

Whirlwind

by Norma Newcomb

CHAPTER IX

"I am but a servant, Miss Wingate. Don't you think that it is up to you to make the decision?"

"Drona Moore married!" Helen kept murmuring to herself, half in wonder. "Drona Moore married!"

She hadn't believed sister Jenny at first. How could she know what was going on in Kansas? But the answer to the telegram she had immediately dispatched had left no room for doubt.

"Of course Drona is married. Ask her about Bill Burke's brother Harold."

To tell Jimmy or not to tell him, that was the question. Or the beginning of the question. For if Jimmy stopped paying Drona court would he start wooing Sally again, start hurting her again? She certainly could not do anything to bring that about. But on the other hand, didn't Jimmy have some claim on her? They'd known one another for a long time, and...

"Sally!" The girl sounded preoccupied.

"What did you say to Jimmy last evening?"

"Plenty."

"How'd he take it?"

"The usual way. A laugh. Nothing can disturb Jimmy's equanimity."

"Such a big word for a small girl."

Sally appeared in the doorway, looking grim. "I said a lot of things last night, Helen. And I meant them. I'll teach Jimmy a lesson he'll never forget."

"Aw, he's not a bad guy."

Sally stamped her foot. "How can you say that, after the way he treated you?"

"I've been kissed before, dear. She'd told Sally the first lie that entered her head. Why not? She'd told herself bigger ones. For instance, she'd told herself that she didn't love Jimmy, didn't love him at all."

"Maybe he'll get a lesson from Drona, Sally. Let him alone, huh?"

"Oh, no. I'm going to take him away from her, and then!"

"Think you can do it?"

"I'm the same girl he begged for a date."

Evening — and a countryside shimmering in the glow of a full brilliant moon. And the air filled with the sweet scent of flowers and a sighing breeze. Philip Jethrup felt profoundly moved as he took Catherine Wingate's hand and helped her over the stiles of the little fence. "Tired, darling?"

"Philip, I'm never tired when I'm with you."

"Sweet." He brought her hands to his lips and kissed them, first one then the other, then all over again, while she shivered deliciously.

"Philip, you'll wear them out!" "Or my lips. Well, they'll be worn out in a good cause."

"Just two more weeks, Philip. Think of it, just two more weeks!"

"I couldn't think of anything else if I wanted to, darling." And that was the truth. When horror is about to enfold you in its arms it is difficult to think about anything else.

As though sensing his thought, which was exactly what had happened, she withdrew her hands from his. A mosquito whirred in her ear and she slapped at it ineffectually. "Now let's stop acting, huh, Philip?"

"I-I beg your pardon?" Lost in his own thoughts, he really hadn't heard her.

"I said, let's stop acting. You don't want to marry me, isn't that so?"

"Yes, Cathie," he said firmly. "I do."

"Philip!"

He got up and took her into his arms. "Yes, darling, it's you I've always really loved."

Mike would have been pleased had he seen their kiss, because Mike was furious enough with Stewardess Sally Alliston to wish her all the bad luck in the world.

He had been properly sorry for his condition the evening she came calling, and she had been suitably gay and forgiving and even accepted his invitation to go dining and dancing. But then her mood had changed—changed while they were on the dance floor. Having no way of knowing that the orchestra was playing the identical tune the orchestra had played in New York when she was in Jimmy's arms, he was rather confused by her abrupt: "Oh, I don't feel like dancing, Mike; let's sit down."

He was uncomfortable when they returned to their table. He had drunk several martinis, so he was slightly dizzy, as well. Made less inhibited by the alcohol, he boldly took her hand and squeezed it gently.

"Sally, what did I do wrong? You look as angry as — as I've ever seen you look."

"Skip it, my pet."

"No," he told her stubbornly. "I won't. You've changed in a subtle way, Sally. I can't skip that."

"Just tired of dancing, Mike, that's all."

"I don't mean that, though it's linked to what I do mean. Frankly, Sally, are you in love with Jimmy?"

She drew her hand away. "What a ridiculous thing to ask."

"Yet the logical question to ask." He frowned as a drunk bumped into his chair. "Look, let's go somewhere and talk."

"About Jimmy? I should say not."

He sighed. The noise in the dine and dance place was head-splitting. "Ever since that first evening you spent with him, Sally. You fell for him, didn't you?"

"No!" she cried vehemently. "I didn't!"

"And he left you for Drona. Fell for her. And so, enter cynical Sal, who is not a wonderful gal."

"Are you quite finished?" She inquired icily.

Again he captured her hand; again he leaned forward intently over the little table. "I'll never be finished, Sally. You see, I love you too much."

This time she didn't succeed in pulling her hand from his, though she tried to—energetically. "Mike, do you have to spoil every date we have?"

"Instinct tells me to keep trying, Sally. Instinct tells me that if I try often enough I'll get what I want."

"All right, then. I fell in love with him."

His face blanched, but he held grimly on to his show of composure. "And now, jealous, hurt, bitter, you want to strike back at him. Suppose you succeed, Sally? Suppose you make him come crawling back to you — which you won't, by the way — what then?"

"Then I shall marry Philip Jethrup!"

"Of all the dirty thoughts!" he raged.

"Is it? That's unfortunate. But please remember that I didn't start this way. I have learned from my dear friends. Jimmy plays high, wide and handsome, and that's all right. You spoil our friendship and that's all right. Well, it's all right for me to marry for money, then."

"Are you through?"

She flung her head back. "I am, Mike. Do I get lecture one or two or three?"

He rose and slapped her face. His face was red with fury. His breath rasped in his throat.

"You cheap — and I thought I loved you!"

She pressed her hand to her stinging cheek, eyes wide with amazement. "You — you slapped me!"

"You deserve worse, by God! A slimy, despicable thing like you! And I thought..."

She sprang from her chair, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Mike, I..."

"Get out. Get out before I really forget myself. You hear, get out!"

"Hey, loud-mouth, you keep yer hands off her!"

A burly gentleman with a cigar clenched between his teeth rose from an adjoining table threateningly. He promptly sat down as Mike gave him a lusty shove and stamped out.

Helen was rather surprised when she received the telephone call from Mike. She was engaged in washing the breakfast dishes when the phone rang, and had beat Sally to it only by a hair's breadth. But she was even more surprised when Mike told her why he wanted to see her.

Forced to speak guardedly, then realizing that guarded tones and words would get neither anywhere, she promised to meet him before going out for her swing-shift term of duty. Sally, miffed, went back to the bedroom in a huff.

"A fine thing, Helen! It could have been for me."

"For you? Who'd telephone

"I'm not exactly undesirable," Sally mentioned delicately. She posed in the doorway, with a hand on her hip, rather pleasing even to Helen's jaded eye in yellow pajamas. "There's Philip, you know."

"Philip?" Helen just managed to control her start. "Have you read this morning's paper?"

"I refuse to read about Jimmy's escapades." Out went Sally's smile, like a light being switched off.

"On the society page it says that Philip and Catherine Wingate are to be married. The date is for the first."

"You're lying!" Sally's voice was electric with fury. "You're lying!"

Helen picked the paper from the sofa and carried it over to her. She opened it, indicated the notices, then marched toward the kitchen, feeling just a bit angry herself. Liar, indeed!

(To Be Continued)

This Week in WASHINGTON

Washington, D. C.—Efforts to bring at least part of the bill to reorganize congress are being made in the house. The senate passed their streamlining legislation on June 10, but the parallel measure has lain dormant in the house. Its supporters in the house hope that some provisions may be brought to the floor for consideration this season.

If certain disagreements between the senate and house bills can be ironed out, administration leaders are willing to clear the way for action. Unfortunately, these differences are hard to compose. Progress is slow among the committee members trying to harmonize the two forms of the bill.

Chief stumbling block is the proposal to create party "policy" committees. These would serve as super-steering committees for the two major parties, and thereby prevent confusion and would enable quicker action on legislation. Advocates of the measure expect that they will have to

sacrifice the policy committees, but they are still undesirous of giving up the whole reorganization bill.

Most important features of the senate bill are these:

Committees with similar functions would be merged into one, such as the naval and military affairs. By this process the present 48 house committees would be reduced to 18.

Congressional salaries would be increased from the present \$10,000 a year to \$15,000. Members also would be eligible for federal retirement benefits.

A new fiscal policy would be set up, under which congress would have to pass a resolution deliberately placing the government on a deficit financing basis if it wishes to appropriate more than could be raised through taxation and other revenues in any given year.

This last provision is a sore point. Administration leaders claim that it would be too cumbersome for efficient legislation. It would require a joint meeting

of the appropriation committees of both houses, that is, the ways and means and the finance committees. Proponents of the bill most important steps in reorganization.

The plan to trim down the number of committees in the house is also causing a lot of dissension. If the streamline bill passes at all, there will have to be a lot of compromising on this point. It is almost certain that more than 18 committees would survive the reorganization.

Another important, but exciting bill that will come up this session is the unification of services bill. The army favors this merger, but the navy opposes it.

One result of the atom bomb tests at Bikini was the stiffening of navy resistance to the unification bill. The battle ships survived the great explosion, after a fashion; at least they did not all go to the bottom, or disappear in a cloud of electrons. Some ships were not hurt at all. It is not even clear yet whether the crews of the bombed vessels would have been annihilated, since some of the tethered goats lived through the blast. In any case, the tests seemed to prove that battleships are not obsolete after all, and that a big navy is still necessary to our security.

Some congressmen have taken a cynical attitude toward the tests, hinting that it is highly unlikely that experiments conducted by the navy would prove that battleships are useless in the future. For the navy to wreck its main reason for existence would be suicidal, say these lawmakers. Be that as it may, results have tended to strengthen the navy's hand in its battle against unification.

Most powerful man on the navy's side is Chairman Vinson of the house naval affairs committee. Before he left for Georgia to campaign for re-election (he has been in office uninterruptedly for 32 years) he took some precautions. By certain arrangements with the rules and other key committees he practically assured that the unification bill would be sidetracked.

Like congressional reorganization, the unification bill is highly technical, and has little emotional appeal. The public is not clamoring for the immediate passage of either. In both cases, no calamity impends if the bills are pigeon-holed. They are measures for more efficiency in government functions. Unfortunately for the nation at large, a good many powerful people are not anxious for more efficient government.

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