

### Sidney Sheldon's Chasing Tomorrow- BEHIND THE BOOK

If Tomorrow Comes was the first Sidney Sheldon book I ever read. I was at boarding school in England at the time. I must have been about fifteen. But I remember it vividly: the excitement of the wildly twisting plot; that edge of your seat feeling that was Sheldon's signature and that is so much more than a need to turn the page. It's more like panic. Real, physical panic for characters that have become entirely real for you as a reader. Most of all, I remember the heroine, con artist Tracy Whitney. How she leaped off the page and hit me like a freight train. How she grabbed me by the throat, and the heart, and didn't let go.

Later, I read the rest of Sidney's novels, and over the years I have grown fond of many of his heroines. But the two that stand out the most for me would have to be Noelle Page from *The Other Side of Midnight* and Tracy Whitney from *If Tomorrow Comes*. Noelle is darker than Tracy. But both are strong, intelligent women; both are courageous and determined; both are survivors who refuse to play by men's rules. Noelle is famously executed at the end of *The Other Side of Midnight* (one of the best scenes in modern literature in my view, right up there with Fagin's hanging in *Oliver Twist*.) But at the end of *If Tomorrow Comes*, Sidney deliberately leaves Tracy's narrative hanging. The final scene of the book shows Tracy on a plane, about to start a new life with her lover Jeff Stevens, when she realizes that the man sitting next to her is none other than Maximilian Pierpont, the one wealthy villain who had always eluded her. Will Tracy go straight? Or will the lure of conning Pierpont prove too much for her? Sheldon does not so much leave the door ajar for a sequel as throw it wide open and roll out a red carpet. Surely, *surely*, he intended there to be another book?

I put this question to Sidney's widow, Alexandra, some years ago, as well as to his daughter Mary. And the answer is, he did think about it. Fans wrote to him all the time, asking what happened to Tracy Whitney. Tracy was as real to those readers as she was to me – and as she was to Sidney, who became emotionally invested in his heroines to a degree that few writers are. So when I thought about a possible series involving a 'quintessential' Sheldon heroine, Tracy Whitney immediately leaped to mind.

What is so different, so special about Tracy Whitney? Perhaps every reader would have a different answer to that. For me, I love her because she is all woman. She can be sensitive and emotional, as well as steely and powerful. She is impulsive, often following her heart where she should not, be it avenging her mother's death, falling for the wholly unreliable Jeff Stevens, or jumping into deep water to rescue a drowning girl, despite being unable to swim. She is beautiful, but it is her intelligence and lust for life that make her so, not the fact that she looks like a supermodel or fulfills some male stereotype of beauty. She is moral, but flawed. And she's addicted to danger. What's not to love?

Bringing Tracy Whitney back to life in these novels has been an honor, a challenge and a thrill. More than anything, my hope is that these books will introduce a new generation of readers to Sidney Sheldon's most enduring and enigmatic heroine.

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