



For a moment there was silence — then a thump

with the extra virtue of perpetual sunniness, and I, for one, wished we might trade, and have Uncle Duke live with us instead of Claytie's unpredictable father.

Every Wednesday afternoon, we went to the Marine Band Concert on the East steps of the Capitol, and watched all our friends tooting and drumming in their splendid way. All Washington came out to these Wednesday concerts, the ladies starched and sweet and swishing in white embroidered frocks, with absurd little flower-like parasols over their bare heads. Miss Sally's peach-colored flounces scurried around her feet as she walked, and there was an answering agitation among the glamorous automatons

on the bandstand, there in resplendent glory.

Claytie never paid much attention to the music, being too accustomed to it, to notice. Miss Sally kept her hand on his shoulder, and we sat close and quiet on the warm granite steps, me, black and glistening above my starched sailor collar, my whole being drunk and numb with the music.

No one could have believed that Claytie's father warbling sublimely on his cornet, was the pink-faced monster who had smashed a breakfast tray that morning. There must have been two of him, an angel and a fiend.

After the concert, the musicians jumped down from the stand and mingled with us like

mortal men, and the whole gay crowds spread like a stain across the clipped lawns, and out beneath the trees.

Uncle Duke nearly always came home with us, because we lived quite near, in a square white house which was very like Miss Sally's "home." Uncle Duke would run ahead with us, full of exuberant spirits after the music.

Miss Sally always walked close to her husband, demure and possessive. She seldom looked at Uncle Duke, and I began to suspect that she didn't like my favorite. But I could see how much he liked her, and I thought of sly posterous ways of endearing him to her. He thought of ways also — but still she glanced at

him only with courtesy, never with friendliness. He used to bring her little gifts, which she scrupulously showed to her husband.

"Thank Duke for me, darling," she'd say, "but I wish he wouldn't give me perfume."

"Thought you liked cologne, honey."

"I do, Clayton. But I want you to give it to me . . . besides I wish we wouldn't have Duke here so much," she said diffidently. "Why doesn't he find himself some nice girl. He's *always* here, it seems to me."

"Shouldn't think you'd mind a handsome boy like Duke hangin' around, admirin' everything you do, Sally," he said absent-mindedly. Then he turned around and looked at his wife, and laughed a short sullen laugh. "Maybe that's just the trouble! Maybe you like it too good. Is that it?"

"Don't be absurd, Clayton," she said.

My mother said, "Um-hum 'at's bad. Mr. Burkwalder bettah be watchin' out, 'ith a nice young man like Mr. Duke 'round here, smilin' sweet at Miss Sally." She shook her head mysteriously as if she knew something no one else knew. "I got a feelin' this ain't goin' end so good."

Uncle Duke always came from rehearsals with Mr. Burkwalder, but often while he was there, Miss Sally would make an excuse and retire to her own room. Her husband appeared never to notice, although my mother said that it was: "On'y so many days tell he goin' 'spect somethin'."

And sure enough, one morning it developed that he *had* noticed. He was eating his hominy and bacon quite peaceably, when suddenly the room was in an uproar. Miss Sally dropped the letter she had been reading while they chatted, and the two of them were on their feet, Miss Sally murmuring soothingly, and Mr. Burkwalder shouting.

"It seems to me you're bein' mighty rude to my friends, Sally."

"Darling, it's not that . . . listen, dear . . ."

His knife and fork clattered on the china, and he began pacing the floor, stopping to glare at her and to shout, "You didn't think—I'd notice. But I'll not have you snubbin' my friends. Three times now, you've got up and waltzed out of the room when Duke was here. I'd like to know the meanin' of it."

"Oh, Clayton, *don't* be foolish. I was probably busy, or something. You mustn't be imaginin' things, darling."

"Well, it's very strange to me. If my friends aren't good enough for you, I suppose I'm not good enough either . . ." And one of the tornadoes feared by the entire house, was on. Sometimes Miss Sally's soft little comforting ways cooled his anger immediately, but this morning suddenly she didn't attempt to calm him. She sat down, and picked up her letters, and I saw her hands were trembling. He strode on, and the icy chandelier shivered and tinkled, and I cowered behind the kitchen door and said the alphabet.

Abruptly he sat down, and called jovially for some more hominy for his were chill as hailstones.

"Sorry, honey," he mumbled, "I didn't mean to be so noisy about it. But you see what I mean."

"Not as well as if you'd told me quietly," Miss Sally said, pretending to go on with her letter. But she reached out her little hand and patted his large thumb.

After that, of course she took pains to be particularly cordial to Duke, and both men were delighted.

"You're an angel, honey," Mr. Burkwalder said. "Don't you know it's only because I'm so damn proud of you? Why do you reckon I bring my friends here, exceptin' to see my charmin' wife?"

Things went on serenely for a while, and Christmas came and went and it was New Year's before Mr. Burkwalder had another fit of temper. He'd been trying to be better natured; he was boyish and winning in his attempts, and we were all happy.

"Nothin' but a big youngster," my mother said. "Ain't a bit of harm in him . . . 'zactly. He just acts as onery as she'll let him act. Ef'n he was mine, I'd punish some of the devilment out of him."

But Miss Sally never knew how to punish anyone. Except herself.

Then lightning struck again. On New Year's Day the Marine Band gave a concert at the White House Reception, and when the two men came back to our house, Miss Sally had sandwiches and highballs for them in the square drawing room. Duke was quiet and thoughtful, but Mr. Burkwalder was his merriest. He did impersonations of important Washington

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