

XXI. The Hurricane

TENDERLY and stormily, as he had attended to all the details of my life, Carl arranged our divorce so that I might marry Bob Johnson. He gave Dudley Field Malone so many instructions for the Paris procedure that Dudley laughed, and said:

"Why don't you come to Paris with us, Carl, and look after Jane yourself?"

And Carl answered, "Hell's bells, when you've been married to the same blue-eyed wench for seventeen years, it's a habit you don't get over in a minute."

Carl left for Montauk with orders that I was to visit him before going to Paris, for any last instructions he might have thought of in the meantime. My plans almost changed when I saw him again in the house on Long Island.

No question of his illness now. The doctor's warnings that he could not continue drinking were ignored. Bottles of scotch almost crowded out the medicine bottles on the table beside him. This time I found him in his bed on a many-windowed sun porch with a fireplace at one end where, as always in Carl's fireplaces, a log burned even on this sunny day.

Fire and water and sun—these were his loves. Carl had built his bed on a platform so that even while ill he might look over the waters of Long Island Sound.

We talked first of trivial things, while Jackie prattled between us. Then Carl asked about Bob, waiting for me in Paris.

"Guess you won't be getting married in gold braid this time, honey?" Carl said, chuckling.

And suddenly remembering that wedding, the rain and the potted plants and the German band, I found myself crying and saw tears in Carl's eyes. That was the moment in which my plans almost changed.

But the car was waiting, and beyond it the boat that led to Bob in Paris. I leaned over swiftly and kissed Carl good-bye.