All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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Lyndaya Kurtz straightened her back and looked up at the blue and bronze evening sky. It was that strange sound again, like a large swarm of bees at their hive, and it grew louder and louder. She leaned the hoe against the picket fence her father had built around the garden. Her mother, whose hearing was no longer very good, continued to chop at weeds between the rows of radishes and lettuce. She glanced at her daughter as Lyndaya shielded her eyes from the slowly setting sun.

“Was ist los?” she asked, using Pennsylvania Dutch.

“Can’t you hear them, Mama?” Lyndaya responded. “There are aeroplanes coming.”

Her mother stood up, still holding the hoe in her brown hands, and squinted at the sun and sky. “I don’t see anything. Is it a small one?”

“No, it’s too loud for just one aeroplane. Do you see, Mama?” Lyndaya pointed. “Coming out of the west. Coming out of the sun.”

Now her mother shielded her eyes. “All I am seeing is spots in front of my eyes from looking into the light.”

“Look higher. There are—three, four, six—there are half a dozen of them.”

The planes were not that far from the ground, Lyndaya thought, only a thousand feet, not much more. Each with two wings, the top wing longer than the bottom one, each plane painted a yellow that gleamed in the sunlight. As she watched, one of them broke away from the others and dropped toward them. It came so low that the roar of the engine filled the air and children ran from their houses and yards
into the dirt road and the hay fields. They were soon followed by their mothers and fathers and older brothers and sisters.

Lyyndaya laughed as the plane flew over their house. A hand waved at her from the plane’s open cockpit and she waved back with all her might. “Can you see the plane now, Mama?” she teased.

Her mother had crouched among the heads of lettuce as the plane flashed past. “Ach,” she exclaimed with a cross look on her face, “this must be your crazy boy, Jude Whetstone.”

“He’s coming back!”

The plane had banked to the left over Jacob Miller’s wheat field and was heading back over the farmhouses while the other five planes carried on to the east. Its yellow wings dipped lower and lower. Lyyndaya’s green eyes widened.

“He’s going to land in Papa’s field!” she cried. “Where the hay was cut on Monday!”

She lifted the hem of her dress in both hands and began to run. The black *kaap* that covered her hair at the back, left untied, flew off her head.

“Lyyndaya! This is not seemly!” her mother called after her.

But the young woman had reached the old gray fence around the hay field, gathered the bottom of her navy blue dress in one hand, and climbed over, and with strands of sand-colored hair unraveling from their pins, she was racing over the stubble to where the plane’s wheels were just touching the earth. Others were running toward the plane from all directions, jumping the fence if they were spry enough, opening the gate to the field if they were not.

The aeroplane came to a stop in the middle of the field and when the propeller stopped spinning a young man in a brown leather jacket and helmet pushed his goggles from his eyes and jumped from the cockpit to the ground. He was immediately surrounded by the several boys and girls who had outrun the adults in their rush toward the craft. He mussed the hair of two of the boys who came up to him and tugged the pigtail of a red-headed girl.

“Jude!” Lyyndaya exclaimed as she ran up to him, the tan on her face flushed. “What are you doing here?”
“Hello, Lyyndy,” the young man smiled, lifting one of the boys up on his shoulders. “The whole flying club went up and I convinced them to come this way to Paradise. I wanted to see you.”

“To see me? You fly a plane from Philadelphia just to see me?”

“Why not?”

“But you were coming back on the train in a few days.”

“A few days. I couldn’t wait that long.”

Lyyndaya could feel the heat in her face as neighbors looked on. She saw one or two frown, but most of the men and women smiled. A very tall man in a maroon shirt wearing a straw hat laughed. She dropped her eyes.

“Bishop Zook,” she murmured, “how are you?”

“Gute, gute,” he responded. “Well, Jude, what is all this? Why has a pigeon dropped out of the sky?”

Bishop Zook was not only tall, at least six-foot-nine, but broad-shouldered and strong. He shook Jude’s hand with a grip like rock. The young man pulled his leather helmet off his head so that his dark brown hair tumbled loose. Lyyndaya fought down an overwhelming urge to take Jude and hug him as she had done so many times when they were nine and ten.

“I wanted the children to see the plane, Bishop Zook,” said Jude.

“Only the children?”

“Well—” Jude stumbled. “I thought perhaps—I might ask Miss Kurtz—”

“Ah,” smiled the bishop. “You want to take her up, as you flying men say?”

“I thought—”

“Are you two courting?”

“Courting?”

“You remember what is courting, my boy—you have not been among the English in Philadelphia that long, eh?”

Everyone laughed, and Lyyndaya thought the heat in her face and hands would make her hair and skin catch on fire.

Bishop Zook put an arm like a plank around Jude’s slender shoulders. “You know when there is the courting here, we let the boy take
the girl home in the buggy after the Sunday singing. You remember that much after a week away?”

“Yes—”

“So your horse and buggy are where?” the bishop said.

Jude continued to hunt desperately for his words. “In the barn, but I wanted—” He stopped, his tongue failing him as the whole colony stood watching and listening.

The bishop waited a moment and then walked over and touched the top wing of the plane. He ran his hand over the coated fabric and nodded. “A beautiful buggy. Pulled by horses with wings, eh? How many, Master Whetstone?”

Jude was trying not to look at Lyyndaya for help, but did anyway, and she was making sure she did not look at him or offer any by keeping her eyes on the stubble directly in front of the toes of her boots.

“There are—” Jude stepped away from the crowd pressing in on him and Lyyndaya and turned around to look at the plane behind him as if he were seeing it for the first time—“there are—” He stood utterly still and stared at the engine as if it did not belong there. Then he looked at Bishop Zook’s thick black beard and broad face. “Ninety. Ninety horses.”

The bishop nodded again and kept running his hand over the wing. “More than enough. There is the problem however—if God had meant us to fly, Master Whetstone, wouldn’t he have given us wings, hm?”

He took his hand from the plane and looked at Jude directly. Several of the men and women murmured their agreement with the bishop’s question and nodded their heads. Most remained silent, waiting for Jude’s answer. Jude stared at the bishop, trying to gauge the look in the tall man’s blue eyes. He thought he saw a flash of humor so he went ahead with the answer he had used a hundred times in their own Amish colony as well as in dozens of the ones around it.

“Bishop Zook,” he responded, “if God had meant us to ride a buggy he would have given us wheels and four legs.”

“Ah ha!” shouted the bishop, slapping his huge hand against his leg and making most of the people jump, including Lyyndaya. “You have it, Master Whetstone, you have it.” He clapped his hands lightly in appreciation and a smattering of relieved laughter came from the small crowd. “So now take me up.”
“What?”

“As bishop, I must make sure it is safe for Miss Kurtz, ja? After all, who has ever had such a horse and buggy in our colony, eh?” He gave his hat to one of the men and climbed into the front of the two cockpits.

“I only have a little time before I must head back to Philadelphia—” Jude began, again glancing at Lyyndaya for help, who had gone so far as to raise her gaze to stare fixedly at the bishop and the plane, but still refused to make eye contact with the young man.

“Five minutes,” said the bishop with a gleam in his eye. “That is all I ask. I am not the one you are courting, eh?”

The people laughed again. The thought passed through Jude’s head that the bishop was enjoying a lot of laughter at his expense. Then he shrugged and climbed into the rear cockpit. He saw his father in the crowd and gestured with his hand.

“Papa, will you give the propeller a turn?” he asked.

“Of course, my boy.”

As Jude’s father, a tall, slender man with a short beard and warm brown eyes, walked toward the plane, Bishop Zook leaned his head back and asked, “Now, before the engine noise, tell me, what is the name of this aeroplane and where do they make such things?”

Jude handed the bishop a leather helmet and goggles. “It’s a Curtiss JN-4, the Jenny, and they’re usually made in Buffalo, New York. But our flying club outside of Philadelphia was able to purchase these at a very good price from our Canadian friends just across the border. They are built there by Curtiss’s Canadian associate, the Canadian Aeroplane Company, so we call them the Canuck.”

“But they are the same as the New York ones?”

“Almost. They have one great advantage. I use a stick, a joystick, to control the aeroplane in these. The old American ones have a wheel that is not as good.”

“Why don’t we put the stick in ours then?”

“We will. The next model has the stick, the JN-4D. But they have only brought it out this month. There are not enough of them. Besides, it’s 1917 and they are all going to the army. Civilian clubs will not be able to purchase them while the war is on.”

Jude’s father, in his brown summer shirt and straw hat, was standing
in front of the plane and smiling. Jude played with a switch on the con-
trol panel in his cockpit. Then he pulled down his goggles and smiled back at his father and made a circle in the air with his hand. His father nodded, put both hands on the top blade of the wooden propeller, and swung it downward. The engine coughed twice and roared. His father’s hat went spinning into the sky with the prop wash.

“Contact,” Jude said loudly. “Please buckle on your harness, Bishop Zook.”

“Ah. So we truly do have something in common with the horses.”

Jude’s father had caught up with his hat. He looked back at his son and pointed east. Jude turned the plane in that direction.

“What is your father telling us?” shouted Bishop Zook.

“The direction the wind or breeze is coming from. We take off into the wind.”

“Why?”

“It gives us lift to help get the aeroplane off the ground.”

The craft moved ahead, slowly bouncing over the field, then gathering speed and rising into the air. Jude took it to a thousand feet and made sure he flew over the entire town of Paradise and especially the bishop’s dairy farm on the west end. The sun was still an hour or two over the horizon and covered the plane in light. The bishop began to laugh and slapped one of his hands against the side of the Jenny.

“Too beautiful, too beautiful,” Jude heard him call out. “Mein Gott, what a gift you have given the birds, such a gift, such a world.”

When they landed again and the propeller had spun down to a stop, Bishop Zook climbed out, pumped Jude’s hand like an excited boy, and then beckoned to Lyyndaya.

“Come, come, my dear,” he smiled, “your buggy awaits.”

Feeling every eye on her, the skin of her face burning, she stepped up to the plane and the bishop helped her into the front cockpit. She used one hand to manage her dress and the other to grab onto parts of the plane. When she was finally in her seat, the bishop gave her the helmet and goggles and showed her how to tighten the buckles of the shoulder harnesses. Then he walked to the front of the plane and bent his head at Jude’s father.
“May I?”
Jude’s father stood back from the propeller. “Of course.”
“I just pull it downward?”
“Ja, just a sharp tug and then let it go. Do not hold on.”
“Yes, yes, all right—when?”
“My son will tell you.”

Lyyndaya sat in her cockpit feeling an odd mixture of embarrassment, excitement, and fear. Suddenly Jude’s hand squeezed her left shoulder from behind.

“You will be all right, Lyyndy Lyyndy Lou,” he said.
She could not turn all the way around to see him, but she knew he would be smiling just as his use of the childhood nickname had made her smile as well. Now, ten years later, without having had a chance to discuss it between themselves, the plane ride had become a buggy ride and they were courting, thanks to Bishop Zook. Well, it would give them something to talk about besides the weather and the crops when he came back to Lancaster County from Philadelphia in a few days.

She could not see what Jude was doing, but the bishop all of a sudden nodded, swung down on the propeller with his enormous hands and arms, and the engine burst into life. They began to roll across the ground faster than she had ever traveled in anything before, faster than galloping her mare, Anna, bareback. She felt her heart hammering and her mouth go dry.

“Hang on!” shouted Jude.

The wind was rushing against her face and body. The earth streamed past brown and green. The sky was a streak of blue and silver. Then the plane lifted into the air and her stomach seemed to turn inside out and upside down. She looked down and the men and women and children were like dolls and the wagons like toys and the houses like tiny boxes. Suddenly the plane banked to the right and she felt herself falling out of her seat. The leather flying helmet, unfastened, was torn from her head, her hair exploded in the rush of air, and as her arms dropped over the side into empty space she could not stop herself and started to scream.