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# Rose Harbor

Newport  
of the  
West Series  
BOOK FOUR

Pamela S. Meyers



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*Dedicated to the Memory of the  
Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)  
Of World War II. These brave women served their  
country by ferrying new bombers to military bases,  
testing aircraft, and training pilots. Most have passed away  
by now, and only a few were still alive when they began to receive long  
overdue recognition for their efforts from the U.S. Government.*

*The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous  
in mercy.*

*He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.*

*<sup>1</sup>He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us  
according to our iniquities.*

*For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy  
toward them that fear him.*

*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our  
transgressions from us.*

*Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them  
that fear him.*

*For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*

Psalm 103 8-14 (KJV)



*August 1943*

*Somewhere in the air near Sweetwater, Texas*

Grace Bauer's stomach roiled. She winced. Not now. Not at five thousand feet and climbing. Pressure built in her throat and she swallowed against it. It was a good two more hours before they'd reach New York. She had to get this B-17 to ten thousand feet. Then her copilot could take over.

Her stomach lurched. "Take over the controls, now."

"Roger." Betty Newport gripped the lever between them, and Grace let go as the B-17 continued its climb to cruising altitude.

She grabbed her discarded paper coffee cup and let her churning stomach have its way, then she sat back and took a deep breath. "I have no idea where that came from."

"Maybe it was the bad barbeque you ate last night."

"No Texas barbeque is bad, especially from Slim's Roundup. Probably the coffee I drank. Whoever made it last must have used the coffee rations from last year."

"I agree about this morning's coffee, but you northerners don't know good barbeque from bad. You okay, or should I stay at the controls?"

“Give me a minute. I’d give anything for a toothbrush about now.” Grace closed her eyes. Served her right for ignoring the sore throat that had plagued her the past couple of days. She needed the hours this flight would give her. The more under her belt on the B-17, the better chance she’d have of being trained on the B-29.

As intimidating as the larger bird was, she loved the idea of being the first woman to pilot the monster. And her experience on the 29 should enhance her resumé when she applied with a commercial airline after the war. Airlines may think they only wanted male pilots, but that was a small obstacle.

Twenty minutes later, assured her stomach was going to behave, she glanced at Betty. “I’m good now. Taking back the controls. I can hang on for another two and a half hours.” She glanced out the window. “Looks like autumn has taken over the Ozarks. I’ve always wanted to go there. Frank and I talked about our honeymoon ...”

She blinked away the moisture in her eyes. Would she ever be able to think about the past without tearing up? Eight months wasn’t enough time for the ache to go away.

“Don’t say it, Grace. Think about other things, like what we’ll do tonight on our layover. It’s been ages since I’ve been to New York. Think you’ll be up for a night on the town?”

“I hope so. He’s married to someone else now, and I need something to shake off this melancholy.”

Within half an hour they approached Kentucky, and the flight promised to be smooth all the way to Long Island.

The radio squawked. “Bowman Field to Flight SWWB1726 headed for LaGuardia. Please adjust flight plan as follows.” Betty jotted down the coordinates then read them off to Grace.

She began correcting the course. “It’s not that much different from the previous plan. We’ll still make it on ...” A sharp pain radiated through her wrist and down her forearm. Her breath hitched, but she completed the adjustment as nausea pushed

into her throat and chills coursed through her body. “Betty, take controls. Now. See if we can put down at Wright.”

“Roger.” She handed an empty paper cup to Grace. “Use mine.”

A minute later, as Betty asked for permission to land at the Ohio air base, Grace wrapped her arms around her torso as best she could, given her harness, and closed her eyes, grateful turbulence was light today. A bumpy ride would not be good.

After another fifteen minutes, they approached Wright Field near Dayton, and soon they were on the ground and taxiing toward a spot near the tower. Betty brought the plane to a halt, and a couple of airmen approached the plane.

Grace released her safety harness then moved to step through the narrow space between the seats, and her knees buckled.

“Whatever this is, it’s bad.” She grabbed the back of her seat and let herself slide to the floor of the bomb bay. Pulling her knees up to her chest, she closed her eyes.

The sound of the door being opened on the side of the fuselage told her Betty had climbed down into the well, next to the door.

“We need help. We have a sick pilot here.”

At Betty’s shout, Grace drew in a breath and willed her churning stomach to behave. Only a few more minutes and she could do what she had to do in something other than a paper cup. At the thought, she remembered the pair of cups next to her seat. She moved to stand but sat again. No way was she able to clean up behind herself. *Pity the person who has to toss them.*

Someone took hold of her arm. “Let’s get you out of here.”

She opened her mouth to say thank you, but everything went black.



SOMETHING hard and cold pressed against her chest. Grace's eyes popped open, and she stared into a pair of pale blue eyes, hooded by bushy gray brows. The rest of his face was covered by a medical mask. "Where am I?"

He lifted the stethoscope and leaned back. "You're in the office of Wright Field in Ohio. You don't remember coming here on a B-17?"

Snatches of recollections swirled in her head. Taking off for LaGuardia and losing her cookies in a paper cup, pain in her wrist, putting down at Wright. She pushed up on her elbows then fell back. "I need to return to the plane. It's due at LaGuardia this afternoon."

"Your copilot is taking it the rest of the way. You're in no shape to be piloting any plane right now."

She propped herself up on a shaking elbow. "Betty can't ferry alone ... regulations."

"We received special permission for one of our airmen to copilot. He's experienced with the 17."

Tension drained out of her, and she fell back on what she presumed was someone's desk that had been cleared. "I'm sure it's the flu. Are you even a doctor?"

"Name's Dr. Henry Austin in peacetime. I'm Captian Austin at the moment. We're going to move you to isolation over in sick bay until we can be sure you're not contagious. Hopefully it is the flu, but we'll know more later. Here's the gurney now to take you."

"I can walk." She tried to sit up, but surprised at how difficult it was, she fell back on the hard surface. "I hope the bed over there is better than whatever it is I'm on now."



"I SAW HER EYELIDS FLUTTER. I think she's waking up. Grace, honey, come on. Open your eyes."

Mom? Was she home?



“Pop, why won’t she wake up?”

“She will, Hannie. She had a very high fever.”

Granddad? She must be home.

“Her lids are fluttering. Come on, sweet girl, open those eyes for your mama.”

One eyelid opened and then the other. She blinked at the blurriness and forced herself to focus. Mom’s face came into view. The dark circles ringed her green eyes belied her smile.

Mom swiped at a tear. “Oh, Grace, we were so worried. Pop, her eyes are open.”

Granddad came into view. A medical jacket, as white as his mustache, covered his ever present dark gray vest and knotted tie. He offered a grin as wide as his wizened face and pressed his palm to her forehead. “Grace, you had us worried.”

“Where am I?”

“At a hospital in Dayton, Ohio. You became ill while ferrying a plane to New York, and they brought you to Wright Field. You were too feverish to move and have been hospitalized for a couple of days.”

Her gaze flicked from him to Mom and back to him again. “How long have you two been here?”

“Since day before yesterday.” Granddad held up a tongue depressor. “We drove down as soon as we got the call. They allowed me special privileges here. Now, let me check your throat. Open your mouth.”

She did as he ordered, and after he laid the wooden utensil on her tongue, she said, “Ah.”

He tossed the depressor in a wastebasket. “Your throat looks better than it did yesterday.”

“You and Mom went to a lot of trouble for a bout of the flu.”

His lips flattened. “I’m afraid it’s likely more than the flu. Now that you’re awake, we need to have tests run, although I’m fairly certain you have rheumatic fever.”

She frowned. “Never heard of it. How soon can I get back to Texas and start flying again?”

Mom gripped her hand. “I’m afraid your flying days are over, Gracie. We’re making arrangements to have your belongings sent home to Lake Geneva.”

The fever must have affected her hearing. Telling her she couldn’t fly again was worse than Frank’s break-up-letter. Flying kept her sane when her heart was ripped to shreds. “What’s a little fever? I’ll be good as new in a few days, won’t I?”

The jowls in her grandfather’s face slackened. “Over time you should be stronger, but not strong enough to resume transporting aircraft. Especially if the heart muscle is weakened.”

First her fiancé jilted her, and now this. How could she go back home after the attention she received from being a woman pilot and showing Frank off to her friends when she brought him home to meet her family? It was a joy to take up the gauntlet in her dad’s place after he’d been shot down in the Great War.

Tears pricked at her eyes. No chance to fly the 29 or be one of the first women to pilot a commercial aircraft—the one dream that kept her going. Why was God being so unfair?