



**Plot That Failed;
OR,
Love That Would
Not Be Denied.**

CHAPTER II.
"Yes, a great many," he replied. "The strongest brain might be excused a sudden dizziness on the edge of such a precipice as this."

"Of course," assented Violet, laughing, but very quietly. "I am so much obliged; I thought only of my stupid sunshade."

"Ah," he said, quietly. "I had forgotten that. Perhaps it has lodged on one of the jutting bushes; if it has, I may recover it for you," and he approached the edge.

Violet, who had not quite recovered from the shock which the sudden sense of her peril had produced, uttered a slight cry of warning and rebuke.

"Oh, please do not look over! It is of no consequence, not the slightest in the world."

The gentleman looked back at her alarmed face, then up at the blazing sun, and smiled significantly.

"It is of great consequence," he said, and before Violet could say another word to prevent him, he had gained the edge and was upon his knees, looking over.

"I can see it," he said, "and I think I can get it. The danger was not so great after all; there are one or two ledges here which will bear a man's weight, I should think, and below them is your sunshade."

While he was speaking, he was cautiously, but fearlessly, lowering himself into one of the ledges of which he had spoken, and Violet's horrified eyes lost first his legs, then his body, and last of all his good-looking face, as it disappeared below the edge.

Rooted to the spot with terror which she in vain struggled to suppress, Violet grew white as death and almost as cold.

At last her terror found utterance in a deep-drawn moan.

"Oh! come back! Please come back! I am sure you will be killed! It is horrible! Do come back!"

While she was still entreating and commanding the handsome, careless face arose above the surface again, and, with slow, cautious movements, the stranger, with the recovered sunshade in his hand, was beside her.

Violet drew a long breath of relief, and then, with a smile that was better than all the thanks in the world, said:

"I won't thank you, for I think you were more foolish than even I. You said it was dangerous to look over, and you actually went over! And all for this stupid, worthless thing." And she shook the sunshade with annoyance.

"Not altogether for the sunshade," said the gentleman, smiling again. "But I am glad I have got it for you, and I assure you the danger was less than I at first imagined it; indeed, for me there was no danger. I am blessed with a steady nerve, and have had some experience in mountaineering."

Violet looked down, and then up at his calm face.

"It was very good and kind of you," she said, "and I will thank you, after

all, I think." Then she made a movement, which he took in intimation that he might say good-day, and, accordingly, he raised his hat—or, rather, would have done so, had not the wind saved him the trouble.

"How provoking!" said Violet, looking after the hat, as it sailed over the cliff, in imitation of the sunshade. "I am afraid there is a fatality about this spot. I do hope you will not go after it, too."

"No, indeed!" he said, with a light, pleasant laugh; "my hat is really of no consequence."

"Oh! but of more than my parasol! You have nothing to protect your head, and the sun is quite as hot as it was five minutes ago." And she smiled naively.

"True," he said. "But my head is used to scorching; in fact, rather likes it."

"You must take my sunshade," said Violet, with provoking gravity.

"No, thank you," he said, imitating the gravity and suppressing the smile. "I do not dread the sunstroke, and I have but a few steps to go," nodding to the blazing Cedars.

Violet was guilty of an unmistakable start.

"The Cedars!" she exclaimed, extending her beautiful eyes to their wildest, "but you are not—" and she paused as if absolutely too astonished to conclude the sentence.

"My name is Leicester Dodson," said the gentleman, a slight, but not imperceptible reserve showing upon his face, and in the tone of his voice as he spoke.

"Mr. Dodson's son!" said Violet, slowly, as if the intelligence were too astonishing to be taken in instant.

The gentleman bowed.

"Mr. Dodson's and Mrs. Dodson's son," he said, with a smile.

For a moment Violet stood still; then her face lit up with its delicious smile, and, with a frank gesture, she held out her hand.

"Then we are neighbors," she said, as Mr. Leicester Dodson, with as much surprise as his courtesy would allow his face to express, took the well-shaped, little hand. "I am Miss Mildmay."

Mr. Leicester dropped her hand as if it had grown red-hot and had burned him. Violet colored then, but understood his gesture of repudiation instantly. "He knows how aunt dislikes his people, and is sorry he rescued my sunshade," she thought.

"I am happy to have been of some slight service to you, Miss Mildmay," he said, coldly, with a careless but distant bow; then he turned and walked slowly down the steep path.

Violet, looking down after him until his bare head had dropped slowly out of sight, then said, audibly:

"Well, that is pride now; but it is proper pride, I think," smiled rather sadly, and returned homeward.

"Aunt!" she said, coming into the drawing-room just before dinner was served, and more quietly than was her wont, "I've had an adventure on the cliffs, startling and melodramatic. My sunshade blew over, and a gentleman was polite enough to go after it."

"My dear!" exclaimed the old lady, thinking it one of her darling's jokes.

"It's true, aunt. A stranger risked his neck—precious, no doubt, to himself and family—for a fifteen-and-sixpenny sunshade. Imprudent, but heroic, was it not?"

"Very good and kind, but imprudent, as you say, my dear. Young men are so rash!"

"This one was not," said Violet picking at the costly fringe on her dress; "he was as calm and cool as—as a cucumber."

"A stranger," said Mrs. Mildmay, smiling. "Whom can it be, I wonder? Somebody staying at the Wenningfords, no doubt?"



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"Aunt!" said Violet; then suddenly changing the subject, "do the vicar and his wife dine with us on Saturday?"

"Yes, my dear, and I have asked Mr. and Mrs. Giles. The vicar is a dear, good man, but—"

"Rather a bore," put in Violet, decidedly.

Mrs. Mildmay looked shocked, but Violet, without waiting for a reprimand, went on, with slow and most unusual gravity:

"Do you know, aunt, I should like to ask this heroic gentleman of mine?"

"A perfect stranger, my dear!" said Mrs. Mildmay, with a smile.

"Yes, a perfect stranger, but a gentleman. Perfect strangers who are gentlemen, and heroic enough to risk their lives for one's sunshade, are people worth knowing. Aunt, ask him. He is tall, rather dark, golden-brown, you know, nice eyes, a yellow mustache and—I think that's all I remember—I was going to mention the smile but, of course, he may not always wear that."

"I don't remember him, my dear," said Mrs. Mildmay. "But if you really want to know him I'll try and find out who he is from the servants."

"And ask him to dinner?" urged Violet.

Mrs. Mildmay looked bewildered and puzzled.

"Yes, my dear, if you wish it, and he really belongs to the Wenningfords."

"I do wish it, aunt," said Violet. "But he doesn't belong to the Wenningfords. He belongs to the Cedars, and is no other than Mr. Leicester Dodson, the tallow melter's son!"

It is Saturday evening, and Mrs. Mildmay's little dinner is in progress. There are the vicar and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Giles from the Ferns, and, wonderful to say, the Dodsons from the Cedars.

Miss Violet had, as usual, had her way with her aristocratic aunt, and the Dodsons are here.

For a whole day Mrs. Mildmay, with tears in her eyes, declared that she would not call at the Cedars; and it was not until Violet had, with greater firmness, vowed that she would go to the Cedars by herself rather than not at all, that the good old lady had given in.

And when they had called, and Mrs. Dodson had accepted the invitation for herself and two menfolk, Violet had still further worried her aunt by declaring that the Dodsons, though they were tallow melters, were not snobs, and that for her part she saw nothing to find fault with in Mrs. Dodson save, perhaps, rather a redundancy of color in her morning cap.

"Which, my dear aunt," Violet said, in conclusion, "is an error in taste not confined to tallow chandlers."

So there they are. Mr. Dodson, the father, a quiet, mild-eyed old gentleman, with a partiality for clear soup; Mrs. Dodson, a smiling, homely looking lady, with a devouring admiration for her son; and the son, Mr. Leicester himself, with no particularly prominent virtues or vices save that of silence.

He had scarcely spoken a word during the soup and the fish, and Violet had almost made up her mind that he was too proud and unforgiving, and was prepared to dislike him, when suddenly he, looking across the table, met her questioning glance, and with a smile dispelled his gravity or ill humor as a mist evaporates before the mid-day sun, broke out into conversation.

Then Violet understands that he is not only heroic but amusing, that he is handsome even though she had thought him, and that, above all, his

manner, speech, and bearing are those of a perfect gentleman. The entrees are passed round and partaken of.

Mr. Leicester is describing the Vicar's Pass to Miss Mildmay, and interesting her deeply therein.

Mrs. Dodson is comparing notes with Mrs. Mildmay, and Mr. Dodson is lost in the beauties of a curried fowl, when the butler, a model of solemn propriety, is approached by a footman, with whom he confers in stately, but rather disturbed asides.

"What is it, James?" asks Mrs. Mildmay, who has noticed the conference.

"If you please, ma'am, a gentleman—"

But all explanation is rendered unnecessary by the opening of the door, and the entrance of another servant, who says, with that clear sing-song, proper for the occasion:

"Captain Howard Murpoint!" and, stepping aside, allows a tall, dark gentleman to pass through the doorway.

Conversation immediately ceases. Dumbly, hostess and guests regard the newcomer; dumbly still, Mrs. Mildmay rises from her chair.

"Captain Murpoint!" she repeats. "Captain Murpoint!" suddenly echoes Violet, whose quick, thoughtful eyes have been scanning every feature of the dark, pale face from its piercing, black eye to the scar on its left cheek, and its black mustache.

"Captain Murpoint!" she repeats, "my father's dearest friend!"

Captain Murpoint came forward, with a smile evidently struggling against some emotion, and met her halfway, taking her outstretched hands, and, looking with what may well pass for tear-dimmed eyes into her pure, youthful face.

"And you are John Mildmay's daughter!" he exclaimed, in a tremulous voice. "Poor Jack, poor Jack!" and evidently overcome by the likeness or some memory of the past, Captain Murpoint, after wringing the girl's slight hand, conveys his own to his eyes—and weeps!

(To be Continued.)

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