.



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