

Chained

The Story of Joan Crawford's New Film

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"childish fright." Even Richard chuckled at her. It was the last straw Diane looked about wildly, then tears flooded her eyes and dropped down her cheeks. Richard leaned over in quick concern and under his watchful gaze she pulled herself together, finally managing an artificially animated interest for the rest of the evening.

But the incident had so unstrung her that it was almost a week before she was quite herself again.

On a clear, crisp day in February, Diane stepped out of her car at the entrance of Stillwell's sporting goods store on Fifth Avenue. She and Richard were leaving the next evening for their lodge in the Adirondacks, and there were some last-minute purchases to be made.

"You come in, Roy," she said to her chauffeur. At the gun counter on the third floor, the clerk greeted her.

"Ah, Mrs. Field. You came for the gun? It's ready." He turned to a back rack and picked out a deer rifle with a repair tag on it, then placed it in the gun case, and handed it to Roy.

Diane took out her shopping list and perused it intently. Then she looked up with a bright smile. "Now where do they keep a little thing like a toboggan?"

"On the mezzanine, Mrs. Field."

"Thank you." She pointed to the gun-case. "Roy, put this in—"

Her last words hung in mid-air as her hand half went to her throat. So she stood, frozen, for a long minute. Mike—it was Mike—was leaning over the gun counter, at the far end of the section.

Slowly, almost stealthily Diane started to edge away, making for the elevators.

"Let's see your over-and-unders," Mike had told the clerk. It was as he raised the shotgun he held and sighted along it again that Diane came into his line of vision. For a split second he was still, then he lifted his head as if to clear it.

"Hello, Mike," she said in a small voice.

Mike summoned a brittle gaiety; "Well, hello! Fancy meeting you in your own home town." He extended his hand. "How are you, Diane? This is a surprise."

"Y-yes. How long have you been up here?"

"I don't know—two—three weeks."

"Is—is Johnnie with you?"

Mike laughed. "Nope. He said he hadn't recovered from New York since the last time."

"Oh." Her silence asked, "Have you recovered, Mike?" Aloud she said, "Where—where are you stopping?"

"St. Regis," Mike broke the shotgun a few times as Diane searched his face yearningly.

"I've—I've the car outside. Can I drop you anywhere?"

"Mmm." He was pleasant enough.

"No, thanks—I'll walk."

"All right." Making her decision quickly, she turned and was out of the door, while Mike looked after her grimly.

Continuing on down to the car Diane hurriedly reached into the floor of the tonneau for her galoshes and pulled them on. Waving aside the doorman's

offer of assistance with an excited laugh, she re-entered the store, and in another minute was standing beside Mike.

"Have—have you decided on a gun?" she asked with a curiously calm, poised brazenness about her.

Mike stared at her galoshes. "What's the idea?"

"I'd—I'd like to walk too."

Oh, so that's it, Mike thought. Wants to have her cake and eat it too, perhaps. Him—why not oblige the lady? After all—

"No sale. Maybe to-morrow," he said to the clerk. "Come on, then." He took Diane's arm. They walked up Fifth Avenue in silence for a while. Every now and then Diane stole a look at him. Once he caught her and the veiled plea in her eyes. She looked quickly away.

"Has—has Johnnie been well—and happy?" she finally asked, not meaning Johnnie at all.

"Sure."

"You look—pretty well."

"I can't complain."

"I—I'm glad, Mike."

"So am I."

Silence again, as she trudged along beside him.

"Where are you heading?" Mike asked abruptly.

"Why—I'm supposed to be at the Colony for luncheon—"

"Oh!" At the corner Mike indicated the sign on the lamp post. "This is my station. Going West." As he raised his hat Diane touched his sleeve impulsively.

"Mike—how long will you be in town?"

"Oh, three—four days, maybe. Well, Diane, keep up the good luck and I'll tell Johnnie I saw you and—"

"Can't—couldn't we go some place and talk?"

Mike shot a glance at her. "Sure," he replied easily, "providing you can break that date and lunch with me."

She nodded eagerly. "That's all right, Mike."

(To be Continued.)

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