



The Right Forward, the Girl, and the Left Guard [Prize Story]

DOWN through the halls expectancy floated. It was the old game over again—the last of a series. This game was important. It loomed big because it was to decide the season, and the present season is, by reason of proximity, a matter of greater moment than all the seasons of the past combined. This is natural, for the rigor of the game on the floor is more intense than that of all the games the Alumni and old-timers relate. This is true because, in athletics, as in some other things, the joy is in the thrill we feel, and an indifferent fight of unmatched dogs thrills more intimately than all the battles of dead kings. So the crowd that gathered in the Gymnasium was quiet. Even the “outside” girls, brought by fellows who usually came alone, were hushed by the tension in the air. There was a slightly louder hum for a moment when the Left Guard brought in the Girl and seated her under the ladder by the west wall. But the sensation was little and short lived, for the Left Guard was not a popular favorite.

His place on the team had always been uncertain. In fact, many wondered how he got there at all. Of course, it was only because Wines had left school, and there was no one else in sight. Not that the Guard did not know the game, for he did—few better. Also he kept his head, and followed his man reasonably well. But that was all he did. There was the seat of the trouble. He had neither the strength for rushing play, the speed for sensational *coups de force*, nor the brilliancy in seizing opportunity as Fate decreed it, for a star. He lacked the genius of the game.

So the gathering crowd forgot him as soon as the dressing-room door closed behind him. The Girl was of greater interest—but all topics yielded to the coming contest.

And then the Right Forward, surnamed the Majestic One, appeared clad in battle array and grave importance, with just a dash of self-sufficiency. He came in and surveyed the crowd with head erect and frowning brow. At last he found the Girl and walked over to the west wall with a condescending gait.