

First Flight

A few white clouds drifted across the clear blue skies early one evening in June. Everything was clean and crisp and peaceful.

Peaceful, that is, right up to the point when Joe said calmly, "Here, I'll handle this."

"You're sure right you will!" Beth thought excitedly to herself. Out loud, she said as evenly she could, "Thanks, Joe." and exhaled deeply. "Say – where did that deer come from?" she asked casually, hoping this was an extremely rare occurrence.

"Happens all the time," answered Joe matter-of-factly. "They seem to love wandering out on the runway. No big deal." The normally unflappable Beth wanted to shout, "That's easy for you to say – it didn't bound onto the runway on only your second landing attempt during your very first flying lesson!" Instead she simply responded, "Hmmm. Well, glad you were here to take over."

They both chuckled. Beth Bader knew that Joe understood how she felt, and she was grateful for his reassuring manner in the "Bambi-on-the-runway" incident. It was one of the reasons she was taking flying lessons from him. Joe Towns had over twenty years of flying instruction behind him, and as she was quickly learning, very little ruffled him.

After Joe pulled the plane up into the air for another pass around the airport, Beth took back the controls, confident and enthusiastic again. "Sure glad that's behind us," she said, breathing a somewhat premature sigh of relief.

As they gained altitude, Beth, who hoped she wasn't becoming paranoid, asked, "What's that smell? It smells like something burning."

"Well," Joe said, glancing down at the control panel, "it looks like the alternator burned out. These old planes sure are temperamental." "No big deal," he repeated. And again Beth wanted to shout, "What are you talking about! Now our flight instruments are out!" But she simply said, "Hmmm. What's next?"

In the next few seconds, Beth thought to herself, "It seemed like such a good idea to take flying lessons. The way things have been going lately, I was determined to do something to prove I had some control over my life. Well, I don't feel very much in control right now! But I'd better get back to business."

“Let’s take ‘er down,” said Joe. “You can do this. Get into position like before, and put ‘er on the ground.” “No problem,” said Beth, gripping the throttle a little tighter. She brought the plane around and squared it up with the runway, looking for any wild animals who might decide to join them.

This time, however, as she brought the plane to a halt on the ground, Beth thought with pride and relief, “Whew! Everything went exactly as planned, although that landing might have been a teensy bit rough.” She looked over at Joe, and he smiled. “Yep, we definitely landed.”

As they walked to the hanger, laughing at the unexpected events in her first flying lesson, Beth remarked, “I can’t wait to see what happens next week!”

Joe grinned. “Me neither.”

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