

DONNA of the BIG TOP

by BEULAH POYNTER

CHAPTER XXI

THE circus was enroute to New Orleans and all performers were looking forward to the week to be spent there. It was where Con usually spent the winter and he had many friends in the city. It meant a change from Pullman state rooms, since those who could afford it would move to hotels and boarding houses. New Orleans was considered the high spot of the tour, and everyone was getting costumes cleaned or making new ones for the opening there.

In Nashville Con had purchased several yards of amber colored satin and asked the wardrobe mistress to make a suit for him. Madeline, similar to one of his own. When she went for her first fitting Madeline drew back in horror and protested that she could not wear yellow. "It's bad luck!" she said. "You know yellow is bad luck, Con. We'll get our notices or something else will happen!"

He laughed at her superstition. "Who cares about notices anyway? I've worn a yellow suit in all the big cities and I guess if I can, you can. Don't be so silly."

Every free moment now he was working with Lucy, the Bengal tigress, determined that she should be the star beast when they played New Orleans. The struggle for supremacy between man and beast was magnificent. Day after day the huge cat would be driven into the arena where Con faced her alone. She would snarl defiance and crouch as though to spring. Then, at the crack of his whip, she would back away until her gorgeous body was crushed against the bars. But Lucy would not go through the routine. Each day Con would curse and leave the cage more determined to break the tigress' spirit.

Then, as though she realized that man was her master, Lucy became tractable. The day she wriggled across the sawdust at his command and lay fawning at his feet like a tame kitten he was as elated as a small boy with a new toy engine. Con celebrated by inviting Renfro and La Belle Matilde to dinner at a smart hotel and his gay spirits caused the circus owner's wife to remark that he was more excited over conquering Lucy than he had been over his marriage to Madeline.

They played Biloxi the day before they went to New Orleans. Because it was cheaper to remain there over Sunday Renfro did not move the show until the following evening, but Con, anxious to get into the city, hired a car and he and Madeline motored in.

Con had already gone to the circus grounds when Madeline awoke in the morning. "His precious cats," she thought. Then, because she resented Con's leaving without calling her, she took her time at dressing and sauntered over to Canal street to look for a coffee shop.

The city was new and interesting to her and after breakfast she wandered down towards the river. The old French market was teeming with life and she stood for some time watching colored women bargaining for fish and crabs and tiny river shrimp, for mangoes, yams and red plantains. Then she moved on until she reached the docks.

She whirled in astonishment and stared into the face of Ned Trafford. He wore a three-days' growth of beard and his eyes were bleary and blood-shot. His shabby, dirty overalls were patched and, like the other dock hands, he was bareheaded.

"Oh!" was all Madeline could stammer. "My eye!" Trafford sneered. "What is my fine lady doing down here? Looking for a job toting rice?" "I was just looking around. I must get back to the show." She started to pass him, but he reached out a grimy hand and grasped her wrist.

"Oh, no, you're not going off with-

out some sort of 'howdy-do' to an old friend. It's a sight for sore eyes to see you again. How do you like my looks? Pretty nifty, eh? I've got you to thank for this. Some comedown! I suppose you know I'm black-listed?" "It's your own fault," she said hotly. "You jumped the show."

"After I saw you tied up with that animal trainer I couldn't hang around. Maybe you don't know it, but you knocked the center pole right out from under me and I've been skidding to the devil ever since." Trafford brought his mottled face close to hers and held her frightened gaze with his bloodshot eyes.

"Let me go, Ned!" she said, trying to hide the terror she felt. "If you'd been any sort of a man you'd never have let a snip of a girl like me ruin your life. Why—why anyone else would have known I was only playing. I never—we were never anything but friends."

"So you say—and so you'd like to think. But I've not forgotten the times I kissed you and you let me hold you in my arms—"

"Ned, please! I've got to get to the circus grounds. I've a show today. Please!"

He laughed harshly and flung aside her arm. "Sure, you've got a show. I hear you're in the animal act now. So that's why the big star hitched up with you? I think I'll come out and see the act. Maybe you'll do an extra turn, knowing I'm in the audience."

"Perhaps I will." She attempted to laugh lightly and made a step toward the doorway, but he moved more quickly and blocked the exit. "Maybe you and your husband will have supper with me afterward?" he sneered.

"You keep away from Con. If you don't—"

"You'll what?" "I'll—Ugh! have you arrested for trying to kiss me?"

He flung back his head with a guffaw of harsh laughter. "It's too late for that now, my lady! No one would believe you. Well, run along or you'll miss your cue. I'll be seeing you."

Her knees were shaking when she stepped out into the sunlight again. She hurried over to Canal street, looked about for a taxi and bade the driver take her to the circus grounds as quickly as possible.

On the way she debated whether or not to tell Con about the encounter with Trafford, then decided it was better to say nothing. Trafford might not show up at the circus and if he didn't an unpleasant situation would be avoided.

(To Be Continued)

News of Goshen

GOSHEN, June 15.—(Special)—Miss Louise Waske is attending business college in Eugene.

Orin Channon, who was a patient in the Eugene hospital for some time, is able to be at home again.

Mrs. Alva Aikens is visiting in Portland this week.

Mr. and Mrs. Archie Ashbridge of Cottage Grove visited over the weekend here with Mrs. Ashbridge's parents, Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Richards.

Lawrence Smith of Dexter was here on business the first of the week.

Mrs. F. M. Keller of Bend arrived here this week. Mr. Keller bought the Shell service station here a short time ago.

Mrs. E. R. Kyle, who has been visiting her mother, Mrs. Florence Coppenhaver, has returned to her home in Florence. She was accompanied by her son Edwin.

Members of the Mt. Ralston fish planting club of Sacramento, Cal., traveled a total of 1,855 miles by pack trains to plant fry.

"Oh, no, you're not going off with-

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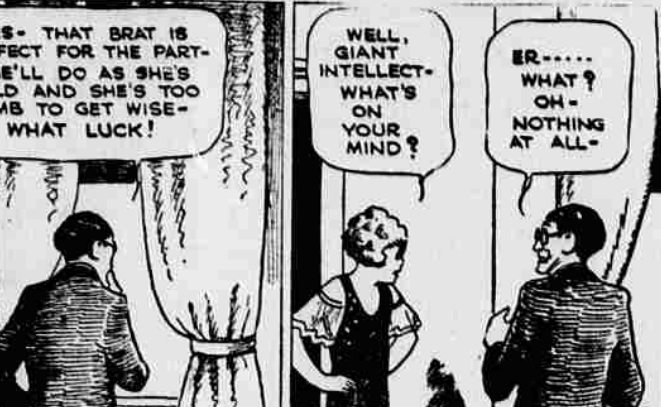
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