

Our Weekly Serial Story Installment

STRAIT GATE

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CHAPTER VIII—Continued

Sarah Lynn drew Gunnar aside while the Hermod was being wheeled to the line. "It's a gorgeous thing to do—and I adore it! Look at him—almost expiring with bliss! But, Gunnar, he looks so sick—he has such a wretched color, and see how he breathes. I mean—suppose he has a weak heart?" She put an anxious hand on his arm.

He looked down at her, his gaze at once stern and gay, reckless and reasonable. "Thinking still with fear of death? You have not listened, then, while I told you? Life is one adventure; death is another! To be alive—that is nothing, unless life is good. Is he living in that foul hole? Better death in clean air! We go!"

CHAPTER IX

The Gate was richly golden, bathed and burnished in a strong metallic radiance, and the sun was sinking into the western sea in a molten blaze of unbelievable glory.

Pop perched on the edge of his seat, looking off, looking down. His unpleasant pallor was enhanced and there was a pinched look about his nose and mouth. He was breathing badly, but his eyes were enraptured. He caught her scrutiny upon him and smiled at her, drawing a long, quivering breath, tipping his head back, relaxing like a swimmer about to float on a gentle sea.

The Hermod swooped and swirled like a gull, dipped and rose again. Sarah Lynn pulled herself to attention. This proud dominion over the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea was not a bird-like inconsequence but a business of infinite important detail, of levers and gears and hair-trigger precision. The sea-gulls, white dots against green-blue, far below them now, flew because they couldn't help it, but men flew because they had conquered.

The taxi-driver was waiting for them. "Hi, Pop," he said, "you better beat it! Lena, she's fit to be tied!"

The little man tried to thank Gunnar but he made only a series of embarrassed gurgles.

The flier gave him a comradely clap on the shoulder. "It is good! Now you remember always?"

Sarah Lynn escorted him back to the restaurant.

Driving back to Danavale she said again, "I want to come down in a parachute, Gunnar."

"Yes. After you have soloed for a month. Then I will take you."

"Take me?"

"You shall do it from the Hermod. I will remove the door, for your Department of Commerce, Conrad Jordan has told me, makes you wear two chutes when it is the jump of intention."

"Oh? In case one doesn't work? And it would be too bulky to get out through the door? But after I'm once out, it's perfectly simple, isn't it, Gunnar? Just to wait long enough to be clear of the ship before I pull the string?"

"That is all," he agreed. His mouth looked rather grim.

"Gunnar, did you mind when you did it?"

"On the ground, before, I had fear like a great sickness. In the air it left me."

Le Roy suggested her first flight alone in secret but she decided against it. It was due Great-granny and Uncle Lynn and old Penny if they wanted to come, and at the last instant she whispered to her young brother Bill. Bill's freckles, standing out like brown polka-dots on his pale face were the last things she thought about as she walked over to the plane.

She slipped round to the further side, unobserved, and laid her face against the Chinese lacquer red. "Don't be jittery, darling!" she whispered. "I won't even nick your

nail-polish. I promise! I'll take you up like a swallow and bring you down like a leaf."

She got into the cockpit and went through the routine she had rehearsed again and again. It had become an integral part of her mental process.

The assistant sprang aside from the propeller.

"Clear!"

Clear, oh, clear! Forever and forever, life for the queer dark Dana girl, shining and clear.

Sarah Lynn pushed her throttle to the stop and Ladybug went forward with a roar, left the ground and began to climb into the wind. Sarah Lynn reached the altitude she wanted, readjusted her stabilizer to take the load off the joy stick, leveled off, banked to the left, building her own road as she flew. She exulted. "No matter what comes to me, if I live to be a hundred, I can never be as happy as this instant!"

The little ship quivered under her hands, sprang forward at her touch, dipped, soared. It was a living thing, vibrant, sensitive; delicate and dear; helpless in her care, depending upon her courage and skill.

"I'll take care of you!" Sarah Lynn pledged her plane.

Ladybug, Ladybug, fly away home!

Mary Dana Webster went to drink tea with Lynn Dana, an anxious pucker between her eyes.

"Ardine is perfectly poisonous about Sarah Lynn."

He shrugged. "Is it important?"

"Probably not, but it disturbs me. She's such an exceptionally good hater."

"Doubtless. What's the basis of it?"

"Partly disgust at having the ugly duckling turn into a skylark, and at yielding first place as Danavale's center of shocked interest, but chiefly on account of Jim Allison. She has worked it out in her nasty little mind that Sarah Lynn, by being the victim of her joke on Gunnar Thorwald, is responsible for his complete and final defection."

"And that goes deep?"

"Apparently. In her predatory fashion," his young kinswoman said, "she cares enormously. Did you know he'd been grounded? Yes. Drinking. Nice lad, to begin with, and what a mess she's made of his life!"

Lynn Dana nodded. "Of every life she really touches. Poor old Keaton!"

"I don't think he's ever come fully out from the ether," his cousin scorned him.

"But as to Sarah Lynn, I don't see, Mary—After all, the only two things in the world which matter to her are flying and Gunnar Thorwald. Ardine could no more ensnare him than she could take an ax to the plane, much as she would enjoy both activities. I really don't see what she can do."

"Well, I don't either, Uncle Lynn." Her plain and pleasant face lifted a little. "But just the same, she sort of worries me."

The parachute jump now held the limelight in Sarah Lynn's thoughts. She read and studied and asked questions and listened eagerly to Conrad Jordan and the ace, and Lynn Dana sat in his wheeled-chair and approved.

"Won't it be pretty bulky with two chutes, one in front and one behind?" she wanted to know.

"I have said that I will remove the door," Gunnar reminded her.

"Then you can dive out, forward, and that's much handier than backing out," Conrad Jordan said, lighting a cigarette. "Then you'd have to push your way, with your back against the door, against the air-pressure."

Lynn Dana's amused gaze, slightly grim, went from one calm speaker to the other. "If you don't mind, Sarah Lynn, I'd rather like you to

take whatever precautions suggest themselves."

"Of course, Uncle Lynn! I want to be sensible."

Sensible: the small, slight thing with her clear olive-and-ivory face and its crowding eyes, her fine, thin hands relaxed in her lap, planning this dazzling danger as casually as her cousins made dates to go dancing.

"The mental reactions are very different," her uncle's flying friend said, "in a premeditated jump and bailing out in an emergency, to save your life. All the breaks are with you now. You're going at the thing scientifically, you have no fear and no nerves, and I prophesy it's going to be a tremendous satisfaction to you, at the moment and in your memories. But I want to tell you frankly that you'll have some bad minutes before you go up." He leaned forward to knock off an ash. "Never knew it to fail. The most hardened jumpers experience it, though I dare say in most cases it's purely physical and subconscious. I know a young chap at an airport who does exhibition jumps, but always before he goes up he turns deathly pale and his face and hands twitch. And the minute he climbs into the ship he's fine."

"Like a soldier in the trenches waiting the command to go over the top," Lynn Dana contributed.

"Or, I remember before a big game, the agony of waiting, of wishing you had elected to play tiddley-winks instead of football, and the departure of all doldrums when the whistle blew."

"Exactly. Tremendous relief in definite action: setting the body into directional motion toward a determined objective. Physical action replaces mental; fear evaporates. My conviction is that with a normal mind danger brings a calm and alertness and a cleverness far beyond ordinary experience."

"That I also believe," the Norwegian ace said.

Jordan went on. "There's the case of an English army officer, years ago. His chute caught in the ship and tore, leaving only the harness on him. He didn't know it, and the motion-pictures showed him calmly feeling round the harness and rip-cord, trying to figure why his umbrella didn't open, almost the whole way to the earth."

"Cheery anecdote," Lynn Dana said a trifle tartly.

"That was an old-fashioned affair, Lynn. Sarah Lynn'll have two modern, absolutely reliable chutes."

"Fool-proof," she grinned at him.

"Fool-proof, which is superfluous in your case," he grinned back, approving her warmly. Lynn Dana's study pulsed with approval, with affection for her. Her uncle's life-long devotion, the cordial friendship of his friend, the cool comradeship of the flying boy from Norway. What more, besides a Gipsy Moth, did a girl need for complete happiness?

Fliers did not marry.

"I have wondered if I'd really remember to pull the string," she said, "but I was reading Lieutenant Cramer's account of his first experience. An old-timer told him he couldn't keep his finger away from that ring if he tried!"

Jordan nodded. "Your only difficulty will be to wait until you are entirely clear of the ship." He faced Lynn Dana. "She'll have two chutes fastened to the webbed harness about her body. The main one has a 28-foot spread and the second a 24. That's on her chest."

"Made of silk?"

"Light, but entirely substantial. Both have pull-rings and rip-cords to unlatch and throw up the parachutes, and the rings are handily placed. You'll have everything clear in your mind a hundred times over, Sarah Lynn. The thing you must be prepared for is the scream and the flapping of the silk and the report, like a gun, and the violent jerk when your parasol opens. After

that—he ground out his cigarette—"it's really delightful."

"But—I was reading yesterday—when I'm almost down, within a hundred feet of the ground—"

"Then you must reach up and hang onto the big rings above the sling in which you're sitting, and lift yourself, and take some of the bump out of your earth contact."

Sarah Lynn nodded gravely. "Uncle Lynn, what about Great-granny? Shall we tell her, and let her come out to the meadow and watch?"

He shook his head. "I'm against it, Sarah Lynn. She hasn't been up to the mark, lately, and it would be bound to be a strain—not understanding, as we do, the simplicity and safety of the thing. I believe you'd better tell her about it afterward."

"I expect you're right. But she'll be furious at us. I must go home, now, Uncle Lynn." She stood up, and Jordan and Gunnar rose.

"We must be on our way, too," the older man said.

"Yes. But I walk first with Sarah Lynn to her house," Gunnar answered.

They stepped briskly in the summer dusk, Lightning bounding ahead and racing back to touch her mistress' hand with her sharp cool muzzle.

"So, now you fly, and you make the great jump," the youth said soberly. "That is good. The courage you have; the skill you swiftly learn. I think my grandmother, living today, would be also like that."

Sarah Lynn fought back crazy laughter. Of all the round-about, detached and diluted compliments! His grandmother, a girl in her period, would be like her.

"I return, next month, to Norway. I have there the fine offers, one from the government, one from a great flying firm. It is wise that I go."

She heard herself making a faint sound.

"But I like well America, California. I will come again one day. And you, also, should visit my country."

"Oh, yes, indeed! Cousin Sally Ann has told me how glorious it is," she said cheerily and cheerily, and told him good-by and ran in the house.

Well, what of it? Why not? Was there any reason why he should linger forever in an alien land?

Fliers did not marry.

But fliers occasionally, it appeared, fell in love, achingly, absorbingly, terribly in love. She faced it then. "Idiot! You've known it for weeks—months—always! What's the use of lying to yourself. You may as well admit it; he'll never know."

The nonagenarian was beside Lynn Dana when he was driving out to the field for the parachute jump. She had guessed or divined what was to happen. "Can't fool your Gre'grammer!" She sat on

the edge of the seat, the dabs of color which excitement always brought on her cheek-bones, her sunken eyes gleaming.

"I never saw the beat of that one," Great-granny said complacently. You keep that ambulance out of sight, Lynn Dana, or I'll box your ears till you see stars, old as you are. Plumb foolishness, anyway. Sairy Lynn'll come down just as if she was playing on a feather-bed."

"Am I running true to form?" Sarah Lynn asked Conrad Jordan as they fastened her harness about her. "No; a bit too calm and not pale enough, I should say," he told her cheerfully. Then he looked at Gunnar and away again, grinning, without comment. It was the hardy Norseman who was showing the regulation jumper's symptoms.

His ice-blue eyes blazed in a face of sudden snow; his young mouth was set in a taut line. "Come!" he called harshly.

All Sarah Lynn's slimness was overlaid with her equipment. "I feel like Tweedledum and Tweedledee both!" she laughed. She was comfortably casual in her brief good-bys, making no ceremony of farewell.

The Hermod, looking oddly crippled with its missing door, took off into a brisk wind. The flier did not look at his passenger nor speak.

"I wonder what makes him so deathly white?" she asked herself.

"Just a detached interest in all branches of aerial conquest?" She felt suddenly gay. All her instructions were etched on her memory; she was past the traditionally bad moment of leaving the ground; she knew exactly what to do to get clear of the ship, and after that, she had been assured, the adventure would take on elements of distinct pleasure.

They climbed to a thousand feet, two thousand. The meadow fell away beneath them; human beings took on the value of playthings—puppet people with toy automobiles. There was likewise a toy ambulance.

At three thousand feet Gunnar nodded. "Ready? Now you go!" he shouted hoarsely.

Sarah Lynn stood up and made her bulky way toward the opening. She thought he was the palest living person she had ever seen.

"Fling yourself far from the ship. Make sure you are clear. Count a slow ten before you pull the cord!" His words came jerkily. "Wait! You are sure? You wish to go? There is no need, if you—"

Suddenly Sarah Lynn laughed aloud, filled with a wild mirth which was heady and sweet. "Still the fear of death?" she mocked him. "Life is one adventure; death is another!" She was confident, shining-eyed, radiant, but as she made a forward movement his arm shot out and caught her, pulling her against him.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Candid Camera Pictures Interior of the Stomach and Other Cavities of the Body

"Tiny cameras which can be swallowed by the patient and which carry their own illuminating system have been used for photographing the interior of the stomach," Walter E. Burton discloses in his article, "X-Rays: A Way to Better Health Through Photography," in Hygeia, the Health Magazine.

Similar methods may be employed for making interior views of other body cavities. Furthermore, other methods have been worked out so that movies can be made of the vocal cords, the interior of the bladder, of the ear drum and other portions of the body.

Other startling innovations have been recently introduced in the field of photography that will greatly further medical research. Among them are actual color photographs of the interior of the eye, showing the optic nerve ending, blood vessels and other details. The pictures were taken through the crystalline lens and pupil of the eye, the pupil being dilated by drugs in order to provide a greater working area.

Infra-red photography has the ability to penetrate the skin and show details ordinarily invisible. While an ordinary photograph shows only surface details, the infra-red picture makes the subcutaneous veins stand out almost as clearly as if they were on the surface.

Infra-red waves penetrate the deepest pigment. A negro, photographed with them, appears white, and although he may seem smooth shaven, he is seen to have a distinct beard, because the roots of the hairs in his face show.

Motion pictures have been made that show the course of blood flowing through an artery into a capillary, cancer cells that move and drink, and blood cells that devour bacteria and other harmful matter. Time-lapse photography was employed in filming the actions of these cells; that is, the exposures were made at such intervals that, when the film is projected at normal speed, movements of the cells are stepped up 40 times or more.