

THE TOY WIFE

Adapted from the
Maurice Goldwyn-Mayer picture



GERTRUDE GELBIN,

RESUME

Gilberte and Louise Brigard, who have grown up in France, come home to live at their father's plantation in pre-Civil War Louisiana. Gilberte is called Froufrou by everyone; she is innocent, delightful, childlike, wanting only a handsome husband. Andre Vallaire, young man about town, falls madly in love with her. Georges Sartoris serious young lawyer, whom Louise has always loved, also falls in love with Froufrou. Georges, not realizing Louise's feeling for him, begs her to help him in his courtship of her sister. Louise urges Froufrou to marry Georges, and Froufrou influenced by her sister, accepts him, Andre, upon learning the news, goes away.

CHAPTER TWO
THE TOY WIFE

Gilberte Sartoris was the happiest woman in New Orleans. And why shouldn't she be? Hadn't she been married for five years to a husband who adored her? Wasn't their little son, George, the prettiest, the dearest and the smartest child in the city? As Madame Georges Sartoris, Froufrou found life infinitely more exciting and satisfactory than she had as Gilberte Brigard.

And Georges did adore her. He waved aside the inconveniences caused by the haphazard state of their household. How could Froufrou be expected to supervise a house full of slaves? That the servants were surly, unruly, and disobedient was a cause for concern; but each time Georges broached the subject, Froufrou's petulant charm won him back to good humor.

Pick laid her finger upon the root of the trouble. "Ah tries to watch ever which way in dis house, mastah," she cried. "Ah can't do it. Missy's too nice. Dat's all dere's wrong here!"

Georges, attempting once more to take Froufrou to account, instead found himself her abject slave. On the subject of their child, however, he was more firm.

"You're not going to accuse me of neglecting George," Froufrou exclaimed.

"No," he sighed, knowing he was losing the battle he had started. "His nurse neglects him on one hand—and you spoil him on the other."

She laughed gaily. "Don't worry about George, I adore him—and he adores me."

The day came at last when Georges took final reckoning of his marriage. Froufrou's whims and caprices made him give up the one important step in his career—his opportunity to head the Government commission detailed to revise the laws of the South West.

"The Southwest?" She frowned, puzzled. "Where's that?"

He explained the need for their both going to this country.

"I should die there, Georges! I can't go." Her excuses were legion, and all, according to her reasoning, perfect. "Besides, Georges," she offered as her final reason, "Think of it—after all this time Madame de Cambri has just found the leading man to play my lover in the Charity Ball. How dreadful it would be if I dropped out of the play, now!"

She went on in detail, explaining that Andre Vallaire, who had been in France these last five years, had returned to New Orleans. That Madame had sought him out at once for the play. That Andre had accepted. That she and Andre were getting along famously at rehearsals. Surely Georges could understand that now. She mustn't leave the city.

"If you love me," she pouted, "you'll not go either—"

Georges gave up the great chance of his career. Somehow, from that time on, he no longer had the same patience with her shortcomings. It was Froufrou herself who decided they must bring Louise to live with them.

"She'll take care of everything for us," Froufrou beamed.

Over his protest, she dispatched to get her sister.

Louise's arrival in their home marked an instant change. She took matters in hand; safeguarded the precious keys to the household; kept the slaves in control; cared for little George in a way that made him tractable and happy; managed affairs so that Georges, for the first time, knew peace and quiet.

Froufrou was delighted with the arrangement. Now she had nothing to worry about. She had all the time needed for rehearsals. What fun the rehearsals were! Andre read his lines with a fervor that constantly amused her.

The weeks rolled by merrily enough until the day when Froufrou found Pick surly and disobedient. Pick had always been such a devoted slave that Froufrou was astounded. She questioned her sharply.

"If you aint noticed nothin'," Pick retorted, "Ah aint sayin' nothin'—"

Froufrou demanded an immediate explanation. Pick regarded her with unhappy eyes. "Mam'zelle Louise got de keys and she's got Mahsta thinkin' she knows ebbrythin'. You jest watch out, Missy! Pick loves you. She don't care if you hit her—but Mam'zelle

Louise is actin' like she was de missy here—and Mahstah war her man."

Froufrou reached out and slapped Pick full in the face. "That will teach you not to carry tales," she cried furiously.

But the seed of suspicion and unhappiness had been planted; Froufrou began to notice things she had never seen before. She realized that her husband now turned to her sister for advice, for pleasantries, for friendship. Her child, whom she adored as a fellow playmate, no longer looked for her or wanted her. "Aunt Lou-ee" was the only name on his lips.

Into her heart which had known only carefree gaiety crept the bewildering pain of being unwanted. On top of this heart-breaking discovery, came another even more startling and more terrifying: Andre Vallaire still loved her.

"Go away," she begged desperately when he told her.

"Where?" he asked.

"Anywhere—far—"

"If you knew how much I love you," Andre whispered.

"I do know. Oh, I know. That's the trouble. That's the danger."

"Danger?" he cried. "Does that mean there's a chance of you caring for me?"

"How do I know?" she wept. "How can I tell. I'm a woman who must be loved. That's all I know. That's why I beg you to go away."

"If that was a tear for me" Andre cried. "I'd not leave without you."

A week later, two events occurred which seemed heaven-sent to Froufrou. Andre came to tell her he was going away. Her eyes filled with tears—but her heart felt blessedly relieved. Immediately thereafter, Monsieur de Richelle, who had courted Louise in Paris, arrived in New Orleans to seek her hand in marriage.

Froufrou was beside herself with hope and excitement. Louise must marry him! That would solve everything! She insisted that Georges convince Louise to accept Monsieur de Richelle. Eventually, despite his demur, she forced him to speak to her sister.

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She sat back with cold eyes and watched them, as miserable and beaten, they discussed the matter.

"No," Louise at last, "I can't marry him."

Froufrou arose. "Since you have failed, Georges," she said evenly, "I shall convince Louise, myself." She suggested that Louise follow her to her sitting room.

"Now," said Froufrou when they were alone, "Let me have the real reason why you refuse this ideal marriage. Or do you want me to tell you?"

"I suppose you think I lied to you about Monsieur de la Richelle that time," Louise answered, her voice low and strained, "I fancied myself in love with him, that time—"

"That time you urged me to marry Georges?" Froufrou demanded. "You are certain you did fancy yourself in love with him then?"

"Whether I was or not," Louise said evasively, "I'm quite certain that I don't love him well enough to marry him, now."

"So am I!" was Froufrou's stinging retort.

"Well," said Louise helplessly, "then—then you have the real reason for my refusal."

"I didn't love my husband when you decided I was to marry him," Froufrou replied meaningly.

"That was different—"

"But I learned to love him afterwards—as you were sure I would."

Louise remained silent, her head downcast.

Froufrou smiled. "Why should I not take your fate in my hands," she cried, "just as you took mine? Don't you think you would love Monsieur de la Richelle in time—as I love my husband?"

"No, Gilberte! No—"

"No," Louise repeated nervously. "I am different from you, I am older. I should not be happy—I know myself!"

"Not so well as I know you, my dear sister!" Froufrou placed her words with deadly aim.

"Gilberte."

"You needn't use that tone, Louise. I'm not a child any more. And I'm not

afraid to tell you what I think of you."

"But I'm afraid—I'm afraid you're not yourself!" Louise raised painfully eyes. "You may say something you'll be sorry for—"

Froufrou stared down at her with hate.

"You thief!" The words bolted from her lips and struck Louise full in the face. Louise half rose from her chair. "Hush!" she cried.

Froufrou advanced towards her and jerked away the household keys which Louise wore suspended on a cord ever since the day of her arrival—ever since the day Froufrou had given them to her with gay abandon of her duties.

"I gave you these keys," Froufrou said with deadly calm. "I trusted you—and you've stolen everything in this house!"

"Gilberte!" pleaded Louise "Someone will hear you."

"Let them!" cried Froufrou. "Why not? Even the servants knew it before I did! You've stolen my place, my husband—and now, my child—"

"It's not true," wept Louise. "It's not true—"

"And that's why you want neither home nor husband nor children of your own!"

"Gilberte! You must listen—"

"Deny you love him!" cried Froufrou.

Louise lifted her face proudly. "I don't deny it!"

"Ah!" Froufrou breathed deeply.

"Well, then," answered Louise, her eyes fixed upon her sister's face. "I loved him first. But he loved you; and it was for his sake that I made your marriage—and only to save that marriage did I come into this house."

"That's a lie!" Froufrou stepped back. "We were happy when you came."

"He wasn't," Louise answered shortly. "Ask him! Ask him what he said to me the day you sent him for me. Ask him what he called you."

"What?"

"He said your marriage would end in disaster unless I saved it. He said your frivolity was destroying his peace of mind and his career. He said you were incapable of caring for your home or your child as a woman should."

"No!" Froufrou's voice rose in sharp agony. "I don't believe it! I don't believe it!"

"It's true. And more. He said you were only a toy-wife—and a real wife was needed in this household."

"A toy wife?" whispered Froufrou. "Not a real one?"

In the pause that followed, she looked about wildly, like a trapped and hurt creature with no chance for escape. The name of Andre flashed

through her mind. He was going away—tonight! She backed away and leaned against the door for support, staring helplessly at her sister.

"So you came here to save this marriage?" Her voice was pitifully small and strange.

"Yes. To save the marriage for which I was responsible. And have—if you will let well enough alone—"

Froufrou laughed shortly. "You think so?" She paused and smiled. "You haven't very good eyes, my wise sister."

"What do you mean?"

Her hand found the doorknob. Her eyes grew wild and bright. Andre! Andre! The name pounded through her brain.

"You'll see!" she cried. "You'll see!" She turned and ran from the room.

What will Froufrou do now that she's learned the truth about Georges' feeling for her? Be sure to read the concluding chapter.

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Behind The Scenes In Business World

To the business man confidence is the basis of profits, and the prospect of profit is what makes prosperity. Factories are reopened or new ones built as soon as operators believe that there is at least a 50-50 chance of being able to sell more merchandise at a profit in the near future. The return of confidence usually begins to manifest itself in the stock market. People are willing to pay more for stocks and bonds of corporations once they feel assured that earnings and dividends are likely to increase. Last week men and women all over the country and even in Europe began to invest idle money in American securities. Result—the stock market rose to a new high for 1938. Even confirmed pessimists had to admit that all signs indicate the low point in the depression is behind us.

FOR 'SUBURBAN(K)S' — Beans thrive in an acid soil, whereas carrots prefer to "stay over on the alkaline side." These are two of the more elementary of many fine points of soil testing and adjusting that Suburban Burbanks are learning this year. Soil diagnosticians of the Freeport Sulphur company report home gardeners are going much more scientific than ever before, with unusual demand noted for small chemical kits, sold at hardware and seed stores for from \$2 to \$20, with which they test and adjust garden soil for alkalinity-acidity balance. Kits consist of charts, manual, test tubes and vials of fluids. Some gardeners report savings of up to 50 per cent of their summer vegetable bill through this scientific "trucking."

THINGS TO WATCH FOR—Golf clubs with transparent heads, in which arrows are imbedded to guide the stroke... A "can't miss torpedo" which, in case it misses an enemy battle ship, turns back and strikes the warship from the opposite side... Portable partitions for soda fountains, which move on an overhead rail and can be adjusted to divide off any number of seats from others... A germicide more potent than tincture of iodine, yet less irritating... An "elevator" car which runs up and down the side of the stairs in your home.

HEADLINES—New car registrations declined, but filling stations see upturn in business—reasons: old cars burn more gas than new ones... Miami to have movie colony—studio under construction will begin by producing cartoons and later do full length features... Cigarette production shows increase over last year.

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