

Wayne Dorothy

# Dorothy Dixon Wins Her Wings



Dorothy Wayne

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# Dorothy Dixon Wins Her Wings

## *Chapter I*

### OUT OF THE NORTHEAST

"Hi, there, young lady!"

"Hi, yourself, – what d'you want?"

At the water's edge, a girl of sixteen stopped in the act of launching a small skiff. She straightened her lithe figure and faced about, her brown hair blowing in the breeze, turning a pair of snapping grey eyes inquiringly upon the young man who walked down the beach toward her.

"Miss Dixon, isn't it?" asked the stranger, his deeply tanned features breaking into an engaging smile. "I'm not sure I recognized you at first in the bathing suit-"

"No matter how you were dressed I'm sure I wouldn't recognize you," returned Dorothy, shortly. "I've never laid eyes on you before-that's why."

The young man laughed. "Quite right," he said, "you haven't. But I happen to be a near neighbor of yours, and I've seen you."

"Up at New Canaan?"

"Yes. Dad has taken the Hawthorne place, – bought it in fact."

For a full minute the girl stared at this tall young man with the blonde hair and the jolly smile. Surprise left her speechless.

Then-"Why-why-" she gasped. "Y-you must be the famous Bill Bolton!"

"Bolton's the name, all right," he grinned. "But that famous stuff is the bunk."

Dorothy was herself again, and a little ashamed of her burst of feeling.

"But you *are* the aviator!" She went on, more calmly. "My father told me the other day that you and your father were coming to live across the road from us. And I don't mind telling you we're simply thrilled! You see, I've read about you in the papers-and I know all about the wonderful things you've done!"

"I'm afraid you've got an exaggerated idea-it was all in the day's work, you know," protested the blonde-headed young man, his eyebrows slanting quizzically, "I'm Bill Bolton, but I didn't barge in on you to talk about myself. You're starting out for a sail in that sloop that's moored over there, I take it?"

"Why, yes, I am. Want to come along?"

"Thanks a lot. I've got a business matter to attend to down here in a few minutes." He hesitated a moment, then-"I know it's none of my affair, but don't you think it's rather risky to go for a sail just now?"

Dorothy shrugged. "Oh, I don't know. There's a two reef breeze blowing out beyond the Point, but that's nothing to worry about. I've sailed all over Long Island Sound since I was a kid, and I've been out in worse blows than this, lots of times."

"Maybe," countered Bill. "Storm warnings were broadcast about an hour ago. We're in for a northeaster-"

She broke in scoffingly-"Oh! those weathermen! They're always wrong. It's a perfectly scrumptious afternoon. The storm, if it comes, will probably show up sometime tomorrow!"

"Well," he retorted, "you're your own boss, I suppose. – If you were my sister," he added suddenly, "you wouldn't go sailing today."

"Then it's a good thing I'm *not* your sister. Thanks for your interest," she mocked. There was a hint of anger in her voice at the suspicion that Bill Bolton was trying to patronize her. "Don't worry," she added, resuming her usual tone, "I can handle a boat-Good-bye!"

Their eyes met; Bill's gravely accusing, hers, full of defiant determination.

"Good-bye-sorry I spoke." Bill turned away and walked up the beach toward the club house.

Dorothy chuckled when she saw him throw a quick glance over his shoulder. She waved her hand, but he kept on without appearing to notice the friendly gesture.

"A temper goes with that blond hair," she said to herself, digging a bare heel into the loose shingle. "I guess I was pretty rude, though. But what right had he to talk like that? Bill Bolton may be a famous aviator, but he's only a year older than I am."

She ran the skiff out through the shallows and sprang aboard. Standing on the stern thwart she sculled the small craft forward with short, strong strokes, and presently nosed alongside the *Scud*. As she boarded the sloop and turned with the skiff's painter in her hand she caught sight of Bill getting into an open roadster on the club driveway.

"I guess he meant well," she observed to the wavelets that lapped the side of the *Scud*, "but just the same-well, that's that."

Making the painter secure to a cleat in the stern, she set about lacing a couple of reefs into the mainsail. Having tied the last reef-point, she loosened the skiff's painter, pulled the boat forward and skillfully knotted the rope to the sloop's mooring. Then she cast off the mooring altogether and ran aft to her place at the tiller.

The *Scud's* head played off. Dorothy, as she had told Bill, was no novice at the art of small boat sailing. With her back bracing the tiller she ran up the jib and twisted the halyard to a cleat close at hand.

Then as the sloop gained steerageway, she pulled on the peak and throat halyards until the reefed-down mainsail was setting well. The *Scud*, a fast twenty-footer, was rigged with a fore-staysail and gaff-topsail as well, but Dorothy knew better than to break them out in a wind like this.

As it was she carried all the canvas her little boat would stand, and they ran out past the Point, which acted as a breakwater to the yacht club inlet, with the starboard gunwale well awash. The wind out here stiffened perceptibly and Dorothy wished she had tied in three reefs instead of two before starting. Her better judgment told her to go about and seek the quieter waters of the inlet. But here, pride took a hand.

If she turned back and gave up her afternoon sail, the next time she saw Bill Bolton she must admit he had been right. No. That would never do.

Although the wind out here was stiffer than she had imagined, this was no northeast gale; a good three-reef breeze, that was all. So lowering the peak slightly she continued to head her little craft offshore.

The *Scud* fought and bucked like a wild thing, deluging Dorothy with spray. She gloried in the tug of the tiller, the sting of the salt breeze, the dance of her craft over choppy seas. Glistening in the clear summer sunlight, flecked with tiny whitecaps, the landlocked water stretched out to where the low hills of Long Island banked the horizon in a blur of purple and green.

Now and then as she luffed into a particularly strong gust, Dorothy had her misgivings. But pride, confidence in her ability to handle her boat and the thrill of danger kept her going.

She had been sailing for about an hour, beating her way eastward with the Connecticut shore four or five miles off her port quarter, when all at once, somehow, she felt a change. The sunshine seemed less brilliant, the shadows less solid, less sharply outlined. It seemed as if a very thin gauze had been drawn across the sun dimming without obscuring it. Dorothy searched the sky in vain to discover the smallest shred of cloud.

At the same time the breeze slackened and the air, which had been stimulant and quick with oxygen seemed to become thick, sluggish, suffocating. Presently, the *Scud* was lying becalmed, while

the ground swell, long and perfectly smooth, set sagging jib and mainsail flapping. Except for the rattling of the blocks and the creaking of the boom, the silence, after the whistling wind of a few minutes before, was tremendously oppressive.

Then in the distance there was a low growl of thunder. In a moment came a louder, angrier growl-as if the first were a menace which had not been heeded. But the first growl was quite enough for Dorothy. She knew what was coming and let go her halyards, bringing down her sails with a run. Now fully alive to the danger, she raced to her work of making the little craft secure to meet the oncoming storm.

She was gathering in the mainsail, preparatory to furling it when there was a violent gust of wind, cold, smelling of the forests from which it came, corrugating the steely surface of the Sound. Two or three big raindrops fell-and then, the deluge.

Dorothy rushed to a locker, pulled out a slicker and sou'wester and donned them. Returning to her place by the tiller, she watched the rain. Rain had never rained so hard, she thought. Already both the Connecticut and Long Island shores were completely blotted out, hidden behind walls of water. The big drops pelted the Sound like bullets, sending up splashes bigger than themselves.

Then suddenly the wind came tearing across the inland sea from out the northeast. Thunder crashed, roared, reverberated. Lightning slashed through the black cloud-canopy in long, blinding zigzags. The wind moaned, howled, shrieked, immense in its wild force, immense in its reckless fury.

A capsized sloop wallowed in the trough of heavy seas rearing a dripping keel skyward-and to this perilous perch clung Dorothy.

## *Chapter II*

### **TAXI!**

The black brush of storm had long ago painted out the last vestige of daylight.

Crouching on the upturned hull of her sloop, Dorothy clung to the keel with nerveless fingers, while the *Scud* wallowed in an angry sea laced with foam and spray. She knew that in a little while the boat must sink, and that in water like this even the strongest swimmer must quickly succumb. Cold, wet and helpless, Dorothy anxiously scanned her narrow horizon, but in vain.

For another half hour she hung on in the rain and darkness, battered by heavy combers that all but broke her hold. She was fast losing her nerve and with it the willingness to struggle. Phantom shapes reached toward her from the gloom. Strange lights danced before her eyes...

With a rolling lurch the *Scud* sank, and Dorothy found herself fighting the waves unsupported. The shock of sudden immersion brought back her scattering wits, but the delusion of dancing lights still held; especially one light, larger and brighter than the others. Surely this one was real and not the fantasy of an overwrought imagination!

Half smothered in flying spume, the drowning girl made one last frantic effort to keep afloat. Above the pounding of the sea, a throbbing roar shook her eardrums, a glare of light followed by a huge dark form swooped down as if to crush her-and she lost consciousness.

Dorothy awoke in a darkness so complete that for a moment she thought her eyes must be bandaged. Nervous fingers soon found that this was not the case, and reaching out, they came in contact with a light switch.

The sudden gleam of the electrics half blinded her. Presently she saw that she lay on a narrow bunk in a cabin. Presumably she was aboard a vessel, still out in the storm, for the ship pitched and rolled like a drunken thing, and the roar of a powerful exhaust was deafening.

Someone had removed her sweater, had tucked warm blankets about her body. Her throat burned from a strong stimulant which apparently had been administered while she was unconscious.

For some minutes she lay there taking in her surroundings. The charts tacked to the cabin walls, the tiny electric cookstove, hinged table and armsrack opposite. Listlessly she counted the weapons, four rifles, three shotguns, two automatics-and fastened in its own niche was a machine gun covered with a waterproof jacket. A complete arsenal... The shotguns bespoke sportsmen, but this was neither the season for duck nor for snipe. Men did not go shooting in Long Island Sound with rifles, revolvers and a machine gun... *Bootleggers!*

It came to her like a bolt from the blue. She was on board a rumrunner, no less, and notwithstanding the exhaustion she suffered from her battles with the waves, she found exhilaration in the exciting discovery.

Dorothy threw off the blankets, sat up and swung her legs over the edge of the bunk. Her bathing suit was still wet and clung uncomfortably to her skin. With a hand on the side of the bunk to support her, she stood up on the heaving floor to catch sight of her face in a mirror screwed to the opposite wall.

"Gracious! I'm a fright," she cried. "I don't suppose there's a vanity case aboard this lugger-and mine went down with the poor little *Scud!*"

Then she spied a neat pile of clothing at the foot of the bunk, and immediately investigated. A dark blue sweater, a pair of trousers, heavy woolen socks, and a pair of boy's sneakers were seized upon and donned forthwith.

Dorothy giggled as she surveyed herself once more in the little mirror. "Just a few sizes too large, that's all. But they're warm, and *dry*, and that's something!"

She rummaged about on a shelf, found a comb and with dexterous fingers smoothed her short damp hair into place, then with a sigh of satisfaction, muttered again to herself, "Much better, my girl."

Her makeshift toilet completed, she decided to leave the cabin and continue her explorations outside.

There were two doors, one on the side and one at the end which evidently led forward. After a moment's hesitation, Dorothy chose the latter. With some difficulty, for the ship still pitched unmercifully, she stumbled forward. Then, summoning up her courage, for she was not without trepidation at the thought of facing her desperado rescuers, she laid a hand on the knob and turning it, swung back the door.

Dorothy found herself in a small, glassed-in compartment, evidently the pilot house. She had hardly time to glance about, when an oddly familiar voice spoke from out the darkness. It was barely distinguishable above the motor's hum.

"Please, Miss Dixon, snap off the light or shut the door. I can't possibly guide this craft in such a glare."

"Why, it's Bill Bol-Mr. Bolton, I mean," she cried in surprise, and closed the door.

"Himself in the flesh," replied that young man.

She could see him clearly now, seated directly before her. His back was toward her and he did not turn round. So far as she could see he seemed very busily engaged, doing something with his feet.

"Then-then it must have been you who picked me up," she stammered.

"Guilty on the first count, Miss Dixon."

"Please don't be funny," she retorted, now mistress of herself once more. "I want to thank you-"

"You are very welcome. Seriously, though, it is the boathook you have to thank. Without that we'd both have gone to Davy Jones' locker long before this."

Dorothy was nearly thrown off her feet by an unusually high sea which crashed over the pilot house and rolled the vessel far over on her side.

"Whew-that was a near one!" the girl exploded as the ship righted itself.

"We'll weather it, don't worry," encouraged Bill, though he did not feel the confidence his words proclaimed.

"It looks to me," said Dorothy soberly, "as though we'll be mighty lucky if we reach shore at all-and I guess you know it."

"Never say die, Miss Dixon!"

"Suppose we drop this miss and mister stuff, Bill. Sounds rather silly at a time like this, don't you think so?"

"Right you are, Dorothy. I'm not much on ceremony, myself, as the Irishman said when-"

"Look here, Bill!" Dorothy tossed her head impatiently, "I wish you'd omit the comedy-it really isn't necessary. I'll admit I was in a bad way when you dragged me out of the briny deep-and I appreciate your coming to my rescue. But you needn't expect me to faint or to throw hysterics. That sort of thing went out of fashion long ago. Girls today have just as much nerve as boys. They don't very often get a chance to prove it, that's all."

"Please accept my humblest apology, mademoiselle." Bill's eyes twinkled though his tone was utterly serious. "I can assure you-"

Dorothy's merry laugh rang out-her mood had passed as suddenly as it had come. "Don't be absurd. Tell me-why are *you* piloting a rumrunner?"

"Rumrunner? What do you mean?"

"If this isn't a rumrunner, why do you carry that machine gun and the rifles and revolvers in the armsrack?"

"Just part of our equipment, that's all."

Dorothy's impatience flared up again. "Why do you talk such nonsense?"

"Nonsense?"

"Certainly. You don't mean to tell me that you took a boat of this size on long cruises!"

Bill grinned in the darkness. "But you see," he chuckled, "this isn't a boat."

"Well, what is it then?"

"A Loening amphibian. Not exactly the stock model, for Dad and I had quite a few changes made in the cabin and this pilot's cockpit."

"*What?*" shrieked Dorothy. "An airplane-one that can land either on water or on land?"

"That's right. The old crate has the hull of a boat equipped with retractible wheel landing gear which operates electrically."

"You're too technical for me," she said frowningly, and balanced herself with a hand on the back of the pilot's seat. "But if this is an airplane, why keep bouncing along on the water? I'd think you'd fly to land and have done with it."

"My dear girl-" began Bill.

"Don't use that patronizing tone-I'm not your dear girl-not by a long shot!"

Bill laughed outright. "My error once more. However, Miss Spitfire, when you learn to fly, you'll find out that air currents are very like water currents. When it is blowing as hard as it is now, flying a plane is fully as dangerous as sailing a boat-more so, in fact. When the wind reaches a certain velocity, it is impossible to balance your plane. You have to land-or crash."

Dorothy was beginning to understand. "Then you must have taken some awful risks coming out after me."

"I was lucky," he admitted. "But you see, even if we were able to fly in this gale, now, it's quite impossible to take off in such a heavy sea. If I gave the old bus enough gas to get up a flying speed, these combers would batter the hull in-I'd never be able to get her onto her step. Some day, when it's fine, and the water's smooth, I'll show you what I meant by that. Now all we can do is to taxi."

"Taxi? – This is the first seagoing taxi I've ever been in!"

"In air parlance," he explained, "to taxi is to run a plane along the ground or on the water-just now, it isn't all it's cracked up to be."

"I should think it would be easier than flying."

"Not on water as rough as this. Your legs go to sleep with the strain you have to put on the rudder pedals."

"Oh-you're steering with your feet?"

"Yes."

"Well, why don't you let me help you? I'll drive her for a while," offered Dorothy.

Bill shook his head. "It's terribly hard work," he demurred.

"What of it? I'm as strong as an ox."

"Thanks a lot. You're a real sport. But the difficulty is in shifting places with me without swamping the old bus. She isn't equipped with dual controls. There's only one set of pedals, and as soon as I release them she will slue broadside to the waves, the wings will crumple, and she'll simply swamp and go under."

"And you must taxi either before the wind, or into the wind as we are now, in seas like these?"

"You've guessed it," he nodded.

"But there must be some way we can manage it," argued Dorothy. "You can't keep on much longer. Your legs will give out and then we'll go under anyway."

Bill hesitated a moment. "Well, all right, let's try it-but it's no cinch, as you'll find out."

"That's O.K. with me. Come on-orders, please-and let's go!"

## *Chapter III*

### A WILD RIDE

"Hey, not so fast," laughed Bill. "First of all, will you please step into the cabin, and in the second locker on your right you'll find a helmet and a phone-set. Bring them out here. This shouting is making us both hoarse and we'll soon be as deaf as posts from the noise of the motor."

"Aye, aye, skipper," breezed Dorothy, and disappeared aft.

In a minute or two she returned with the things he had asked for. Bill showed her how to adjust the receivers of the phone set over the ear flaps of her helmet. Then reaching for the head set at the other end of the connecting line, he put it on and spoke into the mouthpiece which hung on his chest.

"Much better, isn't it?" he asked in a normal tone.

"It certainly is. I can hear you perfectly," she declared into her transmitter. " – What next?"

"Come over here and sit on my lap. – I'm not trying to get fresh," he added with a grin, as she hesitated. "I've had to make a shift like this before with Dad. There is only one way to do it."

Dorothy was a sensible girl. She obeyed his order and placed herself on his knees.

"Now put your feet over mine on the rudder pedals. And remember-to turn right, push down on the right pedal, and vice versa. Get the idea?"

"Quite, thanks."

"Fine. Next-grab this stick and keep it as I have it. Now, I'm going to pull my feet from under yours-ready?"

"Let her go!"

Bill jerked his feet away, to leave Dorothy's resting on the pedals.

"Good work!" he applauded. "The old bus hardly swerved. Keep her as she's pointed now. We can't change her course, much less take off until we hit one of those inlets along the Connecticut shore, and smoother water. Brace yourself now-I'm going to slide out of this seat."

Dorothy was lifted quickly. Then she dropped back into the pilot's seat to find herself fighting the tenacious pull of heavy seas, straining her leg muscles to keep the plane from floundering.

"How's it going?" Bill's voice came from the floor of the cockpit where he was busily engaged in pounding circulation back into his numbed legs and feet.

"Great, thanks. But I will say that this amphibian of yours steers more like a loaded truck in a mudhole than an honest-to-goodness plane! How are your legs?"

"Gradually getting better-pretty painful, but then I'm used to this sort of thing."

"Poor boy!" she exclaimed sympathetically, then gritted her teeth in the effort to keep their course as a huge comber crashed slightly abeam the nose.

Bill grasped the side of her seat for support. "You handled that one nicely," he approved when the wave had swept aft. "But don't bother about me-you've got your own troubles, young lady. I'll be all right in a few minutes."

"What I can't understand," said Dorothy, after a moment, "is why this plane didn't sink when you landed and picked me up. How *did* you keep from slewing broadside and going under?"

"Well, it was like this. When I left you on the beach, I motored back home to New Canaan. The sky was blackening even then. I was sure we were in for the storm, so after putting up the car, I went out to the hay barn in that ten acre field where we house the old bus. She needed gas, so I filled the tanks, gave her a good looking over and went back to the house and telephoned."

"You mean you phoned the beach club about me?"

"Yes. The steward said you weren't anywhere around the club, and your sloop wasn't in the inlet. It was pretty dark by then and the wind was blowing a good thirty-five knots. I made up my mind you must be in trouble. Frank ran after me on my way out to the plane-he's our chauffeur you know-"

"Yes, I know-" broke in Dorothy-"he drove you and your father to the movies last night. I saw him."

"That's right. Frank's a good scout. He wanted to come along with me, but I wouldn't let him."

"I s'pose you thought you'd save *his* skin, at least?"

"Something like that. A fellow doesn't mind taking responsibility for himself-it's a different thing with some one else. Well, before Frank and I ran this plane out of the barn, I rigged the sea anchor (nothing more than a large canvas bucket with a couple of crossed two-by-twos over the top to keep it open) with an extra long mooring line. The sea-anchor I brought up here in the cockpit with me. The other end of the line was fastened to a ring-bolt in the nose, of course. Well-to get through with this yarn-I took off alone and flew over to the Sound."

"But wasn't it awful in this wind?"

"It was pretty bad. As soon as I got over water, I switched on the searchlight, but it was a good half-hour before the light picked you up. Then I landed-"

"Into the wind or with it?" interrupted Dorothy.

"Getting interested, eh?" commented Bill with a smile. "Well, just remember this then, never make a downwind landing with a seaplane in a wind blowing over eighteen miles an hour."

"Why?"

"Because the wind behind your plane will increase the landing speed to the point where you will crash when you strike the water-that's a good reason, isn't it?"

"Then you landed into the wind when you came down for me?"

"That's right. And as soon as I struck the water, I shut off the motor, opened one of these windows and threw over the sea anchor. Then I fished you out with the boathook."

"It sounds sort of easy when you tell it-but I'll bet it wasn't." She gazed at him admiringly. "You surely took some awful chances-"

"Hey there!" called Bill. "Pull back the stick or you'll nose over."

"That's better," he approved as she obeyed his order. "Keep it well back of neutral. Sorry I yelled at you," he grinned.

Bill got to his feet. "I'm O.K. now," he went on, "and you must be pretty well done up. I'm going to take it over."

Seating himself on her lap, as she had sat on his, he placed his feet upon hers. A minute later, she had drawn her feet back from the rudder pedals, slipped out from under and was seated on the floor, rubbing life back into her feet and legs, as Bill had done.

"Why is it," she inquired presently, "that the plane rides so much smoother when you're guiding her?"

Bill smiled. "When I give her right pedal, that is, apply right rudder, I move the stick slightly to the left and vice versa. In that way I depress the aileron on the side I want to sail. It aids the rudder. You got along splendidly, though, and stick work when taxiing needs practice."

Dorothy got to her feet, rather unsteadily. "Look!" she cried. "Lights ahead. We must be nearing shore, Bill."

"We are. There's a cove out yonder I'm making for. And better still, the wind is lessening. Just about blown itself out, I guess."

In another ten minutes they sailed in through the mouth of an almost landlocked inlet and with the motor shut off drifted in comparatively smooth water.

"Any idea where we are?" inquired Dorothy, when Bill, after throwing out the anchor, came back to her.

"Somewhere between Norwalk and Bridgeport, I guess," he replied. "There are any number of coves along here. I'll take you ashore, now. We've got a collapsible boat aboard. Not much of a craft, but it'll take the two of us in all right. We'll go over to one of those houses, and get your father on the phone. He can come down and drive you back to New Canaan."

"Drive us both back, you mean!"

"Sorry-but it can't be done. I've got to take this old bus home as soon as the wind dies down a little more."

"How long do you suppose that will be?" asked Dorothy quietly.

Bill glanced up at the black, overcast sky and then turned his gaze aside and studied the water toward the inlet's mouth.

"Oh, in about an hour I'll be able to take off."

"Then I'll wait and fly back with you."

"You certainly are a sportsman," he applauded and looked at his wrist watch. "It's only ten to six-though anyone would think it was midnight. I'll tell you what-suppose I shove off in the dinghy. I'll row ashore and telephone your Dad from the nearest house. He will be half crazy if he knows you were out sailing in that blow and haven't reported back to the club. In the meantime, you might scare up something to eat. There's cocoa, condensed milk, crackers and other stuff in the cabin locker nearest the stove. You must be starved-I know I am!"

They were standing on one of the narrow decks that ran from amidships forward to the nose of the plane below the pilot house.

"The very thought of food makes me ravenous," declared Dorothy, starting for the cabin door. "Give Dad my love and say I'm all right-thanks to you!" she threw back over her shoulder-"Tell him to put back dinner until seven-thirty-and to have an extra place laid. In the meantime I'll dish up a high tea to keep us going."

Within the cabin, she set water on the two-burner electric stove to boil. While it was heating she let down the hinged table and set it with oilcloth doilies, that she found, together with other table necessities in a cupboard next the food locker. She discovered some bread and a number of other eatables stowed away here, as well as the things Bill had mentioned.

Twenty minutes later, Bill returned to find the table set with cups of steaming cocoa and hot toasted sandwiches spread with marmalade.

"I'll say you're some cook, Dorothy!" He pulled up a camp stool, and seated himself at the table. "This is a real party!"

"There isn't any butter-" began Dorothy doubtfully.

"Don't apologize. It's wonderful-do start in or I'll forget my manners and grab!"

Dorothy helped herself to a sandwich and handed the plate across the table. "Were you able to get Dad?"

"Yes. Just caught him. He'd only got home from the bank a few minutes before. One of the maids told him you'd spoken of going sailing, so he phoned the club about you. He was just leaving the house to drive down there when I rang him up."

"Did he say anything else?"

"Oh, naturally, he was glad you were all right. He didn't seem so pleased when I told him I was flying you back. He asked me if I was an experienced pilot."

"He would." Dorothy chuckled. "What did you tell him?"

Bill laughed as he helped himself to another sandwich. "I wanted to get out here to your high tea, you know, so I asked him if he smoked cigarettes."

"Cigarettes?"

"Yes. 'If you do, Mr. Dixon,' I said-you know the old slogan, 'Ask Dad-he knows-' and I'm sorry to say I rang off."

"I'll bet he goes over and asks your father!"

"Very probably. Dad's rather touchy when anybody questions my rating as a pilot. I'm afraid your father will get an earful."

Cocoa and toast had disappeared by this time so the two in the cabin set about clearing up.

"You must'nt mind Daddy's crusty manner," she said with her hands in a dishpan of soapsuds. "He's always like that when he's upset. He doesn't mean anything by it."

Bill, who was stowing away cups and saucers in the locker, turned about with a grin. "Oh, that's all right. I had no business to get facetious-my temper's not so good, either. But there's no hard feeling." He held out his hands. "If you're finished with the dishpan I'll throw the water overside. The storm has broken and there's practically no wind. So if you're ready we'll shove off for New Canaan-and I'll give you your first hop."

## *Chapter IV*

### **THE FIRST HOP**

"How about giving me my first flying lesson now?" Dorothy suggested as Bill hauled in their anchor.

"You really want to learn?"

"Of course I do-I'm crazy about it!"

Bill coiled the mooring line, looping it with practiced skill. "And I'd be glad to give you instruction. But you're a minor-before we can start anything like that we must get your Dad's permission."

"Oh, that'll be all right, Bill," was the young lady's cool assurance. "But how about right now-"

"Every student aviator is a watchful waiter the first time up. You stand behind me this trip and I'll explain what I'm doing as we go along."

"That'll be great! I'm just wild to fly this plane!"

Bill smiled. "But you won't get your flight instruction in this plane, Dorothy."

"Why not?"

"This amphibian is too big and heavy, for one thing; for another, she isn't equipped with dual controls."

"But what does that mean?"

"I see we'll have to start your training right now, Miss Student Pilot-Controls is a general term applied to the means proved to enable the pilot to control the speed, direction of flight, altitude and power of an aircraft. – Savez?"

"You sound like a text book-but I get you."

"All right. Now, unless we want the bus washed up on the beach, we'd better shove off."

Fastening the door to the deck after them, they passed through the cabin and into the pilot's cockpit where head-phone sets were at once adjusted. The amphibian bobbed and swayed at the push of little waves. The sun's face, scrubbed clean and bright by wind and rain was reflected in the rippling water; whilst wet surfaces of leaves, lawns, tree trunks and housetops bordering the inlet gleamed in a wash of gold.

Little gusts of fresh air blew in through the open windows filling the cockpit with a keen sweet odor of wet earth.

Dorothy drew a deep breath. "My! the air smells good after that storm!"

"You bet-" agreed Bill. "But I'll smell brimstone when your father comes into the picture, if we don't shove off pronto for New Canaan."

"Oh, that's just like a boy-" she pouted.

"Shush! student-Listen to your master's-I mean, – your instructor's voice, will you?"

"Instructor's better," she smiled.

"Here beginneth your first lesson." Bill slid into the pilot's seat. "Stand just behind me and hold on to the back of my seat," he ordered.

Dorothy promptly did as she was told. After all, was not this the real Bill Bolton the famous ace and midshipman she had read about?

"All set?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Good enough! Here we go then. I'll explain every move I make, as I make it. Look and listen! First-I crack the throttle-in other words, before starting the engine, set your throttle in its quadrant slightly forward of the fully closed position. Next, I 'contact'-that's air parlance for 'ignition switch

on.' After that, I press the inertia starter to swing our propeller into motion-" the engine sputtered, then roared.

"It is most important," he went on a moment later, "to see that the way ahead and above is clear at this point. Safety first is the slogan of good flying."

"Yes. But really, Bill, you don't have to explain every thing you do. I'm watching closely. When I don't understand, I'll ask-if it's all the same to you?"

"Good girl. Don't hesitate to ask me, though."

"I won't."

With that she saw him widen the throttle and with his stick held well back of neutral to prevent the nose dipping under the waves, he sent the big seaplane hurtling through the water toward the inlet's mouth. The wind had changed since the storm and now, as they raced into the teeth of the light breeze, Dorothy tingled with that excitement which comes to every novice with the take off.

Six or eight seconds after opening the throttle, she saw him push the stick all the way forward.

"Why do you do that? Won't that raise the tail of the plane and depress the nose?"

Bill shook his head. "In the air-yes. But we're moving at some speed now on the surface-and the bow cannot be pushed down into the water. Our speed is gradually forcing it up until-now-we're skimming along on the step, you see."

Dorothy nodded to herself and watched him ease the stick back to neutral and maintain it there while they gathered more and more speed.

"Now I'm going to talk some more," said Bill. "Don't blame me if it sounds like a text book. – In order to fly, certain things must be learned-and remembered. Do not take off until you have attained speed adequate to give complete control when in the air. Any attempt to pull it off prematurely will result in a take off at the stalling point, where control is uncertain. Understand?"

"I think so-but how does one know when to do it?"

"That comes with practice-and the feel of the ship. As flying speed is gained, I give a momentary pressure on the elevators (like this) – and break the hull out of the water-so-easing the pressure immediately after the instant of take off. Now that we are in the air our speed is only slightly above minimum flying speed. Any decrease in this would result in a stall. That is why I keep the nose level for six or seven seconds in order to attain a safe margin above stalling point before beginning to climb."

"There's certainly a lot more to it than I ever dreamed!"

"You bet there is. I haven't told you the half of it yet. One thing I forgot to say-you must always hold a straight course while taxiing before the take off. Also, never allow a wing to drop while your plane is on the step. – We've got enough speed on now, so I'll pull back the stick and let the plane climb for a bit."

"But you're heading for the Long Island Shore directly away from New Canaan-" she protested, "why don't you bring her about-not that I'm in any hurry, but-"

"This is an airplane, not a sailboat, Dorothy. All turns must be made with a level nose. If I should try to turn while in a climb like this, a stall would probably result, and with the wing down the plane would most likely go into a spin and-"

"We'd crash!"

"Surest thing you know!"

"Oh!"

"But the altimeter on the dash says one thousand feet now. We're high enough for our purpose. So I push the stick forward, like this-until the nose is level-so! Now, as I want to make a right turn, I apply right aileron and simultaneously increase right rudder considerably."

Dorothy saw one wing go up and the other go down. She was hardly able to keep her feet as the plane's nose swung round toward the Connecticut shore.

"Isn't that called banking?"

"Right on the first count," replied Bill.

"Why do you do it?"

"Because in making a turn, the momentum of the plane sets up a centrifugal force, acting horizontally outward. To counteract this, the force of lift must be inclined until it has a horizontal component equal to the centrifugal force. The machine is therefore tilted to one side, or banked, thus maintaining a state of equilibrium in which it will turn steadily. No turn can be made by the use of the rudder alone. The plane must be banked with ailerons before the rudder will have any turning effect. – Get me?"

"I get the last part. Guess I'll have to do some studying."

"Everybody has to do that. But I'll lend you some books, so you can bone up on the theory of flight. What I said just now amounts to this: if you don't bank enough you send your plane into a skid."

"Just like an automobile skids?"

"Yes. But of course the danger doesn't lie in hitting anything as in a car. A skidding plane loses her flying speed forward and drops into a spin. On the other hand, if you bank her too sharply, you go into a sideslip!"

"And the result in both cases is a crash?"

"Generally. But I think you've had enough instruction for today."

"Oh-but I want to know how you ended that turn. We're flying straight again now-and I was so interested in what you were saying, I forgot to watch what you did!"

"Well, after I had banked her sufficiently, I checked the wings with the ailerons and at the same time eased the pressure on the rudder. Then I maintained a constant bank and a constant pressure on the rudder pedal throughout the turn. To resume straight flight, I simply applied left aileron and left rudder: and when the wings were level again, I neutralized the ailerons and applied a normal amount of right rudder."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Dorothy-"and that is only one of the things I have to learn. I thought that flying a plane wouldn't be much more complicated than driving a car."

"Oh, it's simple enough-only you have to balance a plane, as well as drive it."

"Do you think I'll ever learn?"

"Of course you will. It takes time and practice-that's all."

"I wonder how birds learn to fly?" Dorothy glanced down at the wide vista of rolling country over which they were traveling. The dark green of the wooded hills, the lighter green of fields, criss-crossed by winding roads and dotted with houses, all in miniature, seemed like viewing a toy world. And here and there, just below them, there was the occasional flash of feathered wings, as the birds darted in and out among the treetops.

"Birds have to learn to fly, too. They get into trouble sometimes."

"They do?"

"Certainly-watch gulls on a windy day-you'll see them sideslip-go into spins-and have a generally hard time of it!"

"Oh, really? I'd never thought of that. But of course they can fly much better than a plane."

Bill shook his head. "That's where you are wrong. No bird can loop, or fly upside down. Reverse control flying and acrobatics-stunting generally is impossible for them. – But look below! Recognize the scenery?"

"Why, we're almost over New Canaan. There are the white spires of the Episcopal and Congregational churches-and there's Main Street-and the railroad station!"

"And over on that ridge is your house-and mine across the way," he added. "Well, here's where I nose her over. Hold tight-we're going down."

## *Chapter V*

# TROUBLE

After releasing the retractable wheel landing gear, which turned the big amphibian from a seaplane into one which could land on terra firma, Bill brought his big bus gently down to the ten acre lot behind the Bolton residence.

As the plane rolled forward on its rubber tired wheels and came to a stop, two men came walking in its direction from the trees at the edge of the field.

"Here come our respective fathers-" announced Bill, stripping off his headgear. "Remember-I take all responsibility for bringing you back in the plane."

"You-do nothing of the kind!" Dorothy's tone was final. She handed him her head-phone and running back through the cabin, vaulted the low bulwark to the ground.

Bill hurriedly made things secure in the cockpit and followed her.

"And so you see, Dad," he heard her say, as he approached where they stood, "Bill not only saved my life-he took all kinds of chances with his own, flying in a gale like that. And-oh! I forgot to tell you that he warned me *not* to go out in the *Scud* this afternoon!" she ended with a mischievous look toward Bill.

Mr. Dixon was a tall man, whose tanned, rugged features and searching gaze suggested the sportsman. He turned from his excited daughter, with a smile and an outstretched hand.

"I'm beginning to realize, young man, that I owe you an apology for my shortness over the phone. Judging from Dorothy's story, I can never hope to express my gratitude for what you've done today."

Bill mumbled an embarrassed platitude as he shook hands, and was glad when Mr. Bolton broke into the conversation.

"The Boltons, father and son, were probably born to be hung," he chuckled. "It's a family trait, to fall into scrapes-and so far, to get out of them just as quickly. Now, as nobody has been polite enough to introduce me to the heroine of this meeting-I'm the hero's fond parent, Miss Dorothy. We are about to celebrate this festive occasion by a housewarming, in the form of a scrap dinner at the hero's home-what say you?"

"But I thought you were coming to our house-" cried Dorothy. "I-"

"But me no buts, young lady. Your father has already accepted for you both and we simply can't take no for an answer."

Dorothy glanced at Bill, who stood rather sheepishly in the background. Then she laughed. "Why, of course, if you put it that way-I'd love to come; that is, if the *hero* is willing!"

"Say, do you think that's fair!" Bill's face was red. He didn't think much of that kind of kidding. "I think it would be great, that is, if you mean me," he ended in confusion.

Amid the general laughter that followed, Dorothy uttered a cry of disgust. "But I can't come like this-" she pointed to her clothes, which were the things that Bill had laid out for her in the big plane's cabin.

"You look charming-" Mr. Bolton bowed, and Dorothy blushed. "However-"

"Make it snappy, then, dear." Mr. Dixon drew out his watch. "You have just fifteen minutes. And Mr. Bolton won't keep dinner waiting for you, if he's as famished as I am!"

"Oh, give me twenty!" she pleaded.

"All right-hurry, now!"

With a wave of her hand, Dorothy darted away.

"I'll look after the plane, Bill," said his father, as she disappeared among the orchard trees. "I want to show Mr. Dixon over it, and that will give you time for a slicking-up before dinner."

It was a jolly, though belated meal that was eventually served to them in the cool, green dining room of the Bolton's summer home that evening. Mr. Dixon, with the finesse of an astute business man, drew out Mr. Bolton and his son, and the two told tales of adventure by land and sea and air that fascinated the New England high school girl. It all seemed unreal to her, sitting in the soft light of the candles. Yet the Boltons made light of hairbreadth escapes in the world's unmapped areas-just as if these strange adventures were daily occurrences in their lives, she thought.

"It certainly is a shame!" she burst out suddenly. Coffee had been served and they had moved to the comfort of low wicker chairs on the terrace. The air was filled with the perfume of June roses.

"What's a shame?" Bill, now spick and span in white flannels, settled back in his chair.

"Why, all the wonderful times you and Mr. Bolton have had-while Dad and I were sticking around in New Canaan. I'd love to be an adventurer," she finished.

"I dare say you'd find it mighty uncomfortable at times," observed her father. "How about it, Bolton?"

"Like everything else, it has its drawbacks and becomes more or less of a grind when one 'adventures' day in and day out-" that gentleman admitted. "I'm only too glad to be able to settle down in this beautiful ridge country for a few months-to rest and be quiet."

"There you are, Dorothy." Her father smiled in the darkness. "And who would there be out in the wilds to admire that smart frock you're wearing, for instance?"

"Gee, Dad! You know I don't care half as much about clothes as lots of the girls-and that hasn't anything to do with it, anyway."

"I think we ought to break the news to her," suggested Bill, a white blur in the depths of his chair.

Dorothy sat up eagerly. "What news?"

"But perhaps we'd better wait until tomorrow. Tonight, she wants to become an explorer-and give away all her best dresses. She might not take kindly to it." This from Mr. Dixon, between puffs of aromatic cigar smoke.

"You're horrid-both of you. Don't you think it's mean of them to make such a mystery of whatever they're talking about, Mr. Bolton? Won't you tell me?"

"Of course, I will, my dear. What do you want to know?"

Dorothy choked with vexation. "Oh!"

"Let's tell her now-right now-" said Bill, his voice brimming with laughter.

"I don't want to hear."

"Yes, you do-all together: one-two-three! You-are-going-to-learn-to-fly!"

Dorothy sprang to her father's chair and caught his arm. "Will you really let me, Dad?" she cried in delight.

"Mr. Bolton says that Bill is an A-1 instructor-and he claims that flying is no more dangerous than sailing twenty-footers in a nor'easter, so I suppose-"

"Oh-you *darling!*" Dorothy flung her arms about his neck.

"Here-here-" cried Mr. Dixon. "You're ruining my collar, and my cigar-"

"Have another," suggested Mr. Bolton. "I'd willingly ruin boxes of cigars if I had a daughter who'd hug me that way!"

"Aren't you nice!" She turned about and bestowed a second affectionate embrace on that gentleman. "That is because you aren't quite as mean as your son-he's the limit!"

"Never slang your instructor," sang out Bill. "That's one of the first rules of the air."

"Seriously, Dorothy," her father interposed. "This is a big responsibility Bill is taking-and I want your word that you'll do just as he says. No more running off and smashing up a plane as you did the *Scud* this afternoon!"

"All right, Dad. I promise. But what am I to learn in? Bill says that the Amphibian is too heavy-and she's not equipped with dual controls."

Mr. Dixon lit a fresh cigar. "I see that you've already started your flight training."

"Bill explained the procedure to me on our way up here this afternoon. But what are we going to do for a plane?"

"Bill has some scheme, I believe."

"Oh, I know," she decided. "Bill shall pick me out a nice little plane and-"

"I shall pay for it," said her father grimly. "Nothing doing. When you have won your wings-well-we shall see. Until then, you and Bill will have to figure without financial help from your fond parent."

"That's fair enough," agreed Mr. Bolton.

"O.K. with me, too," echoed Bill. "I happen to have an old *N-9*, a Navy training plane, down at the shipyard near the beach club, that will do nicely. I was down there this afternoon having her pontoon removed. I want to equip her with landing gear so I can house her up here. The Amphibian uses up too much gas to go joy-hopping in."

A maid appeared on the doorstep.

"Mr. Dixon wanted on the phone, please," she announced, and waited while that gentleman preceded her into the house.

A moment later Mr. Dixon was back on the terrace.

"The bank's been robbed!" he cried. "Sorry, gentlemen, but I've got to hustle down there just as soon as possible."

"This way!" called Bill, springing down the steps to the garden. "My car's out here-come on!"

"That young chap can keep his head," thought Mr. Dixon as he ran beside his daughter and Mr. Bolton. "It would take a lot to fluster him."

Then they came upon him, backing slowly up the drive, both doors swinging wide so they could jump in the car without his stopping.

"Which bank, Mr. Dixon?"

Bill had the car in the road now and was racing toward the village.

"First National-Main Street, next the Town Hall. I'm president, you know."

"I didn't know. But I'm glad to hear it."

"How's that?"

"You should have a drag with the traffic cops. We are doing an even sixty now-and it would be a bad time to get a ticket."

Mr. Dixon grasped the door-handle as Bill skidded them into a cross road with the expertness of a racing driver. "Just get us there, that's all," he gasped. "The chief himself phoned me. I didn't wait to hear details-but from what I gathered, the hold up men got clean away before the police discovered the robbery. But time is always a factor in a case of this kind, so don't worry about traffic rules."

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