

DARLING FOOL

by MABEL McLELLON

CHAPTER XXXIX

toothy smile—her "clubwoman smile" Dan thought it.

"That's my grand big boy!" When Mrs. Cardigan had her own way she could be nice. She ran them all, Dan's father and all of them, with an iron hand, but she smiled determinedly the while. Dan felt balked, baffled. He had to stand by Dad—for the present at least. Anyhow nothing much mattered if what Geraldine hinted about Charles and Monnie were true. He felt the old dull rage rise in him like a tide and clenched his fists, remembering—

"What's the matter, son?"

Dan muttered something under his breath, choking down his toast. Yes, a fruit boat would be the thing, he was thinking. As soon as Dad's affairs were straight again he would clear out. Go away some place. They'd remember him, years after. "That Cardigan boy—lit out, didn't he? I hear he has a plantation in Santa something or other—"

Meanwhile there was Sandra's "little dinner" to attend.

She was especially nice to Dan that night. Sandra in her best mood, her gracious interested, sisterly mood, was quite delightful. Even Dan had to admit it. She didn't demand compliments. She was casual, amusing. She sang a little French song—rather naughty, she said. The other guests, a brother and sister from Cincinnati, Helen and Tad Williston, applauded loudly while Dan pretended to understand. He felt inferior and admired Sandra for her cleverness. She was a darn smart girl, no two ways about it, and very effective, with her dark hair banded demurely back. Sandra was wearing the quaintest of puffed and ruffled frocks in a new shade—hazelnut blue, she said, which gave a sea-tinge to her long-lidded green eyes and made her fair skin look dazzling.

The Willistons insisted they couldn't stop over. Tad had a director's meeting in the morning and Sandra drove them to the 11:20, with Dan in the rumble seat beside the Williston girl. She was a competent looking, rather mannish individual with coal black hair cut crisply away from a broad brow and big, strong, delicate fingered hands. Dan liked her.

Demanding a cigarette, she made a gesture toward the two in the front seat.

"Nice girl, Sandra," she said briefly. "Lots of fun."

Dan agreed, impressed in spite of himself by the Willistons and their dictum. Williston & Co. were "big people" in his father's line. He had been hearing of them since he was a child. He could not help being impressed with the fact that Helen Williston who had seen everything and been everywhere dubbed Sandra "nice," and "lots of fun."

"Can't see why she buries herself in this little town," muttered Dan's companion.

...

Dan had almost begun to defend Belvedere with the heat proper to a native son of the place when suddenly he remembered that he, too, was anxious to get away. He mumbled something, thinking that Miss Williston must think him a dull fellow.

On the ride home he was unusually silent. Sandra, seeming to sense his mood, talked in desultory snatches.

"Don't you want to come in and have a cigarette?" she asked as they approached the Lawrence place.

Dan roused himself. "Believe I will. Then I'll walk home. Need the exercise."

She ran the car into the big garage expertly, as she did everything, with a deft turn of the wheel. Dan helped her out, conscious of the fine, faint scent which always hovered about her beautifully groomed hair and skin. Sandra was—well—perfect, in her way.

(To Be Continued)

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

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BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

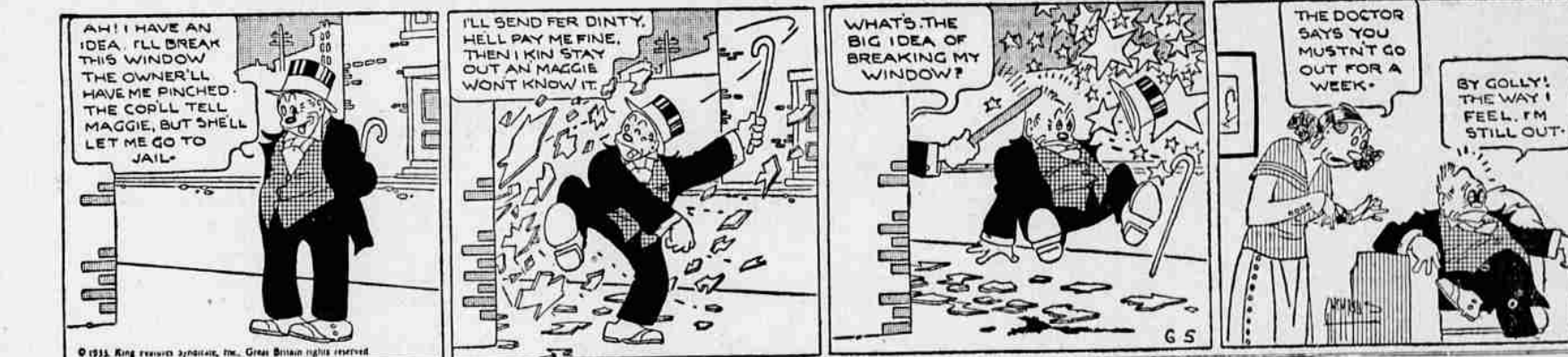
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OUT OUR WAY

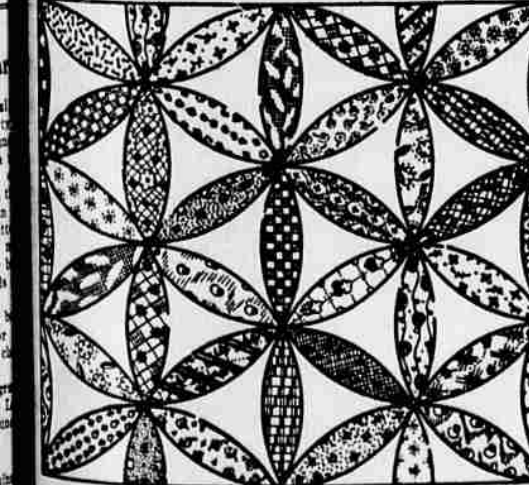
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PATCHWORK QUILT PATTERN



Joseph's Coat No. 449. By Laura Wheeler

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