TANGLED WIVES

By Peggy Shane

SIXTEENTH INSTALLMENT

"I don't know why you're all so considerate of me," said Doris, who was trembling on the verge of tears. "It's Rocky who needs rest, really. I've dozed in the car a lot, and he's been at the wheel since three o'clock this morning."

"Yesterday morning," said Rocky. He stood for a minute looking down at Doris when Beatrice had left the room. "Good night. I probably won't see you again until I get back."

His curt tone startled Doris. He was biting his lips nervously. His face twisted unpleasantly.

"What's the matter?" said Doris in astonishment.

Rocky held out his hand. "Good-night," he said in a businesslike tone.

Doris bent her head. "Good-night."

As the door closed behind him tears sprang to her eyes. He had been so—not exactly unfriendly—but as matter of fact, She hardly knew what she had expected him to do. But certainly she had not asked for this abrupt impersonal good-by.

She crept between the sheets forlornly.

The sun was streaming in her room when she woke. Beatrice was sitting beside her with a loaded tray.

"Eleven o'clock," smiled Beatrice. "I thought you might be hungry."

Doris sat up, opening and closing her eyes. They still smarted from the strain of her long drive.

"Has Rocky gone?"

"Yes, quite early—I have to run. But I brought you this."

She gave Doris the morning paper.

Doris read it as she drank her coffee. At first she didn't notice the story, though it was on the front page. Then the name "Diane Merrell" caught her eyes.

It was a double column heading on the front page of a New York morning paper. Some young reporter had done his best to make a humorous incident out of the stopping of Mrs. Rockwell Du Val on the road to Rockwell St. Gardens' house. The story was sympathetic to Doris and Rocky. Lacking a picture of young Mrs. Rocky Du Val, it reprinted one of Oscar Du Val with the caption:

"Man's wife taken in false arrest."

Doris read it through twice. It would have been a good story—a good joke on the police—if only she had been Mrs. Rocky Du Val.

At the end of the story was a paragraph which said that Mrs. Du Val was the fourth wrong Diane Merrell to have been discovered.

"Why couldn't one of those girls have been Diane Merrell instead of me," she thought as she got out of bed.

She would ask Beatrice to get her some old newspapers. She would like to read about Diane Merrell.

She was bathed and dressed when Beatrice came back.

"I'm afraid I've been a long time, but there's such a lot to do." There was a busy little frown on her broad face.

"I wonder, Beatrice, if you could dig up some old newspapers for me to read."

"Of course."

They went downstairs together to Beatrice's pretty little room, done in covered chintz.

"This has been my own special place since I was sixteen," said Beatrice. "I'm sure there are some newspapers in the basement. I'll fetch them up."

A few minutes later, an elderly maid came in and put down a huge pile of old newspapers on the table. Doris rose unsteadily. She felt a little faint as she put out her hands to touch them. Here lay her story—or did it? Would she have the courage to read it?

The first paper was recent, and contained nothing. As she continued her search with a beating heart, she came upon great glaring headlines:

"Shoots Groom After Wedding. Society Girl Kills New Husband and Disappeared. Note Found."

She read feverishly. She had been married at an afternoon wedding to a man named Howard Valery.

Immediately after the wedding reception she had gone out by a side door where her own motor was parked, loaded with her luggage. The groom had been with her. As they were about to step into the car she had shot him, and had driven away.

As she read, a stronger and stronger feeling of antipathy for young Diane Merrell developed. Was it possible that she had ever been a girl capable of all this? She was a heartless, cold-blooded criminal. For the note proved that the crime had been premeditated.

She unfolded the note again. It had been found in the pocket of the poor boy whose body was discovered crumpled against a flowering shrub. It read:

HOWARD:

This marriage can't go on—it cannot.

You must be crazy. I don't want to kill you.

Do something about it for heaven's sake.

D.

Could any girl have written such a note and forgotten it? Surely, surely if she were Diane Merrell, she would remember something now. But not a faint glimmer of recollection enlightened her.

Could it be that she had two sides to her nature, and that that other darker side was hidden from her now, sleeping quietly? Some day it might wake again, and she would find herself a killer. She would be capable of shooting somebody she loved—capable of shooting Rocky.

She was sick and frightened. She lay at full length on the gently swaying couch. Then she propped her head on her hands and took up another paper.

She saw a large picture of herself.

Yes, it looked very like her. There was no doubt about that.

She went back to her reading. There was a description of the wedding. It brought back nothing at all.

Doris tried not to think any more about Diane Merrell. Surely Rocky would discover something that would help her. He must be near Morristown by now.

She went to bed early. The next afternoon would bring Rocky back. That would have to settle her fate. Now she felt numb and exhausted.

In spite of everything she slept.

CHAPTER X

ROCKY did not come the next afternoon. Instead came a telegram saying that he was catching a train that night and would arrive Saturday morning.

That would be the day of the wedding.

Doris had developed a streak of hopefulness. Rocky would have unraveled some clue, and would bring back the miraculous news that she was not Diane Merrell. Or he would have discovered that Howard Valery had not been killed, or that he had committed suicide. No, that would not do. The experts said that that was impossible. She remembered reading that. Besides, Diane had left a note. But how could she had been to put down on paper such an intention and then to carry it out, leaving the note for the police to find. Of course she hadn't meant it for the police.

Friday passed in a stew of speculation. She woke at dawn next morning with a heavy heart.

After breakfast she waited on the little porch beside the sitting room for Rocky. Her feeling of uncertainty deepened. After all, if she was Diane Merrell what could Rocky do for her? Whatever happened, a long life of loneliness stretched before her; that, or death.

"Mrs. Du Val sees no one." It was Mary's voice.

The butler answered, "I have told her that. But she won't listen."

Doris started to her feet. Who could be wanting to see her? Was it Rocky? No, it was a woman. As she hesitated, she heard Beatrice come in to the sitting room.

A new voice said loudly. "But I'm going to see her."

Where had she heard that voice before—a strong husky girl's voice? "Believe me," the voice went on, "you'd better not try to stop me if you know what's good for you."

Doris peeked in. The girl was someone she had seen before—a brown-eyed girl in a tailored suit of green linen. Doris had seen her before—but where?

"Plenty of good reasons—"

"Whom did you wish to see?" Beatrice was speaking in a crisp impersonal tone.

"I want to see the girl calling herself Mrs. Rockwell Du Val. Plenty of good reasons why she don't want to see me, I know—"

"Then why do you try—?"

"Plenty more why she'd better."

Doris recognized her. She was the girl she had seen at the clam stand—the friend of the real Doris. Rocky had called her Molly.

The big brown eyes looked full of determination.

"There's no use trying to highhat me. Are you Mrs. Du Val?"

"No," said Beatrice quietly.

"I thought you weren't. I have an idea who she is. And I intend to go through every room in this house to find her if I have to."

The quiet youthful voice of Beatrice was in marked contrast to Molly's insistent tones. "Won't you sit down and tell what it is you want to see Mrs. Du Val about?"

"That's my business," said Molly sullenly.

"Supposing you tell it to me."

"Like h—l I will."

"Then I'm afraid you can't see her."

Molly's tone held a jeer. "Oh yeah? Well, supposing I tell you I'm a friend of the real Mrs. Du Val."

Beatrice said nothing.

"That gets you, doesn't it? Now perhaps you'll understand why I want to take a squint at the girl who is palming herself off as Doris Du Val."

"I'm afraid I don't," said Beatrice quietly. "How did you find out about this?"

"Doris saw it in the papers. Mrs. Du Val arrested. And that made her wonder, as the saying goes. She sent me a wire."

"You are here then as Mrs. Du Val's agent? Am I to understand that?"

Molly sat down and crossed her legs. "Yeah. That's about it."

"Where is Mrs. Du Val?"

"That's my business, too."

"I See It All Now, School Girls Together, Rocky, the Big Galahad. Nobody Would Ever Think of Looking Here for Diane Merrell."

"Rocky said that Doris had left him. Do you know where she is?"

"Supposing I do?"

"Does Doris want to get Rocky to come back to her?"

Molly disdainfully inserted her tongue between opened lips and blew vigorously. "H—l, no," she remarked when she had finished the exercise.

"I'm sorry. I don't quite understand."

Molly, searching in the untidy depths of her very large handbag, brought out a paper package of cigarettes. "Gee, I've smoked my last one." She crumpled the bright green wrapper in her fist. "Have you got one?"

Beatrice rose and handed her a silver box filled with the small white cylinders.

Molly seemed cheered as she lit her cigarette, and much more favorably impressed with Beatrice. "Tell you how it is—this is just between you and I, of course—but Doris wants me to dicker with the girl financially—see?"

Astonishment showed in Beatrice's breathless "Dicker? Financially? Do you mean that Mrs. Du Val wants to get a divorce from Rocky?"

"That's it. I knew you'd get it. I knew you'd get it."

"But—I should think that would be a private matter for her to discuss with Rocky."

Molly blew a smoke ring very carefully. This done, she looked at Beatrice pityingly. "You look like a girl who would think a thing like that."

"I am awfully sorry. I'm afraid you'll think I'm a bit stupid. But what financial transactions are you talking about?"

"In a couple of words, baby: alimony."

"Alimony!"

Doris could not stand any more. She stepped out from behind the curtains.

"I'd like to say a word or two."

Beatrice rose. Her face was horrified, Molly's big brown eyes half closed in a veiled, critical stare.

"I thought you'd turn out to be the girl. I wrote Doris about meeting you down among the clams. And was she pleased? She's been trying to get something like that on Rocky for months! The Du Vals have got plenty, and she'll take a big cash settlement, and that will be the end. You know—she's willing to be big—say, listen, Girlie, you're in the movies, aren't you?"

"Of course I'm not."

"On the stage? What shows have you been in lately? I've seen you before—seems like it was in the movies, though. I didn't recognize you that day—on account of those dark glasses, but I could swear—"

Beatrice rose. "I'm afraid we're wasting a lot of your time. I am awfully busy myself, too. I have an idea that Rocky will be quite willing to give Doris a divorce, but that is only my own opinion, and it hasn't the slightest weight really, as I know absolutely nothing about it. This young woman is hardly a fly-by-night sweetheart of Rocky's as you seem to suppose. She happens to be a friend of mine whom Rocky has helped out of a rather tight scrape—"

Molly rose. She whistled as she did so. "What a sap I've been!"

Doris stared blankly. Beatrice bit her lip.

"This is interesting," continued Molly. "I knew I'd seen you in the movies—in the news reel it was."

Beatrice found her voice: "You're mistaken."

"Am I really?" She turned to Beatrice. "What part will you play in the big scene, young lady? Isn't there some law about concealing a criminal? I wouldn't be in your shoes for the world—Miss St. Gardens. I really wouldn't."

"I think you'd better go," said Beatrice.

"After I've telephoned the police. Boy, will this be a sensation! Am I lucky? I can see my picture in every paper in the country. Along with yours, of course." She inclined her head to Doris mockingly. "I see it all now. Schoolgirls together, Rocky the big Galahad. Nobody would ever think of looking here for Diane Merrell! No wonder you didn't want to see me."

Beatrice turned to Doris. "Rocky ought to be here soon. Perhaps he can talk some sense into her."

"I'm a woman of impulse," said Molly, "and I feel a strange whim rushing over me to call up the police."

Beatrice closed her eyes. Then she said in a calm tone: "Let me show you the telephone."

Molly with a small sneer on her pretty mouth took a last look at Doris and followed Beatrice.

Beatrice opened a door. It led to a small clothes closet. Before Molly quite knew what was happening Beatrice had pushed her in.

She locked the door. "It will give you time to get away, Doris. My roadster is right outside."

Doris clutched Beatrice by the hand. "All right. Only—I'm going to give myself up—in the nearest town."

"No—don't. Wait. I'll give you some money. Drive toward Canada, and Rocky will overtake you at—at—let me see—at Burlington."

"No, Beatrice. It's too late. And tell Rocky if he comes, I'll swear I've never seen him before.

"No, Doris. No."

"Yes. Please. You've done so much. I can't stand it. It would break my heart if you got into trouble."

Beatrice had found her purse. She gave it to Doris.

"The key to the car's inside."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Fox River Grove Firemen Entertain 90 Guests From 10 Nearby Villages

Fox River Grove firemen were hosts to ninety firemen representing fire departments of Crystal Lake, Harvard, Woodstock, Richmond, Cary, Fox Lake, McHenry, Hampshire, Huntley, and Algonquin Monday night at the Vinicky restaurant. Besides a delicious dinner the guests enjoyed a dramatic skit presented by Edwin Stanek and Frederick Preunker. Willis Wylie entertained them with piano and accordian music while Yvonne and Louanna Roop danced.

Fox River Grove Items

Mrs. Ed Anderson of Chicago, Mrs. Al Marston, Violet Felgenhauer of Barrington, Mrs. George Vaughan and Mrs. M. Obs attended a bunco party sponsored by the Mothers club of Kelsey school at Mrs. Smith's home on Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Kouba were awarded custody of Willard Learch, son of Henry Learch Tuesday. It was claimed the seven year old boy was not receiving the necessities of life at the home of his father and stepmother and the judge with persuasion induced the father who said he was unemployed since he moved here six months ago, to give the boy into a home where he could enjoy the comforts of life and acquire an education.

The Civic Choral club now holds its rehearsals Friday afternoon instead of at night as formerly.

The Parent-Teacher association held the January meeting Tuesday afternoon at the Grove school. The main topic of discussion was whether to have the circulating library books.

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Leading druggists America over sell Kruschen Salts—You can always get it.

Mrs. Coe, county superintendent of schools, came here from Woodstock and explained the conditions that had to be complied with. In order to have a circulating library every school in the district must join and the charge is $25 for each room. The Grove school has two rooms. These books come from the Community high school library at Crystal Lake. They deal with various subjects and are a great help to school children. It was decided to take up the question with the board.

Men of the village held a meeting Friday night for the purpose of organizing a civic club to boost home trade and home industries and see that local applicants received the benefit of CWA works.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Immens and Mr. and Mrs. H. Haakonson attended the funeral of Mrs. H. Moseid in Chicago Tuesday. Mrs. Moseid was 37 years old and survived her husband by only seven weeks. Mr. Moseid died last November at the age of 40. They were summer visitors here.

Our dramatic players gained honors at Champaign Thursday night when they placed third in the state contest. Oquawka community of Henderson county presented "Miss Mercy" and won first honors, while Sumner community of Lawrence county was awarded second.

Legion Elects Officers

Grove Legion members met at the village hall Friday night for the purpose of organizing a post and elected temporary officers as follows: Mr. Roop, commander; John Dvorak, sargeant at arms; Jasper Jones, finance officer; Alex Kryl, chaplain; Joe Kodydek, historian. Previously they had been members of the Raymond Washer post of Cary. Mr. Roop and Mr. Jones being officers. But Grove members have long been wanting a post of their own.

All Bills With One Check

Announcement

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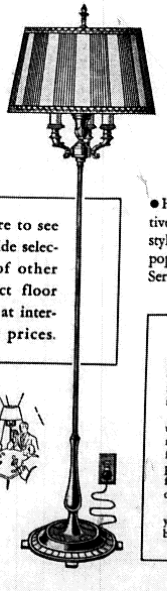

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