

DONNA of the BIG TOP

by BEULAH POYNTER

CHAPTER XXXVII

It did not seem credible to Con, who had spent almost his entire life under the 'big top,' that members of the same family should not only show such different traits of character but that one should be an accomplished aerialist, skilled in every trick of her profession, while the other, though not without ability, was obviously new to the circus.

Vividly he recalled the day when the two girls had joined the show. Renfro's headquarters were in Virginia and until the season before Con had housed his animals with Renfro's. The showman had been disappointed by two European performers who had failed to keep an engagement and had answered an advertisement in a theatrical publication. Photographs accompanied the letter of application, and Renfro had shown them to Con. "They're good looking, aren't they?" Renfro had said. "The aren't they? I remember there Gabriel sisters. I remember there used to be a Val Gabriel in your line, Con. Maybe you knew him. I think he was killed by a lion."

"Yes. He was a headliner. Wife was a trapeze performer."

"Wonder if these girls are his kids. Seems to me I heard he left a family."

Con had studied the pictures and had advised Renfro to hire the sisters. Soon after that the girls arrived at headquarters, after cancelling some small-time vaudeville dates.

Though Donna had admitted the relationship to Val Gabriel, neither girl offered any other information about themselves. But their act had made good. The "big top" was small enough, the circus intimate enough so that audiences could take note of the girls' youth and beauty. Madeline and Donna would have succeeded on that score, even if they had been less clever.

From the first day of their meeting in the huge inclosed grounds of the headquarters Con had been definitely conscious of Donna. Though everyone was busy—and he most of all, with a couple of new cats to break in—he found moments in which he had endeavored to win her regard.

The fact that she had obviously sought to avoid him had piqued his interest, and by the time the circus opened two weeks later he had known that he was in love with her.

He supposed he was still in love with her and would always be. His marriage to Madeline, her death and his nervous reaction were only episodes, interludes between the really important events of his life.

He found himself as impatient to see Donna now as he had been impatient for the winter months to pass during the years he had known her, when he had counted the weeks and days until they would meet again. Ambition leaped into flame once more. If Donna did care for him—even if her affection were but lukewarm—he could convince her that she was wasting her beauty and talents in a place like Lebanon. A dead town and a dismal farm. How had she been able to stand it as long as she had? Divorce was so easy these days. With Donna as his wife, they would be able to do anything! There was no limit to the success they might achieve!

Grandfather Siddal's money was forgotten for the time. Into Con's imagination floated all the rosy dreams he had once pictured for Madeline—an engagement with a European circus, visits to all the famous cities in the world, his name—and Donna's—featured above all the others. He would build a new act, more daring and more sensational than any the world had ever seen. And, above all, Donna would be with him. They would have their triumph together.

Perhaps the discouragement and hardships Con had known in past months had done something to his usual hard-headed common sense. He had faced disappointments for so long that now, for a time at least, he was seeing things as he wished them to be, forgetting everything that might balk his plans.

He was unaware of the glittering

eyes of Mrs. Planter, hidden in the hallway but watching him eagerly, as he made his way to the office. None of the time Con had spent before the mirror was wasted on Mrs. Planter. Swiftly she took in the details of his appearance and even caught a whiff of the scented lotion he had used.

Out on the street, he inquired of a small girl who was on her way home from the butcher shop what direction he should take to reach the Baptist cemetery.

Receiving the information, he set out with a jaunty, care-free stride. He had noticed the first dancing snow flakes from the hotel window. They were coming down faster now—the great, feathery flakes filling the air. Con, who was in no mood to think of their beauty, pulled his up-turned coat collar more closely about his throat and bent his head against the wind.

The child had told him to walk six blocks and then turn to the left. The cemetery was a good 10 minutes' walk from the hotel. By the time Con arrived there it was snowing in earnest. A glittering mantle of white lay like a blanket over the mounds of earth, fir trees, sleeping rose bushes, monuments and tombstones in the old graveyard. A premature dusk had settled between the trees through which the wind howled as though a wandering soul, loosed from its tomb, were moaning its plea for a resting place.

"This is a hell of a spot to meet anyone," Con muttered aloud. "I hope she gets here pretty soon."

He shivered with the cold and wet. He looked about for some sort of shelter and, to bolster up his spirits that had dropped with the errand of the place, lighted a cigarette. But the wet snow extinguished the flame, so he stood whistling dolefully, his body braced against a mauling wind, his hat pulled far down on his forehead.

There was not another person in sight and the stillness and loneliness began to get on Con's nerves. Weid stories he had read in the past, tales of murder and vampirism, of disembodied spirits, flashed through his memory and did nothing to add to his cheerfulness and comfort. What could be keeping Donna? Why didn't she come?

Then he saw her—a slim, hesitant figure wearing a close, dark hat over her bright hair and a rough tweed coat pulled about her. She moved cautiously, peering through the driving snow, stumbling a bit as her heels sunk into mounds of it.

Con did not move. He waited until she was within arms' reach. Then he stepped from the shadows and touched her arm. Donna screamed in a kind of terror and he laughed.

"It's me, Donna," he said. "Who did you think it was—a ghost?"

(To Be Continued)

Lake Creek News

LAKE CREEK, July 4.—(Special)—The Suits Sewing club met at Dorothy Wilcut's with a small attendance. Those present were Eva Almási, Stella Monger, Dolly Goodrich, Juanita Goodrich, Naomi Schmitt, Mrs. Wilson, Sybilla Jones, Francella Slack were a visitor. Lunch was served. Elizabeth Bennett was elected president and Laura Bennett re-elected secretary. The next meeting will be at Eva Almási's July 12.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Wilson, Mrs. Jim Monger, Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Jones and son, Clayton, were Eugene business visitors Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Bud Wilcut, daughter Delores, Ray and Olive Wilcut spent the week-end at Melrose visiting their sister, Mrs. Mike Johnson.

Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Jones and Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Jones spent the week-end at Lakeside visiting friends and relatives. Mrs. C. Jones will stay over until after the Fourth and visit her sister and brother at Marshfield.

Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hanson and daughter, Triha, of Newhall, Calif., visited with the B. H. Jones family over Sunday night. They are on their way to Cedro Woolly, Wash.

He was unaware of the glittering

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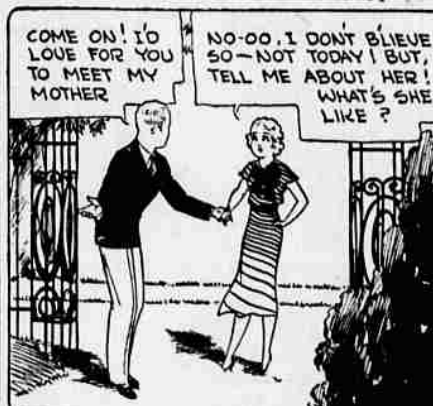
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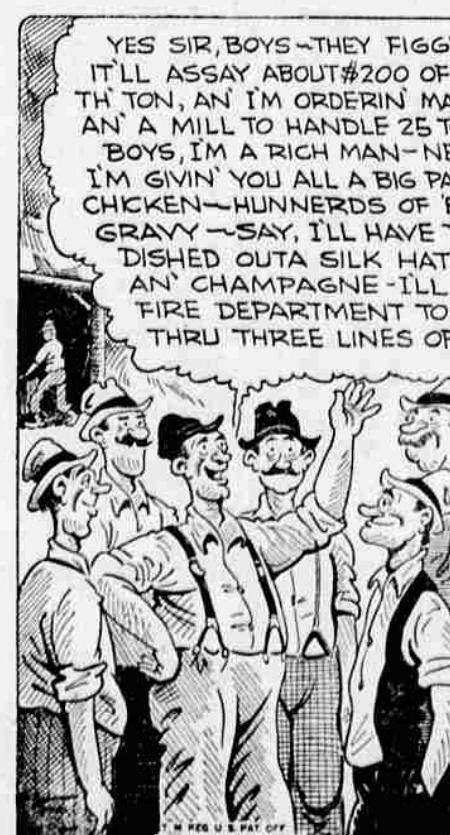
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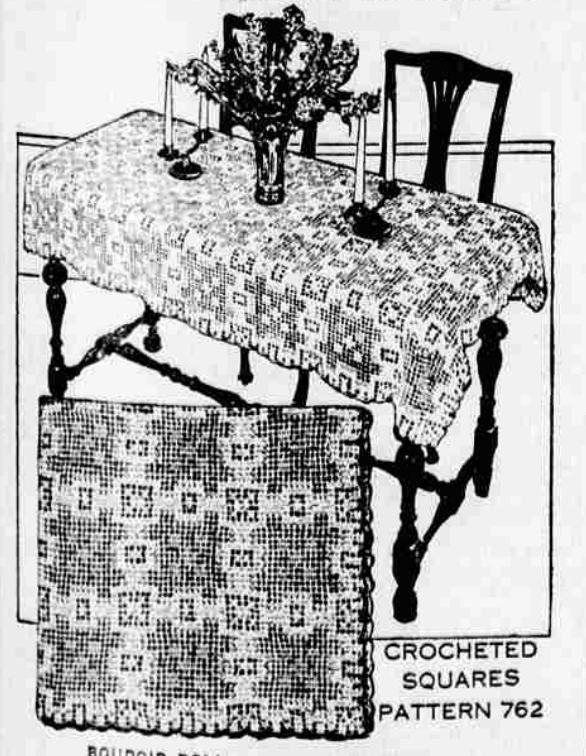
OUR BOARDING HOUSE



BY AHERN



DAINTY LAURA WHEELER BOUDOIR DOLL



Somehow a boudoir doll must be exotic and so express the feminine longing for frilliness. This dainty one, lovely dressed in organdy, tulle or any cotton material is certainly frilly and yet very simple to sew. The ruffles, of course, could be of lace or a contrasting material. The hat, too, is easy to make but if preferred may be omitted, as the doll is certainly very well dressed without it.

Pattern 761 comes to you with a pattern for a dress, hat and petticoat for a regulation 28 inch doll; detailed instructions and material requirements for making these.

Send 10 cents in stamps or coin to Register-Guard, Needlecraft Dept. (coin preferred) for this pattern.