

Up With the Birds

by Pauline Earle

FIFTH INSTALLMENT

Monty Wallace has just arrived in California, having broken the East-West cross country airplane record. Natalie Wade, mistaken by him for a newspaper reporter, writes the exclusive account of Monty's arrival, and succeeds in securing a trial job with a paper in exchange for the story. Natalie becomes attached to Monty.

Altho she discovers Monty's love for her is not sincere, Natalie admits that she loves him. She is assigned by her paper to report Monty's activities for publication. Jimmy Hale, the newspaper's photographer, becomes Natalie's co-worker. Natalie interviews Jabe Marion, a wealthy airplane builder, who decides to build a record-breaking round the world plane for Monty. Marion's daughter, Sunny, exquisitely beautiful, is attracted to Monty. She invites Natalie to dine with her, when they meet the aviator unexpectedly.

Natalie discovers that Sunny is jealous of her friendship with Monty, and that she is trying to prevent them from being alone. After driving to a mountain resort with Sunny and Jimmy, Monty again declares his love for Natalie.

Sunny attempts to drive Natalie from Monty's attention by climbing a high wall. She almost loses her balance and is pulled back by Monty. Jimmy later asks Natalie to consider his love for her if she refuses Monty.

Natalie induces Monty to set out with her in an airplane search for two missing aviators. At dusk Monty lands the plane in the open coun-

as tho his nearness and her adoration for him had driven it out.

Her throbbing heart grew calm. She knew content again.

And so she fell asleep beside him and did not wake up till early afternoon.

"Is this nice?" he asked, seeing that she was awake. She sprang up quickly but he caught her hand and drew her down beside him.

"I'm in a hell of a fix," he said, her hand to his lips. She could not speak.

"I'm supposed," he chuckled, "to be a devil with the women. I've been that way deliberately so that I wouldn't ever want to marry anybody. Now I've got myself in a spot where you come in here and I wake up and you are just as safe as tho I didn't love you. What's the answer?"

"Maybe you really do love me," she said faintly. "You've only wanted me before."

"Well, it's a new one on me—and I love you all right. But there isn't going to be any marrying in our business."

He spoke a little angrily, she thought, as tho he fought against something.

He whipped a glance at the watch on his arm. "We'd better be getting back to the field. They'll be looking for us."

She went back to her own room then, but her heart was singing as tho in triumph. It seemed queer about that when he had just told her they were not to be married. She wondered about it a little but there was no explanation—unless it

You're in no shape to fly. You're all broken up about something. You got to forget everything but the flight."

"All right," he told her. "But get out of here. I'll be all right." She knew then that something more than a night out was behind those tense white lips of his. It was something, she thought, connected with her; something that made him brusque with her. But she couldn't make out what it might be.

She saw to it that he was not disturbed that afternoon and night. When he appeared the morning of the flight, there was still a line of tension about his mouth but his eyes were clear and he could grin.

On the way to the field after breakfast, he was silent. She thought he might be worrying about the flight and tried now to bolster his confidence. But he turned to her impatiently.

"Nat," he said grimly, "I may not be coming back from this thing, and if I don't, I want you to know something. I swore I wouldn't ever love a girl enough to want to marry her. Marriage is not for fools like me that have to be taking crazy risks. I made marriage virtually impossible for me and then you came along. If I could have got you, it would have been all right. But I couldn't and now I'm mad about you. I went out last night trying to forget you and now it's worse thing ever. I'm going to make this flight or die trying and I'm going to be wanting you every inch of the way. But I don't want you to be where I can see you on the take-off."

"All right, Monty. I'll keep out of sight." Triumph sang in her heart as she said the words. "Everything is all right if only I know you love me. Even if we never marry, we will have the most important thing. Now stop worrying, especially about that."

She drove with him to the plane and then she slipped away into the small early morning crowd. It was little more than dawn but these people had come out to see the start.

As she passed toward the flight office, she saw a man in shirt sleeves pushing his way toward the plane.

Inside, she asked the first question everybody had been asking.

"What's the weather report?"

"It's bad," the answer came. "They're going to hold everything till tomorrow."

Natalie strolled back toward the plane. She wondered what it was best to do. Had she better see him again, be with him that day? Or would it be better to keep away from him?

When she came near, she saw that Sunny Marion was talking with him. She seemed to be her old, brilliant self. The pout was gone from her face. That little smile of triumph seemed to ride there.

Monty turned to the shirt-sleeved man at his side. He took the paper he held, glanced at it, then tore it half across.

Leaning down quickly, he kissed the blond girl and sprang into the cabin of the plane. He revved up the motor, found that it had been warmed, that it answered to the throttle.

Then, suddenly, the ship was roaring across the field. Grease monkeys scattered. Someone rushed out of the field office crying "Stop him! Stop him!" But the plane was rising now—it was up and speeding for the sea.

Natalie drew back alone. A sobbing moan broke from her lips. The weather was wrong. He had not waited.

And this was the man she loved, the man who loved her, rushing into unknown terror and death on a mad flight around the world.

She looked around for someone and knew at once that it was Jimmy she sought in that small crowd. But Jimmy was not there. He was nowhere. Thru tear-wet lashes she could not see him at any rate.

And when she did see, she stood stock still.

For Jimmy Hale was leading the beautiful blonde Sunny from the field. And Jabe Marion came behind with the field officers.

Natalie fled then. She raced for a taxi cab and hurried herself into it. "Quick!" she cried and gave the address of her hotel.

For the newspaper woman in her had come to her rescue. The flash would go out from the field office. She must have her story ready for the wire in half an hour. And as she rode thru the morning streets she was planning the lead of that

story. "Defying the elements," she found her lips saying, "Tossing aside contemptuously the adverse weather reports that would have held up the flight from Mineola field today for Mineola field—around the world—non-stop."

She hardly knew when she reached the hotel. She stopped for nothing when she faced her typewriter in that quiet room.

She thrust paper and carbon into the machine and banged at the keys. Her story must go. Her heart might break. Her lover might crash to a thousand deaths on sea or land from the vast height at which he flew, but these bits of paper must be lashed by the keys that her fingers drove. They must be whipped out one by one till the telegraph boy rushed away with them, till the pencils slashed, till the linotypes crashed, till the presses grumbled and roared till the whole world knew that Monty Wallace was on his way.

The story ended at last. "To be continued," she wrote for a last paragraph. "To be continued is the story Monty Wallace writes in clouds and sea today. To be continued is the epic of the Twentieth Century's fourth decade as one tousled-headed youth rides high to new fame or to death."

She did not break when the story ended. She did not stop till the last page had been thrust into the hands of the waiting boy and hurried on its way.

There were two pilots on the plane going home.

Natalie could have screamed when she saw them, for they reminded her again that Monty Wallace was alone as he fought his way across the Atlantic.

It was all she could do to bring herself to enter the roomy tri-motor that afternoon when she knew that it would still be hours before any possible report could come from the lone flier. She wanted to cling to the window of some telegraph office, or better still, to sit at the elbow of one of the radio operators in the world-flight chain.

They would be talking, these men of casual things over their short-wave sets while the man she loved went to his doom, for all they knew, over the Atlantic.

When a storm struck their ship over the Alleghenies as they headed for the southern route of flight, her last hope of Monty's safety fled. That storm would overtake him in mid-Atlantic. It would hurl him down into the angry ocean.

Her imagination pictured him going to destruction and she wished that she might go with him.

But Jabe Marion laughed at her fears when she said something of the sort.

"Monty knows what he's doing," he declared. "It's a daring thing, but he is using that storm to cut his flying time on the first leg. It means a tail wind for him most of the way."

Their own ship mounted higher and higher to escape the fury of the wind. Both pilots stuck to the forward cabin. Now and then she was sure that they were anxious about the fate of their own plane.

But at last she knew that the danger was past. Moonlight shone on a rolling sea of clouds beneath at last and when they made their early morning stop even these clouds had disappeared.

It was still early to have word from Monty. But it seemed to her significant that he had nowhere circled a vessel or shown the great white MAC on his under wing surfaces to any person anywhere.

The night had been mad and now the day flight over the desert stretched before her like a terrifying sentence of imprisonment.

Jimmy had paid her little heed. But he had hung over Sunny Marion thru the night and even now was clinging to her arm as they moved about the hangar grounds after breakfast.

Jabe Marion had been kindly but there had been little understanding in him. He wondered apparently that a mere newspaper writer could be so much concerned at the outcome of the flight.

Another day passed and another and then it was certain that he was down somewhere. No possible hope could be held out. He was down somewhere in Siberia as Jimmy Matern had been.

Matern had come thru after tremendous hardships. Natalie knew that if Monty still lived he faced the same difficulties. Somewhere in the awful wilderness of Russia's old prison colony he was dead or fighting for his life.

The girl went under then. She could not hold up longer. She could not battle thru her daily story of the search for him.

Mack Hanlon saw it and told her she must take a rest.

"You've been working on your nerve," he told her. "You've got to quit for a while. Your job will be there when you want it. The old man told me this morning. But you got to get yourself in shape. It's no good trying to go on."

She faltered when they shook their heads.

But when they came closer and said quietly that Monty was overdue at the first control station, she gave a little cry and slumped to the ground. Blackness engulfed her and she knew no more till they brought her to in the small office.

Her eyes, opening, lighted first on Jimmy Hale's white face.

Sunny stood beside him and her face showed genuine alarm. But that glance of triumph was still there, it seemed, as Natalie struggled to sit up.

"Gosh, kid, you gave us a scare," cried Jimmy. "Don't take it so hard. You know Monty Wallace. He isn't licked yet."

"I know," Natalie said softly "but it frightens me to think of him alone out there."

Mack Hanlon burst into the place then. He seemed as much concerned as Jimmy. "What's the matter, Nat? They told me you passed out."

"Just scared, I guess," she told him. "And tired. Let me get at a typewriter and I'll give you a yarn."

"Forget it," Mack bade her. "Take the day off till you get into shape."

But Natalie insisted on writing what she could, and as she wrote her courage came back. For she found herself writing the story of the millions who waited for word of the world flier. And the story was one of prayer and confidence.

"If the lift of human hearts can keep his plane aloft," she wrote, "then Monty Wallace is safe."

It seemed as she wrote that this must be true, that Monty could not fail and she finished with new strength, to wait for the delayed news from him.

Jimmy had gone on to the office. Sunny and Jabe Marion had gone home to rest, leaving behind instructions that the first word should be relayed to them. But Natalie could not rest. She could not leave the side of the little radio operator who huddled over his short-wave set.

It was dark outside the small office, when at last the operator stiffened suddenly to intense listening. "Great Scott, what a flight!" the operator yelled, rattling his key like mad. "Moscow? The second control. Boy, or boy?"

Natalie was on her feet, shrieking. She grabbed the office telephone and yelled the news to Mack Hanlon, who had taken the late watch, while the little operator poured details into her ears.

"He passed up the first control. Broke all records across the Atlantic. Had gas enough left for Moscow. Went straight thru riding the tail-wind."

Mack was yelling in turn at the other end of the line. Someone was using another line to notify Jabe Marion and Sunny.

"Refueling O. K. at Moscow," Natalie shrieked on. "He's off for No. 5 taking the northern route. That's Siberia. They can't stop him now."

She banged out another story for the early extras and then raced for home and bed.

Jimmy got her on the line just before she turned in and his enthusiasm nearly matched her own.

After that she slept. The flight for her was as good as over. She wanted to be ready to write the story of his success.

It was late when she waked but she did not lose heart when she found that Monty was again unreported. That day she wrote another story and even when nothing had been heard of him that night she went home in serene confidence that success was his.

Morning, however, sent her into panic again. She had left word that she was to be called when the report came but there had been no call. The telephone told her that nothing more had been heard. She knew that he carried gasoline enough to cover two legs of the flight at once if he chose. But now he should have been ready for the flight to Nome and he could not make that without refueling.

Another day passed and another and then it was certain that he was down somewhere. No possible hope could be held out. He was down somewhere in Siberia as Jimmy Matern had been.

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But idleness was almost as bad as work. For days she stayed in bed but it seemed that finally claimed her, she would fall into a dim consciousness that she was tired as before, as little able to think or to fight.

Jimmy Hale called up now and then and told her he would let her know the instant anything was heard but he would not come to see her.

"I can't do it, Nat," he said, "while Monty is missing. If he's all right, I'll be up, and if they find him dead, I'll stick with you till the end of time. But I can't come now, kid. Don't ask me."

At last she understood what was the matter with Jimmy. He was putting up his own fight. He had denied his love for her and had fought his battle, but he knew he would have it all to do over again if he saw her. And besides, there was some strange honor in him that would not let him come to her while there was a chance that Monty would be back.

Perhaps it was not quite that either. It was too much like waiting for Monty's death and all that he might hope it meant to him.

With Monty alive, Jimmy could come back knowing there was a hope for him. With Monty dead, he might come back with hope. But not to know was too much for Jimmy Hale.

Her heart went out to the boy. And then one day when she was sitting on the ocean shore trying to get back her strength to meet the dread news she was sure would come one day, she saw that Jimmy walked with Sunny Marion along the rocks above.

The girl seemed to be a shadow of herself. Natalie sat up. For the first time it occurred to her that Sunny might be as hard hit as she. Surely the tragedy of uncertainty ought to have brought them together before this.

Sunny was spreading a blanket on the rocks and Jimmy left her there stiffened without seeing that the girl below was Natalie Wade.

When the boy was gone, Natalie climbed up to where the golden girl sat staring at the sea.

Sunny sprang up at sight of her as tho she saw a vision.

"Natalie," she cried. "Please Natalie, don't come up here. Don't look at me like that."

"Don't be silly," Natalie tried to laugh. "You and I ought to get together. If I'm going to go crazy over the same man, we might as well get it off our chests by talking to each other."

Sunny stood helplessly while Natalie climbed the rock to her side. When the dark girl took her into her arms, Sunny burst into tears.

"Oh, Nat," she cried, with sob, "I cheated. I loved him so. I was bound you shouldn't have him. You know, I think. I was out with him that night."

"Let's forget about all that," Natalie begged. "Let's just talk about him."

And so, clinging to each other, they sat together beside the sea until a madman raced his car along the beach and ran screaming to where they sat.

Jimmy was speechless when he reached the two. He was not much given to running, tho he could run, as he had once demonstrated.

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(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

Mishkutotash, known today as Scotch, and believed to be the first truly American dish, originated around 1620 when the American Indians taught the Pilgrim mothers how to make it.

Before You Buy Any Fuel For Next Winter Get -

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Hundreds of local people heat with gas and our heating man will gladly show you actual bills for homes the size of yours.

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A storm struck their ship over the Alleghenies.

try, where he and Natalie must pass the night. Resuming the search in the morning, they finally locate the fliers. Natalie wires the story to her paper. That night at dinner, Marion announces a non-stop round the world flight, with Monty piloting the new plane, "Sunny Marion."

Monty's plan is to have ten refueling stations along the route, where pilots are to go aloft to refuel his plane. Monty flies with Natalie to New York, where he will begin the flight eastward. They are followed by Jimmy and Sunny.

Two more days and Monty would be roaring over the ocean on the most impossible flight in history. Something gripped at her heart. Something told her she would never see him again.

She stood up and moved to the window of the room. Children were playing at the curb. The world was going on without a thought of impending tragedy.

She tidied her hair and renewed