

## A Sweet Goodnight, Covid

by James Stiffel

Lance Cartwright, stared up at the pulsating atom in front of him. It looked as if it was about ready to perform its magic trick of mitosis again. Several days ago, he was staring up at dozens of these under a microscope. Now it was from behind a cockpit and the atom stood over him like titan. Early reports showed that Covid-19 didn't like temperatures over 50 degrees C. But what person in there right mind would subject themselves to that? Sargent Geoffrey Cartwright would. Lances father, who he now floated inside of. The lasers on the shuttle pod could heat up a cluster of atoms at a time. But only from 'inside' of the human body.

But seeing as they had gotten closer in recent years, he'd hate to accidentally rupture a spleen or something. He'd really pack up his things and fuck it all off then. Just this once, he'd like to (please) not fuck up. But this virus totally seemed to have a mind of its own. It had its own moods and a personality. Even now, it was goading him. It 'wanted' to be caught and defeated. And yet, every time he got close, it seemed to change its colours. It had become impossible to see in a river of other atoms and red blood cells. But he finally thought that he had it worked out. Matching its speed of 'flight' in here had been his biggest problem. He could keep up with 'Covid' now. Breaking down his 'wall' of cell membrane had been a different story. It had been like gently tapping on the giant gates of hell for years.

Just then a warning klaxon sounded. This could only mean one thing. He was under attack. Headed his way were several white blood cell's. Three...four...five...no, six. Six white blood cell's that Covid had sent all straight for him. Like bee's taking orders from their beloved queen. He glared at covid. "You son of a bitch! I'm the infection?" Covid quivered its spikes in all directions like a squid shaking its tentacles. Lance grabbed the control stick, put his finger on the trigger and fired. An electric bolt flashed towards each of the converging white blood cell's. Lance watched...and prayed.

"Come on! Come on! Save my life!" Six shots hit six targets directly. The white blood cells seemed to hang for a moment -shocked.

Then all of them turned and headed back, back towards their previous master, Covid. Lances face beamed like a new sunflower. This mission was starting to wrap up nicely. Lance would surround Covid with his very own bag of tricks. Covids form stopped shaking. No reaction. But to Lance, he knew he was fuming. His beautiful anti-medicine was slowly turning on him, making a barrier between him and the other parts of the body. Now was Lances chance. But what if he was wrong? What if he failed?

No time for what ifs and may bes now. It was time to strike back. He swallowed the lump in his throat. His heart told him that it could take no more as it thundered on. Lance flipped the switch to power up the heat pulse laser. Five seconds. Should this work, Covid and all of his family in this region should die. No longer able to replicate. No longer able to slip past Un-apposed. No more posing as a part of this body. Three..two...one.

A sphere of red started to expand out from Lance's little craft and edged its way towards Covid. Lance smiled. "This is for my mother!" Covid blissfully unaware, seemed defiant and stood his ground. The heat hit him. Covid was thrown back, not by allot but noticeably so. A pause. Then shaking. Covid was shaking. Its membrane was quivering, trembling in all directions. Lance took one last look at the 'face' of Covid. His face lightened, only for a second. "Don't you see? Your causing pain. Your causing hurt." Lance's eyes watered. "...you and your kind...must...die!" Covid's face seemed to droop. It gave up. Its layers of membrane shot out in all directions. All pieces of it disappearing into nothing and all other Covids in his region. It had worked. He had succeeded. Lance...had been...right.

A freed tear rolled down his cheek. "Thank you." He sobbed. Now the clear up began. Now a clear future awaits.