

Hanging Hanna and Majestic Mel

by

Vixxy Fox



The noise was incredible. Between the air rushing past, the propeller, and the aircraft's engine, Hanna was lucky to be able to hear anything after a performance. Hearing the applause came only after they landed and shut down. Incredibly, the Fox hung upside down without a safety harness; the only thing battling back gravity being the straps she had her feet tucked under which were fastened to the top wing of Mel's bi-plane. A ladder was always set up so people could examine them. The only other accoutrement to this life and death performance of wing walking was her leather aviator's jacket and flying helmet with its bulky goggles.

Before their performance and to raise awareness of their presence, her former ace husband would fly them right down the main street of whatever city they were romancing while she either sat on top of the wing or dangled from a rope ladder attached to the combing of the forward cockpit.

Generally the 'local yokels' would crowd around the airplane after they landed yelling their approval of her defiance of death. This also helped pay the bills as they strategically placed an old straw hat upside down upon the wing. No sign was needed as everyone knew its meaning.

Mel showed up on her doorstep after the Great War was won looking so handsome in his uniform. The old Fox had been an aviator and there were three medals attached to his chest, one of them attesting to the five kills granting him the title of ace. He was the epitome of handsome and she melted into him in a hug she never thought she was capable of.

"Oh God I thought you would never come home!" she whispered in his ear.

“Of course I was coming home,” he replied, “I never stopped thinking about you. You were my whole reason to survive that mess and no better talisman could I have had than your picture on my instrument panel.”

For awhile things were very peaceful on the farm but a post war economy soon doused the flames of their home front fireplace. The Fox and his wife soon found themselves poverty stricken and quite literally down to their last nickel.

This was when an opportunity presented itself in the form of an airplane.

The government, or at least a small farseeing department within a department within a department of the government, convinced a few important officials that aviation would be the way of future wars and without a supply of younger fellows kept ready in the private sector as pilots; all the airplanes ever built would be worthless. Mel stood on their front porch reading and re-reading the letter delivered to him by a special messenger.

“What’s it say, hun?” Hanna asked, coming out onto the porch while drying her hands on a dish towel.

“It says we’re saved from starving to death and we won’t even have to sell the farm,” he replied with a wild look of disbelief. “Because I was an ace, they’re giving me an airplane and a stipend for flying expenses. I can do whatever I want with it just so long as I fly it.”

“The stipend we could use,” she replied sagely, “But what use would we have of an airplane? I don’t think you can plow fields with one.”

He looked at her, the spark of an idea quickly forming in his mind. “I can give rides in it. People will pay for that. All we have to do is the math. We’ll charge enough to make a good profit by which we will pay for maintenance costs, fuel, and have enough left over to keep the farm going.”

The vixen had been hesitant. Alive and poor was still better than rich and dead. “What if you crash?” she asked softly.

“That won’t happen,” he replied, knowing full well it was more than a possibility. “Even at that, I can wear one of those new fangled parachutes just in case.”

He took her in his arms and hugged her hard and that was all the convincing she’d needed. Two weeks later and there was the sound of the aircraft buzzing their farmhouse announcing that her husband had come home with his prize. Running outside she waved to him using her ever present dish towel and he did a snap roll just for her. He then bounced down in the small field across from the house, taxiing back in the tall grass waiting to be harvested as hay.

This was her first introduction to flying and Mel made sure to teach her how it was done including a few rudimentary acrobatics. Even though the aircraft was stressed well as a fighter

from a previous time; it was still only wood and fabric. Though it really did fly, it was still precariously fragile in essence.

Within a month they had the incredible sum of fifty dollars in their bank account. This was over and above operating costs which included two mechanics, Sal and Jonesy. Sal was a French Poodle formerly of the *Lafayette Escadrille* who refused to be shaved, while Jonesy was a German Shepherd who claimed in his very thick Germanic accent to have been the Number One mechanic for the famed Red Baron. Though the pair frequently argued, their different accents lending comedy to whatever the subject was, both got on well as airplanes were the only thing they truly cared about. A new engine quickly ate up the fifty dollar buffer and they were pressed to find ways to increase their income. This was when Hanna suggested climbing around the aircraft while it was in flight.

“NO!”

“Non!”

“Nein!”

In three languages she was told it was too dangerous. This, however, didn't stop her from climbing out onto the wing to wave at people as they flew down Main Street of the next town where they set up camp. Their profits tripled just because of this stunt.

So now she hung upside down from the top wing of a bi-plane which was also a part of a larger show called 'Charles Dupree's Flying Circus'. They were actually one of the more popular acts which included snatching a paper ribbon as Mel flew them upside down at only twenty five feet above the ground.

Secretly, because daring was the only thing honored in acts like this, she at least gave in to the demands of her aviation family and wore a secret safety harness, the hooks of which were concealed under a pants leg and one sleeve of her jacket.

Eventually they gave it up, though Mel continued giving lessons. There was the farm after all and a family to be raised. The odds on not surviving had been beaten and both Foxes agreed a nice mail contract would be a better way to make a living.