

The Kidnapping of Lieut. Wally (1916)



A young woman goes to great lengths to convince her long-time sweetheart — who has returned from Gallipoli missing an arm and an ear — to marry her.

Like 'Three Chances in One', this story doesn't shy away from the physical difficulties of Wally's acquired disabilities, putting him in a position of physical dependence on the heroine.

Unlike 'Three Chances in One', however, this story, written later in the war, has grimmer undertones. The earlier work is a romance in which the bride's wealth smooths the way and the two lovers are united as they would have been had the war not intervened.

About the Story ...

In 'The Kidnapping of Lieut. Wally', the wealth is not there to smooth the path: Wally is invalided on a 'pauperish pension, with the only hope of learning to write with my left hand'. The heroine, modern when she needs to be, interjects that 'I've got a pair of hands if you haven't. Can't I run this car? Can't I scrub?'

In counter-balance to this, however, the heroine admits that

before the war, when they could have married, neither she nor the hero 'believed much in marrying. Said it spoiled the love affair'. With Wally's injury, marriage is at the forefront of their relationship. Here, the war is a means of reinforcing the social order as much as upsetting it, causing the lovers to rethink their 'futurist' opinions in favour of conformity.

"DON'T know anything worse to a woman," said Miss Sophy Trent, "than being absolutely refused and turned down by the man you have asked to marry you, when he has come back from the war."

"Meaning — Cadwallader, of course, Miss Sophy. Were you not engaged before the war?"

The girl brushed a hand over her bronze hair and lifted the sapphires of her face to her companion.

"Never engaged. Wally would not consent to it. He always adored me. Said it a number of times. I simply go mad about him, and though he was never in a position to marry ... it's so different now."

"Hardly!" The crusty old bachelor talking in the little rose garden over looking the harbor never minced matters to Miss Trent. "Wally has all the more reason to — to refuse your offer, Sophy, seeing that he has returned with less than he went away with."

The girl tossed a fluffy curl out of her eyes.

"Pooh! What does it matter? I don't call an arm and an ear missing anything at all. I was always keen on marrying Wally — he has such splendid brains. One would get used to — to things very quickly; and, after all, he has one arm left and one ear."

"And both his legs and a splendid head upon his body; but, Miss Sophy — you've got to consider him."

"That's precisely what I am doing. He is aching to marry me."

"Are you certain?"

"Don't be silly, John. You're getting too old to notice, I suppose."

"But I understand Cadwallader never believed much in marrying. Said it spoiled the love affair. I understood, too, that you had that kind of futurist opinion once upon a time, my dear."

"Once upon a time — certainly. I thought it beastly to argue about a chop. It sounded so greasy, and like a kitchen maid having her beau into a meal without a cloth."

"But neither you nor Cadwallader need have been without a cloth. Before Wally went out to Gallipoli he

had a decent job at the bank — —?”

“Which paid just enough for him to keep going, with a game of golf and an income for his poor mother, who recently died of shock. Wally is a splendid fellow, and we would never dream of marrying anyone unless it was ourselves. There was not enough money, even with mine; but now —”

“Now there is less, and you insist on —”

He stopped. It was hardly fair to accuse her of running after his friend.

“And wouldn’t you insist if you loved a — a woman, and she came home from the war maimed and depressed, with one arm missing and one ear cut off her head? Of course you would, so as to be able to look after her. That is what I intend to do for Wally whether he likes it or not.”

“Oh, I’ve no doubt he will like it considerably. I — I know I should. Say, have you ever tried kidnapping? It’s the very latest thing in preliminary honeymoons.”

The girl stabbed him with a look of blue-black contempt.

“It is the easiest thing imaginable,” he went on. “You can kidnap a king or a butterfly under ten minutes if you only know how. My last experience was a Duchess — you need not look so cross, Sophy. I kidnapped her for another chap when I was in Vienna. Oh, dear, what a time I had.”

“Stop being a fool if you can, John, and let’s have some of the sensible ideas.”

“Very well — this is my particular suit I should say. I lead through strength.”

“Go on.”

“It’s for you to go on, Miss Sophy. Get busy and kidnap Wally for all you’re worth. It’s the very easiest thing if you can drive a motor — and that seems to be one of your chief assets in this case.”



The girl's eyes brightened. "Kidnap Wally! I believe I could."

"I don't mind handing you out some of my experience with the — Duchess," John announced.

"Talk sense and listen to me."

The sun dipped behind the hills at the horizon. The fat cynic rose to depart. When he had gone he left behind him one of those neat little crazy schemes, purely his own, and manufactured in such a way as to be very effective in Lieutenant Cadwallader's special case.

* * *

The jovial cynic turned the wheel of his magnificent little touring car into the drive leading up to Miss Trent's uncle's house. The girl came out with a distinctly pale look about her, and with her followed Lieutenant Cadwallader, whose right coat sleeve hung limp to his side.

Sophy carried the rugs and a warm coat; the Lieutenant, a simple dust overall. By his manner he looked as happy as a schoolboy going out for his first ride.

They both threw a jocular remark to the bachelor, to which he replied, in a cool kind of way:

"Suppose you don't understand these gears sufficiently to drive with your left hand?" he asked the Lieutenant. "I'm afraid I've got to leave you to Miss Sophy otherwise, as I've got a directors' meeting at five."

"Good lord, John; it's nearly that now. Suppose we give up the drive."

“Not on your life. You want all the air you can get now you are out of the trenches. Come on! Sophy has run this car lots of times.”

“I’d trust Sophy — as I’d trust myself, if it had been a case of my understanding a car. I’ll have to learn how to drive left-handed. Come on, Sophy! Which is the thingumabob you start her with?”

For answer Sophy pushed forward a lever, and they shot straight down the drive. There was scarcely time for a word of farewell to the man left standing there, but she had received her instructions, and he had managed to whisper in an undertone as she had been taking her seat behind the wheel, “Ring me if there is any trouble. You’ve got petrol to last two hundred miles.”

They whizzed through the streets of Manly, heading off along the Narrabeen road. The Lieutenant sat close, because he liked it, and Sophy allowed him to for reasons of her own.

They spun along, making speed at thirty-five, then forty. Above this she dared not go.

Later, when the cold water began to trickle into her eyes with unbidden nervousness, and the paddocks ahead loomed as if they were crossways instead of parallel, she leaned over and touched something just to the left of them. She turned on the fullest lights. Cadwallader took the opportunity to suggest returning. He thought they had come far enough.

“Tired?” she said, and went on to forty-two.

“Gee whiz, no; but I’ve got to get back in time to dress for that affair tonight — —”

All the satisfaction he got was the jerk of the girl’s elbow as she turned the car into another long strip of open country.

“Say, my dear girl, we’ll never make it,” he said later, as the full dark hung down in front. Sophy laughed, and he put his left arm across and gripped her by the wrist.

“You’ll have an accident if you do that, Wally.”

“Good Lord, I thought — see here, Sophy, I’ve got to make a recruiting speech at a quarter to nine sharp. You know it’s the Jolly Old Boys’ Club chivoo, and they are making a special feature of me as a member and a ‘returned’.”

For an answer he heard Sophy’s quick little laugh. She slowed down to thirty-five, and then took a look right into his face.

“I’m kidnapping you, Lieutenant Cadwallader. And you are not going to the Jolly Boys’ Club.”



“Good Heavens, Sophy — what madness. You dear little girl, I love you ever so much for thinking me worth it but we simply must return in time.”

“Not till I’ve finished kidnapping you. Don’t you think it’s great fun?”

“I think it’s just — d—. Sophy, don’t play fool tonight.”

“Fool, indeed! I never was more serious! You would have done the same if it had been me. S’pose I went to war and came home — only three-quarters —.” Her voice died into a sob.

“But, dear — don’t you understand? I would be doing you a grievous harm to marry you. Incapable, on a pauperish pension, with the only hope of learning to write with my left hand and making something out of it — perhaps enough to keep me in clothes and cigars.”

“I suppose you’ll admit now that I’ve got a pair of hands if you haven’t. Can’t I run this car? Can’t I scrub?”

The Lieutenant gave a jump. She let the car out again and he subsided.

“Oh, you foolish girl — well, go on. I am never going to consent.”

“Not in the great cause of your country? That speech of yours at the Jolly Old Boys’ Club. It might be the means of getting twenty members belonging to it to ‘sign on’ this very night. You must see that, Wally? You’ve got your duty plain.”

He ground his teeth together, but his face paled in the uncertain light.

“Yes, by God — and I am going to do it. Take me back, Sophy, or — —”

"Or you will try and climb out." Again she speeded up and laughed back at him. She had to laugh, or she would have wept.

For ten minutes the Lieutenant argued. He cursed Gallipoli at the top of his voice.

"Do you think I am so weak," he cried, shaking with fury, "so weak as to allow a woman, you least of all, to be a general servant to me — to have to depend on her — —?"

"Weak?" Sophy raised her voice as well. "I never knew anyone so strong."

"And how long is this ridiculous farce going on?" he said, sitting back, as if resisting it no longer. "I presume the oil tank must peter out some time?"

"Two hundred miles, I believe. At least, John said so."

"John — is he in it as well? I'll break his — head."

"Of course, if you are really serious." Sophy put on her best smile and voice. "If you think it wiser to return now, it is a very easy matter. Are there to be ladies there tonight?"

"Wives of members — that is all. Sophy, for Heaven's sake — —" he began to plead again.

"As sure as you make that speech I'm going to be there to hear you."

"Silly little thing — you're not my wife."

"I shall be before you make that recruiting speech. We come to a little church a bit further on."

It was then two hours since they had left Manly. The Club was there, but he knew he had to dress and shave and there was the return journey to be taken. Breakdowns might be counted in as well.

Thoroughly pessimistic about his chances, he threw himself against her shoulder.

"Sophy, it can't be done." His voice was steady, and he tried to take her hand off the wheel.

"Nonsense! It can. John and I secured a special licence, and anyway we can be temporarily married out here. Next week we can have another ceremony to make it really secure."

"I won't hear of it, and I defy you, Sophy, to go on another inch."

She turned the wheel again into another long open road leading to nowhere, but a little church, with two yellow eyes of light, suddenly showed up on a hill.

"Stop the car, Sophy. I command you."

"I don't belong to your squad," she said.

"Stop — I'll shout out and compel you to let me down, in ten minutes."

"Go on, shout! What's the use? If I let you out now you would not get home before midnight. There is no train for hours. You'd have to get into the car again. And, of course, I should drive — you can't."

"It seems to me I am considered a blessed infant. Curse John — I'll see that he goes to the 'front.' Lazy good for nothing — fat hog of a —"

"Steady!" said Sophy. They were passing the church. "Shall I stop? There is a minister I presume who would marry us."

"I'll give up the speech!" His voice was almost a sob. Then, "let me out; I'll telephone."

She sent the car on again.

"Go on, telephone!" she laughed.

Recklessly Cadwallader caught at her wrist again with his strong left hand.

"The speech can go to blazes; but you can let me down here?"

"What for?"

"I'm going to make a fuss. Telephone, of course, for another car."

"What's the matter with this one?"

He shivered her with a look. "You're the matter!" he said.

Sophy flushed. She thought that perhaps he was a trifle rude to her. She threw in her second gear.

"Am I? I think perhaps that you are trying to get out of making that speech. You don't care to send men, perhaps, to what you know is —"

"Be quiet!" he demanded. She burst into tears.

"Now we've done it!" said Lieutenant Wally. "Sophy, can't you see I don't want to marry you?"



She turned the full lamps of her angry eyes upon him. They were long past the church.

“How can you lie like that? Say it, looking right at me!”

Taking one hand off the wheel, she touched his face. Cadwallader threw back his head.

“It is a matter of my honor, and you don't seem to think of that.”

“Honor! Is there no honor in being true to your love?”

“I am being true.” He leaned over her. The car ran at a slower rate.

“Yes — to your beastly, horrid, selfish opinions. You want to sacrifice me as you have your arm — don't you ever think of a woman's heart, Wally, when — it comes to a time like this?”

“Oh, Hades!” He sat back, and for a time there was silence. Sophy turned the car right round.

“We will go back to the church. No further — except you tell me now, with me looking right at you, that you don't want me for your wife.”

“I don't w-a-n — look here, Sophy, I don't want any wife.”

“That has nothing to do with me. You cannot say you don't want me, and you know you can't.”

“I can!” He sat straight. “I don't want you.” An amused smile trickled out at the corner of his mouth. “I don't want you! I won't have you!”

“Straight?” She was looking right at him.

“Straight!” He deliberately smiled outright.

“Very well. I shall drive you home. You can go to your club, and I — well, I shall accept the offer made by Captain Bruce.”

“Don’t know him. I hope he will make you a good mate.”

“At least he tells the truth about needing me. He has no legs at all!”

Wally stiffened. “By Jove, then, you’re not going to marry him. I’ll get John to kidnap you first.”

They were arriving at the little church again. The lights still shone.

“Your last chance, Lieutenant Cadwallader, to sacrifice me to a man with no legs.”

“You’re not serious?”

“I am.”

“Stop the car! No, go ahead! I won’t be married in such a place.”

“I refuse to be married anywhere else. I want to go to the club as your wife.”

Lieutenant Cadwallader caught hold of her suddenly. The car skidded a moment, but she managed to right it and stopped the engines in time.

“Might have had an accident,” she said. “How careless!”

“I’ve had two already — one at the front, and the other is this affair, never been in a worse smash-up. Come on, Sophy, get it over.”

“Sure you want to?” she queried.

She handed him a ring.

“As if it ever mattered if I didn’t. I’ll hang John by the neck.”

But John was hanging himself his collar in a frantic endeavour search the road from the window of his rooms. Miles away the kidnapped young officer called him up on the ‘phone.

“Say — I’ll be there in time, but it’s a close shave. Tell ‘em I’m bringing my wife. Had to do it, John! but I am ever — so thankful. Sophy threatened to marry some rotten chap called Bruce — worse than I am —

the fellow who lost both his legs.”

John replied, “Bruce? I never heard of him. Are you sure it was Bruce?”

*Wally hung up the receiver and turned to the girl.
“John doesn’t know Bruce. He has never heard of him.”
“Neither have I!” said his wife.*



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