

Our Weekly Serial Story Installment

STRAIT GATE

By RUTH COMFORT MITCHELL

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CHAPTER IX—Continued

"Sarah Lynn—" Gunnar said her name queerly in a choked voice, and kissed her, a fierce kiss, deep and desperate.

Then she was leaping out into swift and stinging air and was amazed to find that she did not immediately fall. The speed of the Hermod was carrying her along beneath it, face downward, with her arms and legs spread out like a starfish. There was the strange sensation of traveling across the air rather than through it.

"He kissed me!" she exulted. "Gunnar kissed me!"

She began to fall, her body twisting and turning. Now she was looking up at the plane, now down at the earth which was coming swiftly, perilously closer.

"There's something I must do, now!" she thought anxiously. "Oh, yes!—The cord! But where is that ring?"

Her fingers fumbled for it. It seemed to be lost in the webbing. Why hadn't she kept her hand on it all the time? She turned over again and saw the Hermod still above her but further away, somersaulted and saw the earth rushing up to meet her. Why hadn't Gunnar taken her higher than three thousand feet?

Sarah Lynn thought suddenly of her mother. She had a poignant picture of Adelaide Dana's upstairs sitting-room, pretty and peaceful, with potted plants whose every leaf glistened, and a canary warbling tenderly in an expensive cage, and quantities of framed photographs of her big brothers and herself and young Bill in all stages of infancy and childhood.

She found the ring and gave a desperate jerk.

Now! She knew exactly what would happen. The rip-cord would release the pack and the spring rips of the little pilot chute would open instantly, catching the air and dragging the main chute out into a long line and the wind would rush in at the bottom and expand it. It simply couldn't fail: Gunnar and Conrad and Vance Le Roy had checked it thoroughly. "And even if it doesn't work," she told herself sensibly, "there is the emergency chute! I'm not rattled," she rejoiced. "My mind is running like a clock. And Gunnar kissed me! He was white as a sheet and scared to death about me, and he kissed me! And it was the kind of kiss—"

There was a weird noise which was something between a whistle and a shriek: something was fluttering overhead, and then snapping, loudly, urgently.

"It's opening!"

Then a gun went off somewhere, a shocking, thunderous boom, and her downward progress was halted so abruptly that she thought her arms and shoulders were being torn loose from her body. There were uncounted instants of confusion and terror, and then peace enveloped her.

Her chute opened and was functioning perfectly. She was floating gently, and everything was quiet about her, a sweet, celestial quietness which was soothing and comforting.

She could see the ambulance moving slowly to keep in line with her. She had lost the Hermod for the moment, but surely Gunnar would land as quickly as possible and come to her. That kiss, she felt, was not final: it must be a prelude. Even if it had been given in high excitement, it stood for an emotion which wasn't to be disposed of with this adventure. Fliers did not marry. Oh, didn't they? Then what?

There was a confused clamor of voices, cheerful, exultant.

"Good girl!" Conrad Jordan said, lifting her to her feet. "Perfect performance!"

"Atta girl!" Vance Le Roy was unfastening her harness, warmed for once into enthusiasm.

"Where is Gunnar?" Sarah Lynn demanded.

Old Pete from the airport was swearing softly and happily, paying her high praise with picturesque embellishments.

"Hold still—" Conrad Jordan had taken out his handkerchief and was wiping her face, and there was bright blood on the white linen.

"What's that from?" she asked impatiently. "I'm not hurt."

"Of course you're not, just a scratch when you were dragged."

"Where's Gunnar?"

"He'll be here just as quick as he can set the ship down," her uncle's friend said. "Now we'll just get aboard and let them run us back to Lynn and the old lady—"

He was steering her toward the ambulance.

"I'm not hurt. I'm not going to ride in that thing!" she told him spiritedly. "Where will he come down?"

"Quickest way to get there," he said, taking her arm in a firm grip.

"We'll all pile in. Half a mile away!" He lifted her and set her inside and a white-suited orderly grinned and congratulated her.

"I want Gunnar," Sarah Lynn said.

"He'll be here in a jiffy. Lynn and your Granny need to see you before they're convinced you're safe, though we signaled them. Well, did it all come off according to schedule? Did it follow the pattern?"

"Oh, perfectly! It was heavenly after the chute opened," she answered, stooping to look out of the ambulance window. "I don't see the Hermod."

"But you can hear him? Right over us," Vance Le Roy said.

The matriarch and the cripple and the old governess greeted her in character. The ancient woman saw in her the reincarnation of her own dim, daring youth, choosing, as she had done, the brightest adventure of her period, and the paralytic sublimated his own helplessness in her courage and skill.

"I told 'em it was all plumb foolishness, tagging you round with that hospital wagon, Sairy Lynn," her great-grandmother said. "I said you'd come down like a leaf off a tree. Us Danas we most generally do what we set our minds to! Leastways, us dark ones."

Lynn Dana smiled into her eyes. "I'm glad for you," he told her, "glad and proud. You've given me my best moment, Sarah Lynn."

Miss Pennington's high color was faded but her diction was as crisp as always. "Let me tidy your hair a bit, she bustled up to her. "I should have thought to have you wear a close net."

The girl slipped out from under her hands. The Hermod was down and Gunnar Thorwald was out and running toward her. She went to meet him.

"I'll know as soon as I see his face," she told herself. "I'll know the first second—"

Gunnar was still white, but she saw at first glance that he was angry, and her heart turned over in terror. There was in his pale face a look of fright and of fury. She did not know what it meant.

Then he reached her, and she knew immediately and entirely what it meant, for he caught her into an embrace of urgency and iron and bent his bare yellow head and kissed her again, and the kiss on the earth differed only from the one at an altitude of three thousand feet in facility and duration.

Sarah Lynn was held in a vise; she could not move her body or her lips, but her mind ran and leapt and soared.

"He does care! He cares—and he's furious—but he can't help it!"

Suddenly his arms loosened about her and he held her off, putting her thoughts into words.

"I have not wanted this." He

frowned in grave anger. "It is not my wish, my plan. Freedom I like. But—" he looked young, bewildered, aghast, and on his pale face were scarlet flecks from the still bleeding scratches on her own.

Sarah Lynn tugged at her handkerchief and pulled it out of her pocket. She was smiling, and she felt very gentle. "There is blood on your face," she said tenderly.

"Your blood!" Gunnar said sternly. "It is your blood upon me."

Sarah Lynn stood on tip-toe and wiped the little red smears away as handily as a mother would have done.

"So," he stated unhappily, "now I must love you!"

"I knew you did," she told him. "You could not know. I did not know, until the moment when you would make the jump."

"That's what I meant. When you kissed me. It was different from any other kiss I ever—"

He said quickly, sharply—"You have, then, the so great knowledge



Now!

of kissing? Who has instructed? Who—"

Conrad Jordan was calling them, walking toward them.

"Gunnar," he said casually, "Le Roy will hop the Hermod back to the field for you. We're all lurching with the old lady, and she is eager to get started. Mind driving my car? Lynn asked me to ride with him."

"Wait!" the youth said imperatively. "A thing has happened—"

"Well, I should say so!" Jordan agreed genially. "Miss Sarah Lynn Dana, daring young aviatrix, completed a sensational parachute jump with all the nerve and skill of a professional."

But the Norseman was not to be deflected. "Always I have said fliers shall not marry." He looked at Sarah Lynn again with grave resentment, sighed, lifted his hands, palms upward, let them drop. "I make now the discovery that I love this girl."

"I think," Sarah Lynn murmured with a sudden accession of shyness. "I ought to ride back with Great-granny!" She ran away swiftly to the car.

CHAPTER X

Gunnar stood still in a clump of madrones when he and Sarah Lynn were out walking after lunch.

"Now we talk," he announced stiffly.

Sarah Lynn halted before him, standing with folded hands.

"Love I did not want. Love, I said always, was a weakness."

"I know," she nodded meekly. "Freedom I wanted; freedom like birds in the air." He seemed to be accusing her of having ruined his plans.

"I'm sorry," Sarah Lynn said. "I mean, I'm sorry you're so furious about it and so miserable, but after

all—she tried to sound reasonable and detached—"birds do come down sometimes, don't they, and build nests and—"

He shrugged his lean shoulders. His mouth looked beaten, baffled. "Everything blocking the way, I have conquered. Now this conquers me. I know it. Never can I lose you. If I fly across the ocean, still you are there. My life breaks in pieces. What now can I do?"

Sarah Lynn thought wistfully of one thing at least, and apparently the same idea occurred to him, for his long arms shot out and caught her to him in a straining hug.

"So, then! It is finished!" he lamented.

It was beginning, she exulted to herself.

He released her and took her thin shoulders in a tense grip. "There remains a thing for you to tell," he said imperatively. "How have you the deep knowledge of kissing?"

"Oh, but I haven't, really!"

"Yet, you said you could tell—"

"Well, of course—boys—it always happens. But it doesn't count at all," she said earnestly. "Duncan was always trying, but—"

"From this day"—the ultimatum sounded—"you jump no more; you kiss no more."

"Very well," Sarah Lynn agreed in a small voice.

He frowned and sighed. "Tonight I speak to your father."

"Oh, Gunnar, not tonight, please! Let's wait a little—"

He shook his head. "We quickly marry. We go to Norway."

They go to Norway. She sat down limply with her back against a pungent laurel. "Gunnar! It takes my breath!"

He sat down beside her. "It is my country. Also, I have there the good chance."

"My mother—" Sarah Lynn said in a stricken voice.

He disposed of her mother briskly. That was the way it happened to mothers: daughters grew large and made marriages and went away with their husbands.

Husbands! Marriages! Norway! The world was filled with strange and startling words.

"Gunnar, have you noticed that funny old thing on Uncle Lynn's wall—the pipe-rack in burnt wood, with the verse?"

He nodded.

"Did you read it?"

"It matters not how strait the gate—"

"Yes. I have thought, 'But of course! It must be straight. How shall a gate be crooked?'"

"It's a different kind of straight, Gunnar! This means narrow. You know, in the Bible? 'the strait way,' A girl made that for Uncle Lynn, just after he knew he would sit still in a chair all his life, and he's kept it there all these years although he's not a sentimental person at all, and it looks so pathetic among his etchings and his beautiful books. He must have loved her, I think. That sort of poetry is terribly out of style, now:

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments
the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul."

"Like hoop-skirts or bustles and bangs. People don't read—"

"That I like," Gunnar interrupted. "Captain of my soul. It is good."

"Yes. But the thing I'm thinking of is the 'strait gate,' Gunnar. That comes first, you see. And before I can think of Norway, and us, I must tell my mother and that will be the straitest gate in my life."

He laughed. "You jump over it! And I wait for you on the other side."

But Sarah Lynn shook her head. "No; you don't jump over strait gates. You crawl through."

Danavale was difficult for Sarah Lynn in those days. It was a joyful escape to have Conrad Jordan invite them to a house-party at his Lake Tahoe lodge. He was staging an air tour to demonstrate the practicability of an airport at an elevation of over 6,000 feet in the High Sierras, and Gunnar Thorwald, Norwegian ace, making the fifteenth plane in the meet, gave international importance to the event.

Sarah Lynn rode with him in the Hermod, flying over the Santa Clara valley and the Sacramento. It was perfect flying weather, clear, bright, calm, with boundless visibility.

"This is the way our life is going to be," the girl told herself. In just a little space of time the trials and the tears would be over—beneath them, behind them.

Gunnar Thorwald was thrilled and stimulated; she had never seen him so alert and eager.

"This also I like!"

He brought the Hermod, swift messenger of the gods, smoothly and silkily to the earth and Conrad Jordan came hurrying to meet them, elated with the triumph of his project—15 shining ships of the air on the line at Rabe's field.

Conrad Jordan got to his feet and moved restlessly about the beautiful big room with its dark wood and mellow leather and hearty Navajos. It was evening.

"Play, please," Gunnar said from the hearth.

Conrad Jordan sat down at the piano and hunted through a pile of music.

The youth lifted himself on an elbow. "No! The music you have yourself made."

His host nodded. He had found the shabby notebook he was looking for and took out some clippings. "Here's a thing I found in a paper—'The Feeling of Stars.' Random lines; fellow jotted down bits of his favorites here and there. I've been meaning to work out something"—he smoothed out the printed slip and read aloud: "I am in love with high, far-seeing places—and this—'Space, and the twelve clean winds of heaven'—"

He began to play, feeling his way among the notes, the chords.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Clothing and Housefurnishings Can Be Fireproofed by a Simple Home Process

Fabrics can be fireproofed and made safer for clothing and housefurnishings by a simple and inexpensive home process of dipping them in a colorless liquid, a solution of seven ounces of borax and three ounces of boric acid in two quarts of hot water. This treatment, says Dr. Martin Leatherman, of the bureau of chemistry and soils, United States Department of Agriculture, will not protect fabrics from injury by flame or intense heat, but it will prevent the fabric from bursting into flame, and spreading fires that endanger life or cause the destruction of homes.

The borax-boric acid solution may be applied by dipping fabrics until they are thoroughly moistened, then wringing out the excess and allowing them to dry. Treated cloth may be ironed just before it is dry. Or the solution may be applied by sprinkling or spraying the fabric enough to moisten it. This method is likely to be more convenient for rugs, draperies, and upholstered ar-

ticles. Addition of a little soap will make the treatment more effective for canvas and other textiles that do not wet easily.

Fireproofed fabrics are particularly desirable for curtains and hangings in the home which are likely to be blown against lamps or candles, for the coverings of ironing boards, for rugs near fireplaces, and even for children's playsuits. The solution is not weatherproof, and articles that are washed, such as curtains and playsuits, will have to be fireproofed after each washing. The treatment does not affect the textile colors and does not injure the fabric. It does have a slight protective effect in counteracting the destructive effect of acid and sulphur fumes from stoves and furnaces.

In Fireproofing Fabrics, Dr. Leatherman gives detailed directions for the borax-boric acid treatment and also mentions three other useful formulas for fireproofing certain insulating materials.