TANGLED WIVES

By Peggy Shane

FOURTEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER VIII

DORIS was beginning to feel sorry. Rocky's advice seemed just as necessary, as he thought. Only, as she soon discovered, there was no one at the garage with whom she could talk.

She dozed, vaguely conscious of intervals of voices dropping and the roar of the motor.

She started and awoke. She sat up. An old man who looked as he might have been one of the men of the village into which she had strayed was watching her from under his pushed-back hat.

She thought he was going to say something but discovered that he was dozing. He kept pinching his lip between his thumb and bent forward as if he were trying to see the shape of it, but other than paid Doris his undivided attention.

"Do please," she began. "What is this?"

Eyes glinted at her with such a startling expression that Doris almost laughed outright. "Don't you know what town you're in?" he asked.

"I don't," said Doris apologetically. "We were driving through on our way to Canada, when something happened to the car."

"Driving through to Canada, you? Been traveling long?"

"Yes, ever since this morning."

Suddenly she was growing less sure over this quickly formed friendship. The place was getting on her nerves. Rocky had taken off his coat and rolled up his sleeves, looked as if the job were almost done. Rocky had gone to a garage some from New York I bet," suggested the old man. "didn't you?"

"Yes." Doris looked at him firmly. "What town did you say this is?"

"This is Edgewater Junction."

Rocky looked up now at the sound of their voices. His eye fell on Doris, a short questioning glance. Doris suddenly found herself of a weary gesture. Would they never get out of this place?

"Yes, sir! This is Edgewater Junction." A new expression had come into the old man's eyes. "And a long ways from New York." His eyes gleamed steadily. "You got folks up in Canada?"

"No sir—" Doris hesitated. Perhaps Rocky had relatives there. She wasn't sure why he had selected Canada. He hadn't told her that. "Yes, is," she continued after a pause. "I haven't."

Rocky's warning suddenly loomed. "For God's sake don't speak to any—"

She had been talking stand to the old man! But fortunately hadn't run into any complications, at least not until now. She looked at him as if the conversation were practically over.

A smile was received like confirmation of information of the utmost importance. The old man started in the direction of the door.

Doris watched him through the mirror above the front seat. When he actually had gone, she saw on she wouldn't open her door even to say good night to the mechanic. She would watch him. She closed her eyes.

"Number, all right."

A time when Doris opened her eyes she discovered that two men were watching her. One was the old man. He had brought a friend in this time, a person of respected years.

Doris looked up, he was putting his gold-rimmed glasses to the mechanical stare which was directing at her. Having adjusted them so that they stay on, he transferred his finger to a folded newspaper which he had been holding in his arm. This he opened up and so that the other man could see."

"Yes?" he said.

The other man nodded. He furtively now at Doris and nothing which she couldn't see the man with the newspaper, put up sharply. Had she been asleep? She brushed a tousled lock of her hair out of her eyes, holding fingers to her hair.

"I been dreaming again?" asked the man to whom she had spoken. "I would have sworn I'd go out of the garage a minute ago."

"Could?" His voice was an echo. "Now whatayaa mean? Say, I bet you don't remember me again if you either, would you?—not even in the police court?"

"Yes." There was a terrified look on the old man's face.

"Why," he called, and followed the mechanic to the office, but now he turned once more." He opened the door of the car. "Now we go." Then he noticed the key. He got into the driver's seat without a word to him and started his engine just as one of the men fell across the door. "Hey, look out," he yelled, swinging free his arm, "if you don't want to get run over." The car started backing out, but the two men clutched at him excitedly.

"Wait a minute young feller," cried the one with the newspaper. "we want to speak to you!"

But Rocky's car with a blustering commotion had backed out to the road. It sallied a minute, reversed, took another gasping leap forward and was up the road in a long diminishing streak.

Rocky drove like a mechanical demon—his senses alert to only one thought, speed. Doris felt frightened.

"You seem to know these roads?"

"Yeah. Friend of father's lives near here. I used to visit him every summer. Rockwell St. Gardens."

Their way lay through dark wooded hills. "Are we going to ride all night?"

"Depends."

"Depends on what?" she wanted to ask, but she felt too drowsy. There was hardly any use anyway, as he was sure not to answer. He was going so swiftly now.

And something was following.

She couldn't worry any more. Her head sank down. She was leaning unconsciously against him. She slept.

"It's Her, All Right."

The car stopped with a jerk. A white light dashed over her face. Men were shouting. She sat up.

A man was standing beside the car. In the gush of light that streamed from his hand she saw his uniform. He was a policeman.

Another man was shouting. Doris turned her head and saw that a roadster full of men was drawn up directly behind them in the pine-fringed road. She could see another policeman getting out of the car. He held a revolver.

Rocky's hand quivered on the wheel. "Don't say anything," he whispered to Doris.

White lights stabbed the road, threw queer shadows into relief. Again the strong white glare of a flash light struck her between the eyes.

"Looks like her, Murphy, all right!"

"I want to speak to the young lady," said the policeman at Rocky's elbow.

Rocky's voice was without a qualm. "Speak to me instead."

The light flicked up and over Rocky's face. "What's your name?"

"Rockwell Du Val."

"See your license?"

Rocky produced it. This had all happened, before but this time Doris knew that the looking at the license was a pretense. The man on her right on the motorcycle was so close, and why did he have his gun in his hand?

"Who's the young lady?"

Rocky did not falter as he lied: "My wife."

Two more men were coming from the car behind. There was a fearful, quiet tread, a breathless expectancy in their walk. Knowing nothing yet, Doris felt terrified. She tried to control her panic. Rocky was being so bold, and yet she knew that he, too, was frightened.

"Has the lady any identification?"

"Yes. Plenty."

"Let's see some of it."

Doris could feel Rocky's nervous inward tremor while she listened to his assumed belligerence: "What's this all about?"

"We'll come to that."

A small wiry man in plain clothes interpolated briskly: "We've got you. No use trying to pull anything. Better get out of the car, mister."

"Am I under arrest?"

"You'll find out what you're under."

"You bet I'll find out what I'm under. And I'll find out before I get out of this car, too."

The fat-faced cop elbowed the small wiry man aside. "Just wait. Let's find out about this. Nobody's under arrest yet."

"That's better," said Rocky.

A dozen flashlights played over Doris' face. Now she heard a murmur among the men.

"Looks like her all right."

"Sure it's her."

"Have you any other identification besides your license?"

"Yes."

"Can you prove that this lady is your wife?"

Again the lights bombarded her. She covered her face with her hands. What did they mean?

"Don't do that!" said Rocky to Doris out of the corner of his mouth. "Look them straight in the eye!" She obeyed, quivering.

Rocky addressed the officer standing beside him: "I'm a friend of Rockwell St. Gardens. He'll identify us in a minute."

There was a slight sensation. The wiry man came and stood beside them.

"You say you know Rockwell St. Gardens?"

"Yes. I know him very well."

"Does he know your wife?"

"Yes."

"Your name is Rockwell Du Val?"

"Yes, I'm named after St. Gardens."

The policemen conferred. The man on the motorcycle still balanced close to Doris.

The officer returned. "I'm sorry to ask you, but you'll have to come to the station with us. We received a tip over the telephone that Diane Merrell was in this car."

"That's utterly ridiculous." Doris felt Rocky's strong grip on her arm. The blister in his tone was a thinly concealed artifice.

Nevertheless she could feel a change in the atmosphere. The policemen were uncertain. Rocky knew it too. She could feel a new strength in his voice as he said again, "Look here. Are we under arrest?"

"Nothin' like that. We just got to take you to the station if you don't mind, mister—"

Rocky cut in crisply. "But I do mind. I've been driving all day and my wife is tired."

"Yeah, but, mister, in a case like this we gotta be mighty careful. And we got this tip—"

"If you want to arrest us, that's your lookout," said Rocky.

The fat-faced cop pushed his face into the car, looking over the wheel at Doris. "We'll go up to St. Gardens' place with you. How's that? If St. Gardens can identify you—"

He opened the door of the roadster as he spoke.

"I'll drive," he said to Rocky. "You can come along in the car behind."

Doris protested involuntarily. "No, No. Don't leave me, Rocky."

"If we're not under arrest I think I'll drive," said Rocky gravely.

The cop grunted. He walked around the car and got in beside Doris. "O. K. Let's go."

The man on the motorcycle sent his machine leaping ahead of them.

The cool air came rushing gratefully to Doris' pale cheeks as the car got under way. Her shoulder was tucked under Rocky's like a small chicken nestling under its mother's wing. What was the name of the girl the police wanted? Anne? Somebody. Was that her real name? Had her real self been found at last. And was she a criminal?

But these thoughts away. Supposing they accused her of the worst of crimes. How could she deny them? What, oh what could she have been in that other lost life of hers?

They turned at last between stone gate posts.

"This is the place all right," said the cop.

They rode for three-quarters of a mile before lights of the house appeared.

At last Rocky drew up before the door of the great house. He shut off the engine, opened the door and jumped out.

"Come on, Doris."

The motorcycle cop drew up beside them. "Not so fast."

Doris knew then that the policemen were still suspicious. Rocky had run ahead up the steps of the house, and was ringing the bell. Doris with a policeman on either side of her followed more slowly.

The door opened slowly. A blond impassive face looked out.

"Hello, Swenson. Is Mr. St. Gardens in?"

The butler swung the door open. "Yes, Mr. Du Val. Come in."

Rocky motioned to Doris. She went into a square hallway. The policemen came too.

On a landing above a short, square-set figure appeared. He stared at the group for a minute in amazed silence.

"Rocky! Is it Rocky, for heaven's sake?"

"It's Rocky. I've brought my wife." Rocky was bounding up the stairs to the landing. Doris saw him take the short square man by the shoulder and say something. Then St. Gardens turned and came down the stairs with outstretched hands.

"Doris! It's so nice to see you again. I was wondering when you would turn up. You must be tired from your journey. Been traveling all day?"

Doris was confused. She took St. Gardens' hands gladly, smiled at him without speaking, but it was the vague act of a bewildered and exhausted child.

She sat down in the nearest chair. The room was going round and round.

She hardly heard the policemen. She knew that everything was being arranged. Everything was all right, Rocky had fixed things.

The policemen went away. The door was closed.

"Beatrice isn't in. Someone's giving her a dinner and dance at the country club. I didn't stay. I just got in," said St. Gardens. "Lucky I did, too. Wasn't that a rummy thing—those dumb cops picking you up like that?"

"Terrible," said Rocky. "They were so suspicious I thought it would save a lot of trouble if you pretended you had already met Doris. May I introduce her now?"

Doris roused herself. St. Gardens was holding out both his hands.

"This is a great pleasure, my dear. Rocky has always been like my own son to me."

Doris put her hands hastily across her own eyes. She knew she was acting badly, but it was all so puzzling to her tired mind.

"She's exhausted," said Rocky apologetically.

St. Gardens apparently didn't know her. He had pretended to recognize her in order to save her from the police. He thought she was the real Doris. She was to fool him as she had fooled the Du Vals. She rose trembling, a hand pressed against her cheek.

"No, no!"

"What's the matter?"

They could not follow her thoughts. She was being stupid. She could not pretend to be the real Doris any more.

She was really that girl—that criminal the policemen were seeking. She looked at Rocky with widened eyes.

"I can't stand it. I'm—"

St. Gardens took her elbow. His voice, rich and caressing, spoke to her softly: "You are very tired. You have been through a dreadful ordeal. I can see that. And now you want to go to your room."

"Let me take her upstairs," said Rocky. "You are right. She needs to go to bed. She's knocked out."

"It's enough to knock anybody out—being mistaken for a murderess," said St. Gardens sympathetically.

Doris looked at him.

A murderess.

That's what she had done. She had committed a murder. The room was still rocking, but she no longer felt tired. St. Gardens' words had galvanized her. New life, like second wind coming to a tired swimmer, flooded her. She looked at Rocky in agony. What did St. Gardens mean?

Rocky read the question in her eyes, but he deliberately ignored it.

"Come, you must go to bed."

Doris wanted to speak but her mouth felt dry. Meantime Rocky was pushing her up the stairway.

A maid came. Rocky went out to get her bags, leaving her standing at the top of the stairs beside St. Gardens. She looked at him with twisted brows.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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To Show "Alice in Wonderland" Here Jan. 14, 15

"Only Yesterday" Coming to the Catlow Next Thursday and Friday

"Alice in Wonderland" and "Only Yesterday" are two of the headliners of this week which will make moviegoing memorable for Barrington people. Charlotte Henry, the fortunate young girl who won the coveted role of Alice from more than 7000 applicants entered in Paramount's international search, will be seen in the Lewis Carroll fantasy at The Catlow theatre January 14 and 15. As Alice, Charlotte Henry encounters the same experiences met in the book. But the screen Alice has one up on the book-girl, because all the chessmen, Father William and the Cheshire Cat and all the other famous Carroll figures are portrayed in the picture by favorite Hollywood stars.

Among the more important screen stars appearing in "Alice in Wonderland" are Richard Arlen, Roscoe Ates, Gary Cooper, Leon Errol, Louise Fazenda, W. C. Fields, Skeets Gallagher, Cary Grant, Raymond Hatton, Edward Everett Horton, Roscoe Karns, Baby Leroy, Mae Marsh, Polly Moran, Jack Oakie, Edna May Oliver, May Robson, Charlie Ruggles, Alison Skipworth, Ned Sparks and Ford Sterling.

"Only Yesterday," the sweet, tender, charming little love story which features a new star, Margaret Sullivan, comes to the Catlow January 18 and 19. It is a story of the war and those frantic, hectic, tragic days when the bottom dropped out of the market. It begins with Jim Emmerson returning home from his office a pauper. About to take his life, he sees a letter on his desk and begins to read it.

John Boles is excellent as Jim; Billie Burke does memorably good work as Mary's aunt; Reginald Denny makes all of his part, and a younger named Jimmy Butler is a delight.

Other pictures of the week include a story of the San Diego waterfront, "Hell and High Water," featuring Richard Arlen and Judith Allen, at the Catlow January 13 and "Lone Cowboy," the tale of a killer's regeneration through the love of an adorable child, little Jackie Cooper of "Skippy" fame. The child, lifted suddenly from his tenement home to the wide open spaces of Nevada, is reluctantly accepted by the hardened killer who learns to love him.

Grand Opera Enters Its Fourth Successful Week With Galaxy of Stars

The schedule of operas with leading principals and conductors to be heard as the Chicago Grand Opera company enters upon its fourth and second to last week of its experimental revival of civic opera, will be as follows:

Monday night, Jan. 15—"Lohengrin" (in German), with Mmes. Jeritza and Sharnova and Messrs. Onofrei, Amato, Baromeo and Zimmerman (debut); conductor, Weber.

Tuesday night—"Turandot" (in Italian), with Mmes. Raisa and Claire and Messrs. Lindi, Frigerio and Barrawd; conductor, Papi.

Wednesday night—"Rigoletto" (in Italian), with leading principals yet to be announced; Papi conducting and Novikoff ballet.

Saturday matinee—"Samson et Dalila" (in French), with Madame Onegin and Messrs. Ferrara and Morelli; conductor, Weber, and Novikoff ballet.

Saturday night—"La Gioconda" (in Italian), with Mmes. Raisa, LaMance and Faggi and Messrs. Chamlee, Morelli and Sjostk; conductor, Papi, and Novikoff ballet, with Ruth Pryor and Bentley Stone, premier dancers, in "Dance of the Hours."

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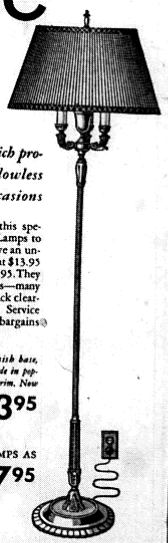

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AN EDITORIAL

The following excerpt from a recent editorial in the Villa Park Argus *provides food for thought:*

"Even if we could legislate electric rates down to a new low, it would avail nothing. It would lower the standard of service, bankrupt companies, eliminate a great source of tax revenue, throw people out of work, ruin investors. Electric rates will continue to drop—but they will drop naturally as means are found to increase efficiency in production, and not because of agitation."