

DIANA AND DAEDALUS

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and losing her veneer of ease and unable to stem the flow of words, Betty continued, "I did so much want to enjoy this vacation, but all I've done so far is worry about expenses and curse the heat. And now this morning my husband is so mysterious. He insisted that I have the car and trailer and myself ready to leave the moment the pilots' briefing ends."

The two girls mentally moved closer to Betty as they warmed up to her sudden outburst of confidences. Intuitively they told her by the compassion in their eyes and the expressions on their faces that they understood.

Sensing their encouragement, Betty released her loneliness and worry even more. "I shouldn't be telling strangers these things, but I'll go crazy if I don't. Bill—that's Bill Coverley, my husband—is a wonderful guy, but when this soaring fever gets him, I just don't know. He was so determined to get here I think he would have committed larceny or mayhem if it had been necessary. And all the expenses! He had to have a new 'ball and bank' or some such indicator. That cost \$70. And the trailer had to be welded. Then our car acted up. It's practically new and the oil system or something went wrong in the motor and the dealer we bought it from would only pay half the cost of fixing it. And on and on it went. All I can think of is about \$300.00 worth of bills coming due at the end of the month."

Having released these thoughts, Betty immediately felt a little ashamed, but much relieved. With a sheepish smile and the lowering of her eyelids she continued much more slowly, "Aren't I awful to talk like this. Please forgive me."

"Sister, if you'll pardon the word," said June facetiously, join the club! What do I mean join—you're already accepted as a full-fledged member." Anne laughed, and leaning toward Betty, said, "We do understand. You'll feel better now that you've gotten that off your chest." Unconsciously Anne laid her hand with friendliness on Betty's wrist as she continued, "A few moments ago I was feeling worse than you, but already I feel much better."

At this moment, the contest director was ending the pilots' briefing. Metal chairs scraped on the concrete of the patio floor as the pilots stood.

Some started to leave, others pulled their chairs around to form small groups to compare notes and discuss flight possibilities. Frank Elder, the receding line of his hair quite noticeable, nodded to Bill Coverley as they strode through the hotel door. Bill's self absorption was so great that he scarcely noticed Frank. In a very few minutes Bill was going to put into operation a plan which he had spent many hours and much thought evolving. He was looking for Betty because her part in this operation was very important. Bill swivel-hipped around several chairs in the lobby as his rapid walk followed the most direct path to the corner where the three girls were sitting. Betty rose and started speaking as Bill stopped abruptly in front of them, "Hi, Bill, I'd like you to meet two friends. You probably know their husbands. This is Anne Howard, and this is June Elder." With a slight bow from the waist, Bill said to each girl, "How do you do!" Without waiting for either girl's reply, he continued, "You must excuse us, but I am pressed for time and I need Betty's help. Nice to have met you. Goodbye, goodbye." As he spoke, Bill had gently reached out and taken hold of Betty's hand. He turned Betty easily and then led her away toward the exit. She had time only to turn and look at her two friends and make an expression of quizzed helplessness. Frank Elder walked up at this moment and noticing the strained expressions worn by June and Anne, he asked, "What's up? What's the matter?"

Anne explained. Frank laughed and said, "You must forgive him, he is noted for his rigid planning. This is one thing that makes him such a great glider pilot. I can't imagine why he is in a hurry now though, because it should be at least an hour and a half before take off."

Outside the hotel, still holding Betty's hand, Bill opened the car door and helped her in. Betty always marveled at the physical control Bill exercised. He knew how to lead her body so persuasively and she loved this. Bill's inner urgency was translated to Betty. She looked at him and became conscious that his thoughts were more serious than usual.

"Dearest," he said, "I am going to be terribly unfair and ask almost the superhuman from you. I know you've been wondering what I've been planning and I appreciate your not asking. It wasn't until the final weather

briefing just now that I was sure we could attempt the flight I want to make today." As Bill stopped and took a moment to organize his ideas, Betty said demurely, but with great sincerity, "Bill, I want with all my heart to be a good crew for you. Tell me what my job is and I'll do it."

Bill's gratitude relaxed his expression of concentration and he squeezed Anne's hand as he started to explain. "No one has ever made the flight I am going to attempt. I will declare Yuma, Arizona as my goal. You must leave at once and drive through Banning Pass, through Indio, and be at the south end of the Salton Sea by 1:00 o'clock or a little after. You see why I wanted the car and trailer ready to leave?" Anne nodded assent. Bill continued, "I will try to make radio contact beginning at 1:00 o'clock and will try every fifteen minutes after that."

Bill released Anne's hand and turned his wrist so she could synchronize her watch with his. Reaching into the glove compartment Bill removed two sectional maps. Opening up the one for the San Diego area, Bill showed Betty where he had marked in red crayon her automobile route to Yuma. His glider route was outlined in blue crayon. Together they went over Betty's route but only as far as the South end of the Salton Sea. Bill folded the map and attached it to the clip board which Betty would keep on the seat beside her. Looking into Betty's eyes, Bill smiled momentarily at the seriousness with which she returned his gaze. His smile prompted her to laugh softly and together they released the tension which had engulfed them. Their arms encircled one another and they held themselves desperately close. Bill's head nuzzled deeply into the smooth and tender curve between Betty's neck and shoulder, and his muffled murmur of, "Darling," filled her with a delicious feeling of warm honey. Abruptly, Bill returned them to reality. He replaced the second map in the glove compartment. He turned the radio equipment on for a final check. While waiting for it to warm up, he asked Betty if she had money enough. She had. Satisfied that all was in readiness, Bill slid out. Betty turned expectantly for she knew Bill had some last minute instructions to give. He began, "Betty, you must drive carefully but you must also drive fast. You will plan to turn the radio on just before 1:00 o'clock. Now, most important, if you do not make radio contact, you are to keep