

Washington Post Feb. 7, 1993

PARTING SHOTS

By Freda Bright

Little, Brown. 320 pp. (galley has 329 pp.) \$19.95.

Dani Sloane had it all. At least, she had what someone raised in an optimistic 1950s suburban home where a woman's horizons were clearly circumscribed might think was all. At 41, she'd become a modestly successful lawyer living in the heart of her beloved Manhattan with her prosperous husband and bright teenaged daughter. Her career came second; "first and foremost, she was a married woman," anticipating her daughter's departure for college and the recaptured romance of her early married days. But the very day she buys a sheer negligee, her husband, choking on the sleazy air of his public relations firm and hating his life, walks out of their marriage.

Dani agonizes through shock, denial and anger, then tries to woo him back. By then he's found a bouncing 24 year-old and is heading to the Caribbean. Now Dani faces the travails of the newly unmarried woman: financial distress, her parents' shame, the paucity of tolerable men.

But shed no tears for Dani. Veteran commercial novelist Bright has rapturous designs. Dani hasn't lost the obsolete American Dream. She's trading it in for the nitrous oxide fantasy for the Nineties. Once she seizes control of her life, Dani will find waiting: 1) A client who can win many millions of dollars, 2) A younger man who is rich, brilliant, cultured, dashing, handsome, witty, worldly, a superlative lover, and an Olympic gold medalist, who sends her flowers after lovemaking and dines her with movie stars, senators and world-famous artists. Meanwhile, Dani is becoming her own woman so well that she may develop the strength to dump both client and lover once she's gotten what she needs.

Bright's style is like the New York scene she writes of, where moderate talent is often trendy and smug, yet prone to flashes of wit and hip chic. The product is affirmative to the point of delirium.