

Up in the clouds

by Beulah Earle

ELEVENTH INSTALMENT

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.

Although 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.

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 spend 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.

But Natalie knew what he came to say and perhaps Sunny knew as well. For nothing else could have sent him to them in such haste.

"Monty's safe," Natalie cried out. "Is that it, Jimmy?"

He nodded his head, gasping. And then the two seized him and pummeled him till he actually could not get the words out.

"Just like Jimmy Mattern," he sobbed out presently. "He was down twelve days before he could get word out. Some little place in Siberia. The Russians flew over twice hunting for him, but he couldn't make them see him."

Strength surged into Natalie like a miracle. Sunny forget herself and danced so madly that they thought she would hurl herself from the rock in her ecstasy.

Then they were all three running for Jimmy's car, and Jimmy drove them straight to the flying field.

There the news was pouring in. Monty himself stood at the elbow of one of those short-wave operators on the other side of the world. He had fought his way through the wilderness sometimes aloft, sometimes in a peasant's wagon, at last in a puffing Russian train with no one aboard who could speak a word of English.

He had reached the Siberian control and had flashed the story of his safety. He was there now letting the world know and Natalie, piecing together the bits that came from the humming receivers through the lips of one small radio operator, was writing the big account of her life.

Mack Hanlon was rushing out an extra at the other end of the telephone. Jimmy had flashed him before he raced to tell Sunny. He had tried to call Natalie but could get no answer. Now he was reading Natalie's story, line by line, to Hanlon.

Monty Wallace would complete his flight and try again at once for the non-stop honors, the story read. Jabe Marion had issued orders that the flight organization was to remain intact for the second trial.

Natalie finished her story and made Jimmy take her to the office. "I don't want any more vacation," she told Hanlon as the shouts of newsboys announced the extra on the street. "I want to handle the yarn from now till the second flight is over."

Hanlon was like a pleased child. "What I ought to do," he laughed, "is to send you along with this bird. These flights are harder on you than they are on him."

Natalie could laugh at that. There were few secrets between her and the weazened little city editor.

She went to find Jimmy in the photographer's den. He was sloshing about in the dark-room with its eerie red light.

"Wait a minute," he yelled at her knock. Then he opened the door and she stood beside him under the red light while he worked.

"I thought you were supposed to be laid up," he chuckled as he rubbed the tips of his fingers over a weak spot in one of his negatives. "I guess there wasn't anything the matter with you that Dr. Mont Wallace couldn't cure?"

"Josh, Jimmy," the girl responded. "You don't suppose I'm crazy or anything, do you? How can anybody be like that who is in her right mind?"

"The boy grinned at her in that eerie glow. "You and I ought to know, kid," he said. "that love makes plain insanity look foolish."

He went on with his work for a few minutes in silence. Then: "How come you and Sunny Marion got so thick up there on that rock? I thought you hadn't been seeing much of each other."

"Oh, that's just some more of the craziness. She's got it too, poor kid. I wonder sometimes if she hasn't got it the worst of us all."

"Don't worry about her, Nat," Jimmy rejoined. "She'll take care of herself. She forgets quick."

"That's a gift, Jimmy, I think."

"That's pure genius, if you ask me. Come on. Let's go somewhere and try forgetting."

It had been so long since she and Jimmy had spent an evening together that the girl was surprised at the invitation. There was no sign that she could find during that evening that Jimmy remembered at all his love for Natalie Wade.

It was an evening she was to recall afterward, an evening she often wondered about.

There was a delay of two days before Mont resumed his flight. He clicked it off then in amazing fashion. Station after station reported him. Each time the refueling was a success. Each time he made the next control almost exactly on schedule.

It was as though the elements having done their worst and failed to put him out of the running had now given up and were willing to let him come through.

When it was clear that he would finish easily, Natalie and Jimmy started East with the Marions to meet him. The girl reporter felt as though her heart would burst when she saw him again. But she hung to her self control as well as she could and managed to make the trip without revealing the tumult within her.

Sunny Marion had a new bearing now. That seeming triumph was gone but in its stead had come a quiet determination.

Their own pilot had miscalculated the speed Mont would make. It was a race at the last to see who would get in first at Mineola and scarcely had their tri-motor stopped rolling when the black ship, a little battered and worse for wear, swept downward.

It was then that Natalie's knees almost buckled under her. Jimmy and Sunny raced on ahead to gather him into their arms. Natalie came after with Jabe Marion.

To her amazement, Sunny faced her with Mont, her arm about him and his thrown across her shoulder.

"Congratulations, people," she was saying. "Mont and I are going to be married."

Mont turned quickly and looked down into Sunny's face. Clearly he had not expected so early an announcement but he grinned when he looked up again and gripped Jabe Marion's hand as the older man sprang forward.

Natalie was surprised at her own reaction. She thought she knew now what Sunny had meant when she spoke of cheating. The girl, no doubt, had taken Mont's words as an offer of marriage on their night together. Mont had been caught in the trap of her apartment naivete.

Suddenly then Nat realized that she, too, had been caught. Nothing she could say or do would make any difference. Mont was equally helpless. And if what she suspected was true, there might be desperation behind Sunny's haste.

Natalie caught Mont's hand in her's and clung to it. But her eyes avoided his face, fearing what they might find there. Maybe it was all true. Maybe Mont had meant only that he could not marry Natalie. Maybe he had willingly been drawn into this engagement with Sunny Marion.

Such was their greeting. Such was Natalie's meeting with the man she loved after the agony of those weeks.

But the joy of seeing him, of having him near, kept her from being cast down. It was not till she was alone that night that she gave way to a torrent of tears.

Next day the newspapers all carried the announcement Sunny Marion for whom his plane had been named, would become the bride of the world flier, Mont Wallace. Jimmy's pictures of her appeared everywhere and that evening there were pictures of Mont and Sunny before the world-flight plane.

It was understood, the cut-lines said, that the wedding would be postponed till after Wallace had made another attempt at the non-stop trip around the world.

After that there was nothing much left for Natalie Wade but the job she had and she plunged into it with all the energy she could muster. She wondered a little that she saw nothing of Jimmy outside of working hours.

Jimmy had told her once that he would be waiting for her if things cracked up for her. They would, he said, jump off a high place together. Maybe that was what he was afraid of now. Maybe he felt that his return to her would bring a mood of desperation to them both.

But she laughed at the thought. She could take defeat, not with equanimity it was true, but she could take it. It was desperate uncertainty that unnerved her.

Mont Wallace and the Marions were deep in plans for the second flight. There would be little news in that until it was accomplished for failure made no heroes for the front pages. Monty had been a spectacular figure on his return, but only because of his return from the dead. His romance had kept the page open to him for another day, but after that there were more thrilling stories than his new preoccupation with work, his hours spent on the plane and on the revision of the flight organization.

Natalie herself was writing a new series of features and found herself engrossed. Life was returning to its old round. Even Mack Hanlon was little interested in the story of the new flight attempt.

But at last the day of the take-off came. The plans had been changed now. The start was to be made from the home airport. New York was only one of the refueling stops. The last leg of the flight would be down the coast from Nome.

Before dawn they were at the field. Jimmy was there with his

flashlights going to record the new scene and the altered plane.

And Sunny Marion was there. It was the first time Natalie had seen her in weeks. The change in her appearance shocked the older girl. It was not possible that this was the golden beauty of a few weeks before.

The plane had been trundled out to the runway. Its motor was turning briskly. The clockers were in their own places. Grease-monkeys swarmed about. And because it was the first start of an international flight from the small port, there was a goodly crowd of curious onlookers.

Natalie moved through the crowd for a sight of Mont. At last she found him talking with Jabe Marion and the little radio operator and stood at Mont's side. "Good luck and success this time, boy," she spoke in a low tone. "I've got a bet right on your nose."

Continued Next Issue

Amended.

Marigold—Young lady, I'll have you understand my word is law. Sally—Well, here's where I make a few amendments.

Getting Out of The Way. Fifer—Where are you running? Groot—To stop a fight. Fifer—Who's fighting? Groot—Oh, just me and another guy.



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News Adm. 10c-25c

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Directed by Nate Watt, a Harry Sherman Production

Cartoon—Serial—Comedy Adm. 10c-30c
FRIDAY MIDNIGHT SHOW—
"ONE MILE FROM HEAVEN"
Short Adm. 10c-25c

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News—Cartoon Adm. 10c-30c

WEDNESDAY—FAMILY SHOW—

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—in—
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Shorts Adm. Only 10c

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COMING JAN. 10-11—
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FOR YOU ALL!
—The Management.

LYRIC THEATRE



Merry Christmas

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