

The Garden Of Alla - Synopsis

It is 1921 and silent film actress and queer filmmaker, Alla Nazimova has decided to make the film version of Oscar Wilde's Salome. At their home, The Garden Of Alla, she has invited her "husband" Charles Bryant to direct the film and her lover Natacha Rambova to design the sets and costume. Charles is clearly uneasy about making a film about a play that is hated by society and banned all over, but Natacha is intrigued. While Charles leaves for a moment to think about it, Alla and Natacha share an intimate moment, recounting their love for each other. Charles returns and decides to make the film.

Flash forward a year and the making of Salome has started to happen. While Alla practices the dance of Salome, Charles shows his appreciation of the designs by Natacha but is concerned about her new boyfriend, Rudolph Valentino and threatens to tell Alla. Tired, Alla returns to Natacha and asks about the encounter between Charles and her. Natacha tells her about Rudolph, but Alla already knows. Natacha is not overly happy that everyone seems to be watching her and Alla tries to laugh it off as nothing important. Natacha becomes upset and informs Alla to mind her business. Charles returns with much concern over the death of film director, William Desmond Taylor and many other small scandals happening in Hollywood including the arrival of a potential censor to films. Alla tries to allay his fears and convinces him the artistry will win out.

We move to 1923 and Charles arrives upset about the lack of news on the distribution of Salome. Alla tries to comfort him on this, but he is seeing the opportunity slipping away with the rising censorship and now the lack of work for which they are now renting out parts of their home. Natacha arrives and we learn that she is now Mrs. Rudolph Valentino. Charles adds this to his fears with the many controversies of the heart throb actor, but Alla has found a way to alleviate Charles: by giving him a real wedding. It is revealed that in fact they have never been official due to a previous marriage of hers and she is working to make that right and offer some respectability to their lives. This eases his mind for the moment.

Two years later and the film has not been distributed and the two have not gotten married yet. Alla returns from touring a play, the only work she can get and with mounting bills, more of the home is rented. Charles wants to talk to Alla about something, but Natacha arrives at the house. We learn that Rudolph has divorced her which causes Alla to be sympathetic. While Charles passes Natacha drink, she notices that he has a different ring on his hand. After some pushing, Charles reveals that in fact he has got married without Alla's knowledge. Furious and hurt, Alla confronts Charles on this and Charles pushes back that he tried to tell them how bad Hollywood would get with the new censorship. Alla returns with the harm that he has now caused all their lives, raising questions to everyone about their relationships and what happens behind closed doors. Charles leaves with his bags and Alla is distraught, recognizing finally the destruction that has happened. Natacha tries to comfort her, but Alla recognizes that they are all now in danger and tells Natacha to leave. Alla reflects on this lost world and the amazing journey they all had as the lights go down.