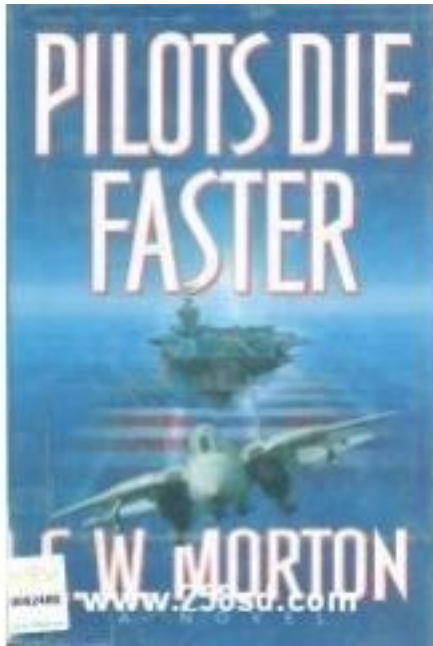


# Pilots Die Faster



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From Booklist F-14 pilot Lt. Gina Worthington's body has been found in the bilges, and Naval Criminal Investigative Service agent Bud Wilson (a former navy pilot and Vietnam POW) has to deal with a crop of most unusual suspects--the squadron's maintenance officer, CO, star pilot, and other female pilot, who was Worthington's roommate, among them. Meanwhile, Wilson's helpers include flight surgeon Carol Benning and enlisted Latino airman Sergio Fernandez. Writing a compact, fast-moving, classically structured mystery, Morton, a naval officer herself, resists the temptation to pad so thoroughly that some things, such as a confrontation with a Russian submarine, are left underdeveloped. She also uses her knowledge of naval matters well, generating much realistic detail in settings and character and designing a truly gruesome end for the murderer. Inevitably for a

mystery, this is probably the first in a series that nautical tale buffs will like as much as mystery fans will. Roland Green From Kirkus Reviews A US Navy aircraft carrier on maneuvers is the possibility- laden scene of the crime in this first in a series from the pseudonymous Morton. When the lifeless body of aviator Gina Worthington is found floating face down in the bilge of the USS Abraham Lincoln, Bud Wilson (the Naval Criminal Investigation Service's resident agent) has precious little to go on in tracking down her killer. Nor does the tough-talking operative (a former A-4 pilot whose own flying career was cut short by injuries sustained during a three-year stint as a POW in North Vietnam) get much cooperation from the dead woman's squadron commander, her fellow jet jockeys, cold-fish roommate Chelsea Berkshire, the carrier group's skipper, or the lieutenant j.g. with whom she'd been sleeping. Indeed, his only support comes from the flattop's chief medical officer, pretty Carol Benning, and a barrio-hardened seaman named Sergio Fernandez. Despite daunting shipboard obstacles and distractions (including a missile-bearing Russian sub that may or may not be shadowing the Lincoln, and an activist band of neo-Nazi seamen bent on racial mischief), the NCIS agent persists in his inquiries. Eventually, he's able to reconstruct the homicide--by using a chemical compound that fluoresces upon contact with blood to follow an otherwise undetectable trail through the bowels of the warship--and to identify a likely suspect. But the crafty murderer ambushes Wilson on a lofty walkway above the carrier's boilers, and the crippled sleuth must survive an all-out onslaught by a knife-wielding assailant. . . . Superior sherlocking in an offbeat milieu, from an author who uses the peculiar mores of a closed community and the vagaries of military justice to excellent effect. -- Copyright &copy;1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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