

DONNA of the BIG TOP

by BEULAH POYNTER

CHAPTER XIII

Whether it was because Mrs. Planter complained of the amount of work she had to do or whether she wanted to avoid being alone with Donna, the girl did not know, but the following day a sturdy, freckle-faced youngster from a neighboring farm, unannounced, into Donna's room.

"Hi Minnie Jones," the newcomer said. "Bill Sidal says as how you can't lift yourself out of your bed and that I was to help you."

Remembering Bill's arms as he had carried her from the bed to the chair and the caress he had repulsed, Donna's cheeks flamed. She tried valiantly to smile at the country girl, and murmured that she hoped she would not be too heavy.

"Sticks, I'm strong as an ox!" Minnie informed her. "You don't look any heavier than a churn of butter. I reckon I can manage all right."

Minnie was strong and, in spite of her awkward appearance, very capable. Donna could find but one fault with the girl and that was Minnie's incessant chattering. From the time Donna was ensconced in the wheel chair until she returned to her bed she was obliged to listen to a flow of conversation that ranged from the number of eggs Pa Jones' buff cochins produced to the sale of the land reserved from hogs Minnie had raised.

"How ridiculous!" she interrupted. "You don't want to touch me—that's all. Ever since the day you brought me the wheel chair you've avoided me. Why?"

"What are you trying to do—get temperamental? I haven't avoided you. I've been busy. Harvesting takes all a man's time. I'm short of hands and there's been so much rain—I haven't meant to neglect you. I thought you understood. I should have remembered that you are a star performer and used to all kinds of attention."

"How unkind to say that!"

"And I didn't mean it. It was a rotten thing to say! I think you are the loveliest thing God ever made and I've been trying to convince myself that everything will be just the same when you go back to the circus, but I know it won't be. I know this place will be as drab as a morgue and that what was endurable before will be hell then." His voice was thick with bitterness.

"But if I don't go back?"

"Of course you will! What is there here for you? Spending a few weeks during the summer when you're laid up with a broken leg is quite different from staying here the year round. No one who has known applause and fame as you have could be satisfied in a place like this."

"I'm not going back. I promised Grandfather tonight."

"You shouldn't have made a promise you know you'll break."

"You don't want me to stay?"

"Of course I don't."

Grandfather Sidal stirred and mumbled. "Reckon it's about time for bed, Maddie." Bill sprang to his feet and assisted him into the house. He came back to help Donna but she waved him aside and manipulated the chair herself.

The next day a doctor from Lebanon removed the splints and she took a few steps, but Bill was not present. (To Be Continued)

Thirty pure-bred Jersey calves recently were distributed to Four-H club members in North Carolina to stimulate farm boys' interest in good livestock.

Seven thousand carloads of snap beans had been shipped from Florida by the latter part of April and growers estimated all records will be broken before the end of the season.

Few applications for federal relief have come from Florida farmers who followed a "live-at-home" program advocated by state agricultural authorities.

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