

Love Insp

HISTORICAL

INSPIRATIONAL HISTORICAL ROMANCE



*Soaring*  
HOME

*On the wings of love...*

CHRISTINE  
JOHNSON





Dear Reader,

While visiting the Frontiers of Flight museum in Dallas, I happened upon an exhibit honoring women aviators. I had no idea so many women were involved in the dangerous early days of aviation. That exhibit piqued my curiosity and ultimately led to this story of Darcy and Jack.

Though Darcy's story is fictional, the events surrounding the first transatlantic flight are based on fact. On May 31, 1919 one of the Curtiss flying boats crossed the Atlantic Ocean from Newfoundland to England with a stop at the Azores. John Alcock and Arthur Brown completed the first nonstop transatlantic crossing a couple weeks later. More information on the early days of flight can be found through links on my website or in books and articles at your local library.

I love to hear from readers. You can reach me through my website at [www.christineelizabethjohnson.com](http://www.christineelizabethjohnson.com).

*Christine Johnson*

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Darcy often acts impulsively, placing her own desires first. How does that affect her relationship with Jack? With her father?
2. Rejection and disappointment are part of life, yet Darcy perseveres when her desire to fly is thwarted. From whom or what does she find the strength to go on?
3. How does Darcy's relationship with her family affect her choices?
4. How do the people closest to us affect our life choices?
5. At what point does Darcy realize she forgot to include God in her decisions?
6. Other than Jack, who helps Darcy achieve her dream of flying? Do you have someone in your life who has served as mentor or inspired you?
7. Forgiveness is one of the most powerful gifts we can give to another and to ourselves. Who did Jack have trouble forgiving? Did it affect his relationship with Darcy?
8. Does Jack risk too much in his pursuit of the transatlantic record flight? Does Darcy?
9. Jack battles twin desires: to protect Darcy and to let her spread her wings. How does Darcy's eagerness to go along with Jack's plans feed into his decision?

10. What does Darcy learn from taking on the challenge of caring for her nieces and nephew? Have you ever faced something that took you out of your comfort zone? What helped you get through it?
11. How does Jack's response to the children surprise Darcy? How does it change their relationship?
12. In times of crisis, it's natural to turn to God, yet He desires a deeper relationship. Will Jack and Darcy move forward into that deeper relationship with the Lord? What in the story leads you to believe that?
13. For much of the story, Jack and Darcy work against each other, even though they ultimately want the same thing. Are there any areas in your life where you're working against someone, when working together would bring the desired result more quickly?
14. When Jack's faith was shaken in childhood, he turned from God, yet the Lord remained faithful. How has God shown steadfast patience in your life?
15. In the world's eyes, Jack and Darcy's transatlantic attempt would be called a failure, yet they consider it a success. Why?

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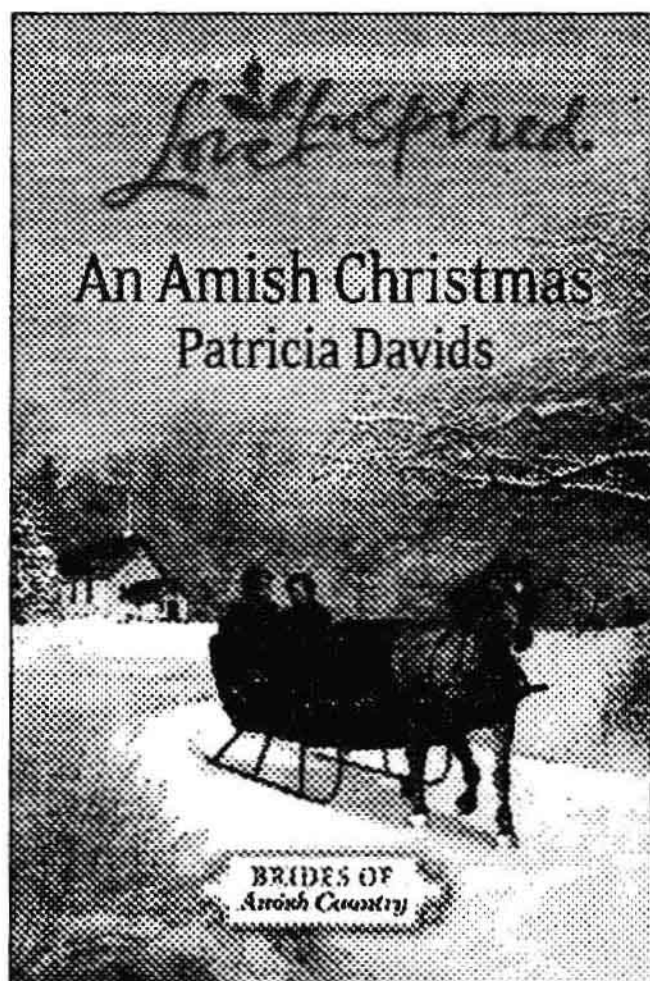
When Karen Imhoff finds a beaten man lying unconscious in her Amish community, she doesn't hesitate to help. "John Doe" needs a place to stay while he regains his memory, and he quickly proves invaluable around the farm. But the handsome Englisher wreaks havoc with her emotions....

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“Ready?” Jack asked.

The little flutter inside Darcy roared into full-blown excitement. Jack wasn't just any aviator. He was the absolute best, and he was taking her up in his plane. Darcy nodded and hastily secured her seat belt. She pulled the motor hood over her hair. Jack passed her a pair of goggles, and their hands touched. That same spark.

With a whirr and a roar, the motor gained speed. The plane began moving forward, slowly at first, then bumping more and more rapidly across the field before her.

Darcy screamed. She was flying! In the air, above the earth, like the eagle. God had not created her to fly, but she'd done it. She had done it on her own—well, with the help of Jack Hunter—and it was every bit as wonderful as she'd imagined.

This was where she belonged. In the sky. Here, above the busy-ness of the world, she would make her place, and it would truly matter.



## ***CHRISTINE JOHNSON***

is a small-town Michigan girl who has lived in every corner of the state's Lower Peninsula. After trying her hand at music and art, she returned to her first love—storytelling. She holds a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in library studies from the University of Michigan. She feels blessed to write and to be twice named a finalist for Romance Writers of America's Golden Heart Award. When not at the computer keyboard, she loves to hike and explore God's majestic creation. She participates in her church's healing prayer ministry and has experienced firsthand the power of prayer. These days, she and her husband, a Great Lakes ship pilot, split their time between northern Michigan and the Florida Keys.

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HOME

CHRISTINE  
JOHNSON



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**SOARING HOME**

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Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;  
and lean not unto thine own understanding.  
In all thy ways acknowledge him,  
and he shall direct thy paths.  
—*Proverbs 3: 5,6*



For my husband, Eric, who encouraged me to fly  
with my dreams.

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thank you for believing.

## Chapter One



*1918 Pearlman, Michigan*

Darcy Shea squinted into the bright September sky, trying to make out the rigid, oversized bird approaching Baker's field. Her pulse skipped and bounded. Could it be? Seven years since she last saw an aeroplane. Seven years waiting. It had to be, it just had to.

"Why did you stop?" Best friend, Beatrice Fox, pirouetted under her lace-trimmed parasol. "We're already late."

"Just wait a moment." Darcy stood still, listening.

The sun's heat shimmered off the baked road. Grasses rustled and crickets hummed, but no low drone of an engine. She absently tucked a loose strand of hair behind her ear. Perhaps she was mistaken. She sighed and resumed walking to the grange.

"Blake's cousin George from Buffalo is visiting this week," chattered Beatrice. She was lately engaged to the only son of the richest family in town, and every relation seemed to be paying respects. "You'd like him. Perhaps you could spend some time together."

Darcy cringed. Her friend was forever trying to create a



match for her, quite as bad as Papa. "What's wrong with the man?"

"Absolutely nothing." Beatrice wove an arm around hers. "He's handsome, intelligent and our age."

"Then why isn't he in the war?"

"Because he's studying to be a physician. A doctor, Darcy, a professional." Beatrice tugged slightly, urging Darcy to walk faster. "I have a thought. We can go on a picnic, all four of us. You can't object to a picnic."

Darcy did not want to go anywhere with a man she'd never met. "I don't know anything about him."

"Blake says he's a real sport."

"Blake would say that. It's his cousin."

Beatrice *tsked* her disapproval. "He's perfectly charming. And educated. There aren't many opportunities to meet eligible men, so if you want to catch one—"

"I don't."

Beatrice planted a hand on her hip. "Darcy, you must be reasonable. You're twenty-three. People are starting to talk. The war can only be an excuse for so long."

"I'm not using the war as an excuse. I don't want to marry. Ever." She shuddered at the drudgery of children and housework. "Better to fight for women's rights."

"Are you still following Prudy and her lot of suffragists? You'll get a bad reputation. Felicity says some people already wonder if you're one of those man-haters."

Darcy didn't care two pins what Felicity Kensington said, and she didn't see why Beatrice placed such stock in her uppity future sister-in-law. "I don't hate men. I just don't want to marry. I have things to do." Such as flying. She scanned the sky for the plane. Gone.

"Just meet him and talk a little."

"No."

"It's just a picnic, not marriage."

A faint drone froze Darcy. The aeroplane. Within seconds she located it low in the eastern sky, heading toward them.

"What is that sound?" Beatrice looked everywhere but up.

The plane dipped and veered toward town. It was landing. It had to be. No plane would fly that low if it wasn't landing. If only she could be onboard. If only she could fly. Darcy danced across the road.

"Where are you going?" Beatrice called. "We're already late from the nickel show. Your mother will be furious."

"No she won't." Which wasn't quite true.

"She'll make us roll extra bandages."

Darcy motioned for her to wait. "Just one moment longer."

The hum intensified until it sounded like a whole hive of bees. An aeroplane. Darcy hung transfixed at the edge of the field. She couldn't leave now. She hadn't seen an aeroplane since the 1911 Chicago air exhibition, the day she knew God intended her to fly. In the air, women flew alongside men as equals. That's where she belonged, not in lowly Pearlman, where not even the scent of an aeroplane could be found.

Until now. The biplane wobbled slightly as it descended, the left wing dipping before the pilot righted it at the last minute. It did not resemble the planes she'd seen in Chicago. This pilot sat farther back, below the upper wing, in a partially enclosed cockpit. The engine was located forward, giving the machine a sleek, fast appearance.

Beatrice shaded her eyes. "What is it?"

"The answer to my prayers."

The aeroplane headed straight toward them at low altitude. Beatrice shrieked and clutched at her impossibly flowered hat as the plane zoomed overhead and banked to make a run down the length of the empty field. The grass bent flat under the roar, and the turbulence sent Darcy's hair swirling. The

plane swooped onto the field, bouncing once before mowing a wide swath through the grass.

“Whooee!” Darcy ran after it, and then, seeing as Beattie was still hunched on the ground, came back. “An aeroplane. Here, in Pearlman. Imagine.” God had sent Darcy’s dream on canvas-covered wings.

“Tell me it’s gone,” Beatrice whimpered.

“Of course it’s not gone.” Darcy peeled Beattie’s gloved hands off her ears. “It stopped by old man Baker’s empty barn.” Already, Hendrick Simmons from the automobile garage and Dennis Allington from the train depot raced down the road on their motorbikes, twin trails of dust rising in the dry September air. “I wonder if something’s wrong.”

“I don’t care, and neither should you.” Beatrice smoothed down her dress. “I thought that horrible thing would kill us.”

“It wasn’t going to kill us. The pilot knew where he—or she—was going. Imagine! It could be a woman pilot.” Darcy had to meet her somehow.

The beep of a motorcar horn sent them scurrying to the edge of the road. Frank Devlin, editor of *The Pearlman Prognosticator*, chugged past in his dusty Model T touring car. That was the answer. The newspaper. She could write a story on the plane and talk the pilot into giving her a ride.

“I need to talk to the pilot, Beattie.” Darcy squeezed her friend’s hand. “This story will make the front page, and I’m going to be the one to write it. Tell Mum I’ll be late.”

“We’re already late. Your mother won’t like it. She’ll say your duty is to the Red Cross.”

“My duty is to the people of Pearlman. Tell her I’ll roll double the bandages tomorrow.” Darcy itched to run. A plane. A pilot. Everything she’d dreamed the past seven years had come directly to her. She had to see it.