

Tangled Wives

By PEGGY SHANE

Copyright by Peggy Shane

WNU Service

SYNOPSIS

A girl finds herself in a taxicab in New York with a strange man who speaks of "an awful shock." He leaves her for a moment, and she drives on, for she fears him. She stops at the Biltmore, wondering who she is. Her memory is gone. She has a wedding ring. The nameless girl meets a young woman who speaks of her desire to go to Reno for a divorce, if she can get the money. The woman vanishes with the nameless girl's \$900. An elderly woman, Mrs. Oscar Du Val, cordially greets the nameless girl, addressing her as "Doris," wife of Mrs. Du Val's son, Rocky. Rocky is abroad, and Doris, bewildered, is taken to the home of Mrs. Du Val and her sculptor husband, Oscar. Doris falls in love with Rocky's photograph, but cannot remember having married him. Visiting a store she is astounded when a saleswoman insists she hide from observation. Rocky returns. He demands to know who she is and why his wife sent her to his home. She cannot tell him. They agree, for the sake of his parents, to pretend, for the time being, they are husband and wife.

CHAPTER V—Continued

—10—

Rocky pulled a chair up to the table and sat down. "Draw up, dream girl," he said gleefully. "Rather, darling, let me arrange your pillows for you."

There seemed nothing else she could do about it, so Doris scrambled into bed. Rocky poked pillows behind her. "Jolly, isn't it?"

"What?"

"Oh—having our own little love nest like this and being so fond of one another!"

Doris' spoon poked tremblingly into her grapefruit. She felt a little reckless about where the juice spattered. "It may seem jolly to you," she looked at him unsmilingly.

Rocky opened his eyes in pretended surprise. "You mean to say it isn't to you—with your love of adventure? Fickle woman, and on our wedding day you were so crazy about me!"

Doris was scarlet. For a moment she thought that Rocky meant they had had a wedding day. It was too confusing. If only he would stop teasing. It was baffling enough not to know what had happened to her.

"After breakfast we'll drive into the village," said Rocky. "I want to call up Doris without Mother finding it out."

"Go alone."

"You don't crave my company."

"Frankly I don't."

He looked at her. She saw that his capricious mood was gone. He was hurt inexplicably, and angry.

"Well, I'm not so d-d keen about you either. It's to save Mother's feelings that I'm going to take you." His face looked grieved, childishly so. "She thinks that we can't bear to be out of one another's sight!"

Doris didn't know what to say. His making fun of love infuriated her. She looked at him in stunned helplessness.

Who was she? What was she doing here? Where was the real Doris? Why wasn't she here instead?

Mrs. Du Val rapped at the door and came in. "Ah my children—like quiet little love-birds you sit!" She glanced at Doris' plate. "But you do not eat!" She shook a finger. "You are too excited. Rocky has talked to you too much."

Doris smiled. "Yes—he hasn't given me time to dress, even!" She gave Rocky a sly glance.

He came out of his gloom with a humorous leer. "But you're so beautiful—dressed or undressed. Why should I?"

Doris drove to the village with him. She sat quietly except for an occasional answer to his sarcastic references to her "sustained innocence"—her "touching consideration" for his parents! When she could stand it no longer she cried:

"Oh, keep still. You haven't the faintest idea of what you're talking about."

"Maybe not." Rocky stopped the car and got out. "But I'll know soon. You wait here while I telephone."

He came out a few minutes later, looking glum. "A fine bunch of women I pick for myself," he growled. "I come home to a strange bride, and my real wife is nowhere to be found."

"Couldn't I get her?"

"Couldn't I get her?" shouted Rocky. "And you let me go through all this nonsense of telephoning her! How much longer do you intend making a jackass out of me?" He eyed her accusingly. "You knew all the time she wasn't there."

She felt as if her last nerve was about to snap. "Stop speaking to me

in that tone," she cried. "And if you happen to have been born a jackass, is that my fault? Stop the car. I prefer to walk."

Rocky stepped on the gas. "Stop it? Like h—!! From now on, this fight gets serious! There are plenty of unpleasant places for clever girl crooks in New York!" He stamped violently on the starter. "Where do you suppose that woman is at this hour? Not home from last night's party, I expect."

"You—you're unspeakable." She drew herself to the farther side of the car. She was seething. Rocky seemed engaged in a bitter brooding. They said nothing more until he opened the door of the car for her to alight.

Doris retreated from his extended hand. "I can get out of this car quite well without assistance."

He seized her arm and pulled her out roughly. "Stop acting like a fool."

They stood eye to eye, Doris on the step above him, outraged, panting with fury. At that moment nothing but physical violence could have satisfied Doris. This man had her so completely at his mercy. She was so helpless. She had no place to go—no one to turn to. And he insulted her, humiliated her. She could not think of words to express her fury. Everything else had gone from her mind.

He too was filled with hate. His mouth was drawn into ugly lines. His eyes looked at her mercilessly.

"You—" he began.

The cheery voice of Oscar Du Val boomed at them. "Ah, my children, home again! Good. I thought you might be late for lunch."

Rocky reached out his hand toward her, smiling hypocritically. It was the

What should she do?

But the kindly Du Vals were perceiving at last that something had gone wrong with the newlyweds. Doris did not eat. Rocky glowered.

Oscar Du Val pushed back his chair. "Rocky you go off somewhere with Doris for a few days where you can be alone together."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Du Val eagerly. "It is not good for young people to be always with us old ones—"

"We love it," Doris spoke impulsively.

Rocky glared at her.

"As a matter of fact, Doris and I are leaving for New York this afternoon, if you don't mind," he said.

Doris' heart leaped with fear. So she was to leave this place—leave Mrs. Du Val, her only friend in the world. And where should she go in New York?

She rose. "I'll go and pack," she said. "What time does the train leave?"

"I'll drive you in my car," said Rocky.

Doris walked swiftly out of the room so that they would not see her tears. Rocky's bitter taunt recurred to her—he seemed to think she was some kind of an evil woman. His eyes were so unfriendly and cruel. If he knew the truth he would turn her over to the police. Perhaps he would anyway. The least he would do would be to put her away in an asylum.

She packed quickly. What the future held in store for her she could not guess. This adventure had turned out to be farcical. "To anyone else it would be farcical although it doesn't seem so funny to me," she thought.

Doris accused herself unmercifully. She ought to have known that Mrs. Du Val was not acquainted with her. One

the kisses, the smiling servants—Rocky at the wheel grim, saying little—then the grinding gears—and the last look over the shoulder—

Then she was riding over the road beside Rocky.

He spoke once on the long journey: "I'll take you as far as New York," he said unpleasantly. "But then I'm afraid we'll have to part company—"

Frightened, horrified, forlorn, Doris still felt that she would rather die than let him know how completely helpless she was.

"You can drop me at the Biltmore," she said.

"O. K."

Doris' throat was dry, her cheeks hot from the sun. She hoped that she would not cry. It would be awful if she broke down in front of Rocky.

Was the drive never going to end? Doris decided that she could sleep in the park that night. She could pawn her baggage and look for a job.

Rocky smoked cigarette after cigarette, his eyes squinting, his mouth sardonic and unhappy. The hills gave way to the Bronx River parkway.

Then Rocky turned off Fifth avenue into a side street and brought the car to a standstill. He got out, walked around the car and opened the door. She looked at him blankly.

"Well?"

"Get out!"

"But why—here?"

"I've decided you're coming with me to have a showdown with Doris."

"Is this—is this where you live?"

"As if you didn't know it."

Doris sighed. It was so hot. She opened her bag and drew out her powder case. "Come on," Rocky commanded impatiently.

"Oh—all right." She had small hope that Rocky's wife would be able to unravel the mystery, but the cool iron grill before Rocky's door looked so inviting.

He smiled at her. "I'm sorry for all my rudeness," he said.

"Oh it's all right. I'm about ready to be handed over to the police anyway." She felt weary and reckless.

"There's something about you that drives me wild. I've seldom met a girl who could get my goat as successfully as you can."

"I must be wonderful that way," Doris agreed.

They entered the elevator, and Rocky pushed the button. The tiny elevator was painted dull blue and decorated with three large mirrors.

Looking at herself Doris saw that she was flushed and bright-eyed from the heat. She thought that she had never looked better in her life, nor felt worse.

The elevator stopped. Rocky opened the door.

"Doris, Doris!"

Rocky's voice boomed emptily through the apartment.

Rocky's wife was not there. As they went in they saw that the place had not been occupied for a long time. Dust lay on everything, and there was evidence that an untidy job of packing had been done there, but not recently.

"H—I!" said Rocky. "My devoted wife seems to have left me, bag and baggage. She didn't even leave me a note as far as I can discover." He bent over Doris and seized her suddenly by the shoulders. "And now, my dear young lady, it's up to you to explain. Just exactly what is the game?"

Doris stared back at him. "Take your hands off my shoulders."

"When you answer my question."

But the glare in her eyes had had its effect. She saw that he was pretending to be more angry than he actually was. They seemed to have reached a deadlock. "This is silly," said Doris. "You know perfectly well I know no more about your stupid old wife than you do."

A slight grin announced that Rocky knew himself beaten. His grip on her shoulders became more friendly. "So you think Doris is stupid."

The girl flushed. She did think so, rather she had conceived a dislike for Rocky's wife for some reason not clear to herself. Yet she did not want Rocky to think so. "I think it's stupid to hear so much about her," she said faintly. "I don't know whether she's actually stupid or not."

"You sweet," said Rocky unexpectedly and kissed her.

It seemed forever that his lips stayed on hers, but it was actually only a moment before she was pushing him away. "I don't think I care at all about having you kiss me," she said confusedly. "I don't believe—"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"I Don't Think I Care at All About Having You Kiss Me."

last straw. She raised her fists in the air and struck out desperately. In her madness she hit the umbrella stand. It knocked over, hitting Rocky violently.

Taken by surprise, he uttered a loud "Ouch."

"I hope it hurts!"

Rocky whispered, venomously, "This is the limit. This ends everything." He rubbed his wounds tenderly.

"And not too soon for me, either!" said Doris.

They went in to lunch. Mr. and Mrs. Du Val noticed nothing amiss.

The meal seemed long and unendurable. Rocky was silent and brooding. Doris felt depressed. Where did she belong? Where should she go?

She considered taking Mrs. Du Val into her confidence. Rocky's mother had been so kind—had seemed such a refuge. Yet had that not been partly because she was Rocky's wife, because she was supposed to have the Du Val seed flourishing within her?

Doris felt more unhappy than ever. She had known, at least, all along that she was not going to have a baby. Mrs. Du Val would be very angry when she found out how Doris had taken advantage of her sympathy and love.

does not run into friends so easily when one is lost in New York.

How, now, would she find her friends, her parents, her—(her mind shied away)—her husband? Then she thought again with terror of the man in the cab. If she did find her friends, it meant finding that man again.

Of course he was her husband.

She looked at herself earnestly in the mirror. She was dressed in the tweed that she had worn on the day of her meeting with Mrs. Du Val. The face, young and anxious, looked back at her. She was absolutely alone in the world. And now she was going out in it—without friends, without money.

Rocky knocked peremptorily on the door.

"Are you ready?" he asked curtly.

"Certainly," she said promptly.

She gathered up her gloves. She took one look around the pretty faultless room. Her haven. "Good-by," she thought silently. "Good-by."

Bending her head so that Rocky might not see her face she left the room.

She took her leave in a daze. Mrs. Du Val full of admonitions, smiles and tears—Oscar Du Val neglecting his precious work to bid her farewell—

OREGON STATE NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST

Brief Resume of Happenings of the Week Collected for Our Readers

Astoria—Mrs. J. G. Hustler of Astoria has celebrated her 99th birthday. She crossed the plains in 1847 with her family, arriving in 1848 at Astoria, where she has since resided.

The Dalles—The city of The Dalles has purchased a new fire truck of the latest design at a cost of \$6830. The funds were from a \$15,000 bond issue.

Astoria — Lime fertilizer to the amount of 248 tons was purchased by 134 Clatsop county farmers this year according to County Agent Smith. During 1932 only 60 tons was sold, to 28 farmers.

Eugene—A foot of snow covers the ground at Cascade summit, according to Southern Pacific trainmen. Thus far the state highway department has kept the McKenzie Pass summit open.

Seaside—To determine whether or not poultrymen, grocers and others want an egg depot established, a meeting was held at Seaside, December 11, to explain the object of such a depot.

Roseburg—Taxes in Douglas county for 1934 will be increased about 2.4 mills, according to County Clerk Agee. Residents of Roseburg will pay approximately the same tax as last year.

Carlton—There will soon be placed in circulation in Yamhill county a total of \$36,967 as a down payment by the federal government's agricultural administration to farmers who signed up wheat acreage reduction contracts.

Klamath Falls—Lawrence Griffen and John R. Morgan of Bly, Klamath county, have been arrested for illegal deer hunting in the Gearhart mountain district. When apprehended by state police they had the carcasses of 11 deer in their wagon. Only four were bucks, the others does or fawns.

Medford—The Medford city council has passed an ordinance providing for a 40 per cent cut in the license fees paid by milk distributors. The new ordinance also changes the method of collection. Gallonage fees, formerly due each month, will be collected in advance on a quarterly basis.

Salem—With applications before it that will require, if carried out in full, more than twice the men allotted to Marion county for its next relief work program, the committee will have to pare the project to fit the 600-odd men that it may employ in its second quota.

Seaside—A decision handed down in the Clatsop county circuit court sustains the city of Seaside in its controversy with the city of Gearhart over rates for water furnished by Seaside. Gearhart refused to pay higher rates on the ground that a contract between the two communities was still in force.

Salem—Salaries of Marion county employes are to be restored to the 1932 basis in the 1934 budget. The budget of \$692,333 is approximately \$92,000 in excess of the levy last year. It does not contain an appropriation for old age pensions or transportation of non-high school district students.

Turkey Sold for \$27.50

Redmond — The heaviest dressed turkey raised in 1933 was brought in by Mrs. E. D. Alrod of Terrebonne. The turkey weighed 27½ pounds and brought the owner \$27.50 on a contest which was sponsored by a buyer here.

Mill to Close for Holidays

Silverton—The Silver Falls Timber company mill will close down December 16 for the holiday season. While it is not definitely decided for how long the mill will be down, officials said that it would likely be for three weeks as considerable repair work is to be done.

1700 Turkeys Received

Eugene—Seventeen hundred turkeys weighing 21,866 pounds were received in the first turkey pool for December here by the Oregon State Turkey Growers. Of the total taken in 90 per cent were prime birds. The association will sponsor another pool here next Thursday.

Big Cabbage Head Shown

Florence — A big-head contest seems to be on in Florence and nearby cabbage patches. Numerous large heads have been reported. Frank Turner was in town displaying a cabbage weighing 21½ pounds that had been grown on the Weston Buss tract in the Canary neighborhood south of here.