

Couldn't Bear To Have Her Husband Paint Another

How the Mad Jealousy of a New York Artist's Wife Slashed His Masterpieces Into Ribbons, Sent Him to a Prison Cell and Nearly Cost Her Own Life



An artist's model whose face and figure have been the inspirations for many celebrated paintings



Rudolph Suden, the painter who has learned how hopeless it was to use any other woman than his wife for a model



An innocent and appealing pose, but one that might add fuel to the flames of jealousy in an artist's wife



Mrs. Suzanne Suden, the latest surprising example of the desperate lengths to which a wife can be driven by jealousy of the models her artist husband paints

IF YOU had had your ear to the keyhole of a certain artist's studio in New York's picturesque Greenwich Village one night not long ago you would have heard the sound of great tearing sobs, the sound of a woman crying as if her heart was about to break.

And a little later, if you had looked into the dim candle-lit room, with paintings hanging everywhere of Bohemian life and bobbed-haired, scantily clad girls, you would have witnessed as dramatic a scene as perhaps even this region of many stirring dramas ever saw.

The heart of the sobbing woman in the studio was really breaking that night, as the events that followed quickly have clearly proved. She was Suzanne Suden, the wife of an ambitious artist, and she was so tortured by jealousy that she could bear no longer the idea that her artist husband was painting the charms of other women.

She had reached the breaking point at last, after months of brooding in secret and many another night like this of sobbing alone in the studio. Now, with tear-stained, haggard face, she was staring fixedly and wildly at the picture which her husband, Rudolph Suden, had just finished of the red-headed model that she hated most of all.

Suddenly her sobs ceased and she threw back her head with a harsh laugh, a little insane and strange, as if some diabolical idea had amused her. In another second she rushed into the kitchen and returned with a long, sharp-bladed knife. Several times she strode up and down the room, as if undecided, and then, with another vengeful look at the teasing smile on the face of the undraped girl in the picture, she made a lunge at the canvas with the knife and tore the smiling face straight across with a wide gash.

That seemed to give her new strength, and she went on slicing and sawing at the canvas until the artist's work of weeks was slashed into ribbons that fluttered grotesquely in the draft from the open window.

With another triumphant laugh, she pulled down from the walls other pictures of the red-headed girl, ripping and tearing at her painted flesh with savage joy. At last somewhat appeased, she contented herself with cutting a few triangular pieces from the bobbed hair

and making long gashes from corner to corner of the last two pictures.

No sooner was the work of destruction finished than the light went out of poor little Suzanne's eyes and she collapsed on the nearest chair. All the fiendish joy of her vengeance was over, and with the reaction came the realization of the grief and anger her husband would feel when he came home and found all his prized masterpieces hopelessly ruined.

Never, she thought, could she face him—better to kill herself and escape the whole thing for good!

So she groped her way into the next room and hastily opened a box of poison tablets, waiting them before she could have time to think any more about whether she really wanted to die or not.

Rudolph came home in time to hear her screams of agony as the poison began its deadly work. He gave her an antidote, called an ambulance and poor little jealous Suzanne was rushed to the hospital, where the doctors said that she had a chance to live.

But even when she recovered and came home again, the question of models came up and Suzanne continued to be jealous of Rudolph's painting them. She also continued to threaten suicide, and every time she heard at the studio door the voice of one of the Village beauties who posed for Rudolph she declared she would take another dose of the poison tablets.

There were bitter quarrels, for Rudolph declared his wife had no reason for her jealousy and thought it cruel and wicked of her to interfere with his artistic ambitions. One night she had him arrested for cruelty to her.

Rudolph Suden had once been quite contented to paint only his pretty little French wife. In those days everything was perfectly delightful in the little Village studio. But there was trouble unending when he announced that his wife's charms were no longer enough to inspire fresh work of art and that he must find himself a model of quite a different type of beauty.

The romance of Rudolph and Suzanne began overseas, when he lay wounded in an American base hospital. She was

then the prettiest of French Red Cross nurses, utterly charming in her big white headdress and with her big brown eyes and soft mouse-colored hair.

The very first thing Rudolph did when he became convalescent in the army hospital was to pull out his palette and brushes and begin the first of innumerable pictures of her.

At that time he forgot all about his models at home in Greenwich Village, and he decided that he had found the prettiest subject in the world. Whenever Suzanne wasn't busy with her hospital duties he painted her, and he went on painting her until he went back to the trenches.

Then they were married and Suzanne came back with her Rudolph to Greenwich Village and continued to pose for him and he continued to be contented with his one model for a long time.

When the sad day came when Rudolph felt the need of a new kind of inspiration Suzanne didn't say much, but she thought a great deal. In fact, she brooded and brooded until the little green monster had a very firm hold on her poor little heart and she lost all her one-time vivacity and merry ways.

She would lie in the next room at night and listen with jealous fury to the laughing voice of the model Rudolph had chosen for the evening. As time went on she became more and more assured that the lure of these other models was keeping Rudolph away from her, holding him in the studio until unearthing hours of the night, making him forget all about his wife.

There was one model whom she hated most of all. This one was younger than herself, with burnished red-gold hair—

quite different from Suzanne's, which is not at all red or golden. Rudolph couldn't resist the inspiration of that hair; he admitted it himself, and he was all wrapped up in his earnest effort to transfer to his canvases something of its fascinating beauty.

And so it went on for months and months. Suzanne, who had once mixed gayly in the studio parties, became more and more morose. At the same time her very tall and handsome Rudolph, with his artistically long, blond hair, became more and more popular in the various picturesque haunts of the artist folk who live in this imitation of the Paris Latin Quarter.

Poor little Suzanne reached the dramatic climax of her jealousy on the night that brought her more dead than alive into the suicide ward in one of the big city hospitals.

On that night, she says, she worked herself up into believing that Rudolph had gone to one of the Greenwich Village parties with the red-headed model, a thing he had never done before, to her knowledge. As she sat alone in the candle-lit studio she was tortured beyond reason by the white flesh and annoyingly triumphant smile on the face of the painting of that same red-headed girl.

Sobbing bitterly, she threw herself across the divan in despair and tried to shut the hated face from view. But it haunted her, and in spite of herself she looked up at it once more.

"There she was—that horrid little creature, who wouldn't leave Rudolph alone and who was now being admired and studied as she once was! And where was Rudolph now? Out with her in one of the Village tearooms, laughing about

poor Suzanne, who was becoming such a wreck? Or was he searching for still more of these hateful inspirations? Oh, if she only could destroy that horrid, aggravating smile—and, why not?"

She enjoyed the job while she was doing it—every rip of the canvas, as she explained later, gave her a satisfaction past description, the satisfaction of destroying at least in effigy that which she considered had deprived her of her handsome artist husband's love and admiration.

"But when I had finished slashing the canvases my rage also was over," she explained later in the hospital. "I didn't take the poison out of jealousy, but I did spoil the pictures because I hated that girl so. I tried to kill myself because I was afraid to face Rudolph after ruining his hard work of so many months."

When she came to her senses in the hospital Suzanne talked incessantly of the models who had lured her Rudolph away from her, and particularly of one with fiery red hair. It was the same when she came home again. She was not satisfied with her husband's declaration to paint hereafter no one but her, and at last she had him put in a prison cell, where she thought the "women who wouldn't leave him alone" couldn't find him.

What was the right thing for Rudolph Suden to have done when confronted by his wife's insane, unreasoning jealousy? Should he have yielded to it and sacrificed his artistic ambitions by giving up the models in whom his brush found such happy inspiration?

That is a difficult question and one with which, doubtless, almost every married artist is at some time or other brought face to face. The artist's attempt to answer it is seldom attended by such spectacularly unhappy results as in the case of the Sudens, but it is, nevertheless, a stumbling block to the happiness of countless artists and their wives.

Many years ago a French writer said that there was only one way for a painter or sculptor to find peace and happiness in marriage and at the same

time achieve success in his profession: by using for his model only his wife.

A large number of famous artists have done this very thing, but none of them has ever explained whether he chose this course because he thought it the only way out of his dilemma or because he was really convinced that he could never hope to find any more satisfactory inspiration than his wife's charms supplied.

Since Sir John Lavery, the great English artist, married a beautiful Chicago woman he has painted no one but her. Every woman he puts on his much admired canvases is an idealization of his wife's charming face and figure.

With Charles Dana Gibson, the distinguished American artist, it has been much the same. The Gibson girl he made famous is a faithful portrait of the Virginia beauty he married many years ago and with whom he is living happily to this day.

But although for an artist to use only his wife for his model may be a good way to insure domestic happiness, art critics do not think it a plan that is at all conducive to the best work of which a man is capable. No one woman, they say, can be charming enough to supply all the inspiration needed by the painter or sculptor of genius. It is felt that the greater the variety of models from which he has to choose the better results he will achieve.

Beautiful as Lady Lavery is, the public is getting rather "fed up" with the innumerable portraits of her which crowd the art galleries and stores and the homes of fashionable society people. And many of the critics are convinced that Sir John's genius would achieve far greater things if he would not persist in limiting himself to this one model.

But perhaps Sir John Lavery would rather sacrifice a large measure of fame than risk marring his happiness with the wife to whom he is so devoted. Certainly there seems no present likelihood of his giving Lady Lavery the least possible cause for such jealousy as that which tortured poor Suzanne Suden so that her friends fear she may lose her mind.