

MAD MARRIAGE

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX (Con.)
Gypsy hurried around the house. Sure enough, there were her worst fears realized. A hole the size of a bushel basket in the center of the precious tulip bed and high on either side of it mounds of soft, fresh earth.

"Oh, Sam!"
Broken flower stems and mangled blossoms showed in the wreckage. Gypsy reached down and tried to raise life one of the half uprooted plants.

Pat, unaware of the damage he had wrought, came close to her, his head slightly to one side, eyeing the garden hole. He evidently was proud of it.

Gypsy took the dog's head between her two hands. "How am I going to teach you," she said sadly, "that you must not dig in the garden? You've been a bad dog, Pat. I don't like you when you tear up the flower. I don't like to have the garden spoiled!"

She shook her head at the terrier. Pat eyed her in puzzled dejection.

"If he was mine, I'd teach him quick enough!" Sam spoke up crossly.

Gypsy rose. "Do what you can with the tulip bed," she told the man. "I'll talk to Mr. Wallace about stretching up a piece of wire fencing." She could hear Sam growling to himself as she led Pat toward the house.

THEY had not been inside ten minutes when the door bell rang. Matilda was in the kitchen baking. Gypsy went to the door. There were two women outside on the porch.

"How do you do, Mrs. Wallace?" they chorused. For an instant Gypsy was startled. Then she remembered where she had seen that purple costume. The woman Jim had introduced at the hotel—Mrs. Butterworth! The younger one was the daughter.

"How do you do?" Gypsy answered. "It's Mrs. Butterworth, isn't it? And Miss Butterworth. Won't you come in? I've just got in from town."

Mrs. Butterworth glanced about the living room. "We've been meaning to drop in to see you for a long while," she said, "but you know how time flies!"

"I declare, here it is the middle of April. Yes, time certainly does fly. Been making some changes in this room, haven't you, Mrs. Wallace?"

"Yes. I hope you like it." "Oh, it's lovely! Lovely! Only of course it looks different to me, because I was always used to the way Miss Ellen had things. Miss Ellen likes it in her little house down the street. I suppose it's improved."

"I think she likes it very much," Gypsy agreed. "If you'll just excuse me a moment, I'll have Matilda make some tea. It will take only a minute."

She was back almost immediately. Daphne Butterworth looked up and amazed Gypsy by speaking. "I've been telling mother how much I like your curtains," she said. It was the first time Gypsy ever had heard Daphne express an opinion.

Before Gypsy could reply, Mrs. Butterworth cut in.

"I suppose you read about that Loring girl marrying Brock Phillips?" she said. "My, what a surprise that was! Maybe I shouldn't say it to you, but of course you must know the whole town expected Marcia to marry Jim Wallace. Only girl I guess Jim ever went with."

"Well, that's the way it goes. You can't tell about men. No, indeed, you certainly can't. Did Jim know about it before he read it in the paper?"

"Why, really, Mrs. Butterworth."

"Oh, I suppose I shouldn't have asked. Only, of course, you know there's bound to be a good deal of talk. That's why I wanted to have the straight of it."

"Well, I guess Marcia Loring's getting a sight more money than she's ever had before. The Lorsings didn't have much, you know. He was in the bank here, but out of some insurance and real estate there wasn't much left."

"Their going east must have been what broke up the match between Marcia and Jim. And last summer when she was visiting out here he was so devoted to her!"

Matilda's arrival with the tea tray helped Gypsy over the embarrassing moment.

"Three lumps," Mrs. Butterworth instructed as Gypsy raised the sugar tongs. "I like my tea sweet no matter what the styles are."

