

STRAIT GATE

By RUTH COMFORT MITCHELL

Copyright D. Appleton-Century Co., Inc. WNU Service

THE STORY

CHAPTER I—Sarah Lynn Dana, youngest of the Dana women of Danavale, Calif., chafes at the well-ordered life approved by her mother, Adelaide, who is trying to marry her to Duncan Van Doren, Detroit society youth. Great-Granny Dana, covered-wagon pioneer, and community matriarch, recognizes in the girl the restless adventurousness of the "dark Danas," a trait shared by her and Cousin Sally Ann Dana, traveler and author, and pleads with Sally Ann to take the girl abroad.

CHAPTER II—Uncle Lynn, wheelchair invalid, adds his plea to Sally Ann to save Sarah Lynn, as does the girl's young brother, Bill. Another plea comes from Miss Pennington, "Penny," adoring governess of the girl, saying she is unhappy and misunderstood. Charmed with Sarah Lynn at their first meeting, Sally Ann considers the idea.

CHAPTER III—At a family dinner party, Sally Ann first hears of Keaton Dana's ultra-modern wife, Ardine, who runs a roadhouse called the Stewed Prune, and is trying to wangle a flight with Gunnar Thorwald, Norwegian ace, famous for his refusal to fly women, through their mutual friend, Jim Allison. Sally Ann tells Adelaide of her desire to take Sarah Lynn abroad. At the height of Adelaide's displeasure, Gunnar Thorwald arrives with Jim Allison, and Sarah Lynn is instantly attracted to him. Duncan invites her to the Stewed Prune.

CHAPTER IV—Sarah Lynn, loathing the Stewed Prune, refuses to drink anything but ginger ale, which Ardine herself serves. Cousin Mary Dana Webster tells Sarah she suspects Ardine and her friends of framing on Gunnar, and Sarah Lynn, in an increasing stupor, decides to warn him. When Gunnar arrives, angry at Jim Allison for missing connections, he hears Sarah Lynn cry, "Go away! Don't come in! Ladybug, fly away home," and sees her carried out to the ladies' room, unconscious.

CHAPTER V

Jim Allison and a couple of his friends had arrived at the field. "Evening, Petey!" Allison greeted the man who stepped forward. "Lieutenant Thorwald's delayed, so I'll warm up for him."

"Okeh, Cap'n Allison." "Gas her, will you? Get the weather report. He'll want to hop immediately."

"I betcher! Told me he was off at—"

"I told you he was delayed. Snap into it, will you?" Allison said sharply.

"Okeh, sir." He started away. "May have to sleep out in Mexico; there's a big roll of bedding to stow away."

"I'll tend to it, sir." "You do what I told you. I'll take care of the bedding. You let it alone; understand?"

The man hurried off. "Walk wide of him this night," he told a youth in overalls, out of the corner of his mouth. "He'll bite the head off you."

"Yeah? Had a coupla drinks again? He better cut that out."

They were standing together when Reedley and Lieutenant Thorwald drove up, and the older man saluted clumsily.

"She's purrin' like a pussy cat, sir, but Cap'n Allison, he went home sick, poor feller. He couldn't hold his head up. He says you must hop without him and he'll telygraft to Los Angeles."

"Very good," the Norseman nodded. He turned to the medical student with a stiff bow. "I am obliged. You may go."

"All right, then," Reedley said, relieved. "I sure hope there won't be any more jinx!"

The aviator did not answer. He was stepping swiftly about his ship, ice-blue eyes keen for the faintest flaw in her shining perfection.

Reedley ran back to his car, jumped in, backed and turned and slid into high and was off at top speed. Half a mile down the road a parked car snapped on its lights and honked noisily, and he jammed on his brakes and came to a slithering stop.

"Okeh?" Jim Allison asked hoarsely.

"Well—Lord, I guess so!" Reedley said. Beads of sweat stood on

his forehead. "A night!" "And what a day is coming!" someone in the flier's car contributed. "Say, Jim, those doors don't fly open—or—or—anything, do they?"

"No," Allison said shortly. "Well—better beat it back to the Prune and rehearse our parts with Ardine."

Sarah Lynn said to herself: "I can't possibly sleep with the music beating and pounding, but I don't want to wake up, because I can pretend I'm flying . . ."

Her head ached hideously and her mouth was dry. But the air in her nostrils now was sharp and sweet and cold, and she was shivering.

"I'm pretending so hard that I'm actually cold!" she exulted. "But I won't open my eyes, because Duncan will think I'm asleep, and let me alone." She dozed again. Then "I wonder if I could open my eyes . . . they're so heavy. I never heard such noisy music, and there isn't any tune; just throbbing and pounding and roaring."

"I think I'll open my eyes for a minute, now, but I'll keep right on making believe I'm not here." Then she was saying in a scared whisper: "I can pretend with my eyes wide open! Sitting right here in the Stewed Prune with the horrible music roaring at me, I can pretend I'm in a plane, up among the stars, flying away in the night!"

Her teeth were chattering; her heart was in her throat; her head blazed with pain. "But why am I pretending to be all wrapped up in blankets? Mercy, if I can make-believe like this I needn't ever be afraid of anything again—not Ardine, nor Mother, nor Duncan, nor Detroit! Nothing will matter!" Her nostrils dilated and she pulled deep drafts of cold air into her lungs. Her head cleared. She sat bolt upright.

A rush of air, chill, stinging, sweet. A great round moon of dazzling platinum. Stars; stars; stars. The steady pounding throb of a motor. A small, compact space enclosing her, and—directly before her, and—directly before her—square shoulders in creamy leather, a head in a sternly classic helmet. Sarah Lynn heard her own voice in a strangled whisper—

"Am I even pretending—him?"

Gunnar Thorwald, Norwegian ace, was flying in a cold rage. He was hurt, disappointed, deeply disgusted. Jim Allison had failed him utterly, and it was a blow, because he was young enough, in spite of his astonishing exploits, to take himself and his career with great seriousness.

He had come to America very earnestly, pledged to study and learn, to take home all he could gather from the nation a-wing, and he had counted confidently on Jim Allison.

"I wouldn't think of asking you to break your rule about never taking women up," the American flier had explained, "under ordinary circumstances, but in this case, if you could possibly make an exception I'd appreciate it no end. You see, the fact is, Ardine—and of course her husband, too—awfully decent chap, Keaton Dana, rather heavy, perhaps, but a prince"—he added hastily under the bleak young gaze—"are very special friends of mine, and she's set her heart on going up for a spin with you."

"I am sorry," the yellow-haired youth said civilly.

"Makes it pretty awkward for me. I dare say I—well, I strutted a bit about what pals we are, and I'm afraid I let Ardine infer that I could fix it up for her."

"I am sorry," Gunnar said again. "I take no women in my ship."

He might well have expanded his pronouncement to say that he took no women anywhere. Sisterless, cousinless, girl-friendless, rigidly reared by a stern grandmother, he had pledged her and himself to keep his mind wholly upon his work until his career was well established.

The night was clear and calm with excellent visibility; his hop to Los Angeles would be without excitement.

He came swiftly out of his musings as the nose of the plane dropped, the whir of the motor increased and they leaned toward a downward pitch. He pulled on the stick to regain normal position, wondering what freak of air currents caused the small disturbance. He was aware of a slight jar. Had he, perhaps, struck a high-flying night bird?

He was immediately in level flight again, eased off on the joy stick and began to re-establish the course



Incredibly, out of all reason, someone was standing behind him.

which had been briefly abandoned, but directly he released his pressure the nose dropped a second time.

There was a jar again, more perceptible this time, and he turned his head to look back through his ship, and found his vision blocked. Incredibly, out of all reason, someone was standing behind him.

His mind refused to accept it. The thing was impossible. It was the figure of a woman!

Then young Gunnar Thorwald, Norwegian ace, experienced an anger the like of which he had never known in all his years of living. It was the sort of berserk rage his ancestors knew, tricked by a wily foe, and which they eased with sudden blood. Jim Allison had made mockery of his rule. Jim Allison had flouted him—his friend—to please the whim of his light-o'-love; made a fool of him in the eyes of the tipsy wasters at a tawdry roadhouse. His teeth ground together and his breath came quickly.

The woman lurched forward and caught at his shoulder to steady herself, bent closer to speak above the roar. Their cold cheeks touched.

"Oh, glorious—glorious!" she stammered. "I don't understand—Am I here?—flying away in the night? Am I still pretending?"—her teeth were chattering with cold, with excitement—"in the Stewed Prune? It's so wonderful—so splendid—"

It was not Ardine Dana, but the dark, thin girl with the lost and lonely look he had noticed at the Henry Dana house, whom he had seen again, maudlin with drink. But now her face was white and her eyes blazed with thrilled rapture, and she seemed to be transported with a wild, incredulous joy.

Happy, triumphant over the success of their trick!

"Keep away from me, drunken fool!" he said savagely.

There was a stifled wail behind him but he did not look around. He busied himself with directions. Where—granted that he must forego the pleasure of pitching her out in mid-air—was the first place he could land her? Anywhere he could get his ship down with a semblance of safety!

Unless he carried her all the way to Los Angeles—or Glendale, which was his destination—and that was unthinkable—he must apparently detour to a place called Fresno.

A stealthy look, presently, showed him that she had settled herself in a seat, a blanket wrapped around her. Her face was pressed against the window, but she turned and saw him and started to rise again.

"I must tell you—" she began urgently, her voice shrill above the motor. "You must listen to me! I wasn't—I wasn't— They gave me something—" She started to stand up, to come forward again.

He made an imperative gesture. "Keep back. Do not come here. Stay where you are."

She dropped beside the window, huddling under her blanket, peering out into the quiet sky.

(Continued next week)

ROLESVILLE

Rev. H. O. Baker has for his guest for the convention in Raleigh his brother, Rev. Jeter Baker of Charlotte and Rev. Eugene Coker.

Mr. and Mrs. V. F. Mitchell and V. F. Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Garkan Jackson visited Mr. Jackson's parents at Clinton Sunday.

The P. T. A. of the Rolesville school met Monday night. Mrs. Preston Jones presided. A large number were present to enjoy the program given by the tenth grade.

Dogred Bowling of Burlington spent the week end with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Bowling.

Miss Ruth Daniel of New York City is visiting friends and relatives here and Wake Forest.

Miss Lucille Hicks and Oscar Perry were married Nov. 12. We wish them much happiness.

Mrs. Johnnie Keith of Neuse is visiting her son, Clarence Keith.

Mrs. Wade Young and William Clark Young, Mrs. Neil Rogers and Mrs. Graham Jackson visited Raleigh Monday.

Mr. Robert Lee Edwards attend-

ed the S. S. Association meeting at Franklinton Sunday and reported a fine meeting.

Mr. Lonnie Bowling of Raleigh visited his mother Sunday, Mrs. J. W. Bowling.

You who were not at church Sunday and Sunday night missed a treat. Pastor Baker gave us a message that caused much thought. Sunday night he told us how to get what we want.

Be here Sunday morning at 10 o'clock for S. S.; 11 for preaching; 6:30 B. T. U.; 7:30 preaching.

STATEMENT FOR VENEREAL DISEASE CLINIC IN ZEBULON

The Venereal Disease Control Clinic is now open to patients in the Avon Privett building in Zebulon, adjacent to Dr. C. E. Flowers' officers.

Dr. Flowers is in charge of the clinic and will make arrangements to give treatment to all patients coming within the meaning of the clinic services.

NOTICE: No Football Game With Fuquay Friday

SPECIAL PRICES

SHOES

GOODS MUST GO! COME!

All Shoes, Rubber Boots, Etc., at SPECIAL PRICES.

DRY GOODS MUST GO!

Prices Will Open Your Eyes

COME EARLY AND SAVE!

Suit Cases, Trunks, Hats, Caps, Underwear

A. G. KEMP — Zebulon, N. C.



For Reliable INSURANCE In Town Or Country

Better See D. D. CHAMBLEE

OLDS ONLY \$777 AND UP

WITH STYLE THAT "CLICKS" WITH EVERYBODY!

The Olds style is the new style . . . See the new Olds! * Delivered price at Lansing, Mich., subject to change without notice. Price includes safety glass, bumpers, bumper guards, spare tire and tube. Transportation, state and local taxes, if any, optional equipment and accessories—extra. General Motors Installation Plan.



YOU OUGHT TO OWN AN OLDS

SEE YOUR NEAREST OLDSMOBILE DEALER

J. M. CHEVROLET COMPANY Zebulon, North Carolina