

THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER
MITTY



James Thurber



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"We're going through!" the captain shouted.

His voice sounded like ice breaking. He was wearing a dark blue uniform, and his navy hat was pulled down over one of his cold gray eyes.

The younger officer sitting next to him, Lieutenant Berg, was frightened.

"We cannot make it, sir," he said. "We are flying into a terrible storm."

"Turn on engine number eight," the captain said.

"Turn on engine number eight!" Lieutenant Berg shouted.

"Full power in number three," the captain ordered.

"Full power in number three," Lieutenant Berg yelled.

The other navy men in the huge eight-engine sea plane smiled at each other.

"Captain Mitty will get us thru," they said. "He is not afraid of anything..."

"Stop driving so fast!" Mrs. Mitty yelled.

Walter Mitty blinked his eyes, "What?" he said, as he looked at his wife sitting next to him in the car. The huge navy sea plane caught in a terrible storm, began to disappear from his mind.

"You are driving too fast! You are going fifty-five miles an hour," Mrs. Mitty complained. "You know I don't like to go faster than forty."

Walter Mitty was silent as he drove toward the town of Waterberry.

Mrs. Mitty looked at her husband. "You're acting strange again. I wish you would let Dr. Renshaw examine you."

Walter Mitty stopped the car in front of the building where his wife had her hair washed and curled. She opened the car door and turned to her husband, "Remember to get those rubber boots while I'm having my hair done."

"I don't need rubber boots," Walter Mitty said.

"You're not a young man anymore," his wife said as she got out of the car.

Walter Mitty stared out the car window. He started the car engine again and drove toward the public garage where he always parked his car.

On the way to the garage he passed a hospital...

The pretty nurse looked worried as she told Doctor Walter Mitty about the sick man. "He's the millionaire banker Wellington McMillan," she whispered. "He is a friend of the president."

Walter Mitty took off his gloves slowly.

"Who has the case?" he asked.

"Dr. Renshaw and Dr. Benbow," the nurse answered. "But there are also two specialists - Dr. Remmington from New York and Dr. Pritchard Mitford from London."

A door opened and Dr. Renshaw came out.

"Hello, Mitty," he said. "We have a big problem here with McMillan. He has obstreosis of the ductal tract. Tertiary. Wish ye take a look at I'm."

"Glad to," Dr. Mitty said.

At this moment, a large machine connected to the operating table began to make strange noises, "Pa-ke-ta-pa-ke-ta-pa-ke-ta..."

One of the nurses screamed, "The new heart machine is breaking down! No one in this part of the country knows how to fix it."

"Quiet, please," Walter Mitty said in a low, cool voice.

By now the machine was going, "Pa-ke-ta-pa-ke-ta - quip, pa-ke-ta-pa-ke-ta - quip."

He went to the machine and began turning a row of knobs on it.

"Give me a pen," he ordered.

Someone handed a writing pen to him. He pulled a small metal tube out of the machine and put the pen in its place.

"That will work for ten minutes," he said. "You'd better start the operation now."

Mitty saw Renshaw's face turn very white. "The patient has developed coreopsis, Mitty. Would... Would you perform the operation?"

Walter Mitty looked at the worried faces.

"If you wish," he said.

He put on a white doctor's coat over his clothes. He covered his nose and mouth with a surgeon's mask and pulled on thin rubber gloves. One of the nurses handed him a shiny steel knife...

"Watch out for that car!" someone shouted.

Walter Mitty stepped hard on his brakes. The garage attendant walked over to Mitty's car.

"You're coming in the wrong door, mister."

"Sorry," Walter Mitty answered.

The garage attendant opened the car door.

"Get out of the car," he said. "I'll park it for you."

"Oh," said Walter Mitty. He got out of the car and handed the man the car keys.

He went into the shoe store. A few minutes later he came out with the boots

in a box under his arm. Walter Mitty was frowning. His wife had told him to get boots and something else.

He could not remember what the second thing was. But he knew his wife would remember. "Where is the what's its name?" she would ask.

Walter Mitty looked at his watch. His wife would be finished having her hair curled in fifteen minutes. He walked over to the hotel where he always waited while she was having her hair done.

Walter Mitty sat down in a big chair facing a window in the hotel lobby. He picked up a news magazine lying on a small table near his chair. It was full of news about the war with pictures of bomber planes...

"Crawley has been wounded," Captain Mitty said. "Get him to the hospital. I'll fly alone."

The sergeant jumped to his feet. "You can't fly alone, sir. It takes two men to handle that bomber plane."

"Somebody's got to knock out that enemy supply center," Mitty said as shells exploded outside.

He waved to the sergeant as he walked out the door...

"Why are you hiding in this old chair?" Mrs. Mitty asked. "I've been looking all over this hotel for you. Did you get the - what's its name? The dog food? What's in the box?"

"Rubber boots," said Mitty.

"Why didn't you put them on in the store?" she asked.

"I was thinking," said Walter Mitty. "Do you know that I sometimes think?"

They left the hotel and began walking to the garage.

As they passed a pharmacy on the corner Mrs. Mitty said, "Wait here for me. I forgot to buy something."

Walter Mitty lighted a cigarette. It began to rain...

He stood against the wall with his shoulders back and his feet together.

"I don't want the handkerchief," Walter Mitty said coldly. He took one last puff of his cigarette and threw it away. Then he faced the firing squad with a quiet smile on his face. He stood tall, proud and undefeated... Walter Mitty, the man nobody knew...

- THE END -

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