

The Daily Short Story

SOME REAL ACTION

(By Mildred Capline Goodridge)

A NIGHT of sweet sounds, the beautiful villa of White Shadows a scene of moonlight joyousness. A fair girl with pride in her face, Lucia Page—a conscious young man, her accepted lover, the centre of an admiring throng—Harold Worthington.

Beyond the group, Leslie Forbes, his sister Myrtle, and young Walter Dale—the brother a natural athlete in build, the sister a charming model of girlish loveliness, her would-be lover slightly reserved, but with a fine intellectual and humane face.

"Well," observed Leslie in his off-hand way, "there's hero worship for you!"

His companions did not venture any suggestions. Walter was watching Myrtle's face with attention. He was a keen analyst. He loved Myrtle, and he was a loyal friend of her brother. Outside of being the best student in his class at college, however, he had never made much noise in the world. He knew that pretty Myrtle was something of a dreamer. He wondered now if she was comparing him with the great bluff Worthington, who was receiving the adulation of the light-minded group of loveliness about him as if he was some valiant warrior.

"Big Injun hero, eh?" continued Leslie. "Saved a drowning man up at the falls, didn't he? I heard that what he really did was to toss the struggling victim a plank. At all events, he didn't get wet. Come on, Walter, it's back to college for us to-morrow, you know."

But Walter had no thought of leaving his lady love. He noted her watching the distant group, and he fancied he could read her thoughts.

"I do wish you could rouse up my brother to—" Myrtle paused. Walter was sure she meant to say "something like that," meaning the heroic deed of Worthington. But she added: "to some real action."

"I think I know what you mean, Myrtle," said Walter in his usual direct way. "You believe that Leslie is indolent. Yes, that is true, but a more whole-souled friend never lived. Believe me, I am doing all I can to urge him to consider study more seriously."

"I know you are," sighed Myrtle, but gratefully. "Mother worries about him continually. She hears a great deal about his reckless ways. He does not seem to appreciate that her life hangs upon a very slender thread."

"Believe me, Myrtle, I shall do

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all I can to direct him aright," said Walter with deep feeling.

The theme was a grave one with Walter. Wild, reckless Leslie Forbes had no better friend than this sterling young fellow student. But for him he would have been twice expelled from college. Many a night had Walter sat up assisting his chum to prepare at the last hour for a critical examination.

Walter gave his friend a great talking to after arriving at the college. He worked double time post-poning him to keep up with his classes. Leslie seemed really on the mend. Then some graduates visited the town, there was a riotous time and some broken windows at the village tavern, and Leslie was in the black books of the professors again.

One afternoon Walter started out for a walk. It was not until he had ended a good long sprint at a little railroad station that, placing his hand in a pocket, he discovered some cards that by mistake he had put on Leslie's coat.

Walter sat down to rest on a bench. He heard the distant roar of a coming train just as the station agent

came rusing wildly out of the depot. He was white as death.

"Wire from Hampton!" he gasped. "Bridge around the curve gone down. Semaphore won't work—must stop the limited."

The man ran down the track in the direction of the semaphore three hundred yards distant. He stumbled, started on again, and then sprang aside, for the approaching train was fairly upon him.

Walter took it all in at one swift glance. Then he tore off his coat

Near at hand was the mail crane. A mighty resolve came into his mind. He ran up those steps, placed one hand on the extended hook, and posed, breathless.

There was a blur, dizzying and nerve racking. How he did it he could not later realize—but he gave his body a swing and landed inside the mail car. Only that he was hurried on a great heap of mail bags, he would have been killed.

"The bridge around the curve—is down!" he just managed to gasp to

the astounded mail men. Then he lost consciousness, to regain it with the train at a standstill, its crew grouped ahead, where a great gap showed the vacant bridge chasm.

Painfully he lifted himself from the car. A new sickening sensation overcame him. He crept to some bushes and sank into new unconsciousness. How he found his way back to college he could not only dimly remember, but some one was rousing him in his bed, a fellow student.

"Tried to get you up before," he announced. "Forbes has gone."

"Gone—where?" inquired Walter, vaguely.

"Home—telegram. Mother dying, they say. On his way—look there!"

It was a morning newspaper that the student held before the eyes of the bewildered Walter. In glaring headlines the story was told of the marvelous heroism of "Leslie Forbes, a student of Hampton college." The man who had saved five hundred lives had disappeared after his intrepid act of bravery, but the discovery of his coat had revealed his identity.

Walter said nothing to anybody about the mistake. He was thinking anxiously of Myrtle in her great home trouble. Three days later a friend wrote him telling him of the death of Mrs. Forbes.

And four days later, graduating July 20, 1m, eod

and rare scholastic honors, Walter received a letter bearing one word, a welcoming, willing, wonderful word to his anxious soul: "Come." And Myrtle had written it!

Myrtle greeted him as he reached the Forbes home the next morning. He gazed sorrowfully at her deep mourning. She retained his hand as she looked into his eyes, her own swimming with tears.

It was a pathetic story that she told. The news of the saving of the train had reached her mother before she died. She saw her son the hero of a wonderful deed of bravery. She had died happy. Leslie by her side. A smile upon her face, she blessed him, and he—in that impressive mo-

ment did not deceive her, but promised to change his life—a vow he kept. The true story of the railroad incident he had since made public.

"I bade you come," spoke Myrtle, "because I wished to thank you, to tell you how proud I am of you, because, through you, my mother died happy and my brother is saved."

"It was a precious word you sent me," responded Walter. "I am through with my college education, and am going back east. But, if you ever send me again, that one word, 'Come,' I will speed me on my way to you."

"My heart bids me speak a better word," said Myrtle, shyly but earnestly.

"And that word is—?"

"Stay."

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