

Tory! Tory! Tory!

Thanks to a rumored nasty divorce and a new relationship with Revlon's Ron Perelman, Philly fashion girl Tory Burch is the buzz of Manhattan



BURCH SOCIETY The It Girl has become Topic A among New York's elite.

Being the new darling of Manhattan café society can be a burden for even the most Eve Harrington of social climbers, but it appears to be particularly wearying if you're simply a nice (well, maybe not so nice, depending who you talk to) girl from the Philly 'burbs who just happened to marry a suave gazillionaire and then was anointed, by no less an authority than Oprah, the "next big thing" in fashion.

Such is the fate of former Philly-ite Tory Burch, the willowy fashion designer who in the past year has seen her stock continue to rise among New York's body fabulous even as her personal life began slipping under the waves. Burch

recently climbed as high as 13th on the website socialiterank.com, which charts the status of stick-thin blondes the way sportswriters rank college basketball teams. The buzzing began when Burch's fairy-tale marriage to Main Line financier Chris Burch—complete with a 9,000-square-foot apartment in the Pierre Hotel and children fit for the "So Long, Farewell" number from *The Sound of Music*—ended in the middle of last year. Then came reports that the divorce was turning ugly and that sales from her fashion line, Tory by Tory Burch, haven't matched the hype. The whispers reflected a twisted schadenfreude that bubbles up among the

haves and have lots when one of their own gets thrown under the bus. Indeed, the Big Apple tabloids can't seem to get enough of La Dolce Tory. ("TORY STORY TELLS OF RIP IN SOCIAL FABRIC," blared the *New York Daily News*.) "It's definitely been on the social world's tongues," an editor from socialiterank.com says of the Burches' increasingly nasty and public divorce and Tory's ensuing romantic entanglements. "Tory is not 20, but she's not 60, either." The editor says folks are tun-

ing into the saga to see "who she's going to date next, what her next power move will be."

Or maybe just to participate in the timeless ritual of gossiping about the rich and famous. The snippets sniping is probably no surprise to those who knew Burch when she was a comely coed at Penn and later, when she was ensconced in a mansion in Haverford, a life doubling as a spread in *Town & Country*. In fact, nothing is more galling to many who knew Burch when than glossy magazine articles heralding her "Main Line" roots. For the record, she was born in Valley Forge.

Despite rumors of a relationship with Revlon czar

and perennial boldface name Ron Perelman now swirling through the gossip pages (it appears that if the two are still an item, they're not an exclusive one), the 40-year-old Burch has maintained a lower profile of late, in stark contrast to when she was the subject of fawning profiles in *Vogue*, *W* and, yes, *Philly Mag* over the past several years. ("Before she leaves on a business trip, Tory writes notes to her kids and hides them around their spacious apartment, which overlooks Central Park," *Palm Beach Post* fashion editor Staci Sturrock breathlessly reported in a particularly diabetes-inducing piece last March.) For the first time, the elegant, icy Burch is feeling the sting of what happens when a formerly obsequious press corps smells blood in the Pellegrino. "I honestly don't think it's fair," laments one fashionista who rotates in the Burch orbit. "I mean, let's face it: She's drop-dead gorgeous. She has beautiful, terrific kids, and a successful business. And she's loaded. That makes a lot of people jealous. I think that's what all of this is about."

Can the teary sit-down with Diane Sawyer be far behind? Indeed, Burch is rumored to have cooperated with *Vanity Fair* for a forthcoming story, perhaps in an effort to both set the record straight and reclaim her title as New York It Girl of the Moment. Because in fashion, the only thing worse than being today's tabloid headline is being yesterday's.

—MICHAEL CALLAHAN