

PEGGY WAYNE  
*SKY GIRL*

Betty Baxter Anderson

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*PEGGY WAYNE*  
*SKY GIRL*

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A CAREER STORY FOR OLDER GIRLS

By

BETTY BAXTER ANDERSON

Illustrations by

ROBERTA PAFLIN

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*PEGGY WAYNE—SKY GIRL*

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I

*A NEW CAREER*

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PEGGY WAYNE turned, half-guiltily, as the door was flung open.

“Oh, it’s you, Jane! I was scared to death it was Merry Bates coming for her nurse’s cap.”

The dark-eyed newcomer closed the door swiftly behind her. “I can’t help telling you how marvelous it looks, Peggy, with your blonde braids. Just the same, young lady, you’d better whip it off. You’d never hear the last of it if any of the other girls caught you in a graduate’s cap twelve hours too early.”

Peggy turned back to the mirror with a sigh. “Here, we’ve labored for three long years to wear these bonnets and I’m sure the last twelve hours will be the hardest.”

Jane chuckled. “You’re going to forget all that, darling, when I give you the great news. I just saw Doctor Black. He whispered a message for you—and me, incidentally. We’re both to go on duty on the three-to-eleven stint tomorrow afternoon on maternity.”

“*Jane!* That means we did pass the state board!”

The other girl nodded triumphantly. "And that's not all. Do take off that cap, Peggy, before someone else comes in."

Carefully Peggy removed the hairpins which had held the stiffly starched white cap in place. "What other news do you have, you fleet-footed bringer of glad tidings?"

"Idiot! Just for that, I'm going to keep you in suspense. You'll have to wait until you see it for yourself."

"Oh, come on, sweet! You know my bump of curiosity simply swells up and throbs when you tease me."

Jane, her lovely brown eyes sparkling with fun, refused to tell more.

Peggy hurried, then, pinning on her own senior cap with its neat black velvet ribbon, and flipping her cape over her shoulders.

"Lead the way, Jane," she cried.

The two friends hurried down the familiar corridors of the nurses' home to the entrance lobby.

A cluster of white-clad figures, chattering excitedly, was gathered around the bulletin board. "If you can worm your way to the front, you can read the notice for yourself," Jane told her.

Peggy finally managed to see the letter which was the center of interest.

"Headquarters of Skylines, Inc., Chicago, Ill.," the letterhead announced. It was addressed to Miss Graves, supervisor of nurses at Iowa Wesleyan.

"I wish to inform you that I will be at Hotel Kirkwood in Des Moines on Tuesday, June 2nd, to interview applicants for position as hostesses for Skylines, Inc.

"Requirements are as follows: Girls must be registered graduate nurses between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-six; not less than five feet nor more than five feet six inches tall; and must weigh less than one hundred fifteen pounds.

"If any of the applicants appear satisfactory, I should appreciate receiving character and scholastic recommendations from you in a personal conversation. May I, then, have the pleasure of your company as my dinner guest at the hotel next Tuesday? I should also be grateful if you will post this letter where it can be seen by your graduating class, and also if you would

notify any of your recent graduates in Des Moines or vicinity whom you think would be interested in an airline hostess position.

Sincerely yours,  
James Hallett  
Personnel director,  
Skylines, Inc.”

With a happy smile Peggy squirmed her way through the half-circle of excited girls and greeted Jane again.

“Let’s go out on the terrace in the sun and talk this over,” she murmured.

Arm in arm, the two girls strolled across the lobby to a French door opening onto the stone terrace.

Merry Bates, one of the graduate nurses at the bulletin board, had turned to watch their departure. She laughed mirthlessly, shrugging her shoulders. “Girls, what chance have we, if those two decide to apply?”

A chubby, red-haired girl smoothed her uniform, chuckling. “I know I’m out, by about fifteen pounds. But I wouldn’t give up hope if I were you skinny things. After all, Mr. Hallett must be hiring quite a few hostesses if he is coming all the way to Des Moines to look for them.”

Jane and Peggy were alone on the terrace, and as they sat down on one of the benches, the blonde girl asked eagerly, “Jane, are you going to apply?”

“Indeed, I am. I’ve never told a soul because I understand it’s rather difficult to get a hostess job. But that’s really the reason I took up nursing. Years ago my uncle treated me to a ride over Des Moines in an airplane, and I’ve never gotten over the thrill of actually flying through the air.”

“Why is it so difficult to get a job with the airlines?” Peggy asked.

“It’s probably easier now than it was three or four years ago,” Jane answered, “because all the airlines have doubled or tripled their business. But I always supposed there were dozens of applicants for each of the eight or nine hundred openings.”

“I read just the other day,” Peggy objected, “that most airline hostesses marry within a year after taking the job. The turnover must be terrific.”

“I wouldn’t marry,” Jane answered serenely. “Not if I ever actually had the chance to fly—and *get paid for it!*”



“Don’t be so positive,” Peggy murmured. Her tone was light and amused. “By the way, how much do you get paid for it?”

“Most lines start their hostesses—or stewardesses as some of the aviation companies call them—at a hundred a month. Advancement is fairly rapid, and chief hostesses get around one hundred and sixty. Besides, you’re given meals and living expenses away from your home port.”

“You know all the answers, don’t you?” Peggy demanded.

“I should. I’ve been dreaming about it for a long time.”

“There are hidden, unsuspected depths in you. To think, I’ve lived with you for nigh onto three years, and I had no idea of what was really going on under those inky-black curls of yours.”

“Please don’t tease,” Jane burst out unexpectedly. “Peggy, will you apply with me?”

Peggy studied the round toes of her sturdy white oxfords a long moment before replying. “It does sound mighty attractive,” she admitted. “There are a few other considerations. What if Dad and Mom don’t approve?”

“Or Doctor Black?” Jane asked.

“*He* has nothing to do with my decisions,” Peggy answered with sudden cool dignity. But her cheeks were flaming.

Jane laughed. “Oh, yes? Then what are the other considerations?”

“The last time I weighed myself the scales said one-fourteen.”

Jane whistled. “Job or no job, young lady, you’re going to diet.”

“If you’ll help me cut out the sodas and candy, I’ll make a bargain with you,” Peggy promised. “If I get down to one-ten by next Tuesday, I’ll apply with you.”

“It’s a bargain. We’ll start right now by taking a long walk in the sunshine and skipping lunch. What say?”

Peggy agreed. Each evening during the following week before the girls tumbled into bed at midnight, Jane would weigh Peggy and record her weight on a little card. Late on Monday, the night before the Tuesday interviews, the pointer on the scales was halfway between one hundred and nine and one hundred and ten. The girls shook hands solemnly.

“I hope this means we’ll keep right on being roommates without a break,” Jane declared.

“You’re a good sort,” Peggy replied affectionately. “I’ll be pretty low when I have to see you off to a glamour-girl life on the plane in a day or two, and return to a hectic existence on night duty at Iowa Wesleyan.”

“Peggy! Don’t even *think* that—let alone, say it!”

“Except, after you leave, I can have all the candy and sodas I crave,” the blonde girl added, grinning impishly.

The next morning the two friends dressed with meticulous care for their interviews with James Hallett of Skylines, Inc.

It was Peggy’s idea to wear suits. “That will give him an idea of how we would look in the regulation hostess garb,” she pointed out. “We’re probably going to be up against some tough competition. We’ll want to use any helpful tricks we know.”

Jane nodded absently. “Not too much make-up—no rouge—pale fingernail polish—a light lipstick—” She paused abruptly. “Speaking of competition, I forgot to tell you that Merry Bates said that Inez Hunt is going to apply.”

The sparkling lights disappeared from Peggy’s eyes. Her voice was dull and wooden when she finally answered. “I was afraid she would. But I couldn’t help hoping that Doctor Black’s being at Iowa Wesleyan would keep her here out of my life. Jane, she’s sure to get there. No nurse has ever left this hospital with more poise, sophistication, a better scholastic record or a more beautiful face.”

“Or a harder heart,” Jane murmured. “Come, Peggy. We’d never be considered if we were late for our appointments.”

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## TWO LETTERS

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MORE than a dozen nurses of approximately the same age, weight and size, were assembled in one of the parlor suites at the Hotel Kirkwood when Peggy and Jane arrived.

Many of the girls spoke cordially, but two or three were strangers, wearing the pins of other hospitals in Des Moines. Easily the most striking girl in the room was Inez Hunt, a sleek, dark-haired beauty in a white linen frock, and a daring striped turban with bag to match. She was sitting a little apart from the others, glancing through a magazine. She didn't look up when the other nurses greeted Peggy and Jane.

A few minutes later a door to an inner room swung open. Then a distinguished, grey-haired man came out.

“Good morning, girls,” he said cheerfully. “I asked all of you to come at this time because I wanted to tell you a little about the background for work in aviation before you apply.”

He plunged into his message, and Peggy instantly sensed the man's sincere faith through his words. “Skyline has an unmatched record of one hundred and fifty million miles of flying, including thirty thousand coast-to-

coast flights and fifty-five thousand Chicago-New York flights. We have achieved this remarkable success because we've lived and breathed safety, from the president of the airline to the newest grease monkey at our School of Aeronautics. As an example, for every hour an airliner is in the air, *sixteen hours are spent on overhaul and maintenance!*

“And this is true of every successful commercial aviation company in the business. But the public has been slow to realize it. The history of man's mastery of the air is still in its opening paragraphs. The Wright brothers didn't fly until 1903.

“Now, I want to tell you a little story. Several years ago an airline executive made a particularly bumpy trip. He noticed the nervous, tense expressions on the faces of the passengers. The weather was bad. Sleet beat against the windows, and the clouds were dark, threatening masses.

“There weren't any women passengers on the plane. He thought, ‘If there were some good-looking girls, these men would be too busy thinking up bright remarks to stew about the storm. Why don't we have official hostesses to make the passengers more content and confident?’

“He proposed the scheme at the next business meeting of his company, and was scoffed at. Girls were timid and scared of thunder and lightning. Women flyers were rare. But the man was stubborn. Women didn't faint and go to pieces these days. See how many drove cars. Look at the sturdy swimmers and tennis players. Maybe it wouldn't work—but why not try it?

“Finally, the company agreed to train eight young women to become regular members of flight crews. No chorus girls, no thrill-seekers. Capable girls, who could keep their heads in an emergency. One type of girl answered this requirement, the trained nurse. She was trained for speed, efficiency, confidence.

“The rest is history. Nearly a thousand air hostesses travel regularly on most of the four hundred airliners in the country. Not only have they brought comfort and enjoyment to our millions of passengers, but they're fast becoming a new symbol of charm and dignity.

“If you are selected to take our training course, and become the proud owner of our gold globe-and-wings you are joining a noble band of women.” He paused a moment, and when he spoke again, his voice was matter-of-fact. “Now, if you'll count off, beginning over here, I'll talk to you privately in the other room and take your qualifications.”

Peggy groaned inwardly. Inez was number one, and she and Jane would be the last!

It was a difficult hour of suspense.

Inez came out, smiling in her secret, superior way. Gradually the applicants dwindled away. Peggy was the last one. Jane waited for her, in the outside room.

Mr. Hallett checked her name from a list. "Let's see, Miss Wayne. You're just twenty-one. Your weight is one hundred and ten, your height five feet three. Right?"

Peggy nodded. "Yes, sir. That's correct."

"And your home is Mount Ayr. Any brothers or sisters?"

Peggy was a little surprised at his chatty, conversational tone. In a moment, she found herself telling him about her father and mother, and her dad's lumber yard, and how she'd always been interested in nursing, but that the airplane hostess idea was new to her.

"My roommate, Jane Fuller, took nursing especially with that idea in mind. She's so enthusiastic about flying that she has me excited about it," Peggy volunteered.

The man sighed. "It is a thrilling vocation, Miss Wayne, but it's hard work. Looking after the comfort of twenty or so passengers; serving their meals; seeing that they don't forget their purses or coats or gloves; checking luggage and tickets; answering questions about maps, cities, points of interests and the weather—it isn't all just looking beautiful and chatting with traveling celebrities."

Peggy had sobered instantly. "I realized that, Mr. Hallett, as you talked with us a while ago. But I do believe that any girl who has the wit and stamina to go through the three difficult years of nurse's training can take it."

"So do we! That's why it's our first requirement. Thank you for coming, Miss Wayne. If you're selected you will be notified in a few days from our Chicago headquarters."

"Thank you."

Jane greeted Peggy, as she returned to the parlor of the suite, with an anxious smile. "I don't know how I'm going to live through the suspense of the next few days."

“Let’s take it a day at a time,” Peggy replied philosophically. “Right now, let’s go have a light salad lunch, and take in a movie before we report for duty at three.”

“I wonder what Miss Graves will tell him about us?” Jane worried. “I wish I hadn’t been so fresh with her, that time she caught me making fudge in the lab. kitchen two years ago—”

Jane giggled. “Silly! She’s forgotten that. Just remember all the nice things she’s said to you about your work.”

One thing that helped through the suspense was an extremely busy period at Iowa Wesleyan. Several nights the girls didn’t go off duty until after one o’clock. Even Jane didn’t do much rolling and tossing when they finally managed to get to bed.

Peggy took the week-end off, to go to her home in Mount Ayr. Her mother had sprained her ankle the week before graduation, and her parents had been unable to attend. Doctor Black was joining her for Sunday dinner at her home, and driving her back to the hospital in Des Moines.

Ben Black, the handsomest bachelor of the crew of internes at Iowa Wesleyan, had singled Peggy out for his attentions six months before, shortly after coming to Des Moines. He had visited in her home several times. When he arrived on Sunday morning the Waynes greeted him as an old friend.

Peggy decided to say nothing of her application for the air hostess work unless she were selected. She was completely uncertain of her parents’ reaction, and the girl wisely chose not to upset them unnecessarily.

“Mrs. Wayne, you make the finest strawberry shortcake in the state of Iowa. And your fried chicken is worth driving hundreds of miles—” the young man declared.

The telephone in the hall shrilled.

“It’s long-distance for you, Peggy,” her father reported.

The girl’s heart was racing as she went to answer.

It was Jane, calling from Des Moines. “Peggy, we both received special deliveries just now, from Skylines. Mine has a pass good on Wednesday’s plane to Chicago. I’ve been chosen to take the preliminary course! Should I open yours?”

“Of course, Jane! Oh, marvelous!”

The distant sound of paper being torn came faintly over the telephone. Then Jane's exultant voice cried, "Yes! It's just like mine! Peggy, isn't it just the most wonderful thing that ever happened?"

"It really is. Thanks, heaps, for calling."

"Good-bye. See you tonight."

"Good-bye."

Peggy went slowly down the hall to the dining room. How would these three receive the news?

"Who was it?" Mrs. Wayne queried anxiously. "I hope nothing has gone wrong at the hospital."

Peggy took the plunge. "No. It was grand news. Jane and I have both been selected to take the preliminary air hostess course for Skylines, Inc., in Chicago. We're to leave Wednesday on the noon plane."

The three faces around the dining table were blank with startled surprise.

"Peggy! What do you mean?" Her mother was the first to recover her voice.

"James Hallett, the personnel director, interviewed a dozen of us Tuesday, but Jane and I really didn't dare hope to be among the chosen few. I wonder how many others got letters?"

"But I thought you wanted to be a nurse," her father objected.

"Only nurses are employed. The hours are easy. The work is steady, and the pay is high. And it's fun, too. There's scarcely a girl in the country who wouldn't give her eye teeth for the chance."

"But, Peggy, darling! It's so dangerous!" Mrs. Wayne wailed.

"Oh, no, it isn't! Why, do you know that for every hour an airliner is in the air, the company spends sixteen hours on repairs and maintenance? It really isn't half so dangerous as my riding back to Des Moines on the highways with Ben this afternoon."

"Thanks," the young doctor remarked dryly. He had dark curly hair, a straight nose and frank gray eyes.

"You know what I mean," Peggy said hastily. She went on, swiftly reviewing Mr. Hallett's talk to the applicants. When she finished, she looked appealingly to her father for his decision.

“Your mother and I will fly to Chicago with you Wednesday, and look over the situation for ourselves,” he announced gravely.

Peggy nodded in agreement, her eyes shining. “That’s very fair of you, Dad. If you and mother decide against it, I’ll do what you wish.”

Doctor Black glanced at his wristwatch. “I don’t like to hurry away, but if I’m to get you back to the hospital by three, Peggy, we’ll have to be leaving. Perhaps, it won’t be such a dangerous trip if we don’t have to go too fast.”

“You’re annoyed with me,” Peggy stated directly, as soon as the roadster was headed north to Des Moines. “I should have told you, but Jane and I thought it would be better to say nothing about it. After all, the odds were against our being selected.”

“I’m not annoyed,” the interne said after a long silence. His eyes were grave. “But you can’t expect me to shout for joy because you’re leaving, can you? Iowa Wesleyan is going to be a dull spot without you, Peggy.”



*FIRST TRIP*

PEGGY spent the next three days memorizing the “general information” section of the Skylines’ schedule that had been sent with her letter and pass. As Peggy waited at the Des Moines airport on Wednesday with her parents, Jane, and the nurses who’d come to see them off, she mentally checked off the items in the folder.

“Forty pounds of luggage—I wonder if our trunks will get there tomorrow? I emptied my fountain pen, because it said that at eight thousand feet or more they’d leak. Do you suppose we’ll go that high? Why, let’s see, that’s almost two miles up in the air! Daddy bought our trip insurance when he got his ticket—”

She had to forget her mental review, for at that moment Inez Hunt made a characteristic last-minute appearance.

Doctor Black’s roadster stopped with a shrieking of brakes in the airport’s parking lot. He hurried to the group waiting at the gate. He was carrying Inez’ smart patent-leather hat-box. The girl was stunning in a new black-and-white print dress, a thin wool black coat, and a dramatic broad-brimmed chapeau.

“We made it, Ben!” she cried, laughing.

Doctor Black, scowling a little, dropped her bag with the other luggage piled in readiness for the plane. He didn't answer, but hurried on to greet the Waynes, and Peggy and Jane.

“I thought you weren't going to make it,” Peggy's voice was cool and her eyes held a hurt look.

Ben, in his white interne's suit, frowned again. “I found I could. Just as I was leaving, Inez hurried up and said her cab was late. She asked if she could come along.”

“Here it comes!” Jane cried.

The great silver plane was losing altitude as it began a wide, sweeping circle overhead.

Peggy had always been thrilled at the sight. But never before had she waited with this eager expectancy. When the Skyliner took off this time, she'd be with it!

The big plane glided to a landing at the far end of the field, then taxied down the concrete runway to the passenger gate.

The fueling truck was waiting and so was the mail truck. Peggy, however, had eyes only for the members of the ground crew who rushed the gangway into place.

The airline hostess was the first to appear. She stood just outside the door, checking the passengers' names from the flight list she held as they stepped out of the plane. “Good-bye, Mr. and Mrs. Martin! We'll be looking for you again, soon!”

Inez Hunt murmured to Jane, “Neat uniform, but a trifle plain, don't you think? Still, that soft ivory shade is particularly becoming to us brunettes.” Her last remark was louder, unmistakably meant for Peggy's ears.

“The blondes will have their innings in the winter,” Peggy retorted quickly. “I understand the heavier uniforms are blue.” She chuckled and added: “If we get through the training course, and have a chance to wear them!”

The plane was scheduled to leave at 11:58 A.M. Peggy noted that it lacked only five minutes of that time when the hostess signalled for them to embark. Jane was the first one up the steps, giving her name to the pleasant, smiling girl. Mrs. Wayne followed a little timidly and then came Peggy.

Inez lingered pointedly, for a last-second farewell to Doctor Black.

Peggy and Jane had adjoining seats, just back of the Waynes. Of the seven passengers already in the plane, the girls noted that two others were of their own age and size.

“More applicants, you suppose?” Peggy murmured.

“Let’s ask the hostess. You take the seat next to the window so you can see more. After all, this is your very first trip.”

Peggy smiled and glanced eagerly looking about the plane. The forward door to the cockpit was closed.

“Isn’t the hostess charming?” Jane whispered. “Oh, Peggy, do you suppose we’ll ever be so assured and efficient?”

“Her name is Sally Rhodes. I saw it on a little metal plate on the side wall near the door.”

A lighted signal flashed on over the cockpit door. “Fasten seat belts please,” one line said. “No smoking,” the other one read.

“Wonder why the ash trays, then?” Peggy asked.

The smiling hostess said, “May I help you with your seat belts?” She showed them how to adjust the webbed strap, and answered Peggy’s question at the same time. “After we’re aloft, the co-pilot will turn off those lights. The passengers may then unfasten the belts and smoke, if they wish. But you’ll be learning all about this in a few days.”

“How did you know?” Jane demanded.

Peggy giggled. “I suppose our excitement is sticking out in knobs, all over.”

Sally Rhodes shook her head. “It was written on the manifest that three of our Des Moines passengers were candidates.” She nodded and smiled at the two young passengers Peggy had noted previously. “Two other girls in your class are on the plane, from Denver.”

Inez Hunt, in the single seat across the aisle, had fastened her own seat belt. She looked up to inquire in a bored tone, “How’s the air today?”

“Delightful. Not a ripple. I’m sure you’ll enjoy the trip.”

They heard the subdued roar of tuned-up motors, scarcely noticeable in the sound-proof cabin. Miss Rhodes hurried down the aisle, checking on all the occupied seats as she went. A few seconds later she was on her own jump-seat, her seat belt fastened.

Peggy caught a glimpse of Doctor Black beyond the fence. She waved gaily and smiled as the big ship rolled swiftly down the runway.

She noted the gentle backward pressure against the comfortable seat. She didn't think of being frightened; she didn't pause to check her sensations; she just had a grand sense of beginning a great adventure.

Almost before she realized it, the transport was off the ground, circling above the roof of the hangar.

Peggy pressed her nose against the window glass, in eager, little-girl fashion. Doctor Black, in his white interne's coat, was just a speck below, fast disappearing. The cars crawling along the highway looked like some strange beetles. Trees and bushes were blurs—

She looked up to see the hostess bending over her mother in the seat ahead. "Take a sip of this," she was saying, extending a glass, "and you'll feel better in a moment."

"I'm—I'm all right now," Mrs. Wayne replied, embarrassed. "I guess I must have been a little upset."

"You may unfasten your seat belts now," the hostess said, nodding toward the glass plate, blank now because the light was out. "Would you like to smoke, Mr. Wayne?" She extended an individual pack of five cigarettes in a box marked *Courtesy of Skylines, Inc.* "You may smoke any time you wish, until we start down for the landing in Chicago. I'm pretty sure we won't run into anything bumpy enough to forbid it, before."

The color had flooded back into Mrs. Wayne's cheeks. "We scarcely seem to be moving. I thought we'd be going so fast we'd be frightened to death."

"Our ship is doing better than one hundred and sixty miles an hour," the hostess told her. "It's impossible to realize it because we're nearly a mile above any speed-comparing object, like telephone poles, or other cars on the highway. You'll get the feeling of speed only on taking off and landing because you can check our forward motion with objects that are stationary."

"Do you like your work?" Jane asked impulsively.

"Immensely. There's nothing quite like it," the girl answered swiftly. "I'm a veteran, too. Over two years—and this trip, I'll pass the twenty-five-hundred-hours-in-the-air-mark!"

Inez leaned across the aisle to join the conversation. "Is the training course tough?"

“Not if you’re interested. You’ll be a bit bewildered at first, with A and N beams, connecting airlines, map reading and compasses and de-icing equipment. But it doesn’t take long to get it in order in your mind if you’re genuinely interested.”

Inez shrugged, and Miss Rhodes went to answer the buzzer from Seat Seven. Peggy and Jane watched while the hostess took an air-map from the pocket of the seat ahead. She pointed out a thin ribbon of water far below, and then checked a spot on the map with her pencil.

“Let’s see if we can locate ourselves,” Peggy suggested, unfolding her map. It was covered with spidery lines, identifying the major airlines of the United States.

“Here’s Des Moines on the Skylines’ route. Look, it says to check off one of these little marks every fifteen minutes. It’s twenty-five after eleven. We should be almost over the Mississippi.”

“Right.” They looked up to an admiring grin from Miss Rhodes. “Perhaps you’ll see a long coal barge, going through the new lock-and-dam. This is an aerial road map. But you’ll get all this soon enough. How about a spot of lunch, or is it too early for you?”

“Why, no! I’m starved,” Jane answered with a surprised note in her voice.

“Flying is good for jaded appetites,” Miss Rhodes assured her. “And you’re in luck. We have turkey today.”

It was an odd, gay luncheon, served above the clouds. There was a cup of delicious hot soup, then a main course of slices of hot turkey, mashed potatoes and well-seasoned fresh peas. The Waynes chose coffee, and the girls had iced tea. The aluminum trays were adorned with neat linen cloths and napkins and gleaming silver. The cups, glasses, and square dishes were of unbreakable ivory plastic material.

Miss Rhodes moved with swift efficiency. She refilled coffee cups and removed the trays as soon as the passengers had finished.

“Do you suppose we’ll ever learn to serve meals so quickly and with so little fuss?” Jane asked.

“This isn’t at all bad,” the hostess told her. “Only a dozen passengers. Wait until you travel on one of the Skysleepers, and everyone wants breakfast in bed, with hot rolls instead of toast, or tea made especially with

carried-along leaves. Or a five-course dinner on the non-stop to New York for a full load of twenty-one passengers. Then, you really have to hop!”

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# CHICAGO TERMINAL

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JANE was leaning over Peggy's shoulder for her first eager glimpse of the Chicago Municipal Airport.

There was a confused picture of street car tracks, hangar roofs, the iron fence of the terminal with watchers lined up beyond concrete runways, trolley cars and more roofs, as the plane came out of its spiral and glided in for the landing.

As the other passengers filed from the plane, Peggy asked her parents anxiously, "How did you like it?"

"Fine—fine," her father answered, smiling. "Just the same, I'd like to know more about it."

Jane, lingering for the others to leave, spoke in low tones to the hostess. "Do you know where we could get a guide to show us over the airport? Peggy's parents want to get a picture of the whole thing before they consent to her going into this as her life's career."

Sally Rhodes frowned a little. "I'd love to do it myself, but I have an appointment at the hair-dresser's in just half an hour." She glanced up at the clock on the terminal facade. It was 2:05.

There was the click of the door from the cockpit. A tall, bronzed, rangy pilot stepped out.

“Tex!” Sally’s eyes brightened. “You’re just the one!” Swiftly she introduced First Officer Martin to the Waynes, Peggy, Jane and Inez. “Tex, these people would like to look over the airport, and I know how anxious you are to tell the world about aviation. Would you be free to do it?”

“As soon as I turn in my flight log,” he drawled, indicating the papers in his hand.

“Perhaps, you’re tired after your trip,” Peggy murmured. “I don’t think we should impose on you.”

“Miss Sally’s right,” the tall lad grinned good-naturedly. “I couldn’t be more proud of this port if I owned it myself.”

The hostess chatted with them while they waited. She pointed out the eight or ten transport planes ranged along the concrete. “Most of the lines use Douglas DC-3s for twenty-one passengers, just like the Skyliner you came in on. But over there’s a Midcontinent Boeing 237-D with the shield-and-silver-streak. Those three in front of Hangar Three are Overland’s sleepers, also DC-3s. Our emblem is the gold globe and wing.”

She touched the tiny pin above the pocket of her suit, then indicated the same symbol on the front of a big building, down the line beyond Overland’s Hangar Three. “But you’ll pick up all this information swiftly, long before your first week in the training course is finished.”

The long-legged pilot was hurrying back to the group. “Didn’t take so long. No Form Seven to fill out this time.”

“Tex, don’t talk like that, or you’ll have these landlubbers completely confused. Form Seven is the paper headed ‘Difficulties Noted During Flight’ which the crew fills out for the Maintenance Department, following a trip,” the hostess explained. “I’ve got to dash. I’ll be seeing you at headquarters, no doubt.”

She waved airily, as the girls expressed their gratitude, and strode swiftly down the row of hangars toward the building identified with the gold globe and wing.

“Gosh, isn’t she swell!” Peggy exclaimed impulsively.

“The very nicest gals in the world are in Skyliners’ crews,” the pilot answered in his unmistakable Texas drawl. “Now, do you want the works or just a brief excursion?”



“If you’re willing to give us the time,” Mr. Wayne answered, “we’d like to see everything possible. It may be some time before Mrs. Wayne and I get back.”

“If you’ll excuse me,” Inez said, “I’ve some important shopping waiting down in the loop. Thanks just the same, officer.”

She turned coolly, and left the little group.

The pilot shrugged and said, “Now, this is a big port, but it isn’t the best in the world. Cleveland’s is a honey, and so is the new LaGuardia field in New York. But you girls will be seeing them in a few weeks.

“The passenger terminal is that small building, which looks quite small ’longside the hangars. But I think you’ll be most interested in our own headquarters. Come along!”

He led the way past the airliners on the concrete to Hangar Five. There was a racket in all the buildings; the humming and grinding of machine tools, the sharp rap of automatic riveters, the hiss of air. Steel lift-doors spanned the widths of the buildings, but all were raised now, and they could see the service crews busy at their work.

“I’m not much on statistics, as a general rule,” the pilot was saying, “but I memorized one set because I don’t think the public realizes how rapidly commercial aviation has been developing. In 1934, 22,130 planes and 125,944 passengers passed through the Chicago terminal. In the first six months of last year, 22,593 planes and 265,956 passengers were counted. More planes and twice as many passengers in half the time!”

Peggy glanced at her parents. She could tell that they were gradually being impressed with all this activity, all this fresh information.

“Not only that,” the pilot went on. “In the last ten years, fares have been cut in half and the speeds doubled.”

“Where will our classes be?” Jane asked.

“Up these iron stairs. Want to see?”

The girls nodded eagerly.

The quartet of observers followed the rangy pilot to the second floor. The rectangular room had about twenty desk chairs, set in rows, facing a large table covered with books, time tables, and pamphlets, and a blackboard beyond. Two walls were covered with huge maps. The fourth side of the

room was all glass, with an unrestricted view of the entire field and the airport administration building.

“But this isn’t where you’ll spend all your time during the next few weeks,” Tex told them, chuckling. “You’ll have to learn how to make up the sleeper berths and serve meals in the planes. And you’ll have a much more thorough trip through Maintenance and the Control Tower than I’ll be giving you. You’ll learn about equipment and regulations for airplanes and flight, the forms and ticket procedure, and you’ll memorize all the regular schedules in the country, as well as to Mexico and Canada, and a little about radio and weather. You’ll be ticket-punchers, baggage smashers, information bureaus, guides, waitresses and little mothers to all the world before you’re through!”

Mrs. Wayne laughed. “Nursing sounds rather simple, compared to that.”

“But not as much fun!” Peggy retorted quickly.

First Officer Martin nodded approvingly. “That’s the spirit! Now, how about a look at the shops? You’ll realize why it takes thirty-six men and women, all experts in their work in air transportation, to keep one plane in the air.”

“That’s what I’d like to see,” Mr. Wayne said.

The pilot led the way down the stairs to the open hangar. “This is just for service maintenance,” he explained. “Our major overhaul shop is down at the end of the line.”

There were men in mechanics’ overalls everywhere. Crouching under wings or fuselage; atop engine mounts; on tall step ladders looking for, or repairing surface defects.

“Back here’s the instrument room, where the brains of the ships are checked and re-checked.” Tex pointed out gyroscopes, barometers, altimeters. Silent workers at the benches, studying minute parts through a microscope, or handling the pin-point blow torches, didn’t look up as they passed.

“I don’t feel I’m absorbing a tenth of this!” Peggy groaned, as the pilot took them through radio maintenance, and then the big operations room and the flight superintendent’s office at the rear of the hangar. Martin pointed out the drafting tables. Next, they paused and watched the meteorologist assembling a weather map from the teletype reports. From an open window

in a partition came a scrambled racket of Morse code, static, and the steady rat-a-tat of the teletype.

“Before we go to the traffic control tower across the way, I’d like you to see the pilot’s best friend,” the tall young man told them. “You may have heard of the Link trainer.”

“I’ve seen it mentioned a lot,” Jane told him. “Can you learn to fly in them?”

The pilot chuckled. “No, but you can learn a lot after you think you know how! The first time I tried, I landed six hundred feet below sea level!”

From the open door of the hangar, and above the noise of the service crews, came a voice from the port’s loud-speaking system. “Overland’s Flight Seven from New York, landing at Gate Five in five minutes! Overland’s Flight Seven from New York, landing at Gate Five in five minutes!”

“Oh, dear! There are just too many exciting things going on all at once,” Peggy wailed.

The pilot had skirted around the big planes being serviced until he came to a door with a high sill. He chuckled as he stepped over into a shadowy corridor beyond. “You’ll soon get so used to it, you won’t even look up. When you realize there are more than a hundred and fifty planes landing here during a day, the novelty wears off quickly.”

He opened a door marked, “Captain Weill, Flight Examiner.”

It was a barren room, empty except for the instructor’s desk, a few benches, and an odd, stubby little machine, set in a circular pit. First Officer Martin signalled for silence, as the older man at the desk called out his orders.

“Climb to five thousand at five hundred feet per minute and make a hundred and eighty degree turn to your left. When you’re finished, descend to three thousand, making a ninety degree turn to your right.”

The watchers were breathless as the hooded device nosed up, turned, nosed down, turned again. Their guide was standing at the desk, watching the “crab,” the pantograph pencil, which transcribed the simulated flight on a co-ordinated map.

“When you’ve completed the last maneuver, make a twenty degree turn to the right and stop. Hold that course for forty seconds, and follow with a

sixty degree turn to your left. When you're through with that, open up the hood."

A few minutes later, a flushed, perspiring young man threw back the cover of the device, and the watchers caught a glimpse of the instruments on the panel inside. The pilot in the trainer took a deep gasp of fresh air, cut the switch, and climbed out. "How did I do?"

"Fair," the instructor told him. "Take five minutes, then we'll try a little radio range flying, and a low approach on an airport. Here's an approach map to look at, while you're resting."

The older man at the desk turned and gave Tex Martin a broad grin. "Hi yah, fellow. Want to do a little brushing up?"

"In the morning," the tall boy told him. "Just got in on Flight Ten from Denver. Showing these folks around. I couldn't leave out the most important place in the business."

"That blarney's not going to help you in the morning when you miss the Sandusky beam, young man."

Laughing, the tall pilot gave the instructor a mock salute, and turned to his fascinated followers. "Tired? Want to see more?"

At their enthusiastic response he said, "Okay. We'll have a look at the traffic control tower in the administration building, then I'll treat you to a cup of tea at the lunchroom."

The pilot marshalled his small group across the field to the principal building, and led them to the circular room at the top, the walls and ceiling of which were constructed of clear glass.

Several men were working here, absorbed in aeronautical charts and diagrams at a table, or busy with the knobs and dials on a number of tall radio cabinets. A voice cracked out of the loudspeaker on top of one of these, "Midcontinent Flight Four calling Chicago. Midcontinent Flight Four calling Chicago."

One of the radio operators spoke into an ordinary telephone transmitter. "Chicago to Midcontinent Flight Four. Go ahead."

Martin nodded toward the man at the transmitter. "They always say 'go ahead,' so they've been nicknamed 'goat heads.'"

The voice came again from the loudspeaker. "We're over Lansing marker at five thousand and climbing at fourteen . . . one, four. We estimate

Goshen at six thousand at forty-three . . . four, three.”

The radio operator repeated, “Lansing marker at five thousand, climbing. You estimate Goshen at forty-three. Your additional traffic will be an Army B-18-A flying eight thousand from Selfridge field to Chanute. He estimates Goshen at three-zero.”

Mrs. Wayne exclaimed wearily, “Did I hear someone suggest tea? I’m exhausted with all this mass of information.”

“Right away!” First Officer Martin cried. “I’m so enthusiastic about this whole set-up, that I forget how tired of it other people might get.”

“Oh, I’m not tired of it!” Mrs. Wayne retorted spunkily. “I’ve just reached the saturation point on knowledge and impressions for today. Peggy, I don’t blame you for being enthused about this as a career.”

“Dad! How do you feel about it?”

Mr. Wayne grinned. “I’m just sorry it’s so hard to teach an old dog new tricks. I’d like this business myself!”

“Whee!” Peggy cried exultantly. “Jane, isn’t it wonderful?”

“Now, all we have to do is to convince Skylines, Inc., that they want us!”

*CLASSES AGAIN*

“I RECKON you girls are staying at the Allison?” Tex drawled when they left the busy lunch room. “If you don’t mind a little crowdin’, I’ll be glad to run you over.”

“Oh, we mustn’t take up any more of your free time!” Peggy exclaimed. “We do so appreciate your expert guidance around the airport and Skylines’ headquarters.”

The rangy pilot grinned. “Oh, I have lots of free time. One more flight, day after tomorrow, and I’ve got my maximum of eighty-five hours this month. I was just goin’ to suggest that I run you girls over to the Allison to freshen up a bit. Then, if your parents don’t mind a small hotel, they could stay at the Dumont. That’s where most of us bachelor aviators stay at the Chicago end of the run. I could pick you all up about six or six-thirty, and we could go to my favorite Chinese restaurant for dinner.”

“This must be a top example of that Southern hospitality I’ve heard about,” Peggy said, laughing.

“My motives are purely personal and selfish,” the Texan retorted. A wide grin parted his long, pleasant mouth. “I always make it a point to get in

good with the hostesses. That way, I get the best steaks for dinner, and chocolate milk shakes in between meals, when I want 'em.”

After a luscious dinner at Hoe Sai Gai, the pilot suggested a theater party, but the girls and Mr. and Mrs. Wayne begged off. Peggy’s parents were returning to Des Moines by plane in the morning, and the girls had been instructed to report at Skylines, Inc., by ten.

Tex took the girls to their new home at the Allison, a hotel for women which gave the airlines a reduced rate for its employees. Then Peggy said good-bye to her parents, for their plane would be leaving a couple of hours before the girls would arrive at the airport.

The girls discovered they were to share their suite of small living room, bath, and one double and one single bedroom, with Inez. She had appropriated the single room, and was preening before the full-length mirror in the living room, when Peggy and Jane arrived.

“What a lovely evening gown!” Jane exclaimed.

“Oh, it’s just a simple little dinner frock,” Inez replied. “I have several friends here, so I knew I’d be going out at night a lot. I just had to have some new clothes. I’m sick of all those old rags I’ve been wearing.”

The telephone rang. Inez swooped to answer it. “Yes, thank you. Tell him I’ll be down in five minutes . . .”

“What a gal!” Jane laughed. “Here we are, home and exhausted and ready for bed, and you’re just going out for the evening.”

Inez went on to the little single room. She returned, wearing a corsage of three enormous gardenias. They were especially lovely on the sleek black gown. Long gloves and a richly-embroidered mandarin coat completed her costume. She waved airily at the two girls, who felt suddenly shabby and plain in their traveling suits and called out, “See you in the morning. Don’t wait up for me!”

“No wonder Inez went shopping,” Peggy remarked, as she started to unpack her traveling case. “She certainly couldn’t have had all that in her forty pounds of luggage.”

“Those mandarin coats cost a small fortune,” Jane observed. “Perhaps Inez had a wealthy and indulgent uncle.”

“I’ve never heard her mention any relatives,” Peggy said. “And I couldn’t help noticing that no kin came to the plane to see her off.”

“Maybe they were like mine. Perhaps, they live too far from Des Moines to have made the trip.”

“She always talks as if Des Moines is her home town,” Peggy objected. “Ah, well, it’s a minor mystery, and I’m much too sleepy to work on it right now.”

Half an hour later both girls were sound asleep. Neither awoke when Inez let herself in quietly at three o’clock the next morning.

Peggy and Jane decided to have breakfast in the exciting atmosphere of the airport lunch room. Just as they were ready to leave, Jane said, “Perhaps we’d better wake Inez. She might sleep right through the first class.”

Peggy agreed. She knocked on the door. “Inez?”

There was no answer so she rapped again.

“Yes?” came the sleepy answer.

“Jane and I are going out to the airport to have breakfast. You’d better rally around. The first class begins in an hour and a half.”

“Thanks. I’ll get there, don’t worry.”

The girls loved the busy, bustling atmosphere of the airport. When Jane recognized a famous pair of movie stars, with a noisy retinue of press agents, reporters, secretaries and maids, she was so excited she could scarcely eat her breakfast.

“We’ll be seeing them every day, darling. You’ll just have to get used to it,” Peggy laughed. “Come, fortify yourself with food. You’re thin!”

“That reminds me. Isn’t that your second slice of toast?” Jane asked suspiciously.

“Oh, all right!” Peggy dropped it to her plate. “I forgot that I went over my calorie limit on dinner last night. But wasn’t it good?”

Jane nodded. “I can see you still need my eagle eye. Shall we go up to the classroom? It won’t hurt to be early, and there’s a good view of the whole field from that big window.”

Peggy agreed, and a few minutes later they were climbing the iron stairs in Hangar Five.

A trim-looking woman in the official ivory suit sat back of the table at the head of the room. She looked up from a notebook and smiled. “You’re early, girls. I’m Mary Ann Huston. I’m to have charge of the candidates’ class.”



Peggy and Jane gave their names. Both noted the “Chief Hostess” outlined in gold thread above the familiar globe and wing pin over the pocket of her suit.

“It seems odd to be coming to classes again,” Peggy remarked. “Only two weeks ago I thought I was through with notebooks and desks and blackboards forever.”

The older girl chuckled. “I can promise you that these classes will be different.” She turned back to her notebook, and the girls wandered over to the window to watch the bustle below. A small tractor was chugging as it towed one of the big transport planes across the apron of cement. Down the row of hangars were mail trucks, express trucks, and the dark green cars from the commissary, all servicing planes preparatory to flight.

There were several smaller planes, too, which Peggy realized were privately owned. As she watched, a new resolve was forming in her mind.

“Someday,” she vowed to herself, “I am going to learn to pilot a plane! Soon!”

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*BRIGHT NEW WORLD*

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PERHAPS, it was because of this new, strong ambition that Peggy became the outstanding student in the hostess class at Skylines, Inc.

That first morning, Miss Huston told the dozen young nurses more details concerning the positions to which they aspired. "You'll work from ninety to one hundred and ten hours a month, never more than that. You'll have two or three days off, between flights, except during the heavy holiday schedules when you may reach the maximum in the third week of the month. In that case, you may have a week or ten days of vacation to make up for it. You will be given five dollars a day for expense money when you're away from home port. You may stay at the Allison, if you like, but most of the girls have found it is less expensive and more convenient to share an apartment with one or two other hostesses.

"Today, you will receive your Hostess Manual. I should like you to read through it carefully this evening. You won't be expected to understand or memorize all of it at once. Various airline executives will come to class to explain the different phases of airplane equipment and regulations; flight regulations and equipment; forms and procedure of tickets; food service; connections and interline information; and I shall ask you to memorize all

regular schedules, equipment and major stops on the airlines of the Western hemisphere. That will be your assignment for tomorrow. It isn't quite as tough as it sounds. Most airlines use about the same equipment, and your familiarity with your own country will assist you."

Inez, who had been the last one to arrive, just at ten, spoke up. "When do we have our physical examinations?"

"Our own flight physician will see half of you this afternoon, and the other half tomorrow afternoon. I shall announce the schedule of appointments as soon as we've finished this morning. Those whose appointments are for tomorrow may have the afternoon free."

Jane's physical examination was the first, and Peggy's was to be late the next afternoon.

The girls left the classroom a little aghast at the assignment "Afternoon free!" Peggy was bewildered. "With all this memorizing to do?"

"You learn it, and then you can coach me tonight," Jane suggested, half-laughing.

Tex Martin, the rangy co-pilot on the Skyliner that had brought them to Chicago, was waiting at the bottom of the iron stairs. "I reckoned I'd find you all," he greeted them, "if I just hung around awhile."

"How did you do in the Link trainer?" Peggy asked.

"Oh, pretty fair. Didn't approach through any tall buildings or high lines. I thought maybe if you two didn't have classes, I'd like to treat you to a spot of lunch, and then maybe we could go for a swim in the lake."

"The lunch sounds fine, but I have to have my physical examination here at one," Jane informed him. "Why don't you two run along? I'll have a snack over at the lunch room."

"I really don't think I should go swimming when I have all this to memorize," Peggy demurred.

"One thing at a time," the tall boy drawled. "Let's all have lunch. Then, we can discuss the swim."

Tex was a gay companion. The girls discovered that he was more than willing to answer questions. And they had a lot of them!

Jane left, reluctantly, in time for her appointment, and Peggy and her new friend continued their conversation through two extra cups of coffee.

"Now, how about that swim?" the pilot urged.

“It depends on one thing,” Peggy said, dimpling. “If my trunk is here, I’ll have a bathing suit, and I’ll go. If it isn’t here, I’ll stay at the hotel and do my cramming.”

“It’s a bargain. Come on. My car’s in the parking lot.”

Tex drove a dashing convertible club coupe, and for this sunny day he had the top down. As he threaded through the heavy traffic he remarked, “Too bad the Civil Aeronautics Authority can’t do something about cars. Most drivers are far off the beam. It’s twice as easy to pilot a plane—”

“Is it, really?” Peggy demanded.

“Why?” he asked, at the note of earnestness in her voice. “Thinking of taking up aviation as a side-line to hostessing?”

“You’re making fun of me,” Peggy said defensively. “I just decided this morning that I wanted to learn to fly. I thought you could advise me how to go about it.”

“I’m not making fun. Look at Jacqueline Cochran and Amelia Earhart and Anne Lindbergh. Who am I to poke fun at women flyers? Not only that, a friend of mine has an approved school at a private field not forty minutes away. He might shave his fees a little if I asked him to.”

“Is it very expensive?”

“It costs about three hundred dollars, and takes about three months to get your amateur pilot rating. About five hundred dollars and four months will earn you a private pilot’s certificate. It would take you about twice as long, if you learn while you’re working.”

“About four times as long, you mean. Why, it would take me until Christmas to save three hundred dollars.”

“You can pay as you go. It costs about six dollars an hour for instruction and use of the plane. You can start as soon as you pay the entrance fee. But I’d advise you to wait a month or so, until you get onto the hostess work. You’ll pick up a lot of information about flight regulations and equipment in the next three weeks that will be helpful later.”

At the Allison, Peggy learned that her trunk hadn’t arrived. Tex regretfully stuck to his bargain and departed, so that she could study her maps.

Both Jane and Peggy passed the rigid physical examination with flying colors. Their mornings in the class rooms, and their afternoons of instruction

in the hangar or in the planes went with amazing swiftness. Gradually, by the end of the second week, the girls began to have an understanding of the patient detail, the skilled craftwork, and the modern efficiency of this great new enterprise.

They filled their notebooks with information on de-icing equipment, radio antennas, direction-finders, altimeters, compasses and gyro compasses, tachometers and ignition systems. But still this wasn't enough for Peggy.

One morning was devoted to the serving of meals aboard an airliner. They learned that the usual menu contained hot meat, several hot vegetables, coffee, tea, milk or chocolate, hot soup, relishes, a cold salad and a cold dessert.

All the food was delivered to the planes from a cateress nearby who had made a career of providing meals to be served high above the earth. Her green trucks were driven out to the loading ramps every morning and, with the assistance of the ground crew, the driver of the car placed the freshly prepared food in the tiny kitchen compartments. The commissary department of the line checked it, and then turned it over to the hostess. It then became her responsibility.

The hot foods were kept in the large thermos pans from the kitchen of the cateress until served by the hostess. The liquids were in thermos jugs, built to withstand the variations in pressures at different altitudes, and placed in a rack in the galley.

The girls rehearsed serving the trays, and found that the efficient planning of the small room made the task much simpler than they had feared.

After class, Jane was assigned to the general office that afternoon to help check trip reports and get a picture of the clerical work necessary to a transport company.

Peggy decided to use the afternoon visiting the establishment of Mrs. Harrison, the cateress who prepared the nine thousand meals each month served by the airlines leaving Chicago. She found the story typical of the fascinating growth of the aviation industry.

Mrs. Harrison, in 1933, had been managing a small hotel near the southern boundary of the airport, used by pilots and executives. She heard the men discussing the radical plan of serving coffee on the planes. She obtained the contract to leave a thermos jug of the drink on every departing

plane. Then one company asked her to provide a tray of sandwiches. All the time Mrs. Harrison was studying dietetics and trying to improve the quality of her food.

“I always felt,” she told Peggy, “that in spite of their good appetites, airline passengers shouldn’t be given heavy food. There’s no physical exertion to riding in a plane, and the stuffy feeling following a heavy meal is decidedly uncomfortable. For that reason, we provide light meat—fowl, chiefly—and fruits, salads and fluids.”

The pleasant young woman outlined her daily routine for Peggy. “We get the schedules from the airlines in the morning, and these go to the chief cook. One stove is reserved for soups. Relishes and salads are prepared in this separate room. The chief cook supervises the broiling of the chicken, while another prepares the peas. Mashed potatoes have to be light as whipped cream, for they seem to gain weight a couple of miles above ground.

“That huge board in the kitchen lists the departure time of every plane as well as the time when the food for each trip must be finished and placed in containers to be taken to the airport. The passenger agent calls us two hours before departure time to let us know how many dinners will be needed. Salads, desserts, bread, crackers, butter, salt and pepper are packed in individual containers.

“I have to be as weather conscious as the pilots,” she told Peggy, chuckling a little. “A cancelled flight means the loss of meals already packed. I get the finest of co-operation from the airline weather forecasters of all the companies.”

“How do you decide on your menus?” Peggy asked.

“Every once in a while, we get a fussy celebrity who wants something special. If it isn’t too outlandish, we serve it to all the passengers. Also, I’ve found it wise to carry quite a stock of baby foods. You’d be surprised at the frequency they’re required. But I try to vary the menus a lot. Many passengers may take two or three trips a week, and I’m thinking of them when I plan the meals.”

Peggy thanked the woman, and strolled back to the airport to see if Jane had finished.

Just as she got to Hangar Five, the loudspeaker announced the arrival of Skylines’ Flight Ten. Peggy paused to enjoy the thrilling sight of the big

silver bird gliding in for a landing. She watched the passengers disembark, then turned to go into the building.

“Hi, Peggy!”

She turned to wave at Tex Martin. He was trotting toward Hangar Five, his flight log in his hand, and a wide grin on his face. “How about that swim this afternoon, young lady?”

“Nothing could sound more attractive,” Peggy confessed. “I’m like Mother. I’ve reached the saturation point on information. Let’s not mention aviation for three hours, what do you say?”

“Suits me. I’ll give you a nickel every time I slip, and you can give me a nickel every time you mention hostesses, airports or planes.”

By the end of their jolly afternoon at the beach, Tex was ahead by five nickels. But one nickel had exchanged ownership eleven times!

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FAMILIARIZATION  
FLIGHT

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THE last week of the instruction course was a tense one for all the candidates. Even Inez stayed at home in the evenings, and the three girls took turns asking all the questions they could imagine. Sally Rhodes came over one afternoon and coached the trio still further.

The final examinations were Friday morning. At the end of the two-hour period Peggy had filled a dozen pages with her neat script. But fifteen minutes later she was uncertain of what her examination book contained. Even with her new interest in the active flying side of aviation, the simple problems in navigation and on the instruments had been rather difficult for her.

Her recent hospital training had made the meal-serving and berth-making parts of the examination, taken in one of the Skysleepers, comparatively easy. But mathematics and physics had been drudgery way back in high school.

As they were leaving the Skysleeper, after making up the berths for inspection, and then folding away the bedding and putting the compartments



back into day dress, Peggy murmured to Jane, "I don't know how I'm going to last through the week-end until Monday. The suspense is going to be terrific."

Mary Ann Huston, overhearing the remark, chuckled. "Maybe I can keep you alive. Would it help if you left on the Sunliner at 1:15 this afternoon for your familiarization flight to Albuquerque?"

"Do you mean it?" Peggy demanded. "I'd love it!"

"Run home and pack a light overnight bag. You'll arrive at Albuquerque \_\_\_"

"At 8:45 P.M.," Peggy interrupted, grinning.

"If Flight Four isn't full of movie actresses from Los Angeles early Sunday, you can learn about night planes then. You'll leave Albuquerque at 2:23 A.M., and get back to your home port by 10:50, Sunday morning."

"You have only an hour and a half," Jane said, "so I'll run home and pack for you. That way, you can go through the preliminaries with the regular hostess."

"Good idea," Miss Huston approved. "You'll need night clothes, and a light silk or lace frock to wear in Albuquerque. The suit you're wearing is good for traveling."

"I'll trust Jane's judgment," Peggy answered.

"Then, you run over to the lunchroom and get yourself a snack. Report to Winifred Talley in Hangar Five at 12:15."

"'All crew members are to report at Skylines' headquarters one hour before scheduled flight time,'" Peggy quoted in a sing-song voice.

Peggy hurried through lunch, too excited to eat much of her salad. Then she went back to Hangar Five, and stepped into the long flight operations room. The Captain and First Officer, neither of whom she had met, were checking the flight plan with a meteorologist and the Flight Superintendent. Peggy loved the bustling, important activity of this room, identified with the racket of the teletype, the droning voice of the radio man in the connecting communications alcove, the staccato of Morse code coming from another instrument.

A few minutes later, Winifred Talley entered, wearing her neat uniform and jaunty overseas cap. She waved her small black hostess kit at Peggy.

“Mary Ann Huston just told me I was to have an assistant. You’re in luck. I just heard that the Brandts are taking our ship.”

“You mean Sandra Stevens and her new husband?” Peggy asked. Her eyes widened with eager interest.

The older girl chuckled. “Um-hmm. The Number One heiress herself, and her new playmate. Her third, I believe. Bob Brandt’s an old timer on this trip. He’s made several tries at the movies before. With her money backing him, he’ll probably swing it this time.”

“Tsk! Tsk! Such gossip!” The young First Officer had risen from the table.

Winifred Talley grinned good-naturedly, and introduced Peggy and the co-pilot, Ralph Beaton. “Pay no attention to his remarks, Peggy,” she warned. “When he finds out Sandra Stevens is in the cabin, he’ll bring back a flight log every fifteen minutes.”

“Anyone else worth a triple peek? Besides you two, of course,” the flyer teased.

“Just a minute. I haven’t looked at the manifest, yet. The press department is out in full force. That’s how I heard about the Brandts.”

The hostess took up a couple of charts from the wall near the Flight Superintendent’s desk. She wrote the time and her initials on the crew chart, and then held the smaller manifest so Peggy could also see. “The Hon. Senator from Arizona is going home for a talk with his loyal constituents, I see,” Winifred murmured. “Must remember to put him at the opposite end of the plane. He backed the new inheritance tax bill that is costing Sandra Stevens Brandt a million or so. They might not be the most congenial companions.”

“My word!” Peggy exclaimed. “You certainly do have to have a lot of incidental information. I thought all I had to do was memorize the Hostess Manual!”

“You’ll find all your current reading and study is helpful,” the older girl told her. “Now, let’s check my kit.”

The little black bag held an amazing number of articles. Threads, needles, a shoe horn, telegraph blanks, stationery, playing cards, post cards, matches, a bottle of soda tablets, some cleansing tissues, and cough drops.

When they’d finished, the veteran hostess led the way to the Sunliner, being readied in the hangar. A helpful mechanic brought a stepladder, and

the girls climbed into the cabin. Peggy watched as Winifred checked the carpets, chairs, walls, buffets, curtains, hat racks, towels, napkins, food trays, cups, saucers and spoons.

She tested the buzzer at each seat, and all the signal and cabin lights, as well as the telephone into the cockpit. As she signed the Equipment Check Sheet, she explained that she'd found the condition of the plane's interior satisfactory, and that it ended the Commissary Department's responsibility.

"From now on it's up to me." She slipped her name plate into the holder on the wall and showed Peggy where to stow her overnight case in the locker marked *Company Personnel* in the baggage compartment.

They'd just finished when the small tractor which would tow the plane to the runway was attached to the tail, and Peggy began to feel the eager anticipation to be in flight.

The Captain and Co-pilot came aboard, and went forward to the cockpit, locking the door behind them. Winifred indicated to Peggy that she should take a seat near the door where she could watch the entrance of the passengers.

The Senator and his secretary, a thin, bespectacled young man, were the first on board. The elderly politician started dictating letters immediately after getting settled. He didn't even look up when the glamorous Brandts made a tumultuous entrance, accompanied by good-bye shouts from a horde of noisy, gay friends, a trio of photographers, and several newspaper reporters.

There were fourteen passengers, besides the flight crew and Peggy.

The door was slammed shut. Through the window the girl could see the gangplank being moved away. Winifred Talley moved smoothly and efficiently about the cabin, assisting with the seat belts, and putting away hats and bundles.

The plane was taxiing to the far end of the field as the hostess went through her duties. When all the passengers were settled, she took her clipboard on which the flight manifest was fastened, and the envelope containing the flight tickets forward into the cockpit, unlocking the door with her own key. She returned at once to her own seat in the rear of the plane and fastened her seat belt.

The Sunliner turned into the wind while the pilot held it motionless with his wheel brakes and revved up the motors for the last-second check on

power before leaving the ground. The cabin floor leveled as the tail came up, then the Sunliner was in the air. A few minutes later she identified a whining noise as the sound of the wheels being retracted.

The veteran hostess moved about her duties smoothly. At the first moment the “Please fasten seat belts” and “No smoking” warning flashed off, the buzzer rang from Mrs. Brandt’s seat. Her high-pitched shrill voice carried clearly all over the plane.

“Hostess, may we have some black coffee? And doesn’t it seem frightfully hot in here?”

Peggy was amused at the Senator’s annoyed snort of protest.

At ten-minute intervals the heiress thought up new demands. Calmly, Winifred Talley went about her work. She brought a pillow for a little old lady in the center of the plane; gave several passengers copies of newspapers or magazines; answered innumerable questions about the terrain and towns below.

The co-pilot stepped out with the flight log for passengers, and Miss Talley allowed Peggy the first look at it. It was headed UP-TO-THE-MINUTE FLIGHT INFORMATION—“Suggest you check your position on route map in the seat pocket.”

Underneath, it gave the date, “En route from Chicago to Los Angeles.” Then, “Our position at 2:17 P.M. (Central Standard Time) over Cincinnati. This information was given by radio telephone to our ground radio station at Chicago. Our next position will be given to Kansas City at approximately 2:51. Our air speed is 184 MPH. Ground speed 210 MPH. Temperature outside 43 degrees. Altitude above sea level 6000 feet.”

In the space below this, for remarks, the captain had written, “We’re riding a tail wind from the east of approximately 15 MPH. According to our winds aloft reports this wind should decrease shortly. Pleasant trip.”

The final lines on the card were “Your hostess, Miss Talley, is eager to answer any questions. Please pass this slip to the passenger back of you. Your Hostess will be glad to provide you with a copy of this report if requested.” Then, “SKYLINES, Inc. Captain Roberts—First Officer Beaton.”

“How do you like the trip?” the co-pilot asked.

“I’m enjoying it tremendously,” Peggy answered, “but I feel as if I should be doing something more useful to assist Miss Talley.”

“Would you like to come forward and ride the jump-seat in the cockpit? It isn’t as comfortable, but you might enjoy watching. You’re so near being a regular crew member, I’m sure it will be all right.”

Peggy’s eyes were sparkling with delight, as she turned to the hostess. “May I, really? I surely would enjoy seeing all those gadgets in action.”

The hostess nodded. Peggy stepped through the cockpit door as the first officer opened it with a deep sense of elation.

The captain looked up in surprise. After the co-pilot introduced them, and explained Peggy’s presence, the older man set the auto-pilot and took the log. “I’ll keep this, and you can give her your A-Number One discourse on navigation,” he told them, his eyes twinkling. “You’ll be ready to become a transport pilot yourself, Miss Wayne, after fifteen minutes of instruction from First Officer Beaton.”

“I expect I’ll become a bore,” Peggy answered quickly, “but I am serious about wanting to know more about the brains of this profession.”

Something about the sincerity of her tone impressed both officers, and Pilot Beaton immediately started to identify the most important of the instruments and their functions. “You have to remember that the propeller pulls and the wing lifts—that’s the simplest way to explain how we get into the air. The primary law is to keep your flying speed.”

“This is the stick, as you know,” he said, pointing to the post just in front of his seat. “It moves forward and backward only. To climb, pull it back. It controls the elevators on the tail of the plane. The small wing on the tail acts like the rudder of a boat, only up and down.”

“And the wheel controls the ailerons,” Peggy said. “At least, I’ve retained that much. To turn, you push the movable bits of the wing out toward the end, and bank just like a racing car.”

The pilot nodded approvingly. “Next, there are the rudders. Handling these controls is just second nature to a pilot. They have to become automatic so we can concentrate on navigation and radio.”

He paused while the captain spoke over the radio telephone to Kansas City, reporting the plane’s position.

“This is our closest friend,” he declared, pointing to the Air Speed dial. “That’s why our instrument board carries two of them. The Altimeter is next in importance. It enables us to clear hills and mountains, even when we can’t see them. When the traffic is heavy we can keep the altitude assigned to us

by Airways Control and avoid collisions. The Bank and Turn indicator is most important in blind flying because it shows so clearly when we deviate to right or left. The little ball in the glass tube shows if our wings are level.

“The Rate of Climb supplements the Air Speed. If the needle points to five above zero, we’re climbing five hundred feet per minute. It’s on zero, showing level flight at the moment. With it, we can start a comfortable descent while we’re still fifty miles from Kansas City.”

“I can recognize the compasses,” Peggy said. “This is the usual one, and this is the gyro.”

“Right. This tricky little dial here is the Artificial Horizon. The straight lines represent the earth’s surface, and this tiny little plane is our own ship. It’s a sort of combination of all the other instruments. It lets us know if we’re going up, down, or turning. It’s a steady little helper, and invaluable in rough air. The good old clock you recognize. The one in this corner is the Tachometer, registering the number of revolutions our motor is making per minute. Now, as I point to them give me their names.”

Peggy was able to respond quickly and accurately. “I expect I’d better get back to work and give the captain a rest,” he said, after complimenting her on her swift responses.

“Do,” Peggy urged. “If I sit here quietly, and don’t make any noise, may I watch you take her in?”

The two pilots agreed, and Peggy observed the efficiency with which the men worked together, guiding the twenty-four thousand pounds of plane down an easy glide for a perfect landing at the Kansas City airport.

Peggy, as she noted every sure movement of the skilled flyers, was more than ever determined in her ambition to be piloting a plane herself one day, in the not too distant future.

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PEGGY ISSUES ORDERS

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A DAY in Albuquerque was a thrilling experience for Peggy. She spent her free time strolling about the old sections of the town, and visiting the ancient church with its fourteenth century bell and colorful Spanish-Indian influence in decoration. She brought a small Navajo rug for her mother, and silver bracelets for Jane.

The trip back to Chicago was uneventful. Most of the passengers were business men, newspaper writers, salesmen. Since it was a sleeper plane, she was of real assistance to Miss Talley in serving breakfasts and making up the berths on Sunday morning.

Jane, Tex Martin, and Miss Huston were waiting at the Chicago terminal when she arrived. "I had a grand trip," she reported. "Have any of the others had their familiarization flights yet?"

"I went to Washington and back, yesterday. But that isn't the big news. Tell her, Miss Huston!"

"I'm relenting, to tell you and Jane a bit early," the smiling chief hostess said. "I ordered your uniforms Thursday. If your final fittings are all right in the morning, you'll both start your regular runs. Jane's taking the Skysleeper

on Flight Nine, leaving at 9:35 tomorrow night, for Albuquerque. You'll have the slow one—Flight Eleven to Denver, leaving here at 7:45 tomorrow evening.”

Peggy glanced questioningly at Tex Martin.

He grinned, and nodded. “Yes, that’s right. It’s my run. And you’ll be coming back with us on good old Flight Ten, too.”

“Well, what are we waiting for? Let’s celebrate! Let’s go somewhere this minute where I can howl for joy, just as long and hard as I want to!”

Jane, Miss Huston and Tex all joined in the laughter at Peggy’s exuberance. “You were a darling to spare us another day of suspense,” she told the chief hostess.

The slim young instructor, whose dark hair was just beginning to show a touch of grey, chuckled good-naturedly. “It hasn’t been such a long time since I was in the same state of tense waiting. Those four days seemed years long.”

After Miss Huston left, Tex announced, “I have the day all planned, if you’re not too weary after your trip, Peggy.”

“No. I feel like a million. Isn’t it marvelous, Jane?”

The dark-eyed girl smiled. “Almost too good to be true.”

“Well, I’ll run you two back to the hotel to get your swim suits, and we’ll have a picnic on the beach. Then late this afternoon, we’ll dash down to the Loop for dinner and a show. Okay?”

The girls agreed delightedly. The trio of friends had a happy, hilarious, carefree day. Both Jane and Peggy telephoned their families to tell them the good news, as soon as they’d reached the Allison. The Waynes were pleased to know that they could see Peggy occasionally for brief glimpses at her stops in Des Moines.

Monday went by in a whirl of exciting preparations. The new suits were becoming to both girls, except that Peggy found she had to change her hairdress radically to accommodate the perky little overseas cap. She’d worn her blonde braids in a smooth crown above her oval face for the three years of her nursing course. Jane suggested that she fashion a flat ‘figure eight’ low in the back, and the new style was even more becoming.

Promptly at 6:45 that evening Peggy arrived at the terminal, wearing her smartly-tailored uniform. She remembered bits of the Hostess Manual



—“must always look fresh—uniform immaculate—no objects protruding above pocket—overseas cap—touch right ear and right eyebrow, but should not cover brow—lower tip of front center seam of cap should be between eyebrows—peach-beige medium sheer hose for summer uniform—no perfume—chewing gum only for passengers—passengers likely to lose tickets, overcoats, hats, gloves—don’t, under any circumstances, accept a tip \_\_\_”

The new hostess checked her kit, then made a last-second examination of her personal luggage. She never would know what impulse had prompted her to add her fever thermometer, scissors, bandages, and the like to her own bag, except that it was the fruit of her long hospital training. The plane’s first-aid equipment was adequate for most minor emergencies. But one never knew—

When Peggy glanced at the manifest, she let out a low whistle of surprise. Tex, who’d just finished the flight plan with Captain Wheeler and the Flight Superintendent, heard her.

“What’s up?” he asked.

“Norma Blaine. What’s she doing on this local? I should think she’d be taking one of the sleepers to Hollywood.”

Tex shrugged his shoulders. “All I know is that she’s been slipping a little at the box office. It won’t hurt her a bit to step out of the plane for autographs and pictures at Moline, Iowa City, Des Moines and Omaha.”

“Is she alone?”

“Not likely. I expect Miss Winston is her traveling companion or secretary. Most passengers on Flight Eleven are business men, shoppers or buyers, from along the line.”

“It’s a real break, not having to serve meals on my first trip,” Peggy commented. “I think I can take care of the coffee drinkers and the magazine readers and the pillow-seekers without too much difficulty.”

Flight Eleven took off with more fanfare than usual, because the fading light of Norma Blaine, the Hollywood star, was still strong enough to attract a group of autograph-hunters and men of the press.

The movie queen was resplendent in a turquoise suede suit and the longest, most luxurious sable scarf Peggy had ever seen. She glittered with jewels. Her current shade of strawberry blonde hair was arranged in intricate whirls and rolls.

Peggy went through her routine swiftly, once the door was slammed. She took the tickets and manifest forward, and returned to fasten her own seat belt. There were only two new passengers on the crowded plane who had to be shown the way to fasten theirs. Miss Blaine's middle-aged companion had secured the star's for her. But Peggy had noted with amazement that the star had almost seemed to collapse into her seat as the plane left.

The new hostess had just unfastened her belt, after the ship was in the air, when the buzzer from Seat Nine sounded.

"I'll bet she keeps me hopping," she thought, as she went swiftly down the aisle.

"I think Miss Blaine is airsick," Miss Winston reported agitatedly.

The star was doubled forward in her seat, overcome with pain.

"Don't be ridiculous," she snapped. "I've never been airsick in my life."

Peggy instantly became the nurse. She placed a cool hand on the star's forehead, and kept her face composed as she noted her feverishness, the rapid pounding of the little veins in her temple.

"I've been feeling rocky all day," the star gasped. "I didn't know whether I could face another of those flash bulbs—with a happy smile—"

"Don't try to talk," Peggy warned her. "Do you mind if I take your temperature?"

"What earthly good would that do?" the star snapped.

"None, I suppose," Peggy agreed good-naturedly. "Just nursing routine. But you really don't mind, do you?"

"No—go on, if it would make you any—" The movie star broke off, a look of stark terror in her eyes. "No—no. I feel better now. Bring us some magazines."

Peggy thought swiftly. "I have quite a selection. Miss Winston, why don't you come back to the galley with me? Miss Blaine could move over in the seat next the window. We could open the ventilator a little more. The fresh air might help."

The change was made with a commotion that disturbed the entire cabin.

Peggy led the way to the tiny galley, and then turned to whisper to the older woman, "Do you know if Miss Blaine has ever had an appendectomy?"

“Appendicitis?” The woman went white. “Oh, my dear! She’s due to start a picture next week, and I can’t tell you how important it is to her career! Oh, she can’t—she mustn’t have appendicitis!”

“It may not be,” Peggy hastened to say, “but she acts like a lot of the cases I’ve seen at Iowa Wesleyan. And we were drilled and drilled on the seriousness of delay and complications. The operation is comparatively simple, if it’s done in time. Of course, the symptoms are the same for about twenty things—nausea, fever, pain. And even the surgeon would have to take a blood count to be entirely sure. But I’d recommend that you stop over in Moline to see a doctor immediately.”

“It’s really quite out of the question,” the secretary said coldly. “May I have *Vogue*, *Time*, and *House Beautiful*, please?”

Peggy went on about her other duties in a pleasant manner, hiding her worry. Just before nine, as the plane was descending for the Moline landing, the buzzer from Seat Nine sounded again.

The secretary said, “May we have a glass of water, please?”

Peggy brought it, and watched silently as the movie star, drawn and white beneath her lavish make-up, took a couple of pain pills.

Five minutes later Norma Blaine was laughing, chatting, posing on the steps for her public.

Peggy, checking the disembarking passengers from her manifest, and reminding one business man of his forgotten brief case, marveled inwardly at the movie star. “The woman has nerve,” she told Tex a few minutes later. “I’m pretty sure she has acute appendicitis.”

“Is it dangerous?” the First Officer demanded.

Peggy nodded. “You bet it *is*—to neglect it. If she’s any worse, after this —” her voice trailed away.

“What’ll you do?”

“Something desperate. I may need your help. But she’ll never be able to go on to Hollywood, I’m certain.”

There were no new passengers, and the Skyliner took off for Iowa City.

Norma Blaine lay back in her seat, her eyes closed, her expressive face twisted with pain. Peggy watched alertly, but the sick woman scarcely moved during the half-hour flight to Iowa City.

This time, as they circled for the landing, Peggy leaned over her seat. "I'll make a bargain with you, Miss Blaine," she said. "If you'll let me take your temperature after we leave this stop, I'll go out and tell your public that you're too ill to come to the door, but they can take your picture through the window, and that you'll wave to them."

"It would be good publicity," Miss Winston urged.

The star smiled. It was a weak, exhausted gesture. "Persistent, aren't you? But I really don't think I can go through that act again tonight."

Peggy's plan worked, and as soon as the ship departed for Des Moines, she took the star's temperature. She read the thermometer with a noncommittal face, and went forward to the cockpit.

"Tex, you'll have to use the radio telephone to Des Moines, and order an ambulance. We can't allow Miss Blaine to continue. Her temperature is above one hundred and four."

The co-pilot whistled in dismay. He quickly outlined the situation to Captain Wheeler. "Are you sure that's what's wrong with her?" he demanded.

"I can't be certain," Peggy declared. "But I honestly think we'd be taking less of a risk if we forced her off the plane, than we would to take her on to Denver."

"Okay, if that's what you want."

Tex reached for his telephone, and started calling the Des Moines station.

Peggy went back to the cabin. She locked the door to the cockpit and reported at once what she had done.

Norma Blaine sat bolt upright. A paroxysm of pain twisted her face. "You can't do this to me, do you understand? I have to be in Hollywood tomorrow! You force me to break my contract and I'll sue this company for every cent it has! How dare you do such a thing—?" She fell back against the cushioned seat, exhausted.

"You might as well cancel the ambulance," Miss Winston told the hostess frigidly. "You have assumed entirely too much authority."

The movie star had begun to cry, pathetically and without artifice. "Oh, Winston! I'm scared! I don't want an operation!"

“That’s silly,” Peggy said, with unexpected firmness. “There are over a thousand appendicitis operations in the United States every day. None of them cost as much effort and pain as your appearance for the photographers in Moline.”

“But I’m scared!” Norma Blaine screamed. “Scared! I won’t get off this plane and let some hick doctor carve me up, you understand!”

“You can calm down,” Peggy told her with a flash of her own temper. “At once. You’re disturbing all the other passengers. Save your hysterics for your audiences. I’m not impressed. You’re getting off this plane in Des Moines. You might just as well get quiet and conserve your strength. If you behave yourself, there’s no reason why you can’t be well and strong in a week or ten days.”

It had been years since the willful and spoiled movie actress had been addressed in such a manner, and it had a powerful effect. Miss Blaine subsided, and Miss Winston confined herself to furious glances.

Peggy took coffee to a couple of other passengers, then. An elderly woman, who had come aboard at Iowa City, had questions about a connecting plane to Minneapolis. At 10:41 the plane sat down in Des Moines.

Doctor Black had come with the ambulance from Iowa Wesleyan. Peggy swiftly outlined the movie star’s condition during the trip. “When I finally took her temperature it was over one hundred four. I decided not to fool any longer,” she told him. “If I’m wrong, I’ll probably be dismissed.”

“Sorry, but I think you’re right,” the interne groaned. “She’ll probably apologize handsomely in about a week, and you’ll be in solid with the airline. I’ll wire you in Denver at the company office to let you know,” he promised.

The flight to Omaha and then to Denver, at 2:25 in the morning, was quiet. Most of the passengers dozed in their chairs.

The last lap of the journey seemed long to Peggy. She was worried about the contents of the telegram that should be waiting at Denver. She was not too upset to thrill to the night landing along the ladder lights, nor to be invigorated with the crisp, Colorado air.

Tex waited for her and introduced her to several members of the night staff at the airport, where she turned in her ticket stubs and went through the

usual routine. Not until her duties were completed did she ask for her message.

She tore the yellow envelope open with nervous fingers, and read the brief sentence. “Peggy darling—Operation successful. Miss Blaine resting. Surgeons believe continued trip would have been fatal. Congratulations. Ben.”

Tex had waited quietly. She looked up, starry-eyed. “I was right! She got through it successfully. My word, am I relieved!”

“Our company car is waiting to take us to the hotel,” Tex told her. “If you’ll have breakfast with me, I’ll attempt to tell you how much I admire your courage and wisdom.”

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*HOME ON CEDAR  
STREET*

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WHEN FLIGHT TEN arrived in Chicago on Wednesday, the publicity department of Skylines, Inc., was present in a body with three or four newspaper photographers in tow.

Jane waited, grinning, as the cameramen took pictures of Peggy with the crew, and Peggy alone.

“You’re a heroine!” Jane had called, as soon as the last passenger alighted from the plane and had been checked from the manifest. “I’ve got all the clippings about your saving Miss Blaine’s life!”

Peggy was embarrassed, but she remembered Miss Huston’s warning that hostesses were frequently photographed for publicity purposes.

As soon as Peggy had posed, she went back into the plane to report to the lad from the commissary department that the buzzer on Seat Five was out of order and that there was a grease smudge on the aisle carpet. Then she went to operations office with Jane at her side to turn the passenger manifest

over to the agent, along with the ticket envelope, and to sign the flight log with the Captain and Co-Pilot.

“How would you two like a long, cool drink of lemonade?” Tex Martin asked.

Gratefully, the girls accepted. At the table, Jane produced the clippings she'd saved from the Chicago papers. There were two or three cuts of Norma Blaine taken at the hospital in Des Moines. In all the stories she was quoted as saying that she owed her life to the quick wit and foresight of Miss Peggy Wayne, “Hostess of Skylines, Inc.”

Peggy blushed and changed the subject as adroitly as she could. “Have you found time to look for any apartments, Jane?”

“I started this morning. There's one I'd like you to see out on West Carmen Avenue,” she reported. “And I have a list of likely-sounding ones in my purse that I thought we could look at this afternoon.”

“If I may make a suggestion,” Tex pointed out, “a spot on the Near North would be handier. You'll be in Chicago several days a month, and you'll want to be close to town.”

Jane handed him the list she'd made. “Why don't you check the ones with addresses in that locality for us?” she asked. “It will save us hours of looking.”

“I'll do more than that,” Tex offered. “I'll be your chauffeur.”

Peggy and Jane chose the third one they examined, a pleasant, ‘English-type’ furnished living room, bedroom and bath, with a concealed Pullman kitchen.

“It's about the size of our galleys in the Skyliners,” Jane pointed out. “We can practice serving meals right at home.”

The rent was inexpensive, for it was really a basement apartment, with a view of passing feet from its half-submerged windows.

Peggy chuckled. “It's going to be difficult to keep our feet on the ground, what with being in the air while we work, and underground while at home!”

The girls arranged to move in that evening. Tex took them back to the hotel to pack and check out.

As they joined the stream of traffic on Michigan Boulevard, Peggy exclaimed: “My word! I've been so busy with my own affairs, I haven't



asked about any of the other girls. What assignment did Inez draw?"

Jane laughed. "The slow night one to New York, and she's a little miffed. It's a dull trip with rather bad hours and lots of middle-aged business men."

When the girls reached their hotel suite, they found Inez dressing to go out for dinner. "We'll be leaving you," Jane announced cheerfully. "We found a little apartment on Cedar Street."

Inez carefully smoothed her dark lip rouge with a bit of tissue before replying. "I've been wanting to see you two, but our times at home haven't meshed very well the last few days. I was hoping that you'd allow me to go with you on the apartment deal. It would cut our expenses considerably if we could team up on the rent and the food."

"Sorry we didn't know," Peggy said, "but I'm afraid the apartment we took is too small for three. There's just one bedroom."

"It would still do if there's a studio couch or a davenport in the living room," Inez pointed out. "I'll be on this foul night run practically every other night, and I'd probably be the last one in, anyway, when I'm in Chicago. I could use the living room for sleeping and scarcely disturb you." She smiled with unaccustomed friendliness. "Besides, I have unsuspected talents. I'm really an excellent cook, and if we went thirds on the groceries and thirds on the rent, we could save some money."

Jane and Peggy exchanged dismayed glances. Finally, Jane spoke, "If you wouldn't mind sleeping on the davenport—"

"It's a pretty small apartment, really," Peggy added in a last desperate attempt to discourage the other girl. "Just one tiny closet in the bedroom. I'm afraid your lovely new clothes will get horribly wrinkled and crushed."

"Oh, that's a minor flaw," Inez replied airily. "I have an iron. Besides, they must have a trunk storage room somewhere in the place, or private lockers. I suppose Tex is taking you and your luggage?"

"All but the trunks," Peggy admitted.

"Well, my dressing case is all packed, and I'll arrange at the desk to have my trunk taken over," Inez answered. "If you'll just give me a key and the address, I'll have my date run me out after the show tonight."

She flounced from the room, her long skirts swishing gracefully.

*BONUS*

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TEX and Peggy had dinner together at the airport before leaving on the next flight to Denver.

“Let me slip you a tip,” he said. “Part of a hostess’ job is to sell the airline to the passengers. A lot of our commuters use the line for short hops on emergencies. They fail to realize how inexpensive air travel is because round-trip fares are quite a lot less; no tips; meals free; no extras.

“For instance, a one-way journey from Chicago to Portland costs ninety-nine bucks, but a round trip is only a hundred and sixty—a saving of almost forty dollars. The shorter the trip, the more expensive the rate per mile. And you’d get plenty of credit at the home office if you persuaded many of the passengers to use the long trips.”

“It would be easy to bring that information into most of the conversations one has with travelers,” Peggy agreed. “So many of their questions concern connections with other lines, and a comparison of train and bus speeds with ours.”

Tex nodded. “That’s it. And it’s a good thing to keep in mind always.”

There were only a couple of vacant seats when Flight Eleven left the Chicago terminal that evening. Half the people were first-time passengers who had to have their seat belts adjusted. Peggy worked swiftly and efficiently with the assurance of a veteran. One timid old lady had confessed tremulously that this was her first trip in the air, and she'd certainly never have taken it if her baby granddaughter in Des Moines hadn't been seriously ill. "I don't think humans were intended to fly," she stated anxiously.

Peggy made a mental note to go back and talk with her later when the plane was well on the way to Moline, and all the other passengers were occupied with magazines and newspapers.

"I came back to talk with you about aviation," the hostess told the old lady with a warm smile. "I just couldn't let you go through this trip thinking humans weren't intended to fly. You see, air is an element, just like water. Our pilots are just like ship captains, who know that air currents and forces and the correct use of the wing surfaces will take us where we want to go."

"But when you think there isn't anything between the ship and the ground a mile below, it's enough to terrify anyone, let alone an old lady who can look back on horse-and-buggy days with pleasure." Old Mrs. Sheldon was more assured, however. Her frail hands had ceased to tremble.

"Long before the horse-and-buggy days, there were ships navigating on water," Peggy pointed out, laughing. "I used to think that way, too, but now I understand that air is very similar to water, and that it is an element capable of supporting great weights in the air, while we have forward speed.

"Another thing, our pilots must have hundreds of hours of experience in the air before they can apply for a job as a transport pilot, and then they usually take a special training course. They are completely familiar with all the vagaries of their element. Their flight plans are arranged to the last detail before they go up. The Captain of the crew has thousands of hours experience as a First Officer before he takes command. They know just when to expect bumpy weather. They have the use of more than four hundred and fifty weather bureaus to warn them of what's to come. They have dozens of instruments to help them navigate when it's dark and when it's storming."

The gentle old lady laughed softly. "You *are* enthusiastic, my dear. I really do feel less nervous. I guess I'll get at my knitting. I'd planned to finish little Polly's sweater on the train, but when I learned I must fly, I thought I'd be much too upset to follow the pattern."

“Is it in this knitting bag?” Peggy asked, reaching to the rack above.

“That’s it. Thank you, my dear.”

“Miss Wayne!”

Peggy turned to the distinguished-looking man in the seat behind Mrs. Sheldon.

“Yes, Mr. Hutton?” She remembered his name from the manifest. It was Steve Hutton and it had sounded familiar.

The man was leaning forward eagerly, his eyes shining. “I hope you didn’t mind my tuning in on your conversation with the other passenger. My advertising company handles the Skylines, Inc. account, and we’ve gone entirely stale on ideas. I don’t know what inspired me to take this trip. I thought a little travel might furnish some new angles. I didn’t expect such a rich reward the first hour in the air.”

Peggy was puzzled. “I’m afraid I don’t understand.”

“You see, the vast general public is still pretty much in the dark about commercial aviation,” the man explained quickly. “It’s our job to sell that lethargic group of tourists who continue to travel by boat, bus and train that aviation has a number of advantages. And we also know that the greatest bugaboo is fear.

“We stress safety in subtle ways, quoting the statistics of millions of miles of successful flight. But we’ve never made any point of showing that air is an element that has been conquered recently as a means of transportation, just as water has been for centuries. I’m going to get off at Moline, and catch the next plane back to Chicago to go to work on the new series. And I can’t begin to tell you how grateful I am.”

“Thank you, Mr. Hutton,” Peggy said with a radiant smile. “How would you like a cup of coffee? You’ve just time before we reach Moline.”

“A good idea. Thanks a lot.”

Several other passengers wanted service, also, and the rest of the trip was busy. Peggy was a little weary by the time they reached Des Moines.

Old Mrs. Sheldon pressed her hand warmly as she left, saying, “You know, I rather dislike admitting it, but I really enjoyed the trip!”

“Perhaps I’ll be seeing you again, then,” Peggy chuckled. “I’m on Flight Ten almost every other day, going back to Chicago.”

“I shouldn’t be surprised!” the old lady promised.

Two days later, when Peggy returned to Chicago, she'd almost forgotten her conversation with Steve Hutton, until she glanced at her letters on the desk in the apartment. One of them had a return address at the top which read: "Hutton and Hutton, Advertising."

She tore it open. Incredibly she drew out a check for two hundred and fifty dollars. There was a brief note, which said,

"This is in gratitude for your really superior idea for our new series. Everyone at Hutton and Hutton is excited about it. Even the executives of Skylines, Inc. are going off the deep end for it. If you ever choose to come out of your element, let us know. You might develop into an idea-woman and copywriter for us. Thanks again. Steve Hutton."

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II

*TAKING A WALK*

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PEGGY had recovered a little from the delightful surprise of the check, when Jane came in from a shopping trip an hour later. She decided to say nothing to the other girls or Tex about the unexpected bonus for she had secret plans for the use of the money.

Jane was full of chatter about her trip the day before. She'd had a couple of opposition congressmen on her plane, who'd kept the entire plane amused with their noisy arguments. Another quiet, mousy little man was a famous radio commentator whom the politicians had failed to recognize. The evening before, on his broadcast, the observant commentator had repeated the argument, word for word, and lampooned the pompous representatives heartlessly.

"I see you've been grocery shopping," Peggy said, after they'd chatted quite a while. "Why don't we have dinner in and go to bed early? I want to go on a shopping expedition tomorrow."

"Goodness! I forgot to tell you the big news! Doctor Black was here yesterday when I got in from my run. He was quite annoyed because you were clear out in Denver."

“I’m sorry to have missed him,” Peggy replied. “Did he have lots of Iowa Wesleyan news? What was he doing in Chicago?”

“He was a little mysterious about his purpose for the trip,” Jane teased. “I just took it for granted that he was overcome with a desire to see you, and hopped the first plane through.”

“He came on a plane?” Peggy demanded.

“Sure. Lot’s of people do. Or hadn’t you noticed?”

Peggy laughed. “I just thought he was against them on general principles.”

“When he found you weren’t available he asked me out for dinner. I offered to get dinner here, but he insisted that since he was in town for just one evening, he wanted to see the bright lights. But that Inez!” Jane was suddenly so agitated that she smeared the nail polish she was applying.

“What did she do that upsets you so?” Peggy asked with a little smile.

“She came in and greeted him like a long-lost thousand-dollar bill, and volunteered to break her date so she could go to dinner with us for old-time’s sake! She hadn’t even been invited! Ben was a perfect gentleman about it, of course, but she just monopolized the evening.”

Peggy groaned. “When I think that neither of us was rude enough to refuse to let her live with us!”

“This morning she was so sweet and charming, I almost forgave her. She made a ham loaf, all ready to pop in the oven, and baked a chocolate cake for our dinner, even though she wasn’t going to be here herself. And she cleaned and scrubbed the apartment from top to bottom.”

“I gave up trying to figure Inez out long ago,” Peggy murmured with a sigh. “She usually has some ulterior motive. Wonder what she’s up to?”

The good behavior of Inez continued through the gay, busy weeks of summer. When all three girls were in Chicago at the same time, which occurred about once a week, she’d get up early and prepare surprise breakfasts of great platters of ham and eggs with hot muffins or biscuits. She urged both girls to share her frequent gift boxes of rich chocolates. Often, she’d ask Tex to join them for dinner. Then she’d work all afternoon in the tiny kitchen, turning out masterpieces of dinners, complete from cream soups to elaborate desserts.

One evening in August when Peggy arrived at the airport, she found a note on the manifest to see Miss Huston before leaving.

Whistling gaily, Peggy ran up the stairs to the office of the Chief Hostess.

Miss Huston greeted Peggy gravely. "I'm going to ask you to step on the scales," she announced. "Your uniform fits too snugly, I've noticed."

Peggy unhesitatingly stood on the scales, and watched, aghast, as the pointer wavered and settled at one hundred eighteen!

"So!" Peggy realized in a flash, "*This is why Inez Hunt has been so kind to me!*"

"You know the regulations, Peggy," Miss Huston told her sternly. "You may continue with your flight, this evening, but I want you to report to me again day after tomorrow. You should, by going on an orange juice, milk, salad and soup diet, get down to one fifteen by that time. I don't want you to endanger your health, of course. And I'd advise you to try to lose ten pounds in the next three weeks."

"Yes, Miss Huston," Peggy murmured, leaving the office.

It took all her will power that next day, to eat nothing but oranges. She breakfasted on grapefruit, melba toast and coffee, and had clear soup for lunch on the trip back. When she reported to Miss Huston she'd lost four pounds.

The Chief Hostess relented a little. "Your work has been satisfactory, and we should hate to lose you because of becoming overweight, Peggy. You'd better get bathroom scales, and watch your weight very carefully."

She was able, then, when Inez offered chocolates upon her arrival at the apartment, to say, "No, thank you. I'm just not very hungry today."

At the end of ten days she'd returned to a safe one hundred eight pounds.

One evening Inez announced she'd asked Tex to dinner. Peggy toyed with her soup, concentrating on celery. She didn't touch her potato, and carefully scraped the whipped-cream dressing from the fruit salad. Then she said, "Please don't serve me any dessert tonight, Inez."

"It's a new recipe," the girl insisted. "I've never tried Baked Alaska before. I think it turned out well even though I shouldn't say so."

Tex joined in the urging, praising it highly, but Peggy remained adamant, sipping black coffee.



“Now, after that marvelous meal, I’ll help with the dishes,” the rangy flyer said, “and then I’ll treat you all to a movie.”

“Not me,” Peggy said quickly. “Thanks just the same, but now that I’m down to one hundred eight again, I’m not taking any chances. I’m going for a walk along the lake front before it gets dark. You three run along to the show. I’ll do the dishes when I get back.”

“Not a bad idea—a walk, after a huge meal like that,” Tex agreed. “Why don’t we all go for a stroll?”

“Sorry, I have letters to write,” Jane said, smiling.

Inez, her face sullen, blurted out, “You can take care of the dishes anyway you want to. It’s the least you can do after I’ve done all the cooking. I’ll go to a show by myself. I prefer it that way.”

She flounced out angrily.

Tex, completely puzzled, said, “Now, what made her fly off the handle like that?”

Even Jane was baffled when Peggy burst into a violent fit of laughter. When she was able to control her mirth she told them, “One of Miss Hunt’s fine schemes backfired. It came so near being successful, though, that I’m still scared. Come on, Tex. Let’s take that stroll.”

*WOMEN IN THE AIR*

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PEGGY, with her check from the advertising agency in her purse, went shopping the next morning.

She took a bus directly to the private field Tex had told her about. The small hangar with its four light planes seemed strangely quiet to Peggy, after the bustling activity of the Chicago municipal air terminal. The two Ryan trainers and a three-passenger cabin model had the familiar NC licenses. Peggy had learned previously that N stood for United States, and C for commercial, so these three were licensed to carry passengers.

An older plane in the rear of the hangar had the NR marking, which meant it could be used for special purposes, such as crop dusting or banner towing. She recalled that NX meant a craft was used for experimental purposes, and a ship marked N- had not yet proved its airworthiness for governmental approval.

Dan Brewster was a bald, genial fellow, about forty. Peggy found him in the crowded little office, which was a sort of lean-to at the right of the hangar.

“Tex Martin recommended you,” she told him. “I’m a hostess for Skylines, Inc. and I’ve learned a little about aviation from my training course.”

“Tex is a great pilot,” the man assured her warmly. “We’ve flown a good many hours together on a little feeder line down in Texas.”

They discussed terms, and the instructor agreed to teach her, and furnish a plane for the preliminary instruction of thirty-five hours of solo flying in return for the bonus check.

“I can afford to shave the fee a little,” he explained, “because most of my students have to pay as they learn. You’re giving me the cash on the line.”

“Do I have to get a permit to study?”

“No license is necessary for the first few hours of instruction,” the flyer explained. “But before I can turn you loose for your first solo, you must carry a Student Pilot’s Permit. All this means is that you must pass a physical examination.”

Peggy sighed. “I had a complete one just a few weeks ago, when I started the training course at Skylines.”

Dan Brewster laughed. “All pilots grumble about it. But at least, you don’t have to have one every forty-five days, as the transport flyers do. It isn’t so tough. Just to show that your general health is good and that your sight and hearing is normal. It costs six dollars, and the doctor will give you a permit. Once you’ve soloed I’ll write that fact on the back of it.”

“Could I learn to take off today?” Peggy asked eagerly.

The instructor chuckled. “Not so fast! We’ll have a little dual instruction on taking off and landing every time we go up. But you’ll have to prove to my satisfaction that you’ve conquered air maneuvers and can recognize a good emergency landing field before you’ll be allowed to take off and land alone.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean solo,” Peggy explained.

“And there’s the little matter of ground schooling.”

“I imagine I’ve covered a lot of that knowledge in my hostess training course,” Peggy pointed out. She had learned the fundamental principles, and was able to point out the stick, instruments, rudders and various parts of the

plane. She named them correctly and explained their functions to Dan Brewster's satisfaction.

The trim little Ryan Model ST seemed tiny in comparison with the big Skyliners.

"We'll go up now," Dan told her. "I won't have you handle the controls at all this trip, but you may keep your hands on them to get the feel of it. Notice every motion as we take off and land. While we're up I'll illustrate how to correct a stall and get out of a spin. You must know banks and air maneuvers, too, before you earn your certificate."

Peggy found it an entirely different experience, flying in the light trainer, with its wing spread of less than a third that of the big transport planes. There was a rush of air, chill, stinging and sweet. She was grateful for the helmet earphones, the goggles, and the leather jacket Brewster had loaned her. The landscape rolled out below them like a map. They encountered a soft sea of pearl-gray clouds and rose over it. It was an exquisitely lovely thing to see. Peggy found it difficult to remember that she was having a lesson!

"See an emergency landing field?" The instructor's voice was urgent in the earphones.

Startled, Peggy peered over the side of the cockpit. From somewhere in her memory she recalled that wheat fields were the choice emergency spots for unexpected landings. There was one far to the left. She pointed out the smooth spot, closely cropped and brown now.

"Good girl! We don't actually need one at the moment, but you must train yourself always to be on the lookout for one."

They were gliding in for a landing, and Peggy kept her hand lightly on the control, noting the instructor's smooth, unhurried motions. He seemed relaxed and sure of himself.

The instructor cut off the motor. "I'll give you some material to study up on at home. Next lesson, you can show me what you've retained. By the way, why did you choose that wheat field?"

"I remembered hearing one of the pilots at Skylines say wheat fields, pastures without stumps, and ploughed ground, if you can land with the rows, were the places to come down in when a forced landing was necessary."

“Right! But remember to check the wind. Look for smoke, wind in trees or cattle.” He grinned. “Cattle graze downwind.”

Peggy took off the goggles and the helmet with the earphones.

“Come back to the office for a little chat,” the instructor invited. “There are a few things I should tell you.”

“That’s my first ride in an open plane,” Peggy told him, her eyes shining. “I like it very much.”

When they were comfortably seated in the hangar office, Dan Brewster leaned back in his desk chair. “First, I want to show you my instructor’s rating.” He produced a certificate from the top drawer of his desk. “This is to reassure you, if you need it, that the government believes me capable of teaching you to fly.”

“Thank you,” Peggy murmured. She was beginning to respect his business-like, friendly attitude.

“Next, as you probably have learned from your experience at Skylines, there is nothing mysterious or romantic or magical about flying. Enjoyable, yes. But we know an airplane flies because men have taken advantage of proved science. Do you know the four forces which act on an airplane in flight?”

“Gravity, lift, thrust and drag,” Peggy answered without hesitation.

“Good. That will be one of your examination questions. Can you explain them?”

Peggy fingered the goggles in her lap a moment, while she thought. “Let’s see. Gravity is the force which pulls objects toward the center of the earth. Lift is the force opposed to gravity, produced by air passing over a convex surface, which for our purpose, is the plane’s wings.”

The flyer nodded. “They teach you more than I suspected in that training course.”

“I’ve been reading some books on aviation, too,” Peggy confessed. “Thrust is the force produced by the engine-whirled propeller. Drag is anything opposed to that thrust, such as struts, landing gear, and even dust on the fuselage. That’s why the transport planes are always hosed down after flight as routine maintenance. I was certainly surprised that a little dust actually retards the forward speed of the plane.”

“Drag is not always detrimental,” Dan Brewster pointed out. “An example is the action of the rudders.”

He took a pipe from the pocket of his leather jacket, and filled it from a tobacco humidor on his desk. “Now, about accidents. A number of surveys into causes of student accidents have been made, and all proved the same point. Showing off. Zooming, spectacular climbs, loss of control in steep power turns at low altitudes, trying to give the passengers a thrill. All just showing off. I’ll have none of it at this field.”

“Yes, sir.” Peggy’s tone was respectful.

“Every student makes mistakes. You learn by error. But the modern airplane forgives a lot. Making and adjusting mistakes develops judgment, and that’s the most prized quality in a pilot.”

“Actually, what causes a plane to crash?”

“A stall or a spin too close to the ground. These are normal maneuvers which you will be taught in the course of your lessons. Executed where they are supposed to be done, and completed above 1,500 feet, they are not dangerous.”

He lit the pipe, and went on meditatively. “If you are lost or confused or don’t know what to do, during instruction or later, simply let go of everything. The ship will straighten itself out. They’re built that way.”

“I suppose that’s like all simple rules. Difficult to remember at the right time.”

“If you can retain that, and remember always to land into the small end of the wind sock, you’ll get along all right.”

The instructor gave her some books on meteorology, navigation and flight, and made an appointment for another lesson on her next day off. “After you’ve had at least thirty-five hours of dual and solo, the Department of Commerce inspector will give you a written examination and test flight. That earns you your private certificate.”

“Why, if I can get in five hours a week, I might be able to do it in less than two months!” Peggy exclaimed.

“It would take pretty steady work, but you could do it. Three’s enough,” the young man told her. “By the end of October is plenty soon. You’ll have to do four hours a week several times to make that. Besides, thirty-five is the minimum. Many of my students prefer to have forty, fifty, or even sixty

hours, before they call on the inspector. But you've already acquired a lot of the rudimentary meteorology, navigation and air regulations at Skyline."

Peggy was resolved to keep her precious secret, even from Tex.

The studying was simple. She took her books with her, and spent hours over them in her plain hotel room in Denver, at the opposite end of her trips. She made cards of bits of information and placed them in her purse where she could study and memorize the material during spare moments. "Your climbing turn must not be too steep. . . . If the stick is held fully back on any stall, the plane will fall off on the wing. . . . A turn toward the wind requires less power than a turn away from it."

She bought copies of Amelia Earhart's and Anne Lindbergh's books, and read them over and over.

She memorized the exact speed and distances of Jacqueline Cochran's records—305 miles per hour for the thousand kilometers, Burbank—San Francisco—Burbank, in September, 1939, which no United States male aviator had bettered. And her international record for two thousand kilometers at 331 miles per hour, set in April, 1940.

Before Peggy went up for her second lesson, genial Dan Brewster shrewdly questioned her on his earlier teachings. When she answered satisfactorily, he continued, "We'll just go up on the good days until you get a little better feel of handling the plane. Of course, you've already learned that 'air pockets' don't exist. It's one of the most widespread misconceptions about flying."

Peggy nodded understandingly. "We learned the first week of our hostess course that the bumpiness in the air comes chiefly from the roughness of the earth's surface. Air follows the contours of the land, just as water would, except it's invisible."

"That's right. An experienced pilot knows that air is likely to go up from the heat of cities or flat fields reflecting the warm air from the sun's rays, and that bodies of water and cool woods and swamps tend to make it rush downward."

As they went to the training ship, Dan Brewster carried along a couple of pillows. "Sit on one and put the other at your back," he suggested. "And it would be a good idea to take off that scarf and put it in your pocket. You can't have anything like that blowing across your eyes at a crucial moment. Always wear helmet and goggles in an open plane. Always fasten the seat

belt. The pillows will lift you to better visibility, also. Strive to make a habit of keeping your eyes trained to a widening vision outside. This is practical for keeping alert to other traffic and the weather.”

After they'd taken their places in the light plane, the instructor showed Peggy a crank on the left of the cockpit. “This is the horizontal stabilizer control. You adjust it to balance the ship when it carries different loads. It's to be checked when you're in the air. When the engine is at cruising speed the ship should be level. If it tends to climb or dive when you release the stick, the ship needs to be trimmed. Roll it ahead if the tail's heavy, wanting to climb. Roll it back if the ship wants to nose down.”

“That should be easy to remember,” Peggy murmured.

“It is. But it will take several hours of flying before you grasp the importance of the next thing I have to tell you. Always fly in relation to the horizon. Whether we are at 1,000 or 10,000 feet it is always in the same place. Check it with the nose of the plane, and with the wings. Train yourself away from conscious movements of the controls. Think of the nose left or right, rather than stick to the left or right.”

The instructor demonstrated stalls and spins aloft, and Peggy learned the importance of overcoming the instinctive desire to jerk the stick back too abruptly. It was really amazing how quickly and easily flying levels could be regained, simply by thrusting the stick into neutral position for a few seconds until the nose of the plane was pointed straight down.

Her hand, lightly touching the stick in her compartment, sensed the expert, sure handling the instructor gave the trainer. She remembered, from her recent reading, that there is no necessity for violent movements in flying. It takes less physical exertion to pilot a plane than to drive a car. But she recalled the author had said that slow, deliberate movements came from repetition and practice. Students were likely to be tense and mechanical at first.

As she studied, and as she thrilled to a rapid progress at Dan Brewster's private flying field, Peggy's great dream was growing.

Why shouldn't women, one day, pilot the big transport planes? Why should the highest goal in commercial aviation be limited to two thousand men?

Around the terminal Peggy sensed the concern of the executives over the drain on their reserves of trained pilots, necessary to the expansion of the



great United States defense program. Seventy-five per cent of the airline aviators were reserve officers in the Army and Navy Air Corps.

True, the government, through its tremendous Civil Aeronautics Authority program, was turning out thousands of pilots every few months. Of the thousands selected to take the course, only three per cent were women. But Peggy realized that in this emergency the country would need the services of the highly-trained commercial pilots with their thousands of hours of valuable experience.

So—Peggy dared to dream. Perhaps, in the immediate future, women would have a chance to prove their right to an equal place in airliner cockpits.

*She would be prepared.*

*ALWAYS SOMETHING  
NEW*

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THE air was crisp, the sun was shining, and a gentle breeze was blowing, when Peggy arrived at the Brewster field two weeks later. She carried a smart suede jacket to wear over her suit in the open cockpit.

“The early bird gets to wheel out a plane this morning,” Dan Brewster said, in greeting. “Good a time as any to learn about getting ready for flight.”

Peggy took a deep breath. “What’s first?”

“Wheel it out of the hangar and head it into the wind,” he replied.

Peggy followed his orders, and the mechanic placed chocks close up to both wheels.

“We turn the gasoline off each night before we put the ship away,” the instructor explained. “Turn it on by pushing the gas shutoff switch in.” Peggy glanced at the instructions stenciled on the side of the ship beside the buttons.

“Now prime the motor by shooting a little fuel into the cylinders. The throttle is closed, the switch off, so it will be safe for me to whirl the propeller a few times to be sure the gas is in the cylinders.”

After that Dan crawled into the cockpit and took over the controls.

The mechanic called “Contact!” Brewster turned the switch to “On,” and replied “Contact!” His left hand was on the throttle, feeding the motor gasoline as it kicked over, his right hand on the stick. The oil pressure gauge climbed to thirty, the oil temperature to 120 degrees, and Peggy fastened her seat belt. She held lightly to her controls, as the trainer skimmed away from the runway.

When the plane reached an altitude of four thousand Dan told Peggy to take over. He pointed out a highway beneath, and told her to practice gentle ninety degree turns to it and from it. Resolutely, she was determined to keep from the too steep banks that had plagued her, the last time she tried.

When she had completed a half dozen satisfactorily, the instructor ordered her to try four one hundred and eighty degree turns, criss-crossing the same highway. This completed, he waved at two tall trees below. “Do figure eights around them,” his voice came through the helmet earphones.

All this was review. “Try taking her in,” the instructor ordered.

The plane was at cruising speed. Peggy glanced over the side to check with the wind sock on the hangar roof. She started her approach, nosing down, so that when she straightened the ship, it would be headed for the runway.

“The air traffic rule,” she reminded herself, “is that I must approach straight for at least a thousand feet.”

She eased back a little on the throttle. She could sense the nose of the ship going down in a glide. Not too much speed! The runway was close! Peggy eased back on the stick, leveling off. Not on the ground until the tail is down. Stick back! Good! A three point!

Dan turned, beaming. “We all know there isn’t such a thing as a born flyer,” he said, “but you do seem to catch on, gal!”

The instructor’s praise was rare, and Peggy glowed with pride.

“Let’s try a take off, now.”

Peggy glanced around the field to see if it was all clear. It was still too early for other students to be out. She taxied to the end of the runway, and

headed into the wind. With her left hand she slowly advanced the throttle. The ship started to move and the stick was way ahead. The tail came up, and the ship was rolling over the ground with increasing speed. Peggy felt the plane straining to get off the ground, and she eased back on the stick. They were off!

She leveled to pick up speed, then nosed up again. Safely away, she throttled down a little and attained the best cruising speed.

Three times Dan Brewster made her take off and land, not touching his controls. Then he crawled from the cockpit.

“You’re on your own!” he shouted.

Suddenly all Peggy’s confidence fled. “You mean—you mean you want me to solo?” she whispered.

Dan’s grin was reassuring. “Why not? You’re all ready. It will take off a little faster without my weight and you’ll have to adjust the stabilizer. The ship will try to climb faster, but don’t go any higher than you have for your trips with me. Keep an eye on the traffic and watch the wind!”

Peggy’s first landing alone was a little rocky, but her second was smooth as cream. The little ship quivered under her hands, sprang forward at her touch, dipped and soared. It was a living, vibrant, sensitive craft.

After the third landing she felt like a veteran, and could scarcely conceal her disappointment when Dan Brewster sang out, “That’s all for this morning! Keep up the good work, Peggy. You’ll have that thirty-five hours of solo flying for the inspector before you know it.”

Every spare moment Peggy had for the next two weeks, she spent at the little private field. With every solo flight her confidence grew and her handling of the trainer became more instinctively expert.

Dan Brewster was enthusiastic. “This brings your log to twenty hours of solo,” he told her one morning. “You’re going to make me eat my words yet about earning your certificate long before the end of October.”

“I’ve been doing my home work on prevailing weather conditions in the United States, analyzing weather maps, studying navigation by terrain and dead reckoning, and solving all the practical air navigation problems I can find. I could recite the air regulations in my sleep. Already, I’m trying to figure out how I can save enough money for two hundred hours in the air.”

“Whoa! You’re way ahead, young lady! You’d better get them one at a time. Are you really going to try for a commercial license?”

Peggy nodded. “I don’t know what I’ll do with it—but I’m determined to have one.”

“Don’t work too hard at it,” the young pilot warned. “After all—pilot fatigue is a serious thing. That’s why the old-timers, even with their thousands of hours, obey the eighty-five hours a month rule so strictly.”

It was difficult for Peggy, bubbling with enthusiasm, to keep her secret.

In September the girls got their first experiences with bumpy weather. It was after a particularly rough trip when Jane greeted Peggy on her return with the announcement that the new Flight Physician wanted to see her in his office.

“What now?” Peggy groaned. “I know my weight’s all right.”

Jane accompanied her up the stairs. “I’ll wait in the corridor for you,” she said, smiling mysteriously.

Peggy walked in the small office, and let out a whoop of delighted surprise. Dr. Ben Black, in a white coat with the familiar gold globe and wing on its pocket, sat back of the desk. “So aviation finally got you, too!” she cried.

“That’s right,” the handsome doctor told her, grinning. “All the best people seemed to be going into it.”

Jane peeked around the door. “Surprised, Peggy?”

“Yes! I’ll bet you’ve known it for a long time.”

“Ever since he came in early in the summer to talk to the officials about the job,” Jane confessed.

“Sorry I’m not able to knock off for the afternoon and celebrate,” he told them, “but I’m due to test a couple of the pilots in the altitude chamber.”

Peggy, always eager to learn more about the profession, suggested, “Could we watch?”

“Don’t know why not. You girls probably know about these tests for the new Stratoliners.”

“We’ve heard rumors,” Peggy told him, “and there seems to be a lot of excitement, but it’s all hush-hush.”

“I think the reason they hired me was that I’ve done a lot of work with oxygen for pneumonia patients. You probably remember that I read a paper about it for the state medical meeting last year.”

Captain Wheeler and First Officer Martin were the two flyers waiting for their tests at the metal tank. Briefly, the young doctor explained that he was to regulate the oxygen in the tank to learn the highest altitudes they could stand without losing consciousness.

“Why don’t you let us try it, too?” Peggy said. “After all, if the new Stratoliners carry forty passengers, they’ll need a couple of hostesses.”

Doctor Black shrugged. “If you want to—you may feel a little dopey the rest of the day.”

“I’d like to try it, too,” Jane confessed.

“In the new Stratoliners the fresh air is taken right in from the substratosphere, compressed with blowers connected with the engines, heated, and fed into the cabins as desired,” Captain Wheeler stated.

“That’s right,” the young doctor agreed. “As you all know, humans cannot breathe normally at altitudes above fifteen to twenty thousand feet because of the rarefied air. This critical height varies according to the person, and the amount of energy he is exerting. With this tank I can regulate these gauges to exhaust the air in the tank to simulate high altitudes. I want each of you to take one of these clip boards and jot down the time every ten seconds, along with any comments you have about how you feel.”

They flipped coins for turns, and Peggy was last. She sat inside the barren little room, jotting down the time periods for what seemed a long, tedious period. She remembered reading that a man can go blind when he’s oxygen-starved. Her head began to pound, and she had that ringing in her ears that she had when an express elevator rose too swiftly.

It became increasingly difficult to concentrate on the time. Her watch seemed to blur on her wrist. The pencil wobbled crazily. Then she was overcome with a drowsy lassitude—nothing mattered—the pencil slipped from her grasp. . . .

“I feel a little woozy,” she was confessing a moment later to her friends.

Doctor Black was studying the four slips of paper on which each had jotted his time notations and comments. “Congratulations, Peggy! You’ve done better than any of the pilots I’ve tested. By more than a minute. Really, it’s quite remarkable.”

He showed them all, then, how Peggy’s writing had remained well-formed, legible, far beyond the others on the pages. Captain Wheeler had done least well, Jane next, then Tex.

After making arrangements to meet Doctor Black for dinner, Tex, Jane and Peggy strolled through the hangar.

“When do you suppose the new super planes will go into operation?” Peggy asked.

Tex waved his hand toward the rear of the huge room where workmen were dismantling some of the reserve DC-3s. “No one’s given the word, but I should think it would be soon. Those ships have been taken out of service to be sent abroad. Some have been flown east for the dismantling, already, and these will be sent to Canada by barge, either to be transhipped by convoy to Great Britain, or to be used there.

“The wings, propellers and tail surfaces are removed, waterproofed and put in a single crate. Then the windows are sealed, and the engines coated with grease and covered with canvas. Some of the men here think Britain, concentrating her own factories on warplanes, will use these as transports, civilian or military.”

“What are those things they’re loading into the flying lab?” Peggy inquired, pointing to a transport similar to the others, except for its appearance. It had been painted dull gray, with a stark-white tail.

“Those must be the new magnesium emergency flares. I heard they were going to test them soon. They’ll light up a ten-mile area and scare people to death.”

“I’d like to see the inside of that ship,” Peggy said. “This is only the second time it’s been around, since we’ve come.”

Tex shook his head. “I’m afraid it’s out of the question. They’ve got new camera equipment and a new terrain-clearance indicator, or radio altimeter, they’re checking for the army, I heard by grapevine. But except for the extra gadgets, it looks like any of our older transports. They just ripped out some of the seats to make room for the equipment to be tested.”

“You know, I’ve got a swell idea,” Jane said. “It’s getting just nippy enough to be a grand evening for a steak fry. We won’t have many evenings left for the out-of-doors. What do you say?”

Her idea was greeted with enthusiasm, and Tex took them to the apartment on Cedar street. While the girls were changing to sweaters and slacks, and preparing the picnic basket, he went back to the airport to get Doctor Black.

At five o'clock they were on their way forty miles north to Fox Lake for a gay evening.

Doctor Black insisted on charcoal for the fire, and took charge of the important business of broiling the steaks correctly. Later, as they sat contentedly around the campfire, and sang one familiar song after another, Peggy made a confession to her soul.

She admitted that she was becoming more than a little fond of the rangy, good-natured Texan. And she was secretly relieved that Jane and Doctor Ben were having such fun together!



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*YOUNG MENTAL  
GIANTS*

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MISS HUSTON was waiting in Flight Operations when Peggy returned from her next Denver trip.

“Come up to my office a moment, please,” she said after Peggy had completed her reports. “I want to talk to you about an extra section leaving for the West Coast tomorrow.”

When they were seated the chief hostess asked abruptly, “Have you ever heard the Junior Mental Giants?”

Peggy nodded. “It’s a clever radio program. I read somewhere the other day that it is the most popular one originating in Chicago.”

“No doubt of it.” The older woman smiled. “I visited the broadcast a month ago. Those children are really a little overwhelming in their brilliance. And they may be difficult travelers. The American Broadcast Company, over whose stations the program is carried, is opening new studios in San Francisco this week-end, and the entire Junior Mental Giants program is to be taken there for the gala dedication ceremonies.”

“They’re going by Skylines?”

“Yes. It will be a field day for the publicity department,” Miss Huston continued. “But it may be a little difficult for the crew. You see, the men from the advertising agency, representatives of the sponsors, the six youngsters, their doting relatives, the master of ceremonies and his wife will be on the transport. The advertising agency and the American Broadcast company have chartered an extra section. It may mean a great deal to our future business if they are pleased and satisfied with the trip.

“For that reason, Mr. Bates, Mr. Hallett and I have decided that it might be wise to keep the same hostess for the entire trip, rather than changing when the crew changes at Denver.”

Peggy nodded understandingly. “That’s eleven hours and two meals, isn’t it?”

“Not to mention extra snacks and temperamental tourists,” Miss Huston agreed. “What’s more, the flight is scheduled for tomorrow, which doesn’t even give you an entire day of rest. If you’d rather not do it, I’ll ask Jane—”

“I’d like to do it!” Peggy interrupted hastily. “This last trip was light and I can go to bed early this evening. Really, I think it sounds like a lark.”

“Good girl!”

“Besides,” Peggy went on, dimpling, “I’ve always wanted to see San Francisco.”

“You’ll like it, if there isn’t a fog,” the chief hostess promised. “I’ll arrange it so you’ll have three days for recreation and sight-seeing there. You’ll return to Denver as a passenger and come in on your regular flight as hostess next Wednesday.”

After planning to meet Miss Huston at ten o’clock the following morning at Hangar Five, Peggy went to the lunch room for a snack. Then she strolled through the Skylines passenger room and ticket office for a survey of the magazine rack. She purchased copies of *Radio Guide*, the *Reader’s Digest*, and a *Ladies’ Home Journal*. All carried articles about the brilliant youngsters on the Junior Mental Giants program which had had such a meteoric rise in the entertainment world.

She learned that the junior stars were limited to the ages between eight and sixteen, and that Martha Sempowski, the musical genius of the group, would reach the age limit in another six months. Jerry Tilton, the star, was

only eight. His general knowledge was amazing, but his special interests were birds and bees.

Shirley Simpson and Tim Woods continued with the program because of their stores of general information, although Tim excelled in mathematical questions, as well. Freddie Breck, an eleven-year-old Canadian, was a well-informed student on world affairs. Lowell Lanning, thirteen, had the highest intelligence quotient in the group. Three of these appeared on every program; two new ones were tried. Occasionally a new one would supplant one of the more familiar stars for a few weeks.

Peggy was alone in the Cedar street apartment when Tex called to ask her to go to dinner with him. She begged off. "I'm going to herd the Junior Mental Giants all the way to San Francisco tomorrow," she explained. "I've been reading about them. Something warns me I'm going to need all my mental and physical strength to cope with them."

"All the more reason you should have a good, nourishing meal to fortify you," Tex pointed out. "Would you reconsider, if I promise faithfully to have you back at the apartment at eight?"

"It does sound attractive," Peggy admitted. "Especially, since I won't be seeing you until next Wednesday in Denver."

"Then you must take pity on me," Tex replied urgently. "Just think how I'll miss you. Why, that's almost a week!"

Peggy dressed carefully in a blue frock which Tex had admired, smiling tenderly at the memory of his voice over the telephone. This trip with the juvenile celebrities would be fun; the three days in San Francisco would be delightful; she was flattered that Miss Huston had selected her from all the girls on the hostess roster. But she'd miss Tex, too!

Faithful to his promise, Tex returned Peggy to the Cedar street apartment after a gay dinner in a little Swedish restaurant. "I'm not even going to ask to come in," he said, suddenly serious. "I want you to have a long, refreshing sleep and a marvelous time in San Francisco."

"Thank you, Tex."

"And just so you won't forget me—" The pilot fumbled in the pocket of his top coat. He brought out a small flat box, beautifully wrapped in gold and white paper.

Peggy's fingers were trembling a little as she unfolded the wrappings. A white velvet box, with the name of a famous jeweler, was inside. It

contained an exquisitely slender vanity case with the familiar globe and wing insignia engraved on the cover.

“Oh, Tex! How lovely!” She flung her arms impulsively around his neck and brushed his lips briefly with hers. Before Tex could respond she had fled down the hall to her apartment.

Less than half an hour later Peggy was asleep. There was a happy smile on her lips and her fingers still clutched the gift tucked under the pillow.

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OVER THE PIONEER  
TRAIL

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PEGGY was delighted that she had appeared at the airport early, for bedlam soon burst. Newspaper and movie newsreel photographers were clustered around the Skyliner, shortly after it was trundled from the hangar.

There were dozens of relatives gathered at the gate to say good-bye to the famous youngsters. Autograph hounds were running in a thick, baying pack.

Skylines' publicity department was on hand, co-operating to the fullest with the representatives of the advertising agency, the broadcast company and the press. They maneuvered adroitly, Peggy had time to notice, so that all pictures of the youthful stars were taken with the *Skylines* name prominently displayed in the background.

Miss Murray, a smartly-dressed, pretty young woman, seemed to be the capable, efficient and amiable chaperone for the group. Peggy admired the way she eased the proud parents out of the photographs, though she seemed to have a little difficulty with Mrs. Breck, the mother of the eleven-year-old

Canadian. She was a fussy, persistent and noisy woman who insisted on staying close to her brilliant son, and who clutched a pretty little four-year-old girl possessively the entire time.

Peggy glanced again at her manifest. The baby was Freddie Breck's sister. "The little girl isn't one of your radio stars, is she, Miss Murray?" she whispered when the young woman was standing near.

"No, thank heaven!" she replied fervently. "I read one time there are no problem children. Just problem parents. The longer I'm around these Junior Mental Giants, the more convinced I am that a truer statement was never made!"

Peggy chuckled sympathetically.

"Freddie Breck is a darling," Miss Murray went on. "His mother wangled this free trip from the agency because she wants to put the little sister in the movies. I feel so sorry for the girl because she's had the most abnormal sort of childhood. Dancing and singing lessons since she was two, and trips to the beauty parlor every week!" She sighed. "The only bright spot in this trip for me is that she isn't coming back with us. She's going down to burst into Hollywood movie circles."

Miss Murray moved away then, maneuvering cleverly to get between the ambitious Mrs. Breck and the cameras.

To Peggy, it was a minor miracle that the transport glided out on time, exactly at 11:20 in the morning.

The hostess was a little surprised to note that the famous youngsters were just as normally curious and eager about the flight as any child travelers, with the exception of solemn, bespectacled Lowell Lanning. He had settled immediately into the seat beside his jovial, fat father, and pulled out the airline map furnished by the company. He produced another well-worn map of the United States from his coat pocket and proceeded to compare the two carefully, completely oblivious to his surroundings and the excited chatter of the other boys and girls.

"What was that shrill noise, just now?" Jerry Tilton demanded of Peggy as the plane climbed away from the airport.

The hostess was returning to the galley with the empty silver tray, after passing chewing gum to the passengers. "The retracting gear," she explained. "The wheels are drawn up into the wings to eliminate drag. It

adds several miles per hour to the plane's cruising speed to have them out of the wind."

"Um-hmm," the round-faced lad murmured. "Birds have known that for centuries."

Peggy went on with her duties, half hiding a smile. The ship had taken off to the east because of the prevailing wind, but it turned now in a gentle bank toward its westward goal.

Martha Sempowski, sitting with Shirley Simpson, glanced up at Peggy as the hostess assisted her in unfastening her seat belt. "You know, I always get a little dizzy when I'm high in the air. But I didn't notice this a bit."

"How high are we?" Shirley, the thirteen-year-old, was next to the window.

"About fifteen hundred," Peggy answered. "I saw the flight plan, however, and we'll go to eight thousand for most of our trip. We'll be above the clouds."

Peggy went to the galley to prepare the luncheon trays. There was a gay, holiday spirit in the cabin. The Junior Mental Giants were as pleased with the fried chicken, mashed potatoes, peas, fruit salad, ice cream and cake as any children she'd ever served.

"If you'll glance out the window," she told Jerry Tilton, the youngest of the group, "you'll get a good view of the Mississippi. Looks small from here, doesn't it?"

"Yes, but it drains the water from an area of 1,290,000 square miles in its basin," the lad answered in his high-pitched, little-boy voice. "We think of it as being about the largest in the world, but the Amazon has a basin more than twice as large. The Congo and the Nile also drain greater areas."

"Is that so?" Peggy murmured weakly. "The Mississippi is pretty long, though. Almost twenty-five hundred miles."

The boy chewed a bite of white meat thoughtfully and swallowed before replying. "The length of a river is that of the channel to which the name is generally applied. Now, the Mississippi-Missouri is much longer. From its source at Red Rock River, Montana, to the head of passes, it's 3,988 miles. The Upper Mississippi, from near Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the mouth of the Missouri is only 1,205 miles. So the Missouri-Mississippi is really fifteen hundred miles longer than the Upper and Lower Mississippi together."

Miss Murray, from the seat ahead, turned to grin at the completely baffled hostess. “That sort of thing rolls out of him by the hour so don’t be too staggered. You almost get used to it after a week or so.”

“How does he do it?” Peggy demanded.

“He seems to have a completely photographic memory. Once he’s read a thing it’s his.”

Still a little bewildered, Peggy went on with her serving of the luncheon trays.

Co-pilot Lodge came back from the cockpit, presently, with the passengers’ flight log. He was greeted with a barrage of questions from the air-minded youngsters.

Tim Woods, a freckle-faced lad, posed the questions for all. Peggy recalled from her reading in the magazines that he was the one who starred at mathematical problems, and that his quiet, smiling father in the aisle seat was a consulting engineer.

“I should like to know more about how you use radio in flying, sir,” he said.

The young aviator in the Skylines uniform replied, “That’s rather a big subject. You see, we ordinarily use two. More, on the Clippers. We have our two-way voice radio and our radio range system of the airways.”

“I’d like to know how the range signals keep the plane from drifting off course to one side or the other. How does it work?”

“A radio range transmitter sends out signals in all directions. Because of its special antenna system, these signals are different in some directions than in others.” The flyer drew an imaginary circle on his left palm with his right index finger. “Just suppose this is the circle of territory covered by the transmitter, with a dot in the center representing the station.” He quartered his circle with two lines. “In two quarters, opposing each other, the signals are the Morse code letter ‘A.’ ”

Tim nodded. “Dot-dash.”

Lodge grinned approvingly and went on. “The signals in the other two quarters are the Morse code letter ‘N.’ ”

“Dash-dot.”

“Right. The antenna is arranged so that the junction of the quarters, or quadrants, comes on the airway. When we fly exactly on course, or directly



on the junction of the two quadrants, we hear neither letter. It's a constant tone in the earphones because the two different signals blend into one. Actually, we fly the twilight zone just off to the right of the exact center, where we hear the 'A' as a sort of overtone. We fly the right of the airway just as motorists drive on the right."

"Is there an operator at each transmitter?" Tim asked.

"No. The signals are transmitted automatically. They're placed close enough together so that we can't lose our course between stations. At intervals, the on-course signal is interrupted for a special code signal which identifies the station for us, so we'll know just where we are at the moment of reception."

"Thank you, very much." The boy's tone was wistful. "Wish we could go up into the cockpit and hear how it works."

"So do I," the friendly pilot answered, "but passengers aren't allowed forward while the transport is in flight. You call me up when you get back to Chicago, and I'll be glad to take you through a plane and our hangar and the traffic control tower."

"I should enjoy that, too, sir," Freddie Breck confessed shyly from his seat just ahead.

"Are girls allowed?" Shirley Simpson leaned forward to ask.

The flyer responded to their eagerness with a favorable nod of his head, and Jerry Tilton added his request to the others.

Only Lowell Lanning, Peggy noted, remained absorbed in his maps. Before the pilot was allowed to return to his duties in the cockpit, the Junior Mental Giants had pinned him down to an actual date and hour for their visit to the airport. He laughingly enlisted Peggy's aid for the proposed tour.

"On one condition," the hostess agreed. "I think we should be given tickets to one of your broadcasts, don't you?"

The pilot nodded. "Two each. That's our price for our extra-super-special-grand-deluxe tour of the Chicago Municipal Airport."

Tim appealed to Miss Murray, and she promised to send two tickets to the flyer and two to Peggy, for a broadcast shortly after the return of the program to Chicago.

The pilot glanced at his wristwatch, and whistled in dismay. "Almost time to set down for Omaha. See you all later."

They glided across the muddy Missouri River to a landing at the Omaha airport.

“All the way across Illinois and Iowa!” Martha Sempowski exclaimed as Peggy went down the aisle. “And now we’re in Nebraska. It seems as if the trip is just starting.”

“You’ll be in Colorado before dinner time,” the hostess told her.

Soon, on the horizon, Peggy was pointing out the silhouette of the Continental Divide. The plane began the earthward glide toward Denver.

The new flying officers took over, but Peggy continued westward with the plane and passengers. The afternoon had passed swiftly, with the youngsters playing guessing games that left their elders overwhelmingly outclassed.

Lowell Lanning refused to join in the fun, and Peggy noted with astonishment that the quiet, reserved boy was now deep in the perusal of a pocket dictionary!

Miss Murray and one of the men from the advertising agency were working on the ‘commercials’ for the San Francisco broadcast. Peggy was amazed at their ability to concentrate and to typewrite in the midst of the hubbub about them.

Peggy served dinner as the passengers watched the sun sinking in the west. “The sun’s winning the race,” Jerry Tilton pointed out. “We were a little ahead of it when we left Chicago.”

“We’re flying over the Continental Divide now,” Peggy told him. “It looks flat from here, but it’s a good mile and a half above sea level.”

“I know,” the lad answered. “I read the Skylines folder. It said, ‘The route crosses the Continental Divide at the Red Desert, a high plateau. This course follows the route of the old Overland Trail, blazed by pioneers and fur traders, followed by the covered wagons, the stage coaches, the Pony Express, the famous Iron Horse, the first coast-to-coast telegraph, the first transcontinental telephone and the first cross-continent highway. Over this route, appropriately, was flown the first coast-to-coast air mail and the first transcontinental air passengers.’ ”

Dazed and speechless at the boy’s remarkable memory, Peggy continued with her duties of clearing the dinner trays.

She glanced through the galley window, glimpsing one of the flickering airways beacons. She thought a moment of the patient pioneers trekking

across the continent at ten or fifteen miles a day. What a change in less than a century!

She took pillows and blankets to Mrs. Breck for her sleepy little daughter. Jerry Tilton was dozing, too, so she adjusted his seat and spread a blanket over him. As the plane soared over the crest of the Wasatch, Peggy caught her breath at the beauty of the spectacular view of the lights of Salt Lake City. Tex had told her to watch for it.

Everyone, except the two sleeping children, got out of the plane for a stretch and a breath of crisp air while the plane was being serviced at the mile-high landing field.

The cabin lights were dimmed shortly after the plane resumed flight, and the lively passengers were quiet now and sleepy, for the last four-hour lap of the long journey.

Shortly after midnight the silver-winged airliner swooped closer to the glowing lights of the great Bay district on the horizon. It nosed down over the cities of Oakland, Alameda and Berkeley and swept over San Francisco Bay to a landing at the California airport one minute later than the scheduled arrival time of 12:48.

Peggy realized her weariness as she checked the drowsy passengers from her manifest.

Miss Murray paused on her way to the waiting limousines. "It's been a lovely trip. I shall try to repay your kindness when you come to visit the program in Chicago. I won't forget those promised tickets, and I have your address."

"Thank you," Peggy murmured. "It has been a delightful experience, except for the times when Jerry made me conscious of my complete ignorance."

Miss Murray laughed. "Don't mind that, my dear! He could do it to Einstein!"

Peggy went through her routine of turning over her papers at Skylines' headquarters at the San Francisco terminal, then took a cab to the hotel Miss Huston had recommended. She almost went to sleep in the taxi.

She woke late to find one of the famous fogs had blanketed the city. She spent a pleasant day in spite of it, visiting the smart shops and taking in a movie. After an early dinner she read the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the sight-seeing folders in her room and turned in.

The next morning was clear and sunny. She took a bus for the trip halfway across the San Francisco Bay bridge to man-made Treasure Island. This was the location of the Pan American Airways' trans-Pacific Clipper base.

It was a tremendous thrill to see one of the huge Boeing Clippers riding gracefully in the water off the concrete ramp. It would leave later that day on its incredible air cruise to Hawaii, the Midway Islands, Guam, Manila and China.

Peggy produced her Skylines credentials, and a polite attendant showed her through the Clipper. It had a wingspread of more than one hundred fifty feet, with four Wright 14-cylinder engines mounted on the leading edges of its broad wings. Passageways were arranged from the flight deck through the wings to each engine, so the engineer could have access to them during flight. Tanks, valves, water, vacuum and fuel systems could be inspected and serviced while the huge bird was winging its way across the ocean.

The transport had two decks. The one reserved for passengers had eleven compartments, seating seventy-four, and with berth accommodations for thirty-four sleeping passengers at night. Cargo was stored on the upper deck, back of the flight compartments. The flight deck included a control cabin, normally manned by the captain, first and second pilots, flight engineer, radio operator and navigator.

The day remained clear so Peggy visited Golden Gate park, strolling to the shores of the Pacific. She took a trip on one of the little cable cars to the top of one of San Francisco's residential hills. She had a lobster dinner at Joe DiMaggio's restaurant to complete a fascinating day of memorable sights and fresh impressions.

In the taxi, going back to her hotel, Peggy glanced in the mirror of the gold vanity case Tex had given her. She regarded the attractive, blue-eyed girl who returned the look so steadily.

"You might as well admit it, young woman," she told the girl in the mirror silently. "It has been a tremendous day. You were thrilled at seeing the Clipper, and you're mad about San Francisco. But nothing can equal the joy you're looking forward to feeling at exactly 9:06 tomorrow evening. At that moment you'll be arriving in Denver. And Tex will be there to meet you!"

*EMERGENCY*

LATE fall arrived, and with it the handsome new blue-grey uniforms for the crews of Skylines, Inc. Inez experimented with make-up until she found shades of powder and lipstick that were perfect for her, but Peggy had been right. The winter uniforms were more becoming to her blonde type of beauty.

The fall brought severe storms to the Chicago sector. Several times the girls reported to the terminal to find the airport had been closed down to all traffic.

Peggy utilized the spare hours for continued study. She stayed in the operations room as much as she dared, concentrating on learning more about meteorology and radio communications. Her avid questions showed an understanding and knowledge, and she found that the men, usually so absorbed in their fascinating work, were willing to talk during these dull stretches when all flights were grounded.

One afternoon in October she reported at the field in uniform, prepared for the flight she was fairly certain would be cancelled. A sleet storm had swept in from the west the day before, and there had been no let-up in the cold all day.

Captain Wheeler and Tex Martin had reported, too. After learning the trip was off, the trio loafed in the quiet operations room. Captain Wheeler was in a reminiscent mood, telling of flying the mails twenty years before.

“We had open planes and no radio, no instruments, and practically no weather reports,” he was saying, when Peggy lifted her head quickly.

“Didn’t I hear an S. O. S. signal?”

But the radio operator had already turned to his table. Peggy caught a word or two—“forty miles . . . Kansas . . . serious . . . serum. . . .”

There was a curious stillness, a breathless waiting in the long room.

A few moments later the communications man turned from his desk. “Lucky we caught that,” he said. “It was a ham operator, down in Barkley, Kansas. The storm is even worse there. All the electric lines are down. He managed to rig up a battery set to get out his S. O. S. A diphtheria epidemic is sweeping the town. Five deaths, already. Only two doctors, and they’ve run out of serum.”

Tex and Captain Wheeler exchanged glances. “Sounds like a job for Skylines and the Aerial Nurse Corps,” the rangy Texan drawled.

Instantly, the room sprang into bustling activity. Captain Wheeler telephoned the president of the company for permission to use one of the Skyliners, while Tex used another line to call the office of the Aerial Nurse Corps. Peggy, standing by helplessly, watched the meteorologist and the superintendent of flight operations start work on the flight plan and maps.

At that moment Doctor Black strolled in, smoking his pipe. “Wouldn’t you think the blamed flying personnel would take this free time to get caught up on their physicals?” he complained. “Only two exams all day.”

Tex had turned from the telephone in time to hear him. “We’ll give you all the work you want, if you really crave action. Wheeler and I are taking off for Barkley, Kansas, just as soon as we can finish our flight-plan, with a load of Aerial Nurses and some diphtheria serum.”

Doctor Black sobered instantly. “Of course, I’ll go.”

“How about me?” Peggy said plaintively. “After all, I am a nurse.”

“Sure. We may need all the help we can get.”

Peggy ran to her locker to check over her first-aid equipment and prepare for the trip.

A half hour later they were in the big transport plane, being wheeled out to a cleared runway.

Four members of the Aerial Nurses Corps had reported within twenty minutes of the summons. They'd brought big packing cases of the precious serum, and even the empty seats had been used to carry the extra cargo.

The gale had increased to fierce proportions and the great plane quivered in the violent gusts. Peggy caught a glimpse of Captain Wheeler's face just before Tex locked the cockpit door, and it was grim. He was staring through the blackness of the night at the neon ladder lights along the runway.

Inside the cabin it was warm and light. Outside the wailing fury of the storm mixed with noise of the motors as the Captain revved up for the final check.

Peggy stared out the window. The lights of the city blotted out with amazing swiftness. They'd be flying on instruments all the way. And who could tell what sort of landing would be waiting at the small town of Barkley, Kansas?

She turned with a resolute smile to the older woman at her side. "Miss Brown, I was aware that there was such an organization as yours, but I'm ashamed to admit I know so little about it."

"Most of our work is emergency, of course, but this is only the third time I've been available for a trip," the nurse replied. "Our metropolitan office keeps a list of us. We're all registered nurses on duty in Chicago. We had a course of special training when we volunteered. This is flu weather, of course, so there were only four of us available when we received your call."

"I noticed your kit," Peggy said, nodding at the seat ahead. "Pretty large, isn't it?"

Miss Brown smiled. "We have to be ready for almost anything. We have oxygen tanks and masks, and an information bomb."

"Information bomb?"

She nodded. "Sometimes it isn't necessary to risk a landing. We fly low and drop this bomb with flares. The package contains strips of cloth, and instructions for the signals. If it's on snow, they'll use the dark side of the strips. A large "A," big enough to be seen from the plane, would mean that only first-aid kits and serum are needed. We can drop them with parachute flares."

"Then, we might not even have to land?" Peggy gasped in relief.

“We won’t know until we see what they signal,” the nurse explained. “If they arrange the strips of cloth in the shape of a letter H, it means that nurses and doctors are required urgently. If it’s just food and water lacking, they’ll make a letter T. But we know that signal is out. They need serum.”

“Who conceived the idea of the Aerial Nurse Corps, I mean?”

“Lauretta M. Schimmoler started it—”

“Why, I thought she was a pilot!” Peggy exclaimed.

“She is. A pilot, a weather expert, and a mechanic who studied airplane manufacturing at the Lockheed plant. She’s even built and managed an airport.”

Peggy grinned. “I’d like to meet her. She sounds as if she could handle a transport plane.”

“She probably will, some day,” Miss Brown agreed.

“How would you like a steak dinner?” Peggy asked, remembering her duties. “I have an idea we’re going to have a busy night ahead. It might be a good idea to be fortified.”

The older nurse received the idea enthusiastically, and Peggy went back to prepare the trays.

After she had served the four nurses and Doctor Black, she unlocked the cockpit door. “How’s it going?” she asked.

This time Tex had no answering grin. “No automatic pilot for this soup,” he said, his voice tense. “Radio’s bad, and we’re bucking a young hurricane.”

Captain Wheeler, at the controls, glanced up and snapped, “I only hope we don’t have to set down in this. It’s no laughing matter to put a big crate like this down in a strange cornfield.”

“You’ve got to eat,” Peggy declared with unexpected firmness.

“We’d both better stay at the controls,” Tex said.

“I’ll bring you some steak sandwiches and some hot coffee,” Peggy told them. “If you can’t spare your hands long enough to hold them, I’ll feed them to you.”

The huge silver bird winged on through the night, on its errand of mercy. At times, the sleet rattled against the windows of the cabin like thousands of small shot. It was the roughest flight Peggy had taken. Most of the time, the



quiet, grave-faced passengers were content to sit quietly, with seat belts fastened, conserving their energies for whatever lay ahead.

Peggy went forward with more coffee for the pilots about ten o'clock. She noted they were flying at 7500, and that the wing thermometers had dropped fifteen degrees since her earlier visit to the cockpit.

Tex had the earphones clamped in place. "In the cone of silence over Kansas City," he reported, laconically.

"Better start dropping a little through this," Captain Wheeler replied, consulting his flight plan. "We can go most of the way to Barkley on the N-beam."

"Hadn't I better get one of the information bombs ready?" Peggy asked.

The captain nodded.

The young hostess went back into the cabin, and returned with the canvas-wrapped bundle, complete with a flashlight and its own parachute.

Captain Wheeler turned to the girl. "Write a note and tie it around the flash with safety wire," he ordered. "Tell 'em to light bonfires along the right side of the best landing runway in case we have to set down."

Peggy took one of her supply reports and jotted down the message, while Tex got the wire. She wrapped the handle of the flash with the paper, and secured it firmly.

The dash-dot of the N-beam was coming fainter now as Captain Wheeler swerved a bit to the left of the course.

"Should spot a beacon right here," he murmured.

Tex stared tensely through the window. "Lucky break to run out of that sleet," he replied. "There she is!"

A moment later the captain ordered, "Throw a flare!"

Tex jerked the pull-handle, and the sky beneath lit with an eery brilliance. The pilot put the big plane into an easy spiral, and Peggy saw the flickering lights of a village below.

"Look at the drift on that flare," Tex muttered. "Must be a thirty-mile wind down there."

Against the snow Peggy thought she could see tiny figures running toward the flare.

"Time to drop the bomb," Wheeler declared tersely.

Tex knelt at the door of the forward baggage coop, and forced it open against the pressure of the slipstream. They were over the dying flare. The floor tilted a little in the outward turn and Tex shoved the bundle, releasing the 'chute. It was a powerful flash on the package and they could see the mushrooming 'chute open.

The long minutes of waiting passed tediously as the plane circled lower.

"They've got it!" Peggy called. The tiny figures below had touched off a couple of flares on the ground.

Tensely the crew of the Skyliner stared down. Back in the cabin the nurses and Doctor Black were watching, too.

Before the third dark strip of cloth was spread on the snow the message was known. "It's an H," Peggy cried.

"We'll spiral a couple more times," Wheeler declared. "They should have the lights for us by then."

"They're lighting more flares instead of bonfires!" Tex exclaimed. "See, over there to the right!"

"Handle the flaps. Get back to your seat, Peggy, and lock your belt. This may get a bit rough."

Peggy went back to the cabin and repeated the order.

"I don't know much about it, but this seems like pretty fancy navigation," Doctor Black declared. "Barkley looked like a fairly small dot on the map of Kansas."

"It is," Peggy agreed, smiling. "I've decided these Skylines pilots know their stuff."

Ahead, in the cockpit, Captain Wheeler held out his hand, palm downward, the signal for Tex to release the landing gear.

Seconds later, the big grey bird settled to earth with a jarring bounce. Peggy unfastened her seat belt, and hurried forward to the door of the transport.

As she flung it open a tall man stepped forward, smiling warmly. "Gosh, are we glad to see you!"

"Thanks. You don't happen to have a stepladder, do you?"

"Nope. But we sure got a lot of willing, helping hands!"

Peggy glanced beyond and saw a circle of men. "Okay. Which do you want first, the doctor and nurses, or the food and serum?"

"We want 'em all."

Peggy took charge, then, assisting in the unloading of their precious cargo.

Captain Wheeler and Tex came out of the cockpit, and helped in handing out the packages. The hostess left the plane last, thriftily snapping out the lights. She insisted that the two flyers stay on the plane to get some rest. Fortunately, the plane was a sleeper, and she'd made up a couple of berths for them an hour earlier.

The welcoming committee had loaded the food and serum on a waiting truck. Miss Brown, Doctor Black and Peggy were given places in another car. The nurses were shown to still another sedan, which had been waiting on the road behind the rude hangar.

"We ain't had a big plane in here for several years," their driver contributed. "Sure was a thrill to see your lights up there. We didn't expect you for an hour or so."

"Where are you taking us?" Doctor Black inquired.

"To the Town Hall. It's a regular hospital. We've only got two doctors. They've been working all day and all night for three days. Every able-bodied man in town helped shovel out this road. It's a mile to the hall. But say, you never realize what a fine place you live in, 'til something big like this comes along. Why, our two doctors ain't spoke for two-three years, and now they're workin' together like the minister and the president of the Ladies' Aid."

"How many do you have left to inoculate?" Doctor Black asked.

"Must be a couple hundred. We took all the kids first."

"How many are sick?" Miss Brown inquired.

"Forty-four, last count. And about half of them are pretty bad."

For the next twelve hours Peggy worked harder than she ever had in her life. Some place, she acquired a roomy apron which she slipped over her uniform. Then she served the food they had brought in the commissary's big vacuum pans. When all the weary nurses, the two local doctors, and the volunteers had been fed, she stacked the empty pans ready to be returned to the plane, and went to assist Doctor Black, Miss Brown and the others.

Shortly after dawn, they finished the inoculations. Then, the two local physicians, refreshed by a few hours of the first rest they'd had in more than seventy-two hours, took Doctor Black and a couple of the nurses to see some of the sickest of the stricken. Peggy went back to her commissary duties, assisted by helpful, friendly, grateful women.

Tex and Captain Wheeler, after a night of slumber in the plane, arrived about eight in the morning to offer their services.

"I think our work is about finished," Peggy reported. "Don't you think we'd better get the plane back to Chicago?"

"Whenever you say," Captain Wheeler replied. "We found this morning that the men who cleared the road to town for you stayed at the airport to shovel a runway for us. They even dumped several loads of ashes and cinders for our take-off."

Doctor Black returned to the Town Hall about ten in the morning, to report that he and the nurses had decided to stay in Barkley until the worst of the crisis had past. "Both local doctors are at the breaking point," he told Peggy and the flyers. "The volunteer nurses are marvelous, and I've never seen such willing helpfulness, but they need direction. We can stay on for a few days, and return to Kansas City by bus or train as soon as traffic's open again. Then we can hop one of the regular planes for Chicago."

On the Skyliner, homeward bound, Peggy suddenly realized how exhausting the experience had been. She fell asleep in her chair. . . .

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## CONFESSION

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As if in apology for the storms, Indian Summer came the next week, warm, sunny and exhilarating.

“A man named Brewster has been trying desperately to get you yesterday and today,” Jane reported, when Peggy arrived at the apartment after her next trip on Flight Ten. “Made a new secret conquest?”

“No. Purely a business acquaintance,” Peggy answered, grinning. “I’m pretty sure I know what he wants. I’ll have to leave immediately.”

“Seems to me you have a lot of activity lately. I’d give a nickel to know what’s going on under that blonde head of yours.”

“Now who has the throbbing bump of curiosity?” Peggy teased. “You’ll know one of these days. I will confess all.”

She changed to a becoming sport suit in soft blue plaid, pulled on a beret, and waved a cheerful farewell.

Dan Brewster had warned her that a Civil Aeronautics examiner might be arriving soon for an inspection of his students whom he felt were ready for private licenses. Peggy was sure of her written examination. She’d spent

every free moment, on her days and evenings in Denver, studying the books. But would she fly satisfactorily?

Half-elated, half-scared, she arrived at Brewster's hangar.

The instructor hailed her warmly. "Good, Peggy! He's up with the last one, now, and there's time for you."

"Golly, I guess I'm scared," Peggy replied, gazing in astonishment at her trembling hands.

Dan Brewster chuckled. "Listen, gal. Everyone of us has gone through this, even the inspector, himself. And he was probably just as shaky as you are."

"Which comes first—the written, or the actual?"

"The written, usually."

The Ryan was gliding in for a landing. Dan Brewster ran toward it, grinning.

Two men clambered from the small plane, and shook hands. "Got another one, Mr. Davis," the instructor said, introducing Peggy.

The girl allowed herself a small sigh of relief. This chubby, jovial man didn't look as stern as she'd thought.

"How many hours solo have you logged?" he inquired.

"Thirty-nine," Peggy replied.

"She's a hostess for Skylines," Dan Brewster explained. "Just got in from Denver. That's why she wasn't here earlier."

"Come along and start on your written, while I make out this young man's license," Mr. Davis said, leading the way toward Brewster's office.

"Congratulations, Sid." Peggy extended her hand to her fellow student whom she'd seen several times before at the private field.

"It really isn't so bad," the boy answered, grinning. "But I'm sure glad it's over. Dad's promised me my own plane if I bring home my license today."

"I'll double the congratulations!"

A few moments later Peggy was at a desk in Brewster's cluttered little office, writing as rapidly as she could. She found the questions comparatively easy. In fact, many of the problems were similar to the ones she had had to work out in her hostess examinations.

An hour later, as the sun lowered in the west, she climbed into the familiar rear cockpit of the trainer while Mr. Davis took his place ahead.

“Remember!” Dan Brewster whispered. “He probably recalls how he felt at this moment, and he was every bit as scared as you!”

Peggy’s confidence flooded back. She waved gaily at her instructor.

In the air, she executed the inspector’s orders with precision. She banked, turned, climbed, stalled, went into a spin and pulled out, and made a spot landing without using the engine.

Now, things seemed to be going wrong, yet she couldn’t be sure. The palms of her hands were moist, and for once, the trainer didn’t seem to respond to the stick properly—

At last it was over. Had he made the others take off and land four different times? Had she failed?

But no. Mr. Davis and Dan were reaching up to help her from the plane. Both were smiling.

They walked slowly toward the hangar office. Peggy couldn’t stand not knowing. “Did everyone have to take off and land as many times as I?”

The inspector nodded. “You’re a full-fledged, licensed pilot, Miss Wayne. You can take your friends for a ride and you can go across country, as you please. You can do almost anything, except give lessons or carry passengers for hire.”

It was hard for Peggy to remember that she was grown-up. She wanted to run and jump and howl for pure joy. After she’d received her precious ticket, she turned to Dan and said, “You haven’t seen the last of me. Remember, just as soon as I can save the money, I’m starting on those two hundred hours of solo.”

“I hope I’ll have the pleasure of examining you again, then,” Mr. Davis declared gallantly. “You seem to keep your head pretty well in the air, and if you have the desire and ambition, I hope you can make it.”

“I do,” Peggy said with warm enthusiasm. But she wasn’t quite ready to tell anyone, yet, of her most cherished dream. These hard-headed commercial pilots might ridicule the idea of women transport pilots.

Peggy missed the bus she’d planned to take. Accordingly, it was after seven when she arrived at the apartment.

She raced through her bath, for Tex was coming at seven-thirty to take her to dinner. Doctor Black and Jane were going with them, and Jane was ready, in a deep flame-colored dinner dress. Inez, too, was preparing to go out.

“You whipped in and out in such a hurry that I didn’t have a chance to tell you the big news this afternoon,” Jane said. “We’re all getting ten-dollar raises.”

“Whee! This *is* a day to celebrate!” Peggy cried.

Inez, slipping her slender feet into shining pumps, murmured, “It’s not a moment too soon for me. This is a pretty gay crowd I’ve been trotting about with, and I need loads of evening clothes. You just can’t appear in the same old gowns night after night.”

Jane smiled. “I’m pleased with the raise because my kid sister has to have her teeth straightened. I’m just going to send the extra ten home for a year to help with that. It’ll make all the difference to her in six or seven years.”

Peggy chuckled. “I suppose you’ll want her to take over your hostess job about that time.”

Inez shrugged. “I certainly wouldn’t send a cent home. My mother heckled me into taking nursing in the first place when I didn’t want to. I had a chance at a modeling job, and she wouldn’t let me take it. Then, she was furious when I applied for this work. But I was free, white and twenty-one, so I got to do what I wanted, at long last.”

Peggy and Jane exchanged shocked glances. That was the reason no one had come to see Inez off at the airport! That was the reason there was never any mail from home for the dark-haired girl.

The silence was beginning to become a little embarrassing, when Peggy blurted: “Wouldn’t anyone care to know what I’m going to do with my extra ten bucks?”

“I’d rather know what took you off in such a tearing rush this afternoon,” Jane answered.

“I passed my Civil Aeronautics examination for a private pilot’s license,” Peggy said, proudly displaying her certificate.

“Did you, really?” Jane exclaimed. Her dark eyes were brilliant.



“Fancy that!” Inez added indifferently. “Will that make you more attractive in a certain pilot’s eyes?”

“That wasn’t my purpose,” Peggy snapped coldly. Her voice was flat-toned. “What’s more, I aim to get a commercial certificate. That’s how I’ll use the extra money—to pay for the use of a plane.”

The doorbell shrilled. Jane glanced out of the half-window. “Whoosh! What a car! That didn’t come for us, Peg. Must be your date, Inez.”

“Bart said he was going to get a new car this week,” Inez replied. “Go to the door for me like a dear while I gather up my wraps.”

A chauffeur, in uniform, was waiting respectfully in the hall. He touched his cap in salute as Jane opened the door. “Mr. Lyons’ car is waiting for Miss Hunt,” he said.

Inez was a dashing figure in her long evening cape. “See you later, girls,” she called, sweeping dramatically from the room.

“No wonder she wasn’t impressed with my big announcement,” Peggy remarked ruefully.

“But I am. I think it’s marvelous.”

“For that, you get a ride our very first nice afternoon off together.”

When Tex Martin and Ben Black arrived a few minutes later Jane told the news about Peggy’s becoming a full-fledged pilot.

“Gosh, that’s swell,” Tex said. “So that’s why we haven’t been seeing much of you away from the airport!”

Peggy nodded. “That’s not all. I’m determined to get a commercial license, now.”

“What for?” Ben Black demanded rather bluntly. “Oh, if you’re going to be flying, you might as well log your hours, but I certainly wouldn’t be in any hurry. There doesn’t seem to be much for women pilots to do, except fly for their own amusement. And you’ve got the ticket for that.”

“Someday, maybe things will be different,” Peggy answered serenely.

*MANHATTAN*

THE approach of the holidays brought an even greater rush than Skylines, Inc., had expected. It was a thrilling time for Peggy, for it meant that she got to see many of the other large city airports. Once, she followed Jane on the second section of a flight to Washington. Another time, she had just returned on Flight Ten from Denver, when Miss Huston asked her if she were equal to another trip that day.

“Of course!” Peggy exclaimed. “Where?” Miss Huston smiled. “On Flight Twenty to New York, leaving at four.”

“Dinner for twenty-one, please, Madame!”

“That’s right.” The chief hostess sighed. “If we had those new forty-passenger Stratoliners in service, we could certainly fill them up. This clear, cold weather and the holiday spirit are good for the airline business. You’ll leave at 4:10, just behind the first section.”

“I’m really thrilled at the opportunity because I’ve never seen LaGuardia Field.”

“It’s a real treat.” Miss Huston studied a chart on her desk. “Another extra flight, Peggy, and your hours for the month will be gone. Looks as if

you'll have most of the week off between Christmas and New Years."

"I'll sleep the whole time," Peggy promised. "You see, Dad and Mother have been talking about taking a winter cruise for years. They thought since I couldn't be home, that this would be a good time. They're leaving New Orleans next Wednesday to be gone almost a month."

Peggy joined Tex for a cup of coffee, and reported that she was leaving in a couple of hours for New York. "Doggone it," the Texan mourned. "I hoped I'd get to show you around LaGuardia the first time."

"I wonder who's the crew for this section?" Peggy asked.

The superintendent of flight operations entered the airport lunchroom, his face furrowed with worried lines. "Say! There you are, Tex! Been looking all over for you! How do you feel?"

"Fine, thanks. But you aren't really curious about my health, are you?"

The older man, who had served years of apprenticeship as a captain for Skylines before assuming his present responsible position, grinned in relief. "Not especially, so long as you've already got seventy-five hours for December. But Lodge, who was supposed to co-pilot this second section of Twenty to New York, is coming down with the flu. We need a First Officer. When I noticed that Miss Wayne is to go, I thought you wouldn't mind helping me out."

Tex blushed and said, "Sure. I was just telling her I'd like to show her around LaGuardia Field. She's never been there."

"Fine! Concannon is captain. By the way, Martin, this is as good a time as any to tell you you're slated for a reserve captaincy beginning the first of the year."

Tex turned a few shades darker, then grinned sheepishly. "Thanks for tellin' me. I feel like I could fly forty extra sections!"

In high spirits Tex and Peggy prepared for the trip. But when the hostess glanced at the manifest, she groaned. "It's always fun to have a baby or two," she told herself, "but seven little youngsters on one trip is a bit too much, even for Christmas!"

It was the busiest trip Peggy had ever taken. She thanked her stars a dozen times that it was non-stop. She was sure she couldn't have checked new passengers in and out two or three times, and still served the fourteen dinners and the four special trays of chopped vegetables, and warmed the three different bottles of formula.

By eight o'clock, however, the younger babies had dropped asleep, and the older youngsters had quieted and were glancing through magazines and books.

Peggy had a moment, then, to recall what Tex had told her of LaGuardia Field, the largest airport in the world. It had been built at a cost of more than forty million dollars; an average of three hundred transports use it daily; four thousand men and women work there. There are eight hangars, one for seaplanes, each larger than Madison Square Garden, and big enough for a football game, crowd and all.

The plane was losing altitude gradually. Peggy went about her duties, assisting the excited parents in getting the youngsters ready for the landing. It was easy to see the light from the control tower, the most powerful beacon in the country, a shaft delivering 13,500,000 candlepower and revolving six times a minute.

Peggy caught a glimpse of the four large red warning lights on the 125-foot standpipe, two miles from the field. Tex had explained that these were self-operating, turning on with the approach of darkness or a fog. Red neon lights marked the runways which were almost a mile long. An electric "sock" in the shape of an arrow, and strung with red bulbs, gave the wind direction at night.

They were coming out of their spiral, and gliding into a landing. Peggy glanced at her watch. It was 7:50—just ten minutes behind the first section of Flight Twenty.

"Let's celebrate your first trip to New York and my almost-advancement by going to the Rainbow Room," Tex suggested, after they'd turned in their papers.

"It sounds wonderful," Peggy answered, "but I didn't bring an evening dress."

"We can go to the Grill Room. It's informal, and you can take a peek at the more famous spot from the lounge," Tex told her.

An hour later Tex telephoned from the lobby of the small metropolitan hotel frequented by Skylines' employees in New York, and Peggy came down in the neat black frock and smart hat she'd found suitable for most occasions away from Chicago. Tex was waiting with a gardenia corsage.

They took a cab to Rockefeller Center and strolled with the holiday crowds along the smart shops lining the entrance.

“I’m going to have a difficult time, remembering all these impressions,” Peggy confessed, laughing. “Tomorrow night, back in Chicago, it’s all going to seem blurred.”

But Peggy found she’d never forget the queer sensation and the ringing in her ears, as the swift express elevator sped them to the Rainbow Room, more than fifty floors above the street. Nor the gay, laughing crowd; the brilliant entertainment; the vast, glamorous, twinkling expanse of lights that was Manhattan at night far below.

They’d danced several times to the lilting music of the orchestra led by a handsome viola player when Tex suggested a sandwich and coffee.

Peggy glanced at her watch. “It amazes me to realize that it was just this morning that we left Denver, more than halfway across the continent in the heart of the Rockies.”

“And here we are up in the air again, dancing and eating,” Tex concluded.

“That’s right. And tomorrow’s my first day in New York, and I have loads to see. What say we call this a day, and a very superior one?”

“Right. I’m a little weary myself,” Tex confessed.

The next morning Peggy shopped at three of the large department stores she’d heard about all her life, then met Tex at Jack Dempsey’s for lunch. He took her to the vast new terminal in the center of the city to catch the bus for LaGuardia. Since he’d flown the maximum of eight hours the day before, he’d have another day of rest in New York before returning to Chicago.

So much had happened Peggy could scarcely believe that Inez was just going out to dinner when she arrived at the apartment in Chicago at 7:30 that evening. “I could sleep for a week, and I think I will, after Christmas.”

“Pooh!” Inez scoffed. “I’ll be dancing until after midnight. Then, I’m going on the second section of Flight Two to New York myself. I really don’t think I’ll get in much Christmas shopping tomorrow, however.”

But there were faint blue circles of fatigue under Inez’ eyes, and Peggy decided it was a good thing for Skylines, Inc., that Flight Two was a dull night hop from three until 7:30, with only breakfasts to serve—and no babies to feed and amuse.

*PEGGY'S LOG*

THE holiday rush continued right through Christmas day.

The three girls had a tiny tree in their apartment, completely overshadowed by the big boxes from home. But they had to open their packages at different times because Inez was on her regular trip Christmas Eve, and Jane had to go to Washington. Peggy's maximum hours had been filled so she had the day off.

Tex gave her a receipt for ten hours flying time at Brewster's private field, and she could scarcely wait for clear, cold days in the week between Christmas and New Year's, so she could log them toward the coveted two hundred hours of solo.

The very next day was crisp and clear, and she was dressing in her warmest suit and fur jacket to go to the field, when the telephone rang.

It was Tex. "How would you like a postman's holiday?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" Peggy demanded. "That's how I meant to spend part of my day—flying at Brewster's."

"James Hallett, the personnel director, is flying to Detroit and Washington today, to interview prospective pilots. He's going in his own

four-passenger Howard. You've probably noticed it at the hangar. He asked me to come along as relief if he needs it. I suggested you might enjoy the trip, if he hadn't planned to take any one else. He said he'd be delighted. I told him that was understating my feelings."

"I'd love it!" Peggy exclaimed impulsively. Perhaps this might be the time she could launch her startling suggestion of hiring women pilots.

An hour later she was in the cabin of the neat little scarlet-and-black Howard. Tex was at ease in one of the upholstered pilot's seats ahead, with Mr. Hallett at the three-quarter wheel. He'd explained that the wheel could be swung to the other seat where there was also an extra pair of earphones, whenever Tex wanted to take over.

Mr. Hallett stepped on the self-starter. The Wright "Whirlwind" motor turned over, coughed, missed, and caught again, settling into a steady, rhythmical hum. Peggy noted that he waited until the oil temperature neared 300 before he signalled the traffic control tower.

Flying a little north of the regular airline to Toledo and Cleveland, they skirted Lake Michigan, passing over the factories of Gary and the dunes along the shore for half an hour, before Tex took over.

James Hallett relaxed and lit a cigarette, and Peggy plunged. "Mr. Hallett, why doesn't Skylines hire some women pilots?"

The thin-faced man's eyebrows shot up in surprise. "Well, we need pilots badly, but we're not in such desperate circumstances that we have to do that yet. In fact, I'd never even considered it."

"You told us, yourself," Peggy persisted, "that it was considered an outlandish idea to hire hostesses, at first."

"You're suggesting it seriously?"

"I certainly am," Peggy retorted spunkily. She could see that Tex was smiling. "You wouldn't be afraid to hire Jacqueline Cochran, would you? Or Anne Lindbergh?"

The airline executive squirmed a little, turning to look at the eager-faced girl. "Well, now, Miss Cochran is more of a speed merchant. That's an entirely different sort of flying. And I don't think Mrs. Lindbergh really needs the job."

"So that's why you're so all-fired bent on getting a commercial certificate, is it?" Tex demanded. "Why, Peggy! You're going to have a long,

hard struggle to log two hundred hours in the air. Where would you ever get a thousand or better?"

"Where did you?" Peggy retorted.

"On a little feeder line down in Texas," he replied.

"Why couldn't women earn their wings that way, too?" Peggy continued.

"They might. It's possible," Mr. Hallett said gravely. "But it's such a new idea. Takes time, you know."

A daring idea had been forming in Peggy's mind. "I'd like a chance to show you," she exclaimed. "Why don't you let me form the flight plan from Detroit to Washington? It's an entirely new problem for me. I didn't even have that particular trip in any of my exams. And I'll fly you two down this afternoon. If I go haywire, you'll let me know soon enough. Then I'll subside."

The two pilots exchanged surprised, amused looks. "Can't think of any good excuses, right off hand. Can you, Tex?"

The tall pilot grinned and shook his head. "Guess you're stuck with it, Mr. Hallett."

Peggy was almost too excited to eat her lunch. She had spent two hours in the Wayne County tower, preparing her flight plan, which she knew would be checked with Mr. Hallett's earlier one, made up in Chicago. She'd gone over it, a half dozen times, in her mind. She felt it was right.

A little after one, Mr. Hallett announced that he had finished the interviews. A couple of young men who had learned to fly at Culver Military Academy, and had since added more than a thousand hours to their flying time in taking Detroit sportsmen north for hunting and fishing trips, were coming to Chicago for their training course with Skylines, Inc.

Peggy, after both Mr. Hallett and Tex had looked over her flight plan, filed it with Airways Traffic Control. She took her place in one of the forward seats of the Howard with Mr. Hallett at her side. Tex lounged in the wide rear seat.

When the engine had warmed up, she called the Wayne County tower. There wasn't a tremor in her voice as she said clearly, "NC3140 (the license number of the ship) Howard, pilot Peggy Wayne from Wayne County to Washington via airways, 9,000 feet, speed 210, time two hours. I want to taxi out."



The tower responded, telling her it was all right to leave, and giving the surface wind direction. Peggy knew that the information of her departure would be put on the teletype immediately and sent to all the main airports along the route.

She climbed steadily on a rising slant toward the Lake Erie shore. “We’re climbing at a thousand feet a minute, air speed 120 miles an hour,” she reported.

Mr. Hallett nodded, but his face was noncommittal.

Peggy kept on the southeast leg of the radio range out of Wayne County, cutting over the corner of Lake Erie. Outside it was below zero, but the cabin was comfortably warm and Peggy shrugged out of her fur jacket.

Over the Ohio shore Peggy put on the earphones and called the Cleveland radio station. She reported her position and altitude, asking clearance to Pittsburgh.

“We’re crossing the main airway now, between Chicago and Cleveland, and I’ll go up to 9,500,” Peggy said.

West and southbound planes fly at the even altitudes, (6000, 8000, etc.) and east and northbound at odd altitudes, so Peggy was taking the added precaution of going up, halfway between, although Cleveland had warned her of no extra traffic.

Thirty-five minutes out of Wayne County they were 135 miles on their way, and Peggy caught the “A” sector of the Pittsburgh beam—a dot-dash, broken at intervals by the P-T of Pittsburgh in Morse code.

The wind had shifted around to the north so Peggy headed the plane almost due east, knowing it would drift the plane to the south, in the direction she wanted to go. Mr. Hallett and Tex exchanged significant glances. A few minutes later they passed over the Pittsburgh cone of silence. Peggy joined the conversation about the busy factories below, billowing black smoke.

Pittsburgh called, saying, “Stay at nine thousand feet until you reach the fan marker thirty miles northeast of Washington. Cross marker at three thousand and contact Washington airport for clearance.”

Peggy repeated, showing that she understood the instructions. An hour and a half out of Wayne County, the Howard crossed the Potomac beyond Cumberland, the river a silvery letter S below.

At the fan marker Peggy reported to Washington. She was preparing to land and she sat straighter in her seat as she conversed with the radio operator at the airport.

“Five miles northeast, at two thousand feet,” she reported.

“You’re cleared to the field. Wind is north-northwest, at twenty.”

The white buildings of the nation’s capital loomed up in the north. But Peggy’s attention was riveted on the tiny row of buildings bordering the airport. The snub nose of the Howard was pointed at the edge of the field, and the engine roar diminished. With hardly a bump the balloon tires struck the turf, and Peggy taxied the ship to the apron.

The prop ceased spinning, and she turned to the silent flyers in the plane. “I missed the timing by a minute,” she said.

Tex grinned. “If you never do any worse—”

“You’ll be a whiz,” Mr. Hallett completed the sentence.

Before Peggy snapped off the radio she called, “Will you please complete my PX?” This was the end of Peggy’s flight plan. The Washington Airways Control would teletype the news that Howard NC3140 had reached its destination to all the control offices back to Detroit.

“Neither Tex nor I could have done any better,” Mr. Hallett assured the smiling girl. “I’m going to do some serious thinking about your ‘outlandish’ suggestion.”

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RUMORS

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PEGGY and Jane were getting their breakfasts a couple of weeks later on a rare leisurely day off together.

“Do you know,” Peggy remarked, “that I haven’t seen Inez in over a week? I’m not at all worried because I know she’s still about.” She nodded toward the waste basket which held a wilted orchid corsage.

Jane chuckled. “I’ve only seen her once this week, and then only to complain loudly that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find an inch of closet space for my two frocks. As an answer, she wadded up a couple of evening dresses she said she’d worn four times, stuck them in a box and put them under the bed. It didn’t help much. I noticed a couple of new ones hanging in their place this morning.”

“One of the older hostesses told me that Miss Huston had reprimanded her a couple of times for slipshod work. Inez coolly asked for the day run to New York, instead. She told Miss Huston she just couldn’t get any sleep before the three A.M. run, and she was exhausted before it began.”

Jane chuckled. “I don’t suppose she does get much rest, dancing for hours in the night clubs before she goes to work. She did tell me she was

starting the day trip to New York next week.”

“It would be just her luck,” Peggy mourned, “to get the first Stratoliner.”

“When do you suppose they’ll be put on?” Jane asked. “I’ve heard more and more rumors this last week.”

“So have I. It shouldn’t be so long.”

The door was flung open. Inez came in, followed by the liveried chauffeur they’d seen before. “Just put the boxes on the davenport, Wilkins,” Inez commanded in her best *grande dame* manner. She ignored the two girls at the breakfast table in their cotton house-coats until the man had left.

“Got a spare cup of coffee for the weary shopper?” she said when the door had closed behind him.

“More clothes?” Jane groaned. “Peggy and I were just stewing about the lack of closet space for us, as it is.”

“Oh, I’ll dump out some more of that old junk,” Inez answered airily. She tossed her new silver fox jacket on top of the packages on the davenport, then poured a cup of coffee for herself. She relaxed in the lounge chair, kicking off her pumps. “Umm—did I find a love of a dinner gown. Rose chiffon, with a long floating cape. Show it to you pretty soon.”

“How do you do it?” Peggy asked, frankly curious. “Even without my expensive hobby of flying, I couldn’t begin to buy as many lovely clothes as you do.”

Inez chuckled a little disagreeably. “Oh, they’re not all paid for. It’s easy to establish credit when you show these shops your Skylines identification.”

Jane said: “Have a sweet-roll?”

“No. I had breakfast when I got in from my run. By the way, did you know that old lady Huston is breaking down and letting me have Flight Eighteen? It’s more work, what with lunch, but I’ll get into New York before the shops close.”

Peggy whistled in amazement. “Why should you want to get there before the shops close? Haven’t you enough clothes to last for a few weeks?”

“Oh, my, no! I haven’t a single hat I like, and I’ll have to have a few smart day things now. I did get a dream of a black suit this morning. I’ll model it for you. Bart’s calling for me at eleven. There are some oils in the

new show at the Art Institute he's thinking of buying. He wants me to help him choose before we go to lunch."

"What does your Bart do?" Jane asked. "Or is he just a millionaire, retired, and living by clipping his coupons?"

Peggy thought she caught a fleeting look of annoyance on Inez' face before the dark-haired girl answered, "Something like that. He has an office on LaSalle, but it seems to run itself. He explained once. Some sort of international brokerage or something."

When the limousine returned for Inez an hour later, she was dressed in the new sheer wool suit, with a chic bonnet of black and white.

She tossed her silver fox jacket over her arm and said, "I'll rearrange the closet tomorrow so you two will have more space. You're a long-suffering, patient pair, aren't you?"

She flipped the door shut with a bang. Peggy and Jane looked at each other, half-amused, half-angry.

"What we should do is pack her stuff and ask her to go," Peggy said.

Inez came back into the room. "Forgot my gloves," she explained. "I couldn't help hearing what you said, Peggy. Perhaps you won't have to ask me to go. I may not be bothering with this silly hostess job much longer. I have prospects of making some really important money. If the deal goes through, I'll be getting my own apartment. And when I do, it won't be in some dingy, old, cramped basement."

"Silly hostess job!" Jane burst out indignantly. But Inez had gone again.

Peggy chuckled. "I never thought I'd reach the point where I'd wish Inez well in her schemes. But if her success means that we'd be free of her and her clothes crowding, I hope she gets what she wants."

"What do you suppose it is?" Jane asked curiously. "Do you suppose that's the way she looks at love and marriage with her Bart?"

"Could be. But enough of Inez. It's an elegant day. How would you like that plane trip I promised out at Brewster's? We'd have time for an hour's flight, and still make the matinee at the Blackstone."

Jane smiled. "You've restored me to good humor. In return, I'll wash the dishes."

During the next two weeks both Jane and Peggy awaited an announcement from Inez, giving the good news that she was leaving the

apartment. At the infrequent intervals when they saw the dark-haired girl, she seemed happy and excited, but she gave them no further news of her ‘important money’ venture.

On a free day during the first week in February, the telephone shrilled in the hostess’ apartment on Cedar. Peggy was home alone. She recognized Miss Huston’s voice.

“Peggy, could you come to the airport at once? I’d like you to take Flight Eighteen to New York.”

“Of course. But I thought that was Inez Hunt’s assignment?”

“Not this morning.” Peggy thought she caught a note of agitation in the chief hostess’ tones. “How soon can you get here? It leaves in an hour and a quarter.”

“I’ll hop a cab and be right out.”

“Good!” Miss Huston caught her breath, then added, “It’s extra special. You’re due for a grand surprise!”

Peggy’s mind hummed with surmises during the swift ride to the Chicago terminal. Maybe the First Lady would be making one of her frequent flights. She’d heard the other hostesses tell of what a gracious, pleasant passenger she was. Maybe the surprise would be that Tex had been promoted to Captain!

The big steel doors of Hangar Five were closed, and it wasn’t until Peggy was inside that she realized the significance of Miss Huston’s call. One of the huge Stratoliners was being readied for flight!

Peggy gazed at the big ship in awe. With a wing span of more than a hundred feet, the huge plane stood almost thirty feet high, and on flying level, because of its tricycle landing gear.

High Jenks, laconic and wiry, stood near the wheel in the nose of the plane, mopping his hands on a bit of wiping waste. Peggy had been warned that the tough old maintenance supervisor had no time for this new-fangled notion of women hostesses around airports, but she’d managed to make a friend of the veteran mechanic.

“It’s been worth waiting for, hasn’t it, High?” she demanded, her eyes shining.

“Mighty sweet job, all right,” he agreed. “Those four Pratt & Whitney twin-row ‘Hornet’ engines will take you cruisin’ at two hundred thirty-five

and hit more than two fifty up in the oxy-belt.”

“What’s the ceiling?” Peggy asked.

“Right at 23,000, and she’ll climb twelve thousand feet a minute.”

Peggy said, “Golly! *I’m going to crew on that this morning!* I’d better get going.”

The girl hurried through her routine of preparing for the flight. Tex and Captain Concannon were absorbed in their PX preparation. Peggy glanced at the manifest before they had finished. Only eight passengers! Too bad, for the big plane could carry more than forty easily. With a complete passenger list, there would have been a second hostess.

Peggy looked up to find a grinning Tex glancing over her shoulder. The girl noted instantly the new insignia above the visor on his cap, and over the pocket of his uniform jacket. “Tex! You have your promotion!”

“Um-hmm. And I really think it’s something that we’re going to crew on the first flight of a Stratoliner for Skylines.”

Peggy nodded. “I thought this would be an assignment for Inez. It’s her regular run.”

“I sort of hinted to Miss Huston,” Tex answered, his face reddening, “that it would be nice if you could go along on this history-making flight.”

It was Peggy’s turn to blush. “Oh, thanks, Tex! It was sweet of you to think of me.”

“I do, all the time,” Tex murmured.

Peggy felt as if she were floating, as she went back to the hangar to check the big plane. “You’d think I was already in the oxy-belt,” she told herself, amused.

Captain Concannon and Tex came aboard a few minutes later and joined Peggy in an admiring inspection of the cabin of the big plane.

“Do our passengers know the treat in store for them?” Peggy asked.

Captain Concannon, an older pilot, nodded. “They were all told they could come later on the scheduled Douglas DC-3, but they were all eager to pioneer with us, the front office reported. Of course, it isn’t really pioneering because this boat has been flown for hundreds of miles, torn down, set up again, and re-checked.”

It was time, now, for the huge plane to appear at gate Five. The motor-lift for the hangar doors hummed; two tractors towed the sleek ship to the

runway. Miss Huston had come aboard, at the last moment, to check with commissary and double-check Peggy's inspection. The publicity department was on hand in full force. The crew posed under the nose of the big ship.

Ten minutes later the crew didn't feel so much like smiling. Only three passengers appeared. At last, the agent from the front office had to admit that perhaps five of the men who had planned to take the flight had changed their minds.

The last man to appear seemed vaguely familiar to Peggy, but his name, Barton Lane, gave no clue to his identity. He acted strangely, too. After checking his name on the manifest, Peggy glanced up to find him staring at her, half-scowling.

"I thought Miss Hunt was on Flight Eighteen," he said. His tone was brittle with annoyance.

"She'll be on the second section, this trip," Peggy told him. "As you were told, this is the first commercial flight of the Stratoliner, and it was necessary to make up a special crew." She smiled. "I'll do my best to make you comfortable. It's really a super ship."

His only response was an unfriendly grunt. He brushed past her into the plane.

The delay in waiting for the other passengers, the hubbub and fanfare caused by the huge crowd of curious from other hangars up and down the line, and the persistence of the photographers had made them fifteen minutes late in taking off. Peggy knew that in the cockpit ahead the pilots were impatient to get going.

It was with a feeling of relief that she finally glanced down at the familiar roofs at the terminal. The weather was going to give them a true test in the big ship, for the meteorologist had reported a rapidly-lowering ceiling. Peggy was conscious that the plane was climbing nearly at its maximum of 1200 feet a minute.

In less than twenty minutes the plane had lifted far above the grey weather. Peggy almost forgot her duties in glorying in the swift transition. She knew Tex was at the controls of the oxygen instruments and, although they were in the thin atmosphere of 18,000 feet, there was no appreciable difference in the warm air of the sealed cabin.

In spite of her pride in being the first hostess to serve in a Stratoliner and the exhilaration of this thrilling trip, Peggy sensed a queer, strained



atmosphere within the cabin.

She studied her passengers more closely. All were men of about forty, she judged. All had a strange air of restrained excitement. She'd offered them magazines, cigarettes, chewing gum. They had refused rudely.

Perhaps they were as overawed as she was in the knowledge that they were flying almost four miles above the earth's surface at more than two hundred miles an hour. It was almost a terrifying realization, yet the trip seemed very little different from an ordinary flight.

No matter how much the girl tried to reassure herself, there was almost an actual, tangible feeling of expectancy in the big cabin.

Involuntarily, Peggy shuddered as she studied the queer trio of passengers, sitting so silently and tensely and solemnly in the huge plane. Blood began to tom-tom in her ears and a hand of ice seemed to contract her heart.

It was much stronger than a premonition of evil. The truth struck Peggy like an unexpected blow.

*All three men were waiting for something to go wrong!*

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*DESTINATION?*

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ORDINARILY, with three passengers who seemed uninterested in papers and magazines, Peggy would have suggested a bridge game. But not these queer, silent men!

She shrugged off her feeling of dread and glanced at her watch. Still half an hour until lunch time.

“I might as well go forward for a look at the controls,” she told herself.

The luxurious carpet was soft beneath her feet as she walked in the aisle. The lounge chairs were soft and comfortable, but the three men were sitting tense and erect.

Peggy pretended to brush bits of dust from a couple of the chairs while she studied these passengers more closely. One was a swarthy-faced dandy, flashily dressed, with sleek, black hair. He chewed his lip nervously and stared out at the cloudless atmosphere. S. Winfred, the manifest had said, but Peggy was sure this dark foreign-looking man must have borrowed the good Anglo-Saxon name.

The other fellow looked like a prosperous, pompous merchant, with his bristling grey brows and moustache. He seemed ill-at-ease, constantly

fingering a massive gold chain across his vest. Peggy stole another covert glance at Barton Lane and dropped her eyes quickly. He was watching her with an intent, suspicious scowl. What was so familiar about him?

She straightened the linen protector on a lounge chair and strode on down the aisle to the cockpit door. She unlocked it and went into the roomy navigation space. Captain Concannon was leaning back in his pilot's seat, relaxed, the plane flying steadily in the mechanical mitt of Iron Mike, the automatic pilot. Reserve Captain Martin had just finished reporting the position of the plane to the Chicago terminal.

"How do you like it?" Peggy asked the older man.

"I still can't believe it," the veteran flyer answered. His lined face creased in a wondering smile. "For anyone who learned to fly on a pre-War Jenny, this boat is almost too wonderful to believe."

"It's not only the plane and the four big motors, and the huge three-bladed propellers," Tex added with unusual seriousness. "It's being able to fly up in this super-highway of the skies. The temperature remains constant. We're free of clouds, gusty winds and all the other atmospheric disturbances. It's all a pilot's dream come true."

"And practically no work," Concannon chuckled, pointing to the gyro pilot. "Have you kids ever been down to Wright Field?" he demanded abruptly.

Peggy and Tex shook their heads.

"You ought to go in the spirit of a pilgrimage," he said. "In the museum there, you'll find a duplicate of the Wright brothers' first machine flown at Kitty Hawk. It's an awkward affair made of fabric, wire and wood. But its twin made triumphant little hops over the sand hills of North Carolina less than forty years ago. Only twenty-four years later, in May, 1927, Lindbergh flew from New York to France. Thirty-six hundred miles in thirty-three hours. And only five years ago a ship like this, built to fly through the oxy-belt, was a remote fantasy."

Peggy nodded. "It's enough to make you want to live for a long time and see what miracles will happen next in aviation."

Tex chuckled. "My Dad used to complain bitterly because the frontiers were exhausted, and I'd never have the thrill of pioneering, as he and his grandfather had had in Texas and California. I guess he didn't expect my generation to go up instead of West!"

“Don’t forget,” Captain Concannon pointed out, “that all the pioneering isn’t being done by the pilots.” He reached over and patted the emergency oxygen equipment almost affectionately. “The boys who figured out these pressure cabin tricks, and the safe-guards of Iron Mike, bank-and-turn, altimeters, and radio beams have contributed just as much as flyers to the success of aviation.”

The door swung open. Peggy turned swiftly to explain that passengers weren’t allowed forward—and found herself facing an ugly little black gun!

“Make yourself small, sister, and you won’t get hurt,” Barton Lane snarled.

Tex, half-turned in his pilot’s seat, was reaching for his black brief case. Peggy knew the regulation that anyone carrying the United States mail must be armed. If only Tex could be sly enough, he might manage to get his revolver!

Frantically, she tried to think of some scheme to divert the attention of this madman for a precious second. Surely, since they were three against one

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But the odds weren’t so favorable. Winfred, the swarthy-faced passenger, crowded past Lane, a revolver in his left hand and a wicked black-jack in his right. Ruthlessly, he slugged Tex over the head just as the young pilot clutched his gun.

Peggy cried out against the cold-blooded brutality of the blow, and her shrieks were the first warning that Captain Concannon had that danger was near. He whirled from his seat to receive the full brunt of a raking blow from the butt of Lane’s gun. He struck out, blinded by the instant gush of blood from the wound on his forehead. Winfred struck again with the black-jack, and Concannon crumpled, unconscious, on the cockpit floor.

“Get ’em out of the way,” Lane ordered. “Get back in the cabin, sister.”

Lane slipped his gun into his pocket. Not waiting for his henchmen to drag Concannon and Martin back into the cabin, he walked ruthlessly over them to reach Concannon’s place at the controls. Peggy saw him disengage the automatic pilot and begin to change the course of the big plane before Winfred shoved her through the cockpit door and into the first chair.

Then he and the man listed as Frank Engle on the manifest, jerked the inert Skylines flyers to the rear of the cabin. Winfred reached above his chair

to the rack and pulled down a brief case. He pulled out two pairs of handcuffs and two lengths of chain, equipped with padlocks.

Peggy stared, unbelievably, at the incredible scene. Five minutes later both helpless pilots were trussed, with handcuffs about their wrists and the strong steel chains locked around their ankles.

“Those boys are out,” Winfred gloated with evil satisfaction. “Won’t need the hypodermics because they’re going to be out of commission even if they do wake up.”

“Which I doubt,” Engle added, chuckling.

“You’d better run forward and relieve the boss,” the swarthy-faced man declared. “I’ll keep an eye, on the girl.”

“Not a hard job,” the pompous one answered. He looked at the frightened girl meditatively. “Don’t try any tricks, Miss Hostess,” he warned. “Be too bad to mess up a pretty face like yours.”

“Get on with your work,” Winfred ordered. “You know, the boss ain’t too strong on this navigation stuff, and we’ve got to hit that field on the nose.”

Peggy found her voice. “Where are we going?” she appealed.

The sleek-haired man laughed shortly, without mirth. “We’re going south to a warmer climate. Just decided, all of a sudden, that we were sick of this winter weather, and we didn’t want to go to New York after all.”

“So you’re stealing a plane worth more than \$150,000 for your little vacation jaunt!” Peggy retorted scornfully.

“See here, sister, you’re in no position to get sassy,” the man warned ominously. “If you’re a good girl and keep your trap shut, we may let you sit down on the desert with one of our parachutes. We brought ’em aboard in our luggage just in case something went wrong with our plans.” He chuckled again, and Peggy went cold at the sound. “But nothing went wrong for us, Sister!”

*BETRAYAL*

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HANGAR FIVE seethed with excitement and bustling activity all that February morning, even before the big Stratoliner had taken off on its first commercial flight to New York.

There had been the delay in the beginning of the flight. Then Mary Ann Huston, the chief hostess, had been unable to locate Inez Hunt when she didn't report for her scheduled trip on the regular Douglas DC-3. After three unanswered telephone calls to the apartment on Cedar Street, she had hastily summoned one of the relief hostesses, and checked the plane herself before the departure.

Flight Eighteen had been away twenty minutes when the first hint of trouble aboard the Stratoliner was flashed to Flight Operations from the Cleveland Terminal.

“UNABLE TO CONTACT SKYLINES' STRATOLINER TO NEW YORK” the radio operator in the Ohio airport had reported by teletype. “LAST MESSAGE FROM CAPTAIN CONCANNON AT 10:45. ALL WELL AT THAT POINT, OVER TOLEDO AT 20,000.”

Mary Ann Huston instantly sensed that something serious had happened when she entered the Operations room. James Hallett was there, leaning over the teletype machine with Captain Bill Wheeler. Arthur Bates, superintendent of passenger service for Skylines, hurried in. "What's wrong, Jim?"

"Know anything about those three passengers on the Stratoliner?" the executive demanded. "Lane, Engle and Winfred, according to the manifest, and all from Chicago."

Bates shook his head. "No. All I know is that I'm having my office check on the five men who failed to show up."

"The Stratoliner has disappeared," Hallett told him grimly. "Reported a quarter of an hour ago over Toledo to Cleveland. The Cleveland operator hasn't been able to contact them since."

Bates' face went white. He turned to the flight superintendent. "Know anything about it?"

The grizzled veteran shook his head. "The plane's as nearly perfect as possible. The only thing that could go wrong is the men on board."

Hallett said angrily, "There's nothing wrong with either of my pilots, and you know it. Concannon has been flying longer than anyone here, except you. Martin is as loyal as they come."

"A lot of men would sell their souls for \$150,000," the gray-haired flight superintendent insisted. "And the plane's worth more than that to some interests, who'd give a pretty penny for that new ultra-high frequency blind-landing instrument."

Mary Ann Huston spoke up a little timidly. "You might be able to identify those three mysterious passengers if you could check the news photographs taken this morning. Perhaps, the police could help you."

There was an interruption as an office boy burst into the room and hurried up to Arthur Bates. "Mr. Bates," he gulped excitedly. "The office has checked on the names of those five guys who didn't show up this morning for the Stratoliner, and they were all phony! No such names or addresses in all Chicago!"

"This is a case for the FBI. All that air mail aboard," James Hallett was murmuring, when there was still another astonishing interruption.

Inez Hunt staggered into the room and collapsed into the nearest chair.

“Inez! What happened to you?” Mary Ann Huston gasped.

The girl was almost unrecognizable. She fumbled at her long hair which cascaded about her shoulders, in a pathetic attempt to straighten it. One eye was black, and there was a long bruise along one cheek. The collar of her white blouse was torn and the tie was gone. Her uniform was smudged and dirty.

“I’m too late!” she cried tragically. “The Stratoliner is already lost, isn’t it?”

“How did you know that?” James Hallett demanded.

Inez straightened in her chair. She took a deep breath. “I was almost at the terminal this morning, all ready for my assignment, when I discovered I’d left my money at home. I wanted to do some shopping in New York and I had to pay the taxi, so I went back to the apartment. Peggy was talking on the telephone. She didn’t hear me come in. I heard enough, though, to learn that she was plotting with some of the men going on the plane this morning. She was going to help them steal it!”

“Where were they going to take it?” Mary Ann Huston demanded.

Inez choked and said weakly: “May I have a drink of water, please?”

James Hallett went to the cooler in the corner and returned with a drink in a paper cup.

When the girl was able to go on, she said, “I didn’t hear where.” She glanced around the tense circle. “I did hear her say, ‘Oh, Tex will manage that nicely.’ ”

The chief hostess groaned. “Martin asked me as a favor if Peggy Wayne could join the crew. I was glad to oblige. She’s had such a good record with us!”

“So has Martin,” Hallett said sadly. “And I have been so proud of myself for being a good judge of character.”

“But what happened to you, Inez?” Miss Huston asked. “We’d better hustle you up to Doctor Black’s office immediately.”

“Well—I was so stunned that I just stood in the middle of the floor. When Peggy turned from the telephone, she saw me and laughed. ‘I’ve just fixed up a swell joke on Tex,’ she said. I still wasn’t convinced, but I turned to go in the bedroom to get my purse, and I—I don’t know what happened. She hit me. When I came to I was in the bedroom with my hands and feet



tied, and my clothes all mussed. I had a dreadful struggle getting loose, and I came here as soon as I could, without even combing my hair.”

“Why didn’t you telephone?” James Hallett demanded.

“I—I guess I was just too dazed to think of it,” the girl said, falteringly.

“Come on, Inez. I’ll take you up to Doctor Black.”

The girl fumbled in the pocket of her uniform. “I found this on the telephone stand at the apartment. I thought it might be a clue.”

She held out the slip of paper to James Hallett. He read aloud, “J. C. Chambers, 1059 Glengyle Road. Benjamin Collins,—”

Arthur Bates snatched the paper. “Those are the fake names and addresses of the men who were supposed to go along on the Stratoliner this morning. This Peggy Wayne must have made the reservations by telephone!”

“We’ve got to work fast,” James Hallett snapped. He turned to the radio operator. “Contact all the airports within two thousand miles of Toledo. Warn them to be on the lookout for the Stratoliner.” He groaned again. His mouth was taut with strain. “A cruising range of two thousand miles would see them safely to Mexico or some secret landing place and refueling spot anywhere in the U. S. Keep the air hot. I’ve got to telephone the FBI in Washington. I don’t need to tell any of you that this is a serious blow for Skylines, Inc.”

*LUNCH TIME*

BACK in the Stratoliner Peggy stared ahead at the open cockpit door.

Lane was busy at the controls. Engle was listening with the earphones, thumbing rapidly through Captain Concannon's flight notebook.

Gradually, Peggy was recovering from the nasty shock. She even picked up a magazine and began to leaf through it idly.

It was half-past eleven. By this time the Chicago terminal had probably been notified of the loss of communication with the big plane. But the course had been changed, so even if the company did know that the Stratoliner had been stolen and could have sent a fast ship in pursuit, it would not help the situation.

As Peggy glanced down at the little gold globe and wing pinned to her uniform she was aware of what a terrific loss this would be to Skylines. The publicity, alone, would be a blow to the prestige of the company. The monetary loss involved would also be tremendous. Air mail cargo was valuable, too.

Peggy had heard rumors that the company had very nearly staked its future on the success of the Stratoliners because the executives had felt that

the added speed and space would mean a profitable increase in revenue. Four more of the big planes were on tentative order. Skylines might be forced to become a second-rate company if the orders were cancelled and a rival line took over the planes.

Peggy turned when Tex moaned and stirred a little. She faced her guard who still held his gun in a menacing position.

“Couldn’t I do something to make those men more comfortable?” she begged. “I’m a nurse, you know. I could put some pillows under their heads and cover them with blankets.”

“Nothin’ doin’, sister. Just go right on reading your magazine like a good girl and you won’t get hurt. I told you that before.”

Peggy picked up the magazine again. There must be something she could do, she thought desperately.

If only she could get her hands on the controls, she might be able to keep the plane aloft until Tex or Captain Concannon could recover enough to help her land it. Flying one of these big boats was almost as far from the trainer flying she knew as navigating an ocean-going steamer compared to a motorboat on the river.

First, however, she’d have to overcome three armed and desperate men. Then, a daring scheme flashed into her mind. The magazine slipped unheeded from her fingers as she thought it out. The risks were tremendous. They might all be killed in the attempt!

“Not very interestin’ readin’, sister?” the voice behind her snarled.

Peggy turned and smiled brightly. “I feel that I should be on duty, even if I don’t seem to be working for Skylines, anymore,” she answered cheerfully. She glanced at her watch. “It’s still a bit early, but wouldn’t you like a lunch tray?”

The man watched her suspiciously. “Don’t know why not,” he agreed sullenly. “I’ll just keep an eye on you to be sure you don’t try any funny stuff.”

“Are you trying to be amusing?” Peggy retorted. All trace of fear went out of her voice. “What chance would I have against the three of you, even if you weren’t armed? I know when I’m beaten.”

“Good girl,” the man approved.

“It’s an extra-special lunch. Commissary really did themselves proud in honor of the first commercial flight of the Stratoliner. Shrimp cocktail, sliced turkey and dressing, fresh asparagus and a fruit salad.”

“Skip the shrimp for me, sister. I’m allergic to it. But you can go heavy on the turkey and dressing.”

“Would you like to come back to the galley and watch me?” Peggy demanded mockingly. “We always carry strychnine as a part of our equipment to stamp out unruly passengers.”

The swarthy-faced man guffawed appreciatively. “That’s rich! Just the same, I’ll bet you wish you did have some!”

“Would it bother you too much to lift these men up into the chairs?” Peggy asked. “It’s going to be awkward, carrying trays over them.”

“Sure.” He slipped the gun into his pocket, but walked over the prostrate flyers, so he could face Peggy while he roughly shoved the men into aisle chairs. Peggy stood, her face calm and unconcerned, while he lifted and tugged.

He was panting and breathing heavily when he’d finished, and Peggy was elated. The man was almost friendly as he watched the hostess deftly go through the practiced motions of preparing the trays in the gleaming galley.

“Shall I take the other trays forward, first, so you can keep me covered?” she suggested.

He nodded and she made two trips to the cockpit, being careful to go slowly. It was imperative to conserve every ounce of her strength for the ordeal ahead.

Then she carried a perfectly-appointed tray, inviting with its gleaming silver and crisp linens to Winfred, who had taken a seat just ahead of the unconscious pilots. Peggy noted that his revolver was in his right-hand pocket beside the aisle.

It was difficult to hide the suppressed excitement in her voice as she inquired, “May I fix a tray for myself now?”

The man nodded, his mouth crammed with turkey. “No tricks,” he growled, tapping the revolver in his pocket significantly.

She smiled, saluted smartly, and went back to the galley.

As quietly as possible she lifted down the heavy vacuum coffee container. Winfred turned. She smiled gaily. From his seat he couldn’t see

her hands—

Although the suspense was unbearable, she forced herself to breathe deeply six times. Then, with all her strength, she hurled the heavy vacuum bottle against the sealed galley window.

*OFF THE AUTOMATIC*

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LEAFING through the magazine and facing the desperate problem of recovering the Stratoliner from these gangsters, Peggy had remembered her ability to remain conscious an unusually long time in the thin air of the substratosphere.

The entire success of her scheme depended on this first important step. The window must break with her first blow or these men would shoot her mercilessly.

Her rage and fear had given her superhuman strength. The window shattered with a resounding crash.

As the bitterly cold air blasted through the broken window, Peggy hoped in an odd, detached manner, that the heavy vacuum coffee pot wouldn't strike some unsuspecting person miles below.

The ear-splitting smash of the metal on the glass and the roar of the cold air drowned the angry outcry of Winfred as he leaped to his feet. His lunch tray dropped unheeded. He reached for his gun, a murderous glint in his cruel eyes.

Peggy shrank against the cupboards in the trim galley. There was no protection for her. Cold dread froze her blood and she waited for the crash of that gun.

But Winfred's angry outburst and quick leap to his feet had been his undoing. The thin air claimed its first victim. He slumped unconscious to the floor. The gun fell harmlessly to the carpeted aisle from his nerveless fingers.

Peggy knew she must work swiftly. It was a matter of seconds until she would become dizzy and helpless, too.

Almost automatically she scooped up the gun, and hurried down the aisle, pulling herself along by clinging to the backs of the chairs.

Pompous Mr. Engle was slumped over the wheel, Peggy realized, but Barton Lane was not to be so easy.

The first blast of cold air which swept forward to the cockpit had warned him. He was reaching now for the emergency oxygen equipment which Captain Concannon had been patting affectionately such a short time before.

Unhesitatingly, Peggy knew she must act swiftly, or all would be lost. If Lane had access to the oxygen, he could wait for Peggy to succumb to the thin air, and continue with his daring crime.

She lifted the gun, took careful aim, and shot Lane's arm.

Peggy's body ached with cold now. It was grim torture to concentrate. A dim haze began to cloud her vision. Her head was throbbing. She must reach that dangling pipestem for a gulp of precious oxygen.

She fell over the threshold of the cockpit door. The world was turning black. There was a maddening, rhythmical drumming in her ears. She was scarcely aware of the deadly lassitude overwhelming her; the feeling that nothing mattered. She could no longer focus her eyes, and she remembered dimly a warning that Doctor Black had pronounced a long time ago. "A man can go blind when he's oxygen-starved."

But oxygen was there. Just a few, short inches away. With her last reserve of strength and determination, Peggy crawled forward and grasped the life-giving tube. The oxygen had a sweetish taste. A few seconds later she could almost sense the strength pulsing back into her body.

Peggy shook her head in an effort to clear her vision, and the panel board came back into focus.

Iron Mike was carrying on, faithfully, she realized. More steadily than any human hand, he was keeping the plane on its course, she could tell with a glance at the Artificial Horizon.

Blood was dripping down from Lane's arm. She glanced beyond him. His slumped body had covered the left extreme end of the panel. Her bullet had also demolished the compass!

But this was no time to worry about the instrument panel.

She must first see that her adversaries were completely helpless.

She took two more generous whiffs of the oxygen, and made her way down the aisle of the cabin to Winfred's brief case, thrown carelessly on one of the seats. He'd mentioned hypodermics and they must be here.

She found the kit and had it open before the dizziness came back. It was maddeningly slow work, but she managed to get back to the emergency oxygen supply this time before collapsing completely.

She didn't attempt to bare Lane's arm. She thrust the needle through the cloth of his sleeve and jabbed it deep before thrusting the plunger home. "I hope Miss Graves will forgive me for this!" she thought, half-chuckling. "It would be enough to take me off the registered list of nurses if anyone could see!"

Peggy kept the pipestem end of the oxygen supply in her mouth as she refilled the hypodermic from the bottle in the kit, then repeated her administrations on Engle's arm.

The next step would be more difficult. She filled the needle once more, dropped the kit, and breathed several times of the sickeningly-sweet oxygen. Then she made her way to the rear of the cabin and jabbed the needle recklessly into Winfred's leg.

This thin air was dangerous for Tex and Concannon, too, she knew. But it was a vital risk she had to take.

She scarcely had strength to jerk the needle from Winfred's inert body before she turned to crawl back the long stretch to the cockpit. It was useless to try to stand. She was aware only of the painful cold; the pitiless torture of trying to concentrate on reaching the cockpit.

She couldn't fail now!

Dragging herself slowly, unconscious of her whimpering sobs, she forced herself to inch along the luxurious carpet like a wounded animal. She



could see nothing. Almost all feeling had deserted her clutching fingers.

Hours later, it seemed, she crawled across the slight rise to the cockpit door. She longed to slump flat for a few seconds' rest, but some inner driving energy warned her of the fatality of that weakness.

She dragged on—but she was between the cockpit seats! She couldn't reach the oxygen!

Peggy, with a last supreme effort of her will, forced the slowing cogs of her mind to act. Unseeingly, she reached forward and the weight of her unconscious body helped to disengage the automatic pilot. The knob seemed to melt and dissolve under her hand, and the girl sank into warm and restful darkness.

Out of control, the plane started corkscrewing toward the earth almost four miles below. The scream of the overtaxed propellers shrieked in protest, but there was no one to hear. Inside the huge silver bird six unconscious humans lay helpless.

*LOST*

THE ghost plane, coated with snowy rime, plunged toward the earth in tight spirals.

Peggy's lucky ability to withstand the rare atmospheres better than most mortals also made it possible for her to recover more quickly from its effects.

She blinked a few times, and then became overwhelmingly conscious of her peril. It seemed that the blackness had blotted her out for an eternity, but they were still aloft. They were hurtling downward at a mad pace. Could she get the plane under control in time?

A glance at the altimeter confirmed her fears. They had dropped almost fifteen thousand feet!

As she watched the needle made another complete revolution on the dial. What if they were above mountainous country?

Instinct made her grab for the wheel. She pushed Lane's inert body ruthlessly out of her way. She dragged back on the stick with all her might, but it seemed another eternity before the tell-tale whirl of the altimeter responded.

The cockpit windows were coated on both sides now with the dry, white frost. It had been instinctive for Peggy to haul back on the stick. Now, as she breathed of the richer air, her wits came back. She throttled the motors, and neutralized the rudder and stick. The plane gained speed. The air took hold of the tail surfaces. The plane stopped spinning and went into a straight dive. Only two thousand feet now! She must pull out of it. . . .

Peggy eased the wheel back and lifted the big ship into level flight. Then she started to gain. "You must keep forward speed," she told herself. "Get altitude—then you can take a little time to think."

It was still icy cold in the cockpit, but Peggy forced the plane up to 10,000 before she engaged Iron Mike, and went to get her heavy coat from her locker.

In amazement Peggy noted that it was two o'clock. Four hours out of Chicago! They could be anywhere from five hundred to nine hundred miles from the home terminal.

She had been so thoroughly chilled that the heavy woolen coat did little to relieve her shivering. She lifted Captain Concannon's and Tex' coats from the company personnel locker, and carried them back through the plane. If only one of them could recover consciousness long enough to give her explicit directions for handling the big ship!

But both pilots were slumped in their chairs, oblivious to danger.

She must make sure, and doubly sure, that none of the other three passengers would recover first. She had no idea of how long the effect of the hypodermics would last, so she resolutely forced her numbed fingers to tear into long strips one of the fine blankets belonging to the airline.

It took another half hour to bind the ankles and wrists of Winfred, Lane and Engle. The bullet wound in Lane's arm had stopped bleeding so Peggy decided against taking the time to place a proper bandage on the wound.

There was one more demand on her strength.

She had to drag Lane's body from the crowded cockpit so she could take over the controls again. Much as she disliked having Engle alongside in the other pilot's place, she knew she could never drag the dead weight of his large body back into the cabin. Lane, not so large, was bad enough.

Finally she managed to free him from his wedged-in position between the seats where she'd shoved him ruthlessly when it was necessary to get the plane out of its spiral. Being careful not to start the wound bleeding again,

she tugged and pulled him to the aisle of the cabin. At last, she was in Concannon's place at the controls.

She rescued the captain's manual from the floor by Engle's bound feet, and flipped the pages to the PX planned five hours before in Chicago. It had been over Toledo, she decided, when the gangsters had taken over. They'd set Iron Mike on a southwesterly course which had been followed for almost three hours at about two hundred forty miles an hour, except for the few minutes when he'd been disengaged for their descent.

Frantically her mind raced over the problem. It was simplified somewhat because of the freedom from winds in the oxy-belt. She studied the Civil Aeronautics Authority radio facility map, southwest quadrant, in the captain's manual.

If her rough computations were correct, she should be near the northeast beam leading into Dallas. For the first time, Peggy's superb courage faltered. What if all this had been in vain? What if she were to crash on landing, and ruin all for which she had struggled?

Resolutely, she thrust aside the coward's thought and adjusted the headphones.

Ever so faintly the sound came. It was the "A" signal! So far, so good. And then, at the thirty-second interval, came the "DL" in Morse Code, which meant she'd been correct in her hasty navigation!

Joyfully Peggy seized her microphone. She forgot the usual speech peculiar to pilot and ground radio communications, and cried, "Dallas! Dallas!" Her voice sounded excited and strange in the big plane with its weird cargo of five unconscious men.

"This is Dallas speaking," a puzzled voice from that vast void beneath answered.

"Listen!" Peggy cried excitedly. "I'm in the Skylines' Stratoliner that left Chicago this morning for New York. We were highjacked by our three passengers, and they stole the plane. I've got it back, but I don't know where I am or if I can land a big ship like this one."

"You're *what?* Who's calling?" the Dallas operator demanded, amazement in his tones.

"I'm Peggy Wayne, a hostess for Skylines," the girl explained breathlessly. "I'm on your "A" beam on the northeast leg, but I don't know where. It's coming in stronger all the time. That's why I'm pretty sure I'm

on the northeast leg. But would you please notify Skylines headquarters in Chicago where their plane is? Oh, yes. Get a police car, too. I've got three men to turn over to them. And then can you help me in?"

"What happened to your crew?" the operator demanded.

"They're all unconscious, except me," Peggy reported. "But please send the message on to Chicago, will you? And then help me land?"

"Okay. But we've been closed down for twenty-four hours to all traffic. It's going to be a tough job to land that baby in this soup."

The radio signal was growing steadily stronger. Peggy disliked leaving the plane in the hands of Iron Mike again, for fear of passing over the cone of silence which would mean the plane was above Dallas when she was away. But she felt she must see if there was a chance of either Tex or Captain Concannon's reviving in time to land the ship.

She could afford to stay up here another hour or so, for the cruising range of the big boat was 2600 miles. She knew that the full capacity of 1700 gallons of gas had been placed in the tanks when they left Chicago because of the light load.

She did set the plane down to 6500 feet before calling the automatic pilot into use, because the air was not so biting cold at that level.

Both Skylines pilots were still unconscious, though Tex groaned and moved a little as Peggy felt his pulse. It was a bit slow, but regular, she noted with relief. Captain Concannon was breathing heavily. The wicked gash on his forehead was going to give him some nasty pain later, Peggy decided.

When she returned to the cockpit, Dallas was calling frantically.

"I just went back to see if either of the pilots had wakened," she explained.

"I talked to your company headquarters," the operator reported, "and they were as puzzled as I am. Seemed to think that you and one of the pilots had made off with the Stratoliner."

"Of all the crazy things that have happened in the last five hours, that's the craziest!" Peggy exclaimed in complete bewilderment.

"Well, a man named Hallett and two or three other executives are coming right down in a private plane. I warned them that we're closed to all

traffic with no relief in sight according to the station meteorologist. But they insisted they could make it, so they're probably on their way."

"Good!" Peggy cried. "Now, all I've got to do is set this big bird down."

"Have you passed over our cone of silence yet?"

"Not unless I did while I was back in the cabin. I don't think so because the signals have been stronger—wait a minute." The high whine in the radio had increased until Peggy had to cut the volume. The noise of the beam reached its peak, then dropped off into silence. "I'm in it now," Peggy reported over the radio telephone.

"Keep on the southwest leg for three minutes, then intersect the southeast leg at three thousand. Hit the northeast again at two thousand, and drop four hundred feet a minute. Cut your air speed to one-twenty when you hit the northeast beam."

Peggy repeated his instructions. Then, with eyes alternating from her watch to the dials on the board, she tried to carry them out to the letter.

At four hundred she should be able to see a little of the huge city through this murky haze. Better to come in a little too fast than to lose all forward speed.

And the retractor gear! She mustn't forget to drop the landing wheels in place. It was reassuring to think of the safety features of the tricycle landing gear. The propellers, moved up into low pitch, were noisier now. A light glowed brilliantly on the instrument board, the same one that flashed on whenever the plane went over a station.

Peggy cut the motors back a bit more and nosed the ship down. There were breaks in the gray 'smog' now. Peggy almost whooped with glee when she saw the white concrete runway beneath.

She circled once more, slowing the speed to just under a hundred.

The radio telephone spoke again. "Good girl!" the unknown voice applauded. "Very little surface wind. You should be able to set her down."

Peggy was in the final glide. The flaps were down, the motors barely surging over. The big ship seemed reluctant to leave the air, then came the squeak and slight bounce as the tires hit the concrete. It rolled majestically to a stop.

Peggy was suddenly too exhausted to taxi toward the hangar. She just quit.

*IN THE HOSPITAL*

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SIRENS shrieking, an ambulance and a police patrol car raced across the field to the big plane.

“This warm air is a relief,” Peggy thought dully, still sitting in the cockpit.

Something about the appearance of the ambulance snapped life back into Peggy’s spent body, and she was recalled to her duties.

“If Miss Huston could see me now, she’d probably have me studying the hostess manual,” she thought, amused. “I certainly don’t ‘look fresh.’ My uniform is far from immaculate, and Mr. Winfred’s gun still seems to be ‘protruding above my pocket,’ and that’s all wrong.” She touched the evil little black instrument of death gingerly. Had she actually shot at a man during that mad flight?

Somehow, Peggy couldn’t force herself to go through the usual hostess gesture of greeting the newcomers with a smile at the plane’s door. She would wait in the pilot’s seat until the police had taken Engle and Lane and Winfred.

The first man aboard was the curly-headed youth who had been at the radio controls in the Dallas airport. "I had to see it, to believe it," he mumbled, blushing a little.

"Thanks for all your help," Peggy told him sincerely. "I certainly couldn't have managed without it."

"Gosh, lady, how'd you knock all these men out?" the policeman demanded incredulously.

"I can't take all the credit." Peggy laughed a little shakily. "I wish you'd haul these three away. They've all been given hypos of their own knock-out drops. It may be several hours before they're able to give you their version of the story."

She lifted the flight manifest from its hook on the wall near Captain Concannon's place in the cockpit. "You can see by this that the three men are listed as Barton Lane, Frank Engle and S. Winfred. I had to shoot Mr. Lane in the arm—"

"How'd you get a gun?"

"It was Mr. Winfred's. Mr. Lane seemed to be the boss of the trio. I was in the cockpit, talking with Captain Concannon and Reserve Captain Martin when he came forward. I turned to tell him passengers weren't allowed in the cockpit, and he had a gun. He ordered Winfred to get rid of the pilots, and Tex—Mr. Martin—was just reaching for his revolver when he struck him with a black-jack. The Captain turned in time to get a terrific blow on the head with the butt of Mr. Lane's weapon."

"Didn't the plane start to fall?" the bewildered policeman inquired.

"It was on the automatic pilot. Both Mr. Lane and Mr. Engle are pilots. They took over the controls and headed southwest. They wouldn't tell me where they were going. We were in the substratosphere where the oxygen is thin. I carried their lunch trays to them, and asked permission to fix my own. Then I threw a vacuum bottle through the sealed window, and ruined the air control of the cabin. Mr. Winfred and Mr. Engle crumpled right up, but Mr. Lane was reaching for the emergency oxygen, and I had to shoot him in the arm. Hit the compass, too," she added regretfully.

"But why didn't you fold up, too?" the radio operator demanded.

"I knew I could go a little longer in the thin air than most people," Peggy explained, "from tests in the pilots' test chamber at our headquarters in Chicago. I almost went out, two or three times, but I always managed to get



back to the emergency supply. You see, I had to make sure they'd stay out, so I gave them injections of their own drugs which Winfred had brought aboard in his brief case."

The bewildered officer lifted his cap and scratched his thinning hair. "Most amazin' story I ever heard," he said. "Better run all of you over to the hospital. You can repeat it to the captain. We'll mount a heavy guard over these three boys. They sound and look like international gangsters the FBI might want to hear about."

Peggy turned to the gaping radio operator. "Heard any more from Skylines in Chicago?"

"Only that they took off about half an hour ago. The usual run takes a little over six hours but they've probably got a fast plane."

Peggy nodded. "Mr. Hallett has a Howard four-passenger cabin plane. Cruises a little better than two hundred."

An hour later, Peggy was relaxing gratefully in a comfortable hospital bed. She had repeated her story to an astonished Chief of Police, who had immediately barred a group of photographers and reporters clamoring to get her first-hand account of this thrilling adventure.

A nurse came in to report smilingly that Mr. Martin was awake now, and that his first concern was for Miss Wayne's safety.

"Could I see him?" Peggy asked eagerly, sitting up.

"You may have dinner with him in another hour," the girl told her. "But the doctor said you must rest quietly for a time. May I pull the shades? Perhaps, you could get a little nap."

Peggy nodded, but she couldn't sleep. Her mind raced over the harrowing experience of the day. There was still one thing that puzzled her. Where had she seen Barton Lane?

With sudden, shocking clarity she knew. And the certain knowledge was so horrible in its significance that she sat bolt upright again.

Barton Lane was Bart Lyons, the wealthy admirer who'd sent his liveried chauffeur and car around Chicago on errands for Inez!

Peggy had caught glimpses of him several times as Inez had returned to the apartment after being with him. It could mean but one thing. Inez had been in on the plot!

The man had expected Inez to be on the Stratoliner. He had asked about her, particularly, when he entered the plane in Chicago. It explained his annoyance at finding another hostess in place of Inez Hunt.

Also, it was after Inez had been seeing so much of her generous gentleman friend that she had boasted that she wouldn't be bothering with a silly hostess job much longer. She had prospects of making some really important money!

Inez might even have been paid before for supplying information about the Stratoliner. Certainly, rumors had been floating around for several weeks before the big ship actually appeared. It was possible that Inez could have learned when the first commercial flight was to have been inaugurated.

Aghast at the implications, Peggy leaned back against the soft pillows with a sigh. She had known, of course, that Inez was a weak and selfish character, but she had never realized before the depths of the girl's wickedness.

At dusk the nurse returned to help Peggy dress in the neat black frock from her overnight case which had been brought from the Stratoliner.

"I had expected to wear this to dinner in New York this evening," she told Miss Benson, the nurse. "But here I am, having dinner in a hospital in Dallas. That's the sort of unexpectedness about aviation that makes it such a fascinating profession. But there were about three hours today when I would have gone back to safe hospital routine with the utmost delight."

"I've had my application in with the Western Airlines here in Dallas for two months," the red-haired Miss Benson confessed. "Do you suppose I'd have any more luck getting a place if I went to Chicago?"

"I'm pretty sure there's to be an opening soon, right in our own apartment," Peggy told her, suddenly sobered.

The nurse dimpled. "Who's the lucky man? That nice Texas aviator in the next room?"

Peggy blushed deeply. "That wasn't exactly what I meant. How long will you be on duty?"

"Until eleven."

"Then I'll see that you get to meet Mr. James Hallett, our personnel director. He's flying down now. He should be here a little after nine o'clock."

“Fine! And thank you so much.”

Miss Benson led the way to the next room and Peggy was disappointed, momentarily, to see Captain Concannon in the other hospital bed. His face was half-covered with a bandage, but he joined Tex in a cheerful, grateful welcome.

“There’s no adequate way we can tell you how thankful we are that you were on board to rescue us,” Tex assured her, his voice deep with emotion.

“You not only saved our lives, but you saved our reputations,” Captain Concannon told her, equally serious.

“You’re forgetting that I saved my own neck, too!” Peggy retorted, a little embarrassed. “I’m just as indebted to you two for explaining the instrument panel on the Stratoliner to me, and to you, especially, Tex. You’ve been so patient with me during the time I’ve snitched in the Link trainer!”

“It was a dry crust cast upon the waters,” Tex answered, with his old teasing gaiety, “which returned a three-layer cake with frosting.”

Miss Benson came back a moment later. “I have a message for the three of you,” she explained. “Police headquarters telephoned. They’ve examined papers found in secret pockets of the three criminals which indicate that your three passengers were in the employ of an unfriendly foreign government. They not only wanted the Stratoliner, it appears, but something on the plane.”

Captain Concannon and Tex exchanged a knowing glance. “The new blind-landing instrument,” the former muttered.

Tex agreed. “I don’t see what good it could do them without the automatic localizer beam on the ground, but perhaps their scientists could figure it out from the part they’d get with the plane.”

“Or from the chap in our company who tipped them off that the Stratoliner was to go into service this morning,” the other pilot added bitterly.

Miss Benson had gone out to get their dinner trays, and Peggy glanced into the hall to be sure no one was listening.

“I’m not so sure it was a man,” she told them. “Barton Lane looked familiar when he came on board, and he seemed disappointed that Inez wasn’t the hostess. It wasn’t until a few moments ago that I realized that he’s

Bart Lyons, her wealthy admirer.” Rapidly she went on, outlining her suspicions.

Both flyers listened with shocked absorption.

Tex sighed. “There’s only one good thing about the whole nasty mess,” he pointed out. “She couldn’t possibly have access to the new localizer beam so that part of the secret instrument is safe.”

“So is the other,” Captain Concannon added with a smile at Peggy. “Thanks to the stalwart superhostess of our crew.”

Peggy covered her blushing confusion by turning to the red-headed nurse who’d just wheeled in a cart with their trays. “You’ve no idea what a treat this is,” she chuckled. “I’m not used to having my trays brought to me.”

“It’s an extra-special dinner tonight, too,” Miss Benson announced. “Shrimp cocktail and turkey with dressing!”

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PEGGY'S CONTRIBUTION

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AFTER a quiet, pleasant dinner with the other members of the Skylines crew, Peggy spent an exciting hour with reporters and photographers in the sunroom at the end of the hospital corridor.

She told the story from the beginning, minimizing her amazing accomplishment with her characteristic modesty. She gave full credit, too, to the Dallas ground radio operator who had assisted her in bringing down the plane. She carefully avoided mention of the new landing instrument which the flyers and she believed was the true objective of the gangsters' criminal act.

"What was the value of the plane?" one youthful reporter demanded.

"I couldn't tell you exactly," Peggy told him. "Mr. Hallett and some of the other Skylines executives will be here later. They could give you the amount."

"What would be your guess?" he insisted.

"Between one hundred fifty and two hundred thousand."

"That much, really?" There was a hint of scornful disbelief in his voice.

“I do know a few figures,” Peggy told him. “There are four engines which cost eight thousand each. Each seat costs four hundred dollars, and there are more than forty of them.”

The reporter whistled in amazement.

“Each instrument on the panel is designed and built with the precision and skill of a Swiss watch,” Peggy went on. “The big seventy-four passenger Clipper ships cost nearly a million dollars, and a ten-passenger transport of the type used on the better feeder lines is priced at sixty thousand. So I don’t think my guess is an exaggeration. It’s more likely to be understated. That’s why I should prefer your getting the information from one of the executives.”

“Thank you,” the young man murmured, subsiding.

Miss Benson entered then. “I’d like to have you rest before your Chicago visitors arrive, Miss Wayne. You’ll have to be excused now.”

Peggy refused to go back to bed, but she relaxed in the big rocker in her room gratefully. She glanced through the pages of a magazine, but her thoughts were on the interview ahead.

With a glow of inner satisfaction she realized her feat might mean much in convincing the Skylines executives that women pilots are capable. Her pleasure in the thought was lessened, however, when she realized that she must tell the men of her suspicions about Inez Hunt’s shameful part in the day’s adventure. It wouldn’t be fair to the company to let her go unpunished for her disloyalty.

The magazine dropped unheeded to the floor, and Peggy paced the room impatiently as she fought out the problem. She had never liked Inez, and it seemed to make her duty that much uglier. Ever since she had been a small girl, she had hated tattling and talebearing.

Her anxiety was short-lived. Miss Benson knocked on the door, a few minutes before nine.

“The airport just telephoned to say that the plane from Chicago is in. Your visitors will be here in a few minutes. Wouldn’t you like to go in the flyers’ room again to greet them?”

Peggy nodded. Perhaps Tex or Captain Concannon would volunteer the information about Inez Hunt’s treachery. That wouldn’t seem quite so direct an accusation as she felt it was her duty to make.

It was a noisy reunion, when James Hallett, Doctor Black and Mary Ann Huston entered the tiny hospital room a few minutes later. Everyone talked at once, but Peggy was hailed as a heroine by the newcomers.

The lovely dark eyes of the chief hostess were bright with unshed tears as she murmured, “You can’t ever know how proud I am that you vindicated my faith in you completely!”

Peggy looked a little puzzled, but it was several minutes later before James Hallett turned to her directly and said, with shocking abruptness, “Inez Hunt has confessed her perfidy, my dear. We have decided to bring no criminal action against her, but she will be black-listed with the sixteen other major airline companies. It is quite possible that she will lose her certification as a registered nurse.”

“How—how did you know?” Peggy faltered.

“She accused you and Tex of plotting to steal the plane,” Mary Ann Huston explained. “She learned a week ago, by accident, when the Stratoliner was to be placed in service. She sold the information to this man Lane, or Lyons—whatever his real name is—and entered the plot with him. She faked five reservations because she felt that would make the flight of the Stratoliner more assured.

“This morning, she appeared a little late, but expecting to take her place on the big plane. She saw you checking the flight inventory in preparation. Realizing that the three gangsters would take over anyway, she determined to make you look guilty. She took a cab back to the apartment, struck herself, crumpled her uniform, and made a shambles of the bedroom to make it appear as if she’d fought with you.

“She told us that she’d forgotten her money and that she made the cab go back to the apartment after she’d almost reached the airport. Of course, the discrepancy in her story is that she forgot the waiting driver! She told us that she overheard you plotting with the passengers to take over the Stratoliner, and that you said you could count on Tex to help—”

Peggy gasped, her eyes round with horror.

“Then she claimed that you struck her, dragged her into the bedroom and tied her ankles and wrists. She raced to the airport, supposedly, to warn us. But the Stratoliner had already disappeared.”

“When the Dallas operator relayed us your message from the plane, we knew she had fabricated the entire story,” James Hallett added. “Confronted

with the truth, she broke down and confessed the entire plot. She really knows very little of the truth about her international gangster friends. She claims to have known nothing about the new secret instrument in the plane, and I'm inclined to believe her on that score. I don't think anyone capable of betraying the company for which they work would hesitate to betray their nation, however. And it appears that working for this so-called 'Lane' amounted to the same thing."

They were silent a moment, and Doctor Black broke the seriousness of their meditations with a chuckle. "It certainly doesn't look as if I were needed here in a professional capacity. That bandage on Concannon looks as if it would be good for several hours, and I've never seen Tex or Peggy looking more fit. So I might just as well use this auspicious occasion to make my important announcement." He blushed, grinned, and went on, "Hostess Jane Fuller has given me the honor of consenting to become my bride!"

Everyone was delighted except Mary Ann Huston who cried in mock-anger, "Doctor Black! You're making off with one of my prize girls!"

Peggy said, "There's another one, right here in this hospital longing to take your training course."

"I know—we have hundreds of applications," the chief hostess admitted. "But Jane is a prize."

"Yes, and I won her," the young doctor agreed. "She wants to work another six months so you can't say I'm not giving you fair warning."

"Let me congratulate you," Peggy cried, enthusiastically. "You're right. I've known Jane a long time. She's a prize friend as well as nurse and hostess. I know she'll make you happy."

"Thank you, Peggy," the doctor said, his voice sincere. "Jane and I both wanted you to be the first to know."

James Hallett cleared his throat and said, "This is all very jolly. Skylines is rapidly becoming just one big happy family. But we're rather getting away from the matter in hand. Miss Wayne, for your fellow employees and all of the great air transport industry, I wish to tell you how greatly we appreciate your courage, skill and quick thinking today, in saving the Stratoliner and the lives of Captain Concannon and Captain Martin."

Peggy's eyes twinkled. "This seems the best possible moment for me to ask if you've changed your mind about women transport pilots?"



The executive grinned. "It would seem so, wouldn't it? I'll tell you a company secret. Our air express business is growing so rapidly that we're seriously considering putting on some 'flying freighters.' We might add some women transport pilots to our rosters as first officers on those, if they've met the usual requirements of two thousand hours of solo experience and our six weeks of training. Not very romantic, of course."

"With only eighty-five hours of work a month, Mr. Hallett," Peggy declared, dimpling, "you could confine the romance to your free hours on the ground." She carefully avoided Tex Martin's eyes, because she was a little startled at her own daring.

"That reminds me," Tex drawled. "I just wanted to have it understood that if you do hire women pilots, Mr. Hallett, you won't make any silly rules about their having to quit when they get married."

"I think that can be arranged," the executive replied gravely. "Miss Wayne, this remarkable piece of flying you carried out today will contribute a great deal toward breaking down the prejudices against women transport pilots, I am convinced. Skylines, I know, will be on your side."

Tex punched his pillow complacently, and sat higher in his bed. "Mr. Hallett, you may think it was just luck that brought us to Dallas. But I think Peggy had it in mind all the time to look over Texas. You see, my father and mother live near San Antonio. I've fallen in with her scheme. I've wired them to come. They'll be here in the morning to meet and greet their future daughter-in-law."

"Why, *Tex Martin!* You know I did no such thing! You're—you're outrageous!"

"You saved my life," the lanky youth replied, completely serious. "Now, don't you think it would be a good idea to keep on looking after me? Don't you, Peggy?"

Peggy nodded, starry-eyed with happiness.

Mary Ann Huston turned to James Hallett. "Well, James. Now that you're here in a hospital, perhaps you'd better stay over tomorrow and interview new recruits. It looks as if we were going to have a large class of new hostesses this summer."

James Hallett nodded, but he was smiling. He looked straight into Peggy Wayne's eager eyes as he said, "You may have lost a trio of hostesses today, Miss Huston, but I believe Skylines gained a great new pilot."

THE END

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Peggy Wayne, Sky Girl* by Betty Baxter Anderson]