

Chained

The Story of Joan Crawford's New Film

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His reply was to bring her close to him and place a light kiss on her forehead. "It's all wrong," he said softly, his lips in her hair, "we weren't meant to end this way."

Diane broke away. "We weren't ever meant for anything else. Good-bye, Mike Bradley," she whispered tremulously, holding out her hand. "I'll think of you often—and good luck." In the dark her eyes glistened with unshed tears.

There was a strained pause. Then Mike took her hand. "All right. So long, Dinah. Just the same old thing—shipboard friends—and never see each other again. Right?"

"Right." The lump in her throat was growing.

"I don't believe it."

"You must."

"I don't believe it," Mike insisted. He leaned against the wall, his hands in his pockets. "So long, Dinah."

With a strange fleeting look she left him.

Mike felt a curious empty sensation at the pit of his stomach. The truth gnawed at him. He was in love with her; irrevocably, hopelessly in love with her. He, the self-sufficient Mike Bradley who had always taken life by the tail and swung it around to suit his fancy, found himself tortured by the vision of a pair of eyes now lost to him. Forlorn and miserable he stood there. He hadn't seriously believed she'd leave—and—incidentally—she was gone.

Morning brought Diane to her hotel suite at the Plaza Royal Hotel in Buenos Aires in less time than she

had imagined possible. The hotel porter rushed her through the customs, the manager welcomed her with magnificent hospitality—all, she realized dimly—due to Richard's thoughtfulness and foresight.

Her living room was again banked with flowers as on the boat and a cablegram reading, "My love. Forever and ever. Richard" was placed in her lax fingers. She smiled gratefully, then shook her head in self-reproach as Mike's name came to her lips.

The manager was addressing her. "And what are your plans for the day, Miss Lovering?" Diane made a helpless gesture. "I arrange everything," he continued importantly. "A car to drive around the city? Or we have excellent bridle paths—everybody rides in the Argentine. Perhaps a horse —"

Diane brightened a bit. "Yes. I'd like that. Say—ten o'clock."

When the manager had bowed himself out with a flourish, Diane moved to the large French windows on the balcony. The streets were still empty. From afar came the cry of an early milk peddler calling his wares. In the patio below, birds were starting to chitter in the trees. Diane stared at the scene moodily.

Amy, her maid, came flourishing in, chattering volubly. "Say—this is mighty pretty! And trust Mr. Field to send those flowers. He's always so thoughtful."

"Always, Amy—everywhere."

"One thing—I'm glad to get off that boat and get my feet on good firm ground again."

"I suppose that's the best way to look at it," Diane replied listlessly.

"Look at what?"

There was a convulsive sigh. "Nothing."

Amy voiced her concern. "Darlin'—you don't feel good—"

Diane glanced at the cablegram. "I should, shouldn't I?"

Amy patted her arm. "You just haven't waked up yet—"

"That's just the trouble," Diane said slowly and bitterly. "I'm wide awake. And I'm afraid to open my eyes."

"Darlin'! What on—?" And as Amy stared, one great round tear welled up in Diane's eyes, quickly followed by another and another. "I've never known the sun could be so warm and strong," she sobbed, "beating down on me—and I can't open my eyes and look at it." She touched the telegram gently. "But I haven't the right or reason to feel sorry for myself." Her fists were clenched tightly. Then, with a supreme effort, she gathered the remnants of her courage together.

"Amy," she smiled through her tears, "stop looking as though you were going to reach for a strait-jacket. Maybe what I thought was the sun was only a temporary sunstroke—so skip it."

Amy raised her shoulders in helpless bewilderment as Diane rapidly undressed and got into her riding-habit. Fifteen minutes later she was in the lobby, addressing the manager. "Well," she said briskly, "if the horse is ready, I am."

He bowed. "I shall telephone the stables, Miss Lovering."

"And a guide please. Somebody who knows—" She never finished what she was about to say.

In the next terrified instant, too stunned to even scream, she felt herself lifted bodily and rapidly borne to the door, while the few straggling guests in the lobby stood petrified in astonishment.

(To Be Continued)

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