

The Secret Wife of Walter Mitty

By

Beth Black

With fondness and thanks to James Thurber.

“My meager attempts have not adequately described the breadth of your magnificence ...” His handsome face, pallid from the man's many great mental efforts, drew the attention of all the women on the street, but it was clear that the Poet Laureate of the United States, Mr. Walter Mitty, only had eyes for her. And those eyes — such dark, intense windows to the artistic soul within, gazed at her with infinite love. Yes, Walter Mitty, whose vigorous imagery folded into robust rhyme had earned him the sobriquet, *Gritty Mitty* — begged to write yet another sonnet in her honor. A breeze whooshed through his long, black hair and blew leaves into the air, encircling them, softly singing *sheesheeshee*. He reached for her delicate hand and clasped it firmly, displaying the adoration of a poet's soul, and she knew he would never let her go ...

“Will that be cash, check, or charge?” the clerk repeated, tugging at the dress in her arms. The young man paused, and she realized he needed it to ring up the total. She released the dress into his hand. Mr. Mitty stood in the corner, face to the wall, making those damnable clacking noises again: *ta-pocketa-pocketa-pocketa-pocketa-pocketa*. She thought about dragging her husband to the dentist for another look at those dentures. Before she could mention it, however, he loped out of the store. Edith Mitty reached over the counter, wrenched her dress and receipt from the astonished clerk's grasp, stuffed it into a bag, and raced to catch up.

Outside, she found Walter and handed him the bag. They walked past a billboard advertising the new art show downtown. She turned into his studio and hurried up the stairs to the cool garret where she knew he waited, paints and brushes at the ready. The great artist Señor Galtero Mittéo insisted on nudes, always nudes, and always of *her*. She loosened her scarf and sensed his hot Spanish eyes undressing her further. He stood ready to paint, mixing his colors with a brisk *sheesheeshee*. She felt shy for the first time, wondering if he lusted after her the way she had secretly dreamt of him. His intense, dark eyes revealed the truth ... he had! He motioned for her to strike a pose.

“Get in, already.” Walter held the car door open. She slid in. On the way home, Mr. Mitty drove like a maniac and she lost her temper. Finally, he slowed the car to sixty-five, but not before she tore her blouse in fear when they nearly ran over a cat. “Do not worry about that!” he commanded. “It’s a minor event in a life we shall fill with major beauty.” The master couturier, *Halter de la Walter*, fashion designer par excellence, snapped his fingers and immediately two aides rushed forward with gorgeous blouses for her to admire and enjoy. They were followed by more aides, arms out, laden with many more clothes. Silk brushed against suede, whispering a lovely *sheesheeshee*. “You, Mrs. Mitty, possess the figure I have dreamt about all these years. I can never design for anyone else, ever again. All that I draw is to dress your beauty. It is all for you!” Laughing, she seized the blouses, skirts, pants, coats, sweaters –

“Hand me your bag, dear,” Mr. Mitty said. The car was parked, and he had the door open, his hand held expectantly in her face. She pulled the bag out of the back seat and gave it to him. He stood there while she climbed out of the car.

“Gee, I’m hungry. What are you fixing for dinner?” he asked.

The aroma drew large crowds to his trendy bistro as world-renowned chef *Sir Salter "Old Salt" Mitty* stirred his most famous dish with a large wooden spoon, Poulet au Voila! The utensil in his powerful-yet-creative hand brushed against the sides of the glorious, steaming pot with a *sheesheeshee ...*

"Mac and cheese ... again?" Mr. Mitty's voice betrayed a slight irritation.

"I thought it was your favorite," she replied.

"Well, yes. It is. But this is the fifth time this week, dear." His face softened and he smiled faintly at her. He shrugged.

Stirring the pot of thick, cheesy goo, she mixed in the cooked elbow macaroni. "Hey, it's not every man who can say his mac and cheese is homemade. Secretly, Edith was ashamed that she'd lost track of how many times she served it that week. "I'm sorry. I've been a little preoccupied."

He stroked her lower back gently, right on the spot where her arthritis felt tender. The warmth from his palm eased the pain, somehow. She was very fond of Walter and promised herself to make him steak the next evening. Turning into his arms, she nuzzled his ear. "Don't worry. I have a surprise for tomorrow night," she whispered. The spoon in her hand began to drip, so she quickly withdrew and resumed her cooking.

She thought he might be miffed at her abrupt departure from his grasp, but Walter stared blankly ahead. In fact, she wasn't sure he noticed that she had pulled away. He wandered off, making that noise again. She sighed and stirred.

The doorbell rang. Tapping the spoon and setting it down, she turned off the stove and hurried from the kitchen to the entry of their apartment to see who it was. Mr. Mitty had already opened up and was staring at their visitor. A mysterious man stood holding a bag. He appeared secretive, first, because she did not know who he was, and second, because Walter was apparently also at a loss. Moreover, the strange man's appearance filled her with foreboding. His fedora slung low over one brow, reaching toward a pair of disturbingly dark eyes. Worse yet, this stranger's black pencil-thin mustache stretched mightily to trace the full length of his sneer.

"Yes?" queried her husband.

"You received a ... call," the man said. His voice somber, his speech slow.

Suddenly, the infamous spy, "W" Mitty, thrust a hand out and yanked her back, away from the man. "Run!" he commanded. "So long as I am able to fight, they shall never capture my glorious queen!"

Find out what happens to Edith and Walter in *Fun & Games!*

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