

Excerpt from HIGH FLYING By Kaylin McFarren

Skylar touched down with a gentle bounce. She taxied off the runway and pulled around to a stop in front of a black hanger that she didn't recall seeing before. But then after that harrowing experience, everything in the world seemed new.

She shut off the engines and the airplane shuttered. The propellers slowed and stopped with a jerk. Silence. She started to remove her headset but stopped and said into the mic, "Are you still there? I can't thank you enough."

"It was nothing. Glad to help."

"I don't know what got into me. I've never panicked like that before."

"No problem. Happens to the best of us."

"But I'm used to emergencies. I've done it a thousand times. I do stalls for a living!" She hesitated, embarrassed to admit such a thing. "Well, thank you. I really can't thank you enough." Then she realized she didn't have the foggiest idea who he was—this guardian angel who saved her. "Can I ask who this is?"

"The name's Haines," he said. "It was my plane you clipped up there. But I managed to bring her down safely."

"That was you! I don't know how that happened. You just appeared and I only had a second to react. I'm so glad you're okay. That I'm okay too...thanks to you."

"Like I said, glad to help."

"Wait a minute. Did you say Haines?" She must have misheard. Or perhaps it was the near-death experience confusing her further.

"Yep, that's right. Dylan Haines." He paused, then he asked, "Have we met before?"

"Um...I..." Skylar looked around and realized that she wasn't sure where she was. None of this was making sense. She pulled off her headset, thinking she could see better without them.

She looked around for Jake. Where was Ethan? The airshow was still going on and groups of people were gathered here and there, filling the open spaces outside.

Leaving her backpack behind, she climbed out of her seat and hopped to the ground. *Where was everyone? Where was Jake?* She was having trouble believing her eyes. A short distance away sat the brick traffic control tower and administration building. People were milling about, going in and out of the buildings. And she knew these buildings well. She saw them every day. She also knew that they had been remodeled a few years ago. But the building in front of her had clearly not been remodeled. It had the old windows and doors, and the addition that gave them more offices wasn't there.

What was going on here?

Draped across the black façade was a huge white banner with black letters. She couldn't believe her eyes.

Welcome to the '97 Reno National Championship Air Races & Air Show!

What? 1997? Was this some kind of joke? Skylar looked around, half expecting someone to jump out and yell, "Gotcha!"

All the buildings around her looked the same but different. Everything was just a little bit off. She took another look around. The hangers were there, but where was the shed? She used that shed daily for tools and wash pails. The small maintenance building was there, however, the large newer side wasn't. It was just a parking lot.

Skylar scanned the whole airport and realized it wasn't making any sense. This wasn't right. *None of it was right!*

Antique planes of every make and model were lined up in neat staggered rows. Pilots were checking engines, climbing in and out of cockpits, and studying the reader board for their positions. Red and white checkered canopies had replaced the black vendor tents that had been there this morning. The grandstands were still filled to capacity, yet none of the faces looked

familiar. Not even the faces in the “Employee Section.” And there was still no sign of Jake and Ethan. Plus Jake’s biplane wasn’t there and his hanger was nowhere in sight.

Was she losing her mind?

A striking man with wavy brown hair and an athletic build strode up to her, wiping his hands on a rag. “So, you must be Skylar. It’s good to meet you. And all in one piece.” A bright smile stretched across his face.

She returned his smile and realized that she recognized him. Her brain started filing through faces and names, searching for something to remind her who this man was. Then a picture came to mind. *She knew a picture of this man.* That was it! Skylar had seen his face in her grandfather’s album. Only, that album was filled with photos of her father.

He looked exactly like a picture of her father. But that was impossible. Wasn’t it?

Skylar looked at him a little closer. Same hair. Same sea blue eyes. If her father had a twin, this would be him. *But wait...it couldn’t be.* He didn’t have a twin and this man looked to be 26-years-old.

The world came to a standstill. It was 1997! Her father would have been twenty-six in 1997. This was crazy, and so was being here, in this place—in the same year and place where her father had died.

Skylar kept her clammy hands clenched at her sides and squeezed her eyes tight. *This is all a dream...just a dream.* Either that or she was dead. She must have crashed and died on impact. That was it! She was...dead. She opened her eyes again, but everything was the same. *Still 1997.*

She broke out in a cold sweat. A tingling sensation began in her hands and feet and then quickly spread to her entire body.

Her father stepped forward and reached out a hand. “Skylar? Are you all right?”

She simply stared, mystified. “This...this isn’t real. It...it can’t be,” she stammered. “It’s...a dream. Just...a dream.” He was tilting off center before her eyes, blurring into fuzzy grayness, disappearing as the world went black.