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# Oslo Overtures

MARION UECKERMANN

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## **OSLO OVERTURES**

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Cover Art by Nicola Martinez

White Rose Publishing, a division of Pelican Ventures, LLC  
[www.pelicanbookgroup.com](http://www.pelicanbookgroup.com) PO Box 1738 \*Aztec, NM \* 87410

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Publishing History

First White Rose Edition, 2015

Electronic Edition ISBN 978-1-61116-455-8

**Published in the United States of America**

## Dedication

This book is dedicated to Taya Weiss,  
an incredible woman who touches the clouds.

Taya, you're an inspiration.

<http://tayaweiss.com>



## Praise

*Oslo Overtures* is everything great about inspirational contemporary romance in a snack-sized read. Ueckermann's novels always take my heart on an adventure that lingers long after the last page. I look forward to where her heroes and heroines will take me next!

~ Nancy Kimball, author

Marion Ueckermann crafts an engaging story filled with faith, hope and the joy that comes from conquering one's fears and claiming a second chance at love. This sigh-worthy romance is threaded with breathtaking imagery of the Norwegian skies and a peek into the fascinating world of wingsuit flying. Readers will fall in love with Ueckermann's smooth prose and vivacious characterization.

~ Heidi McCahan, author

Marion's latest release is packed with high-flying adventure, mutual misunderstandings, and sweet romance all set against the beautiful, authentic backdrop of Norway. As Kyle and Anjelica learned to trust God in all circumstances, I got another look at what it means to place my life—every aspect of it—in His hands. This compelling short story is a must-read.

~ Grace Olson, author







# 1

*Who are these that fly along like clouds, like doves to their nests? ~ Isaiah 60:8*

Anjelica drank in the beauty of the surrounding mountains that hugged the dark blue waters far below. The climb had been worth it. As usual. She could never get enough of the view across the fjord. Beside her, pockets of snow filled the gaps between flat gray rocks.

She stepped up to the edge, closed her eyes, and inhaled deeply. The butterflies in her stomach were determined to be the first to take flight. Standing at the exit point—whether a precipice, skyscraper, or aircraft’s open door—was one of the scariest moments. She could turn away and fail or step forward into moments of death-defying adventure. Despite her anxiety, this was Anjelica’s favorite place.

She raised her arms and leaned over the rock. Her body dropped through the air before she stretched her limbs like a bird. As the wind wrapped around the shape of her wingsuit, she began to fly.

Visions of the week ahead filled her mind. She exhaled slowly. Her helmet warmed inside at her breath. She had to calm her thoughts—focus on the flight was paramount to success. For the next few minutes, she and the currents would wage war against gravity and error.

Determined to improve on her previous time in

the air, Anjelica raised her head. She bent her body at the waist and looked ahead, slowing her rate of descent and forward momentum.

A streak of red whizzed past her. Erick Thuesen. Show off. Anjelica would have shaken her head and raised a fist at him if she didn't risk going into a deathly spin toward earth. She had to remain focused. Usually his antics made her smile, but Erick wanted them to make her heart soar.

Not going to happen. Been there before.

Irked at his lack of focus on their training, the amused expression never made it to her face today. They didn't have time for foolery. The world record attempt was little more than a week away. He should try to stay in the air for as long as possible, not see how fast he could make it back to solid ground.

This was their last jump before the team gathered in Stryn, then headed down to Oslo where they'd join not only the larger team from Kjerag, but teams from all over the world.

Although she couldn't wait to start training with the international wingsuiters, Anjelica didn't relish the thought of the day's road-trip that lay ahead, or the testosterone environment she'd be plunged into for the next week. Not everyone in this high-flying community felt this sport was for the fairer sex.

~\*~

With a wide grin, Kyle Sheppard turned to his seven-strong team and rubbed his hands together. "This is going to be sweet." Flying the fjords of Norway had been his dream for too long. "I wonder who'll fly lead in the formation, be the star at the top of

the tree?" He handed his passport to the customs officer at Oslo Airport. Not even his exhaustion from the twenty-seven hour journey between New Zealand and Norway could extinguish his excitement. This would be a high to beat all adrenaline highs.

God willing, Friday they'd break their record set in California last year by eleven—one hundred and eleven wingsuiters flying in formation.

As part of Norway's National Day celebrations, May seventeenth would see a tree-shaped formation high in the Oslo skies, bringing not only a summer Christmas reminder to Scandinavia, but a new Wingsuit World Record validated by The Guinness Book of World Records.

"I know you're vying for the position, Sheppard, however, I'm hoping it won't be a star, but an angel at the top of the tree—a blonde, Nordic one." Luke Maskil's grin matched Kyle's as laughter erupted from the rest of the team. Luke wagged his brows. Mischief twinkled in his eyes while the promise of a good time ahead plastered his face.

"Lukie-boy, you do know this country offers more than just leggy blondes?"

Luke smacked Kyle's cheek with a few friendly taps. "Lighten up, Sheppard. Why always so serious? You have to appreciate the finer qualities a country has to offer. There's more to this life than just flying the lines."

Kyle feigned surprise. "Really?" He retrieved his passport, stuffed it inside his jacket's top pocket, and grabbed the handle of his suitcase.

He'd drawn a line more crucial than those he flew—one he would not cross. It was far less dangerous to fall from a cliff or a plane, than to fall in

love.

He turned his head and spoke over his shoulder. "I guess I'm having too much fun flying high to concern myself with things down below."

Luke patted Kyle's back. "Keep saying that, Sheppard. Maybe one day you'll actually believe it. But I'm telling you, as your friend, that you can have fun in the air *and* on the ground."

Perhaps Luke was right. But it didn't matter. Wherever they travelled, Kyle chose to ignore the beauties that gravitated toward him—women attracted only to his exciting career and good looks. Adrenaline groupies. *Will I ever find someone who really cares about who I am, what I believe in?*

He'd never find his soul mate on this earth.

God would have to send an angel from heaven. Even divine intervention seemed an impossible task, for it wasn't often that angels and shepherds met.

Kyle smiled. But when they did, miracles happened.

~\*~

The large green garden that overlooked the Oslofjord at Hotel Refsnes-Gods stirred pleasant memories for Kyle. For a moment, he was back in Perris, California and the green field dotted in an array of colors. He couldn't wait for morning. The same lawn he stood on now would be filled with colorful wingsuit pilots from twenty-three different countries.

Kyle loved the first day vibe as the buzz of languages rose into the pre-dawn air.

The organizers had booked all sixty-one rooms in this centuries-old hotel. They couldn't have chosen a

more idyllic location for the participants to stay.

He looked at the weathervane up on the spire of the hotel's left wing and prayed the metal structure showed the same favorable conditions for the rest of the week. A movement from his bedroom window on the top floor caught his eye.

"Bro, this place is awesome," Luke shouted as he leaned out of the open window. He raised his hands to the heavens. "Whoop..."

Kyle shook his head and smiled. Crazy Kiwi. He wouldn't put it past Luke to want to jump out of that window and fly. With Luke Maskil as his roommate, his hands would be full. Kyle wouldn't have it any other way though. Luke was his best friend. But ever since Kyle had sworn off women, Luke felt the need to be his wingman, too. He'd intensified his efforts to set Kyle up with someone.

"Sheppard..." Luke waved his arms in the air. His upper body balanced in mid-air two floors above the ground.

"Yeah?" Kyle sent a quick prayer to heaven as he jogged up the tree-lined path that led to the hotel entrance. Last thing they needed was Luke falling out the window and being eliminated from the event due to injuries.

"You'd better hurry, the welcome party's about to start."

Kyle checked his watch. Seven o'clock. He'd lost track of time. "Be right up. Wait for me."

If weather conditions permitted, he was really going to enjoy these long days, especially when he and Luke travelled west and north to fly the fjords after their record-breaking event on Friday.

As Kyle opened their hotel room door, Luke

swung around. "That was fast."

"Well, you said to hurry. Mind if I jump in the shower first? I won't be long."

Luke had claimed dibs on the shower when they arrived. Kyle didn't mind. He was glad to have an excuse to go for a walk and have some time alone to talk with God.

"I'd have a problem if you didn't, Sheppard. I can smell you downwind." His face broke open in a wide smile. "And it smells like you've been chasing sheep."

Kyle pulled off his T-shirt and threw it at Luke. It hit his friend full-face before falling to the floor. "Yeah, right. If I've been chasing sheep, it's because I've a wayward flock to look after—all seven of you." Kyle waited for a comeback.

Instead, Luke grabbed the television remote from the bedside table, flopped onto his bed, and flipped through the channels.

"And what do you think you'll be able to understand?" Kyle asked.

Luke grinned, gaze fixed on the leggy model making her way down the catwalk. "Don't need to understand. Just need to see."

Kyle shook his head at his friend. He stepped into the bathroom, took a shower, and then rummaged through his bag for a fresh shirt and jeans.

He and Luke headed downstairs.

Meeting the other participants tonight was important. The conference room buzzed with old friendships being renewed and new ones forming.

They lined up at the buffet table and an array of food. Plates loaded, they mingled. It was great to catch up with old friends, but those who had lost their lives to the sport were noticeably missing.

"I can't believe it. Look who's here." Kyle pointed across the room toward the familiar blond head. "Erick." He made his way through a sea of men. Luke followed.

"Erick Thuesen. How long has it been?" He grasped the tall Norwegian's hand.

"Too long, my friend. Too long."

Kyle gave him a bear hug. "We missed you in California last year. Glad to see you're back in the air after your accident."

"Fortunately, it wasn't as bad as it could've been. Still, my stupidity had me laid up for a few months."

"Still doing crazy stunts?"

The Norwegian grinned. "Now and then."

Luke wrapped his arms over Kyle and Erick's shoulders as he leaned into their conversation. "Has anyone else noticed a severe lack of women in this room?"

"Yes, and you know why?" Kyle looked at his two friends, unsmiling. Silence filled the air before Kyle's smile boomeranged back. "Because if women were meant to fly, the skies would be pink."

The three buckled over as their laughter filled the air.

When Kyle straightened, his chortles subsiding, he was met by eyes as blue as the Nordic fjords. He stared spellbound. Had he died and gone to heaven?

The blonde beauty's lips parted. They were the softest pink Kyle had ever seen. "Clearly you've not yet seen our sunsets." There was the slightest tremor in her voice.

Kyle cleared his throat. "I—I only arrived this afternoon."

Her eyes widened as if to say, "So?"

He rubbed his neck before trying again. "It's still light outside. No sunset yet." He raked his fingers through his hair, sweeping the dark strands away from his eyes, and grinned. He hoped that would help.

It didn't.

She turned her attention to their Norwegian partner in crime. "As for you, Erick...you find that sexist joke amusing?"

Erick began to nod, but his head quickly changed direction. He opened his mouth.

She stopped him. "Don't say anything." Turning to Kyle, she took a step closer.

Kyle could feel both the warmth of her breath and the coolness in her voice.

"I'm sure you'll soon discover that in Norway we believe in equality of the sexes, so it's best you behave appropriately in our country, Mr. Sheppard, or return home to your sheep."

He really wasn't a sexist—the joke had just rolled off his tongue. He never joked. Why had he chosen that moment to start? And why would she assume he was a sheep farmer just because he was from New Zealand?

"I'm not—"

"Besides," she interrupted, and Kyle wasn't sure whether he saw a smile tug at her mouth. "Don't you know that only angels are meant to have wings." She turned and disappeared into the crowded room.

Luke gawked at Erick with a slap-me-silly, I-just-died look. "Who. Was. That?"

"Anjelica Joergensen. But we call her Angel."

"She's gorgeous." Luke turned to Kyle and raised his brows. "Isn't she?"

Kyle recognized that twinkle. He and Anjelica were in trouble—Kyle more so than her, for only a few



hours earlier he'd mused about God sending him an angel from heaven. His Maker certainly had a sense of humor. And impeccable timing.

But it would take bucket loads of divine intervention to fix his rocky start with this Angel. Didn't angels normally introduce themselves to shepherds with words like "peace be with you," or "don't be afraid"? From the introduction they'd had, Kyle felt neither fearless nor peaceful.

He should apologize. But would she believe him when he told her he didn't mean what he'd said—that he was only joking?

"Excuse me." Leaving Luke and Erick to nurse their drinks, Kyle took off after her. He searched all over, but she had vanished.

~\*~

Anjelica punched her pillow. She should've ignored what she'd overheard. Gritted her teeth and let the comment slide. The first night together and already she'd had a run-in with one of the men. Not just any man either.

Why did it have to be Kyle Sheppard?—one of the world's best wingsuit pilots. And that stupid remark about him going back to his sheep? His surname made him as much a shepherd as her name made her an angel. What must he think?

For weeks, Erick had talked about his friend from down under, this brilliant flier from the other side of the world. Of course, she knew of Kyle Sheppard. She'd heard about him in the wingsuit community, read about him in the media—although he kept his private life very private.

She'd watched countless YouTube videos of his death-defying falls in the most impossible locations. Speculation from the Norwegian team for their Friday attempt at the largest unlinked wingsuit-bigway was that the New Zealander would fly lead.

She'd been anxious to meet him and hoped to have an opportunity to learn from him over the next few days. Anjelica scrunched her pillow into a bundle. She'd met him all right. He wouldn't want to teach her anything now.

Still, one of the world's best or not, his comment was inappropriate. Pink skies! The skies were often pink, and far more beautiful than anything a cloudless blue day could ever offer. She and any other female wingsuiter had as much right as their male counterparts to own the skies.

Anjelica switched off the bedside light and hoped her roommate wouldn't disturb her when she returned. She needed to calm her mind and rid herself of her frustration. The only way she could do that was with a good night's sleep. And prayer.

*Lord, please don't let me bump into this man again this week. If You could, just make sure that I'm on one side of the formation and he's on the other.*

With a hundred and nine other participants on the ground and in the air, that should prove easy enough. Shouldn't it?

## 2

The wake-up call came at five AM.

Anjelica bounced out of bed, ready for this day. Two envelopes had been pushed under the door overnight. One for Anjelica, the other for her American roommate, Brandy, who'd obviously lived up to her name the night before.

She slid Brandy's note onto the table between their beds, gripped her own and opened the balcony door.

The candy-stripe cushioned chair outside beckoned. Sitting down, she propped her bare feet up against the balustrade. The envelope trembled in her hands. For several moments, she gazed across the ocean. These familiar butterflies—how she hated them.

Anjelica took a deep breath and ripped the envelope open, removing the single sheet of paper from inside. She blinked at the diagram showing her position in the formation and those of her teammates. This was unexpected. Dropping the paper to the floor, Anjelica swept her hands through her hair. She was flying lead? She was flying lead!

"Good news?"

Anjelica recognized the accent.

Kyle Sheppard.

She leaned forward and looked up. Kyle peered down from a side window set in the right tower of the hotel.

"Maybe," she answered. If she gave him the

satisfaction of knowing why she was smiling, he'd probably just pass another sexist comment. He'd know soon enough anyway.

A head popped out beside Kyle's. His fair-haired friend...Duke? With a broad smile, he waved. "Morning, Angel."

Anjelica pursed her lips and frowned. Erick had told them her name? Her nickname? Perhaps he called all women Angel. Wasn't it a common phrase for some foreigners?

"Did you get your envelope?" Kyle's friend continued. "Where're you placed?"

She remained silent.

He leaned further out of the window. "Oh, and just in case you don't talk to strangers, I'm Luke. And this is my very good, very talented, and very single friend, Kyle." He ruffled Kyle's hair, messing it up a little more. "We're from New Zealand, and no, surprisingly, we're not sheep farmers." Luke pushed Kyle's head forward. "Say hello."

Kyle smiled. Raising his hand slightly, he gave a brief wave. "Morning."

"For the record—" Luke leaned a little further out of the window, and Anjelica held her breath, hoping he didn't fall. "—he didn't mean anything by his comment about the pink skies...and he does feel bad about making it."

Then why did he not apologize?

"So, gorgeous, where are *you* placed in the formation? Are you our angel at the top of the tree?"

*Our* angel? This Luke wasn't only persistent, he was downright forward. Anjelica felt a little sorry for Kyle, having him for a roommate. His impudence must get tiresome.

"You can tell us, we're practically neighbors," he droned on.

Anjelica bit her lip to stop a smile. "And spoil the surprise?" She walked back inside her room. Time to wake up Brandy. They had to be outside on the lawn in thirty minutes. She couldn't wait. Those two Kiwis were in for a shock.

~\*~

Kyle smacked Luke on the back of his head. "What was that all about? 'Very single friend'?"

"Just trying to help." Luke rubbed his head then grinned. "Is she gorgeous or what?"

Kyle had to agree. And it was refreshing to meet a woman who didn't fall all over him. In fact, he was certain she disliked him. Immensely. Not that he could blame her.

He removed the battery from the charger and placed it back inside the recording device before tucking it in the side pocket of the backpack housing his wingsuit and chute.

Luke hovered, waiting for a response.

"She *is* gorgeous. But it makes no difference. You know my standing on the feminine gender." Kyle slung the backpack over his shoulder, grabbed his helmet, and made his way to the door. He'd be toast if he gave Luke any indication that he found this woman intriguing. "Besides, she totally does not like me, so no point going down that road."

"That's exactly why you *should* go down that road. The fact that she's not into you is just what you want. And need."

His friend knew him far too well. "We're only here