

A CASE OF 'NO WEDDING BELLS FOR ME'—TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT AS THE CASE MAY BE

BY JANE WHITAKER

The bell rang furiously. I heard the landlady running to the door, then a quick patter of feet up the stairs and my best friend bolted into the room.

"Thank the Lord you're an old maid, Jane," she cried.

"Consider the thanks offered," I laughed, "and tell me why I am supposed to join in a chorus of 'No Wedding Bells for Me?'"

"Don't treat it as a joke, Jane, I'm serious. I just had dinner with Fanny Farwell. You remember she married five months ago. You ought to remember because you were fool enough to give her a present, and—"

"Just a moment," I interrupted. "You know my sister is engaged to be married, and, as one old maid is enough for any family, I do not want her ideals of matrimonial bliss shattered."

Sister suggested that she would go to a nickel show and we waited in silence until the door closed after her.

"What is it, a sob story?" I asked.

"It's a farce, a comedy, a joke," she responded bitterly. "In the last few days, I suppose because it is spring and I am past thirty, I have been looking at men I know and wondering which would treat me most kindly if I bent to the yoke. I'm cured now."

"When Fanny invited me to dinner I was real joyous. I haven't had a home-cooked meal in an age and I haven't seen Fanny since she married."

"They have a very cozy home, with 'Love thinketh no evil' mottoes on the wall, and the table was already fixed, with my favorite salad of cucumbers and lettuce, but Friend Husband was not in sight."

"'Victor is late,' Fanny said, with that exasperating superiority newly-married people adopt. 'We will wait a while and have an old-time chat.'"

"I did the chatting in a monologue, while Fanny reiterated like a parrot: 'I wonder what keeps Victor; I wonder what keeps Victor.'"

"I was faint with hunger, and I had visions of over-done meat, soggy potatoes, cold soup, when Fanny suggested that we better start eating."

"It was as I had feared—even the salad had wilted, and Fanny still kept up the parrot strain."

"Finally, just as I put a big piece of tough meat in my mouth and began the process of mastication she dropped her fork with a clatter, leaned across the table and shouted at me:

"'Oh, suppose he has been killed!'"

"The piece of meat went down my throat whole, and I choked. I strangled unassisted for about three minutes before I could get my breath or pick up a glass of water, and then I found Fanny was staring sorrowfully into space."

"'I just couldn't live if Victor were dead,' she moaned."

"Oh, boah!" I said with fervor. "A hundred things could have detained him."

"'But Jane says a man can go away perfectly well in the morning and be brought home dead at night.'"

"Jane has an imagination," I answered. I did not want to depreciate you, Jane, but I refused to visit a morgue, identify a corpse and walk slowly behind a hearse just to gratify her fancy."

"Besides," I said to Fanny, "you have lived before you met Victor and you'll go right on living after he is dead."

"The deluge came. She buried her face on the tablecloth and sobbed like a leading lady in a melodrama."

"I didn't try to comfort her, I was too disgusted. And just as she was