



SHORT STORIES

OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE



Adventure in a Tight Skirt

By Elsie Endicott

THERE was the usual restless crowd of wayfarers on the subway platform, but Jack Saunders, the fullback, was oblivious to them all. With hands in pockets and legs spread apart, he was streaming of rushes, tackles, and the Great Game that was to be played within 24 hours. Victory had been his all along the line. Could he stand unconquered by the valiant foe and win the distinction of being the most famous fullback of his day?

He pursed his lips and began to whistle, swaying slightly back and forth, to and fro. How strong he felt, how powerful, how gloriously young! Napoleon in his palmiest days never felt mightier. Hercules never more virile.

Suddenly Jack's eyes became riveted on a figure that, tall and slim, paused for a moment at the top of the steep flight of stairs, that led down into the tunnel. A second later, it crumbled and began to roll and bump over the stairs, down, down, in rapid descent. At the same moment the rumble of an approaching train sounded ominously close and threatening.

Jack grasped the situation in a flash. The girl, carried on by the impetus of her descent, would continue to roll into the pit, to be crushed by the oncoming train.

With an instant doubling of his body,

Jack plunged into the crowd of travelers, each scattered like snowflakes in a typhoon. He made a mad leap across 40 feet of platform and reached the foot of the staircase—just in time to catch the bundle of humanity, tossing it over his shoulder, just as he had so often plunged, seized and lifted high the coveted football.

His excitement immediately abating, he peered into the girl's face with a shyness in queer contradiction to his mighty physique. Her eyes were closed, her lips pale as death. An ugly bruise marred the high forehead, and she was so still that Jack was frightened into a panic.

"What shall I do with her?" he stammered.

"Call an ambulance. Take her to the Emergency Hospital," suggested a gruff voice at his elbow.

"Better still," a woman was speaking. "Find out if she has her card in the bag, and take her home. None of us would care to be carted off to a hospital."

"Will you open her bag, madam?" pleaded Jack, handicapped by the dead

weight. "You are right about taking her home, if we can find out where she belongs."

"Here is her address," the woman cried with satisfaction. "It is printed on the inside of the bag. Miss Clarise Morse, 44 X street."

Jack refused all further aid. Unconsciously he assumed a proprietorship in the girl, which would have amazed him at any other time. She was his, and he intended to take care of her! X street would be easy to reach in a taxi. As for carrying her up the stairs, these people didn't realize that he was Saunders, the noted fullback, who minded the girl's weight as little as he would a bird's.

Clarise's mother was at home. She was terrified at the sight of her unconscious daughter at first, but Jack, in his big, confidential way, soon dispersed her fears. "I'll go for a doctor. Don't you worry, Mrs. Morse. He'll fix her all right."

Clarise, however, needed little fixing. When the doctor arrived she was fully conscious, and very much ashamed of herself.

"A good night's sleep will do you more good than any medicine. Just be sure to keep a poultice on that lump. In the morning you'll be as trim as a whistle," was the doctor's verdict, which relieved Jack immensely. He had waited to hear what his opinion would be, but once assured of the girl's safety, he prepared to leave. Mrs. Morse halted him.

"Surely you are not going without bidding Clarise good night!" she protested.

Jack needed no second invitation. He entered the dainty bedroom and gripped Clarise's hand tightly.

"You must accept my thanks," began Clarise, very much embarrassed by the eager glow of delight in the big fellow's face.

"Oh, don't mention it. Think how great it is that you won't be laid up a month or two. Say, girlie, how did it happen? Slip on a banana peel?"

"No," Clarise flushed. "I'm so ashamed of myself!"

"No need of being humiliated. Accidents happen to us all."

"But this was entirely my fault. The

whole trouble formulated when I overheard a conversation in the office. The girls were discussing the engagement of our head clerk. One said, 'It's good luck to be head clerk. Everyone for the last 10 years has been engaged to be married within six months of her promotion.'

"Well, if Clarise Morse gets the job the fates will rule otherwise," replied another. "She's so dowdy that there's not a man alive who would look at her a second time. Why, she's a frump!" Then they all laughed, while I came very near crying, for their remarks were cruelly unjust.

"I should say they were," declared Jack, glancing admiringly at the daintily well-gowned figure.

"Don't judge me as I am now," interposed Clarise. "I was different then, which was only this morning, though it seems ages ago. Not only was I unhappy over what I heard, but I was angry, too. You see, I have to support mother. Every penny is precious, for which reason I make my own garments. I know they are plain and lacking in style, but I never thought

myself a frump. In my pocketbook was a hundred dollar bonus from the firm. For several weeks I had been dicker between some new bedding and a phonograph. All of a sudden, in a frenzy of temper, I decided what to buy. At a fashionable garment store I ordered the latest style gown, in stock. They gave it to me, assuring me that the lines were the very essence of style. Having donned the creation, I headed for the street. On the way to the tunnel I realized how tight the skirt was. Such minding baby steps I had to take! It was ridiculous and uncomfortable, and already I was regretting the purchase when I arrived at the long flight of stairs."

"I see now," exclaimed Jack. "You hesitated, wondering how in the world you were ever going to get down. Then you heard the train below and forgot the tight skirt in your haste to catch the car. After the first step you felt like a bronco hobbled at the ankles and down you went in headlong dash—into my arms."

"Well, you know the ending better than I do."

"The end isn't yet," Jack protested boldly. "The great collegiate game comes off tomorrow. Will you be there as my guest to root for me? Wear your home-made duds, though. I'm not strong for style when it develops into madness."

Clarise promised readily, and the next afternoon, clad in a warm, home-made garment, she shouted, yelled and cheered for Jack Saunders.

There was only one fly in her elation. If she hadn't thrown away one hundred good dollars for style! The girl, said that she could not catch a man without being stylish. Her eyes wandered back to Jack, who happened to be looking her way, which action was becoming more and more frequent, and she glowed with pride and joy. This time the girls were wrong. Jack didn't care—she stopped suddenly. The truth loomed up monumental. She did owe her happiness to her fashionable gown. If it hadn't been for the freakish, one hundred dollar tight skirt, she would never have met her triumphant fullback!

A Long Walk

By Passenger to Railway Porte.—I say, how much longer are we going to wait at this station? I've been here an hour already.

Porter—That's nothing, my son. I've been here fifteen years.

BOBBY patted his new sled lovingly, and smiled happily at his mother and sister, who sat sewing before the fire.

"Isn't it a dandy?" He asked for the hundredth time, as he carefully carried it out of the door.

"Yes," they agreed laughingly, waving good-by to him.

There was a gust of fresh, winter air and then the outside door banged.

"I am going to hunt again for that card that came with that sled. Mrs. White said as she thoughtfully laid aside her work. "I am positive that was one!"

"So am I," agreed her daughter, as she joined in the search. "I wish that we could thank the giver."

But the hunt was in vain, for no crevice or crack revealed the desired information.

"It is of no use, mother," Mildred said at last, as she picked up her crocheting on the lounge. But while she had hunted her crochet hook had slipped from her work. "Well, mother," she laughed, running her fingers along the crack in the lounge, "I think that we had better hire a detective."

To her surprise, she pulled out a little card addressed to—"A cheerful, curly-haired boy." On the back it read:

"Please accept this sled from a

lonely man, who wants to make you very happy this year. I have often seen you playing around the house, and I hope that some day we will know each other. Your friend,

"JOHN GREEN."

She passed the card thoughtfully to her mother. She could not understand why the sender, who owned their home, and was one of the wealthiest men in the city, could be unhappy. Her thoughts were so busy that she did not notice the flush that crept over her mother's face as she eagerly scanned the card.

"We must invite him over," Mildred spoke at last.

"Yes," her mother answered almost incoherently, "we will."

When Bobby learned of the discovery he was joyous.

"When mother, when?" he kept insisting.

"Some time," she answered absent-mindedly.

But Bobby was not satisfied. He walked slowly over to his sled, to

think things over. He wanted to see his "sled friend" at once! But how was he going to do it, when he did not know who he was, or where he lived? No one noticed when he stealthily slipped out his coat and hat, and softly tiptoed out of the house. He knew that he was not allowed out of the yard, but he felt that he must find this lonely friend at once! Although he had no idea which way to go, he walked boldly and resolutely down the busy street.

"I'll find him," he said to himself, confidently. "I just know that he is tall and has dark hair, and he has a nice smile, and eyes that just shine! I just know it!" And he trudged on contentedly.

Yet not one of the tall, dark-haired men was Mr. Green. In fact, they frowned at him when he asked them. Still Bobby studied each new face expectantly. Gradually the little fellow's enthusiasm began to weaken and he grew tired. The sun had almost disappeared down behind the long column

of massive, grotesque business blocks, and a sharp, cold wind was rapidly rising. He was cold and leaned against a building for shelter.

"Guess I'd better go home," he whispered tearfully to himself.

But he did not know which way to turn. He was lost! He sat down on an icy, forsaken doorstep and cried.

It was then that he felt a friendly tap on his shoulder, and a voice was saying, "What's wrong, sonny?"

Slowly he raised his head. A tall man with dark hair was leaning over him. His eyes twinkled and his smile was pleasant. At first Bobby could not speak, because of his astonishment and then he gasped in wonder, "Are you Mr. John Green?"

It was the stranger's turn to be surprised, and he surveyed the little fellow with interest.

"Yes," he answered finally, and he spoke with difficulty. "But how did you know? This is the first time I have been in this city for a long time, and I thought that I was forgotten."

"Oh, I know," Bobby replied happily but wearily, "now Mr. Green take me home. I'll tell you the street."

Mr. Green took the tired boy in his arms, and carried him to his car at the edge of the sidewalk.

Meanwhile Mrs. White and Mildred were frantically hunting for the little boy. It seemed strange that he had disappeared from his playground, and that the little sled should be unused.

"Phone Mr. Green to help," Mildred said at last.

Mr. Green came as soon as he was summoned, for he was much interested in his little tenant.

But he was greatly surprised when Mrs. White met him at the door.

"It can not be Grace, my old friend, can it?" He asked vaguely, as he scanned the door for support.

Mrs. White smiled a moment in spite of her worry but remained silent.

"And have you known all along?" Mr. Green continued.

"Yes," she assented, "that is why Mildred always paid the rent. I did

not know how you felt."

"I was always sorry that I lost track of you," he answered, "but come, we must look for the boy!"

Just then there was a tramping on the stairs and a little voice was calling, "Mother, mother, I've found him! I've found my 'sled friend!'"

"Your 'sled friend!'" Mr. Green gasped, as he followed Bobby up the stairs.

"What do you mean and where have you been?" his mother cried, as she drew him to her. "Mr. Green has just come to help hunt for you. He is waiting now in the parlor."

"Gee," Bobby muttered under his breath, as his eyes fell on the back of a gray head and a pair of broad, square shoulders.

Suddenly his mother left him and rushed to meet the man in the parlor, who had risen excitedly to his feet. No one seemed to know just what happened then, but Bobby was soon raised to his friend's shoulder and a happy voice was crying in his ear. "Meet my

dad, Bobby. We had a little foolish trouble a number of years ago, and we were both too proud to give in until we felt that it was too late. And now, sonny, see what you have done. You have given my father back to me, and I know that he cares."

"Yes, my boy," broke in Mr. Green, Sr. "You have found my son for me."

Bobby did not understand it all, but he felt strangely happy.

After supper he sat thoughtfully on his sled. He felt a little bit lonesome. He could hear his mother and Mr. Green, Sr., talking and laughing merrily together. And his sister and the younger Mr. Green seemed to be enjoying themselves, too.

"Gee," he sighed softly, as he hugged his battered teddy bear closer. "Perhaps after they get through with each other they will give me a chance, and laying his curly head down on his little red sled, he fell asleep.

Co-Sufferers

"Does your husband suffer from his rheumatism?"

"Yes, but not half so much as the rest of us do!"

She Did the Talking

Louise—Have you a speaking acquaintance with Mrs. Teller?

Julia—No, just a listening one.

AT the breakfast table, after he had drunk his last cup of coffee and pushed his chair back in the same way he had done when living in a remote farmhouse instead of his present fine city home, Caleb Drummer spoke to his wife and daughter.

"I think we'd better invite young Meade to Thanksgiving dinner," he said. "The lad's a stranger in town and likely to be lonesome on a holiday."

Mrs. Drummer and her daughter, Sophia, swiftly exchanged glances, but not swiftly enough to escape the father's notice.

"What's the matter?" he demanded testily. "Isn't my secretary good enough company for you—now you've come up in the world?"

"Now, pa," began Mrs. Drummer, solemnly, but Sophia giggled.

Undaunted, she met her father's choleric stare. "Why, pa, I thought Mr. Meade was only a bookkeeper. Is he coming up in the world, too?"

"Yes, he is," snapped the other. "He's showing a good mind for business, and I'll make him sales manager of my Eastern office as soon as he can qualify. But you and your mother seemed to forget how we—"

"Now, pa," began Mrs. Drummer again. "You—"

"I say you're putting on airs! Because business made a boom in my affairs, and money's coming in faster than we can spend it, is no reason we should put on airs. And Felix Meade—why, I was a country boy myself and didn't have half his education."

Sophia leaned forward and held her father's flashing glance with a look wonderfully direct from eyes so gentle.

"Listen, pa. We like Mr. Meade, ma and I. We'll be glad to entertain him at any time. Only we had planned a little family affair for Thanksgiving Day. Emma and Wallace are coming with the children, and Uncle Lem."

"Um-h! So much the better. Meade'll feel more at home. I was afraid you were getting up one of your fancy parties."

Behind Caleb Drummer's broad back, as he turned to leave the room, Sophia's soft blue eyes met her mother's again in a glance of keen significance.

MOLLIE DOW'S blue eyes sparkled as she met the mail man, but the smile with which she had greeted the letter he handed her turned to dismay as she read the few lines it contained.

She threw out her hand in angry defiance and looked at the tiny diamond twinkling on her finger. "You never had any right to be on my finger," she muttered through burning tears, and taking the ring from her finger she threw it on the table, where it landed with a vicious little thud. Wiping her eyes, Mollie resolutely smoothed out the crumpled sheet and re-read the haunting lines:

"So you are engaged at last, Mollie. I am so interested I must come at once and see what kind of a looking man he is. Shall arrive at the South Station on the 3:25 train. You both be sure and meet me."

"AUNT JANE."

"What business is it to Aunt Jane or any of the rest of them?" she flung out in angry defiance. It was already 5 o'clock, and in three hours she must face Aunt Jane with the truth or start into action the inspiration that had re-

sponded to her frenzied appeal.

"He never, never will do it," she wailed. She stopped short, listening intently. Yes, that was Jim Bradley's step. A minute later Mollie heard the key turn in the lock in the door, close to her own. Jim's strong athletic figure flashed before her mind.

No word had ever been exchanged, but Mollie had learned his name and much of his history from the landlady.

Mollie crept to the door and softly opened it.

"I never, never can do it," she moaned. But the thought of Aunt Jane's nimble tongue and how she would take this precious bit of gossip and make a story so vivid that never again would Mollie dare visit the rural town, from which she had come to the city five years before, spurred her on.

She paused before Jim's door and gave a little knock.

"Why, it is Miss Dow," greeted Jim, and there was genuine pleasure in his tone. Noticing the girl's agitation and traces of recent tears he quickly asked: "Are you in trouble? Can I help you?"

He pushed a chair towards her, and closed the door.

Passing him the letter, she said: "Please read this! It will make the telling easier."

"You engaged?" Genuine dismay rung in Jim's question.

"No, it's all a lie, a senseless one. Who'd ever be engaged to me? Just because I am 35 and unmarried is no sign I am devoid of feelings," sobbed Mollie.

"I'll do anything you say," he promised

blindly. "I have wanted to know you ever since I first came here, two months ago."

Mollie looked at him. "You wanted to know me?" she gasped.

"Then you'll help me? It's only for one day or I'd never ask you." She was too serious for her words to seem exaggerated.

"I never said that I was engaged, but I gave them to understand that I was, and—and I had to describe someone, so I described you. Aunt Jane will be here in less than three hours."

"And you want me to go with you to meet her?" Jim asked eagerly.

"Yes, and just stay with us over tomorrow," reiterated Mollie. The car was crowded that night, but Jim managed to find a seat for Mollie, and stood at her side with proprietary in-

terest.

"We must be sure and address each other by our Christian names, Mollie," cautioned Jim, pulling her hand through his arm as they left the car.

"There she is now," gasped Mollie.

"Courage," Jim breathed in her ear. "Just remember and act natural." The next minute Mollie and the tall, angular figure faced each other.

"Oh, Mollie, Boston is horrid. I never was so scared in all my life. I wouldn't start on a journey like this again if you were engaged to 40 men."

That night they partook of a hot supper in Mollie's room.

After Jim had returned to his own room, Aunt Jane turned to Mollie. "Well, I am surprised. And he is studying for a lawyer? How did he ever happen to fancy you, Mollie?"

"Now, I'd advise you to restrain your curiosity, Aunt Jane. Jim won't stand it." The next night, after seeing Aunt Jane off at the station, Mollie was just fitting her key in the lock when Jim came out. "May I come in a moment?" he asked.

He took her hat and gloves as she removed them.

"You look all in," he exclaimed tenderly. "Have you been to supper?" Mollie nodded. "You have been a good sport, Jim," she began bravely, "and I never can tell you how grateful I am." She held out her hand. "You may take the ring off now, and let our engagement end."

Jim's hand went over Mollie's. "You haven't heard the news yet. In three weeks I get my degree, and the following week I am to be made a junior

member of our firm. Now, Mollie, can't we continue our engagement until about June and then get along well on my salary?" He punctuated his question with caresses that convinced Mollie of his sincerity.

"Do you mind, Jim, if I use this for the engagement ring?" asked Mollie, holding up the little diamond.

"Mind," cried Jim. "Why, Mollie, I owe all my happiness to that little ring and Aunt Jane."

A Cynical Impression

"I can remember," commented the sarcastic constituent, "when a man could get pretty far ahead, simply by looking wise."

"I shouldn't be surprised if times had changed," replied Senator Sorghum. "It sometimes seems to me that it's getting so a man doesn't even have to look that way."

Quite Devoted

Phyllis—He seems very fond of his wife.

Joan—Very! He doesn't even find fault with the way she's bringing up the children.

The Old Time Ways

By Phil Moore

Then her face lit with a smile that made her look like a mischievous little girl.

"How he's going to enjoy that Thanksgiving dinner!" she bubbled.

Sophia had met Felix Meade on several occasions, but he had never been to the Drummer home. He had been introduced to her in her father's office, and once he had escorted her to her limousine. Again, they had met in a byway of the park, and admired together the glowing Autumn scenery.

Sophia was a stunning figure in imported toggery, and she carried herself with an air of haughty formality. Her newly acquired riches had brought with them a fear of fortune-hunters, and so, to all young men—especially impecunious young men—Miss Sophia Drummer was discouragingly aloof.

But there had been a moment when young Meade had referred to his old home and his love of rural scenes; when Sophia, flicking a little pile of leaves with her swagger stick, had

looked up responsively and caught the intensity of his unguarded interest.

She had colored a little and grown daintily polite again; but she had thought: "No young man with eyes like those can be a fortune hunter!"

Later on a home, however, she had amended this decision with a sigh: "One never can tell."

Early on Thanksgiving Day the elder daughter of the Drummer family arrived with her husband and two children. Also quaint Uncle Lem appeared, wearing a gay-bordered waistcoat and a spreading white tie in honor of the rare occasion.

After a little whispering beyond the hearing of the master of the house Uncle Lem announced that he wanted to see something of the city.

"City? I can show you nearly the whole state before dinner time," boasted Caleb Drummer, and ordered his car. "I'm some driver, I am, Lem. Come along, Wallace. Kids want to go!"

But the "kids" preferred to investigate further the wonders of the handsome new house and to bask in the society of their beloved Aunt Sophia.

"Don't hurry, pa," advised the latter. "If Mr. Meade comes in, I'll take good care of him."

Mr. Meade appeared in due time; and he could not restrain the look of wonder on his face when the Drummer door was opened by Sophia herself—Sophia, clad in a simple frock of dark blue and wearing a little ruffled white apron.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Meade," she greeted him blithely. Don't try to conceal your surprise, for there's more to follow. All our servants are off for the day. Pa is out in his car with some of our guests; and if you want to see me, you'll have to come into the kitchen. Or perhaps you'll like to help me with the dining room decorations."

Thus Mr. Felix Meade was made an accomplice in the scheme which had been brewing for several days in the

Drummer household. And when Caleb Drummer returned with his guests, it was Sophia who opened the door again.

"Got a good appetite?" she said gaily. "For we're going to have a real old-fashioned Thanksgiving dinner. Mother and Emma cooked it, and I'm going to serve it."

"What the—what—," began the astonished man; and then he saw Felix Meade's smiling face. "See here, Meade, you in this, too?"

"I fell in," Meade laughed boyishly. "Need any help carving the turkey, Mr. Drummer?"

With his hand on the young man's shoulder, the master of the house moved to the dining room. The modern elegance of the room's interior had been concealed beneath rustic decorations of interlaced boughs and woodland foliage. Fall flowers of the sort which country gardens yield were massed abundantly and in the center was a long table set in lavish old-fashioned style and offering a feast such as

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Seeing It Through

By Algia Frances Brooks

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