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The Time Will Come by Will MacMahon



"The rite was sacred."

DOR-8437-M-18, an outstanding beauty in an aerial age when all young flying women were lovely, was just now in a fierce temper. The savage frown on her hawk-like face only added to her charm.

She swayed across the magnetic floor of her sun parlor, her six feet of willowy height like a reed in the wind. A touch of her long, steely fingers set in operation the much-used teleplane, and immediately a vision of the sunny heavens overhead appeared on a side-wall screen.

A slow-going, ponderous, noisy quadplane was doing its maximum of eighty miles per hour at the 2,000-foot level, apparently a Mid-West farm lad going to the Atlantic Coast

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general market. He was infringing on the taxi zone, but he knew that the small, brilliantly colored public service planes would not dare to hit him.

At the 6,000-foot level a passenger express whirled westward at high speed, no doubt the third section of the Boston-Pasadena triplane line. The slogan of this cross-continent corporation was: All the flight by daylight.

"Double darn this old telltale!" DOR-8437-M-18 exclaimed fervently. "I never get altitude when I want it."

She angrily twirled the dial of the teleplane. The nearer planes faded out, and stars began to appear in the

sunlit firmament. Between two fixed, twinkling points a dull blue spot grew into strength on the screen.

The girl glared at it, and then seized a pair of calipers with which she made a radial measurement that confirmed her suspicions.

"The unspeakable little beast!" she muttered irately. "He spied on me all day yesterday, and he slept up there last night. I wish to Jehoshaphat he would float into the aerial bombing practise zone and get blown to Hajifax and back."

She made a further calculation that revealed by the spectrum test that the hated man was at the 26,000-foot level, far beyond the range of naked eyesight. His high-power glasses, however, made her home easily visible to him, and she was convinced that the steady flashing on the indicator of her upper realm radio telephone was caused by the call that he was vainly trying to put through to her.

She glanced through a window to the white enamel surface of the little landing-field at the rear of the house. Her apple-green monoplane was parked just outside the one-plane hangar, its wings folded demurely.

The girl clashed her glistening, pointed teeth. If it had not been for that despicable male creature afloat in the ether, she could have taken to the air and made that Boston-Pasadena triplane look like a captive balloon.

In San Francisco, at the Chinese tithing take-off field, there was a young man who was not bold, but gentle, modest and self-effacing. And of course it had to be DOR-8437-M-18's bad luck that he was too poor to afford a twin house.

"Some fine day," she murmured whimsically, "I'm going to lose my head and agree to live under the same roof with him."

The girl turned back the dial of the telltale to encompass the heavily traveled air lanes up to 10,000 feet,

and then she called her chum, Florence, on the lower realm radiophone. The dialing read: FLO-8441-M-19.

"Hello, Flo," she said. "This is Dorothy. I tried to get you yesterday, but you were out."

"I was in all day, Dot," the other maiden declared. "I'm hardening my face with tannic acid to join the African fortnight flight. That equatorial sun is triple hell on the skin."

"That's queer. I must have dialed you a dozen times, Flo."

"The tape doesn't show it, my dear!"

"Well, anyhow," Dorothy went on hurriedly, "I wanted to tell you that the dentist flew in from his laboratory, and I haven't a natural tooth left in my head. He says that he never did a better job in porcelain; I have needle points on both lowers and uppers."

"Congratulations, my dear," Florence said heartily. "I have two silly old molars left, but as I am not man-crazy it doesn't matter. And you must remember not to bite too hard—if you happen to fly to California!"

A flush mounted to the temples of DOR-8437-M-18. The smoldering light in her dark eyes softened.

"Aha!" FLO-8441-M-19 exclaimed rallying. "I can feel you trembling."

Dorothy hastily took her elbow from the 'phone table.

"That's vibration from the ozone motor," she insisted nervously. "Just a moment, my dear."

She turned to look at the screen of the tell-tale. At the 5,000-foot level a plane was hovering, and the girl hurriedly trained her binoculars on its identification marks.

Then she spoke swiftly into the 'phone, her tone urgent.

"My awful Aunt Helen is over-head," she explained. "Slide over at once, and help me to get rid of her. Let's give the old cat our

maiden's creed; she can't stomach it for a minute."

"Gangway!" Florence shouted, and hung up.

DOROTHY walked to the door of the sun parlor and looked out over the treeless, rolling Westchester hills. Everywhere, at spaced intervals, were small houses, each with its little white landing-field that at night was electrically lighted.

This was a residence section owned by unmarried young people. Farther north, the roofs just visible over the horizon, were the double houses of the wedding folk, each with a two-plane hangar. Their children were housed in huge dormitories, since privacy and the bliss of solitude were not appreciated by the young of the species.

Dorothy now could see quite plainly the insignia on her aunt's plane: HEL-10166-W-59. And up the cement state road the figure of her rescuer appeared, and rapidly approached.

Florence was standing on the central moving platform, and now she stepped to the slower one to her left, thence to a still slower one, and so on to the grass plot in front of her chum's home. She entered the house just as the dreaded Aunt Helen alighted on the small flying-field, as softly as a feather.

"Think up some old ones, Flo," Dorothy whispered. "We'll make her sick."

Florence's eyes were a pitiless blue, like the ice of a glacier. She draped her length, perhaps an inch less than the other girl's, over a lounge, half closed her eyelids and hid her long hands in her sleeves.

"Hello, old top!" the aunt called out boisterously to her nieces as she entered the room, and then she caught sight of the visitor.

"Oh, hello," she added lamely.

The old lady was fifty-nine years of age and a widow, as her flying

license indicated. The average span of life for women was one hundred years. They were called "young" up to fifty, which was the marriageable dead-line; thereafter they were "old" and doomed to celibacy.

Men, delicate creatures, were "aged" at forty-five. A widower was so rare a bird that his experience was immortalized in talking-tape, whereon he explained how he miraculously escaped death at the hands of his wife before she was gathered to her mothers.

Aunt Helen had been even taller than her niece, but now she was somewhat stooped. Her features were those of the eagle, rapacious and cruel.

"I was just saying to Dot," Flo remarked, "that virtue is its own reward."

"And I agree with her," Dorothy said, "that to be good is to be happy."

HEL-10166-W-59 started as if she had been stung by a hornet. A dull red overswept her lean cheeks and settled in her beak of a nose.

"You unmarried females give me a pain in the neck!" she declared bitterly. "I think your innocent pose is only a rotten trick. In my day, young women shot off their mouths with original thoughts, particularly on sex. And here are you two flannel-mouthed hussies dealing in platitudes that were old when China conquered the world a hundred years ago."

"A pure heart and a clean mind——" Dot began.

"Stop!" Aunt Helen groaned.

"A loyal love, each to its kind," Flo finished.

"Love? Hell!" the old lady gritted as she casually tuned up the telltale. When the blue spot appeared, she turned triumphantly to the two girls.

"Now I know you're play-acting!" she announced grimly. "Up there is the man for my niece, and

there isn't an atom of sentiment in his make-up. Marry him, Dot, and you'll have a twin-house career and a fortune that is absolutely tithe-free. There's condor blood in his plane's veins; what other male do you know who can go up 25,000 feet and sleep there?"

"I never could endure a man who pursues a woman," Dorothy objected, shuddering delicately, and Florence shook with her.

"No!" HEL-10166-W-59 exclaimed scathingly. "You want a little milk-sop with a schoolgirl complexion who will shriek bloody murder when you nibble his right ear."

"Oh, auntie, how could you?" her niece gasped, with a sly wink at her chum.

"To the pure, all things are pure," Florence asserted glibly.

"I didn't mention the *left* ear," the old lady pointed out in self-defense.

Both girls at once screamed in well-simulated dismay and hid their faces.

"Hell's bells!" HEL-10166-W-59 moaned. "You young minxes are too good to be true. I'm going to get out of here before I lose my temper."

"Oh, must you go?" Dorothy murmured.

"If I stay, I'll go cuckoo," her aunt declared. "But, remember this, Dorothy: If you marry a one-house man, the time will come when you will wish to kill him for disturbing your meditations—and if you do that, you have to prove that he snored."

"You had trouble over the death of your fourth husband, didn't you?" Florence asked meanly.

"Yes; the prosecution tried to prove that I faked the dictaphone that I put in his bedroom." HEL-10166-W-59 replied coolly. "But I countered with testimony that he cracked his knuckles, so that was that!"

"For the right man," her niece

remarked dreamily, "I believe I even could live with the poor people of Park Avenue or Riverside Drive, in one of those dreadful elevator apartments, and fly with him each day to his labors in the Berkshire dairies."

"Love is everything," Florence agreed.

THE old lady's retort can not be given here, but she was still swearing to herself when she took off from the little flying-field to go back to her Adirondack home. From her 5,000-foot level she saw above her a small biplane of a disgusting type, and idly wondered what it was doing in a speed lane. Those Drof flyers had no shame; their rattlety-bang machines took them there and back, and they thought this was flying.

The flivver made a really creditable landing on the spot where HEL-10166-W-59's fine monoplane courser had stood, and only slightly bent a tin wing against the hangar. The flyer who alighted was a youth not quite five feet tall.

He had an infantile face, with a complexion so clear that his beauty was luminous. There was not a disfiguring muscle in his limbs; he was as smooth and rounded as a baby.

Expertly, he touched up his cheeks with a blush puff to remove the slight fatigue of flying, but he did not adorn his lips. They bloomed with natural health, in a veritable Cupid's bow. Over his ears he modestly wore gauze coverings, as was the custom of unmarried males.

Dorothy and Florence had been absorbed in a discussion of the condor flyer that would have astonished the hard-boiled Aunt Helen. These maidens knew their rights; man was to be chased, never the pursuer. That tithe-free individual, who was emulating the sentinel buzzard above them, was nothing less than a horrible throw-back to the sex slavery

days of women in the Twentieth Century.

The gentle, faltering footsteps of the youth at the sun parlor door brought Dorothy dashing to greet him. She stopped at arm's length, fascinated with his manifold charms.

"Precious little man!" she breathed. "Oh, to think that you came to me!"

He stood there, eyes downcast, summoning up courage to speak.

Florence, truly a chum worth while, quietly left the room, crossed the grass plot, and went from a slower platform to a faster until she disappeared up the road.

"I—I——" the young man began, and then found his tongue. "I have been ordered to fly with tithes to Peking," he went on. "But I convinced myself that first I should conquer my manly reserve, and bid you good-bye in person. A dreadful rumor has reached us on the Pacific Coast that the Manchu women are taking white husbands by the awful law of propinquity."

"I shall save you!" the girl asserted fiercely. "Come to my arms!"

The youth stepped back in a panic, and put a shrinking hand to his right ear.

"But I—I can not afford a double house," he half whispered.

Dorothy glanced around at her sacred possessions, with their utter privacy and independence, then bravely faced her destiny.

"My darling boy!" she breathed. "Give me that right ear."

Blushing furiously, he bared it from its covering, and solemnly—for the rite was sacred—she bent gracefully from the waist and sunk her pointed artificial teeth into the pink, shell-like offering.

"Ouch!" he gasped.

"Now, no Manchu female would have the gall to claim you," the girl declared serenely. "I have marked you as mine. When you return from the tithing we shall be

married, and go to live in a single house for the connubial poor. Love is everything!"

In their absorption in each other they did not notice that a blue plane had been spiraling down toward them out of the ether. The condor flyer, deciding that there was not room for his landing while the field was polluted by the flivver, swooped off a hundred yards and alighted in a grassy lane.

"Some confounded butcher boy parking against regulations," he muttered. "Well, when he leaves, I'm going to kiss the flirtatious Dot right on the mouth."

No other evidence is needed to prove that this man was an atavistic brute. No girl had been caressed in that disgraceful fashion for generations. The Chinese conquerors of the world had outlawed the Caucasian custom of lip contact, simultaneously with the eradication of all germ diseases, and it was popularly believed that non-kissing meant the salvation of the race.

"I had a sporting flight from San Francisco," the beautiful youth was saying. "You know, my plane has a false recognition mark, and it is powered with a second-hand pursuit plane. I had a bushel of fun with the Chink traffic cops who towered to chase me out of a speed lane, only to find that I had the wings of them."

"My wonderful little man!" the girl exclaimed. "Oh, to think of the days when I shall have your left ear, too!"

"Please, please, must you speak of that?" he murmured ehidingly, his azure eyes slowly welling with tears.

"Forgive me, Roy!" Dorothy pleaded contritely. "Of course, I should be satisfied with the engagement ear; the married one will come in due time. I shall try to contain myself and not offend you again."

"You are pardoned," the young man said. "The thought of matrimony is terrifying to me, but I know

you'll be gentle and considerate. And now I must go; I wish to reach the Denver tourist hangars before dark. Good-bye, dearest."

"Oh, let me bite you just once more!"

"Must you?"

He submitted to the caress, then fled to his disguised flivver, and went hurtling into the west.

THE condor flyer slowly approached the girl's home. He was a very tall man, at least five feet six, and he walked with what was lamentably close to a vulgar assurance.

His face was strong. There was in the Museum of Antiquities the portrait of a ten-year-old boy of the lusty Twentieth Century whose features resembled this man's.

Yielding to the racial distaste of superfluous hair, he had faithfully employed acids and electricity to remove all such growth from his arms and legs and chest. After marriage, he vowed mentally, he wouldn't give a hoot; he would let himself go and permit nature to take its course.

"Hello, Dot!" he cried out as he entered the room. "Give us a kiss right on the smacker."

"I'll give you a smack right on the kisser!" she retorted furiously.

Her doubled-up fists were eloquent of her meaning, although she naturally hesitated to strike a man.

"Oh, well, I can wait until after the ceremony," the fellow rejoined calmly. "But none of this ear-nibbling for me; that's the trick of cats and dogs and Chinks. I'm a one hundred per cent American; the slant-eyes never conquered us condor guys. If they hadn't made us tithe-free, we would have bombarded Peking from the 25,000-foot level, and put their eagle-blood machines on the blink."

"If you only knew how repellent you are when you boast!" the girl remarked hotly.

"I'm not boasting; I'm admitting," the ruffian replied. "And I've

got a two-house joint that's waiting for you. I was to meet your Aunt Helen here to talk it all over, but I saw that she ducked out for some reason. Did you give the old gal the bum's rush?"

"What coarse womanish language you use!" Dorothy exclaimed disgustedly. "Have you no manly refinement at all?"

"I've got something better," the brute asserted, drawing a document from his pocket. "Cast your lamps on this, and sign on the dotted line."

DOR-8437-M-18 gasped at sight of the paper, and her hawklike features blanched. It was the well-known forcible marriage decree of the Chinese Viceroy in America, permitting the holder to have and to hold any unmarried female whom he desired as his legal wife. Here was an ancient idea completely out of tune with the times.

"I claim the olden privilege of the harvest moon," the girl announced definitely. "That gives me six weeks of absolute freedom, you cad!"

"Hell! Who tipped you off?" the man muttered angrily.

She did not explain that Florence had been her adviser. The Chinese law was strict in that a suitor must not only wait for the harvest moon, but entirely absent himself from the scene in the interim.

"I'll fly to an oasis in the Sahara Desert, and grow as fat and round as any girl could demand," this fiend in human form asserted with a grin. And he added to himself: "I'll grow hair to my heart's content, too! I hope my chest looks like a mattress."

MEANWHILE, two groups of school children had approached the condor airplane. In one party were the girls—slender, tall creatures with sharp faces that promised to become adorably hawklike. The boys were cherubic, and bashfully kept to themselves.

"Let's play school," the largest girl suggested, "or shall we chase the gizzards out of those confounded little sissies? I simply can't endure their curls!"

"It's a hot day," another lassie pointed out, "and of late I haven't had the urge to tease the plump darlings."

The first girl gave her colleague a hard look, but the latter was greedily eyeing one of the smaller lads. He caught her gaze, and blushing turned his pretty head.

"All right, school it is," the tallest maiden decided. "Now, children, the lesson will be on the art of flying."

"Oh, that bores me to tears," the youngest girl of all protested. "We know it by heart."

"Do you, you little slob?" the volunteer teacher remarked. "Let's hear you give the first lesson."

"In the glorious days of the machine-gun age," the littlest girl intoned, "Li Fung Fat, a charlatan of Ho-pang-ho, conceived the idea of transfusing the blood of a hawk into the veins of a chicken in order to make the latter fowl a scion of the skies. The charlatan was behended when his game rooster, so treated, pursued the Emperor's hunting-falcon into the clouds and struck it dead with his spurs."

She paused for breath.

"That'll do out of you," the tallest girl announced. "Next pupil."

Another child took up the time-worn tale.

"Yrneh Drof, the tenth of his industrial line, having partly lived down the stigma of a fortune won in the manufacture of a sickening type of automobile, which crawled over the earth's surface at less than forty miles per hour, dedicated his life to the study of bird blood. He discovered in this magic fluid the secret of gravitation, and was enabled to apply it to airplanes so that an accidental fall became impossible. The inventor thereupon marketed a cheap flying-

machine that today disgraces the air as his ancestor's automobile polluted the earth."

"You flunked the name of the secret," the pretended teacher said severely.

"I know! I know! I know!" several girls shouted in unison.

"Well, Flossie, you give it," was the command.

"Trypanosomamaniacal hermionitis," the answer promptly came. "And Yrneh Drof, the tenth, made his out of blackbirds' blood because they were cheap."

"My mother's plane is a sharp-shinned hawk," one little girl explained proudly, "but my father says it must have owl blood in it; she stays out a lot at night."

All the girls laughed loudly at this, and the little boys near by looked self-conscious in their pretense at not understanding. At that moment a welcome diversion occurred.

A missile out of the sky struck the center of a pond alongside the lane. The boys shrieked in terror, but the girls dashed to see the treasure trove.

It was a chicken, still much alive, but entirely denuded of feathers. The largest girl rescued the fowl from the water, and held it head down with the cruelty of her sex.

"Oh, let the poor thing go!" a small boy cried out in anguish as he buried his pretty face in his hands to shut out the pitiable sight.

"Isn't that just like a boy?" the girl demanded of her companions. "Now, how in —! How did it get here in this boudoir condition?"

At the sound of that frank word "boudoir," all the boys promptly left, with their heads in the air. Of course they knew that girls will be girls, but this was going too far.

"I'm betting the bird escaped from a coop on a kosher chicken truck flying down the Harlem valley," a girl suggested. "It jumped out into a hundred-mile air-pressure and lost its

feathers, and then was blown a mile over here."

"Sounds reasonable," their leader agreed, "unless this is Li Fung Fat's famous game rooster, and he tackled a condor!"

The girls chuckled heartily at this bizarre thought while they poked their long, wiry fingers into the chicken's plump body. It squawked feebly and struggled to escape from the torture.

Girl-like, the little savages looked about for something to focus the cruelty that swayed them. They yearned to sacrifice this windfall from the heavens in a fitting manner.

"Condor?" one tall child remarked thoughtfully. "There stands a machine of that blood. Let's put a transfusion of this rooster into its veins."

"Yes, let's!" another reckless miss cried excitedly.

They swarmed into the cockpit and opened the equilibration chamber, and then the tallest girl tore open the fowl's neck with her steely hands and guided the crimson flow into the receptacle.

The flying man would not have objected had he known; it was an interesting experiment, and he had an affinity with roosters, and bulls, and rams. The insignia on his plane was: BUK-UM-27. It meant that he was Buck, an unmarried man, aged 27, a rogue if ever there was one.

"What if it's a hen?" a girl inquired, eagerly watching the flow of blood.

"If it is, this plane ought to lay eggs," the chief experimenter replied. "But who gives a hoot?"

She tossed the still struggling fowl to the ground and, with shrieks of laughter, the rowdy crowd kicked it along the lane in an impromptu football game.

The condor flyer stepped out onto the sun porch and stared at the noisy girls.

"Little savages!" he exclaimed. "Thank God, I was born a man."

"I'm only sorry you weren't endowed with fewer womanly traits," Dorothy retorted. "Come in here, and sign over to me the usual forfeit of fifty-one per cent of your property, in the event that a fat woman of the oasis proves alluring to your he-man tastes."

She said the word "fat" as if it meant "unclean."

"All right, my predaceous beauty," he agreed. "But I'll be back on time to tame you, kid, or bust a lung trying."

As he mounted his blue machine to tower into the azure sky he observed blood-splashes in the cockpit.

"Some ruffian of a girl got a good sock on the snout," he told himself amusedly.

Then he took off to the south, intending to make a vast, high circle out over the Atlantic Ocean and to sleep five miles above the home of his betrothed before setting out for the Sahara Desert. With no riding-lights showing, Dorothy could not see him, and thus the letter of the Chinese archaic law would be obeyed.

IT WAS midnight when DOR-8437-M-18 suddenly awakened, a roaring in her ears and a flashing light on her eyelids. The crash that followed on the cement road near by advertised an aerial disaster such as had not occurred for a generation.

An airplane actually had fallen out of the sky!

Lights sprang up on many flying-fields in the neighborhood, and soon a dozen airplanes were clustered about the smoking ruins of the crashed machine.

Dorothy and Florence identified the charred form of the aviator. They were apologetic when they did so, because the one means of identification was a gold tooth, and this marked the dead man as a vulgarian.

"You're sitting pretty now, Dot," Flo remarked. "You've got the guy's tithe-free bankroll, and you can marry

the beautiful boy you love and stake him to a twin house."

"Can—and will," the fortunate girl announced. "I'll make a night flight and catch him at Denver. I can easily bribe the Chinese tithers to put a substitute in his place. Chinky-Chinky-Chinaman eats dead rats!"

"Don't be hysterical, my dear!"

"Oh, but just think, Flo! Tomorrow night I'll have Roy by the *left* ear!"

"Some girls have all the luck," FLO-8441-M-19 remarked enviously. "And I hope you'll settle down now, girlie."

"Who wouldn't?" Dorothy de-

manded happily. "With a sweet little man like mine!"

THE little schoolgirls held a secret conference over their responsibility in the matter of the featherless fowl. Some of them argued that it was a game rooster whose blood overcame the gravitation of the condor fluid. Others asserted that it was a hen that weakened the floating element. At any rate, the mixture had proved defective, and the condor flyer was dead.

And Dorothy bit her shy young man on the left ear, and they are living happily ever after.
