

# Update on the Story

## EIGHTH 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 Babe 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.

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 country, 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."

The day before the flight, Monty once more declares his love to Natalie.

In spite of adverse weather reports, Monty takes off. Natalie returns by plane to California, where she hears that Monty has reached Moscow, and is continuing on to Siberia.

"Mont," she said quietly, with none of her former manner. "I know what you are thinking—and I fear. But to put you at ease, let me tell you this. Jimmy and I love each other. We plan to be married. I never really loved you, as you know. I tricked you into the engagement only to please a foolish vanity. I'm sorry, but perhaps the future will help you to forgive me. In the meanwhile, I hope you and Natalie are very happy. Can you say the same for me?"

Monty paused for a moment, then sprang to his feet.

"Sunny, Darling," he exclaimed, "of course I forgive you—and wish you happiness."

He looked at her again, again at Jimmy.

"Does Natalie know about—about you?" he asked.

"She does," replied Sunny. "She knew it this morning before we left for the airport."

"This makes it perfect!" was all Monty could say. He started to pour another drink, then turned to the seated pair.

"Have another whiskey and soda—this time for Nat!" he said, glancing reaching for the glasses. In a trice the bubbling drinks were raised.

"A toast," demanded Jimmy.

"To Natalie," added Sunny.

"To all of us," corrected Monty.

At that moment the door buzzer interrupted them. Their glasses aloft, they slowly lowered them. Said Jimmy, "I'll go see who it is—wait."

Jimmy disappeared toward the foyer. His footsteps were heard to stop, followed by the click of the door being unlatched. To the ears of Monty and Sunny came a voice, low, throaty, intensely feminine.

"Is this Miss Wade's residence?" the voice inquired.

"Why, yes," Jimmy was heard to say.

"And is Mr. Wallace here at the moment?" the voice inquired again.

"You're right, but—" Jimmy's reply was broken by the voice's third query.

"May I come in?"

Double footfalls could be heard in the foyer. An instant later Jimmy returned to the room accompanied by a tall, dark woman in silver fox cape whose face was indistinct behind a light veil. Her rich, contralto voice filled the room altho she did not speak aloud. She had not

waited for Jimmy to speak first. "You are Mont Wallace?" she demanded.

"I am," replied Monty, "but who are you?"

"I am your wife," announced the woman, simply. "Vivian Wallace, nee Morgan."

A bombshell in the room could have done no more to astonish the three. But the woman who called herself Vivian Wallace remained strangely cool.

"This is an outrage!" protested Monty, recovering himself quickly.

"Scarcely that now," the woman replied in an even tone. "The outrage was committed long ago—this is but the sequel!"

And as these words hung poised in the tense atmosphere, Natalie burst into the room.

"Did I hear the door buzzer?" queried Natalie, looking about the room. Her eyes widened at the sight of the strange woman.

She turned to Monty.

"Won't you introduce us?"

"Why—," Monty faltered, "This is Miss—Morgan. Miss Morgan, meet Miss Wade."

The dark woman held aloof, her brows arched. Again the throaty voice filled the room.

"I am also Mrs. Wallace," the woman said.

"Mr. Wallace has neglected to mention that I am also his wife."

Natalie recoiled. Her lips strove to form words but there was no sound. She fastened her gaze on the other woman, then turned.

"What is this—this trick?" she demanded of Monty. "Tell me—what is it?"

"Honey," began Monty, stepping forward and taking her hand, "this is a puzzle to me as much as to you. The woman claims that she is my wife."

"Your wife?" Natalie cried, "but that's impossible." Her whole being fought against the thought.

"I couldn't have married her," Monty asserted, then looking at the woman he added, half-humorously, "I could never have been that drunk!"

Up to now Jimmy had done little but watch. This latest sally from Monty seemed to relieve the tension all around. Jimmy turned to the woman.

"You're sure that I'm not the fellow?" he asked sarcastically.

"I'm in no mood to jest," was the sharp retort. The woman drew to the farther end of the room, lit a cigarette, exhaled slowly. It was a dramatic moment, silent, deadly.

The woman spoke first. Her tactics had the advantage of putting the others on the defensive.

"I suppose you all wonder why I don't shriek and tear my hair," she began evenly.

"There's no need for histrionics," she continued without a pause.

"Mont," she turned to face him, "you want to throttle me, but it would do you no good. Being nasty won't settle anything. I have good reasons for coming here. You know who I am—you must know what I came for."

Before other voices could break in, the woman faced Natalie and continued.

"We have something in common—we love the same man—or do you?"

"What do you mean?" Natalie broke in suddenly. But her words were not enough to still the other woman.

"I loved him once—I still love him. And as for you—Give you three weeks with another public hero with a good copy slant and you'd

fall all over again."

Sunny dashed her cigarette viciously to the floor.

"Let's not beat around the bush!" she fairly shouted. "Don't tell us what we're thinking and doing. What about you?"

"Yes—what's your explanation of this?" demanded Jimmy.

Monty took charge of the situation and faced his accuser.

"Out with it!" he roared. "What's your game—what's your racket? I never saw you before in my life and you know it. If you don't start talking fast I'll turn you over to the police!"

Unruffled, undismayed, his self-admitted wife merely smiled.

"Still the same old Mont," she countered. "When you have nothing to say, you just make a noise and try to bluff."

Monty clinched his fist. He lunged at the woman savagely.

"If you weren't wearing skirts—I'd—"

Jimmy caught Monty by the arm. "Take it easy," he cautioned.

"We'll never find out what she's up to that way."

In the midst of the din, a telephone had tinkled in the far corner. Natalie picked up the receiver.

"I'm Wallace," Monty admitted. "Okay, boys, take him outside."

"Wait a minute," Monty commanded, drawing back. "What's the idea? You can't take me without a warrant!"

"You're wanted for assault and battery and you're comin' wit us, see?" a taller limb of the law explained, none too gently.

"Assault and battery?" Monty asked, dazed. "Who ever said I assaulted her—even tho I can't deny I thought of it?"

"Who's talkin' about a dame?" the stubby one protested.

"All I want to know is did you or did you not, sock a couple guys at the airport dis mornin'?"

The room burst into a roar of laughter. Monty stepped to the side of the spokesman of the law.

"All right, boys, let's go."

"You mean—you ain't gonna put up a fight?" one of them asked, incredulously.

"Nary a fight!" Monty assured, solemnly.

"Get—and me wearin' this pair of brass knuckles all the way from the station!" was the disgusted reply.

As he walked to the door, Monty turned to Natalie.

"Call the mayor in a couple of hours. That'll give me a little time to relax—and we still won't be late for the party."

"You're on, Mont," Natalie called back watching the foursome disappear into an elevator. She turned. Her eyes fell on the strangely silent "Mrs. Wallace."

"Are you going to stand by and see him get away like that?" Natalie asked the woman.

"Why not?" was the offhand answer. "He'll be safe there, and when he steps out of the cell, I'll be waiting to put him right back in!"

Natalie turned to Sunny and Jimmy. She knew not what to think. Evidently Monty's sudden adventure with the police would not provide any permanent escape from the designs of the woman who stood as her accuser.

Quickly taking leave of the three, Natalie jumped into her car, bent on seeing Mack Hanlon. Only a few hours had passed since she had talked with Mack about Monty's preparations for landing. So much had happened. She sped along, refreshed by a cooling breeze. It was yet early afternoon. And in more ways than one the day had scarcely begun.

Meanwhile, back at Natalie's apartment, a different scene was taking place. Jimmy was not long in following Natalie, believing his greatest help in the situation would be rendered in the field, as it were. Sunny saw him go. She returned to the room where Vivian Morgan was casually thumbing thru the leaves of a magazine.

Without looking around, the throaty voice of the woman addressed Sunny:

"I'll never forget your face when I walked in this room," the woman began. "You really didn't think I'd come, did you?"

"Of course not, you fool," was Sunny's angry retort.

"I told you that I needed money, and I still do."

"And you think you can get it out of me?" inquired Sunny viciously.

The woman had turned by this time. She seated herself and proceeded to light a cigarette, proffering the pack to Sunny. Sunny made no move and the pack was withdrawn with a shrug. The woman continued:

"My dear, you are going to help me. Let us understand each other. Let us be frank. We have—let us

ask. "What did you mean by that remark?"

Natalie gave a knowing glance. "Any girl with all those stock props couldn't be anything but a very amateur blackmailer. Mont—she's just a rank beginner."

Monty whistled softly.

"What if I tell her to go ahead—pull all the stops—see how far she gets?"

"She'll just get herself into a bad mess—and give you a lot of free publicity," was Natalie's quick reply.

At that moment Jimmy strode into the room. He addressed Monty.

"If you'll step inside," Jimmy explained in a slightly comic manner, "there's a delegation from the sheriff's office ensconced in the ante-room. And I think they're waiting to see you!"

"Looks like your amateur is rapidly becoming a professional," was Monty's dry remark to Natalie as the three started back.

"Don't worry, dear," Natalie reassured him, "this is just another part of the game."

Monty faced a trio of men, obviously not intent on social formalities. The stubbly of the three addressed him from the corner of his mouth not occupied by a cigar.

"Is youse, or ain't youse, Monty Wallace?" was the terse interrogation.

"I'm Wallace," Monty admitted. "Okay, boys, take him outside."

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if he didn't send those plug-ugly around to get you away from here?"

"Why not?" agreed Monty. "I'm perfectly willing to hand the books to Mack until a more deserving candidate pops up!"

Sunny's thoughts had already passed on to other things. Here, alone with Monty, she could certainly find a way to extricate herself from a precarious position. At first she considered telling Monty the whole story, confessing her part in the tangled web. But something within her forbade such candor. In a moment she had decided and launched her campaign.

"Mont," she began evenly, "what are you going to do about this woman?"

Monty thought for a moment, then replied quickly, "Nothing."

"If I fight back, she'll have something on which to hang her claims," Monty reasoned. "If I play possum, she'll soon get tired of flailing the wind and either quit or make a fool of herself."

Sunny's mind was speeding to find an effective argument against this strategy which could only spell disaster for her.

"How do you know," she asked, "that she hasn't something up her sleeve—something more tangible than that might be used to make trouble?"

"I never saw the woman before in my life," Monty repeated, "and even if she does have something that can be twisted around as fake evidence, I think I can take care of myself in the clinches."

Sunny pondered a moment. It was quite obvious that any campaign to talk Monty into capitulation was bound to lose. She tried a last resort.

"Why not settle with her, just to avoid annoyance?" Sunny's evident eagerness betrayed her.

"Why are you so anxious to see me give this girl hush-money?" Monty demanded, his eyes narrowing as he looked at her. Sunny winced. The shot had hit too close.

"Well," she began slowly, "I simply thought that if you could keep out of trouble—without paying too much, of course—you'd not be risking a nasty scandal, not only for your own account, but for dad as well."

The mention of Sunny's father, backer of the world flight, shed a new light on the situation for Monty. He began to remember that he was not solely responsible for what might happen to his name. Convinced that he could "take care of himself," yet he had no right to risk his sponsor, to risk spoiling the name and reputation that the Sunny Marion had traced around the world.

"Maybe you're right," Monty half-admitted. "Perhaps I'd better talk things over with The Boss. If he agrees with my policy, we'll lay low and see what happens. But if he's inclined to feel the way—"