

Darling Fool

By MABEL McELLIOTT

BEGIN HERE TODAY
MONICA O'DARE helps to support her mother, youngest brother and sister by working in a dress store in the small town of Belvedere. Her brother, BILL, plans to marry ANGIE GILLEN as soon as Angie divorces her husband. Monica is in love with DAN CARDIGAN whose wealthy parents do not approve of her. SANDRA LAWRENCE, pretending to be Monica's friend, tries to win Dan from her.

Sandra becomes **ENRAGED** with BETTE, a maid, and JAMES, her father's chauffeur, and discharges them. A few days later she receives a telephone message saying her father is hurt. Sandra hurries to him only to find herself the victim of kidnappers. The kidnappers prove to be Betty and her cousin. James helps Sandra escape.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXVI

DAN explained slowly, painfully. "It's like this, you see. She's had a shock. She's not—not her self. She keeps calling for me. Says she's well enough the doctor says it'll be all right for her to make this trip. And Dad—all the rest of them seem to think I ought to go along. Just," he hesitated to add, "to humor her. She's perfectly all right. It was just a bad shock."

"I see," Monnie lifted her eyes, staring out at the fading garden. Dan rushed along. It was not like him to be so garrulous. These fellows, he said, had got away. Sandra was so dazed she couldn't even describe them. They'd been forgotten, though. Hadn't talked much English—not that she could understand, anyway. She had been plucky, hadn't she, to get away from them?

"Very brave," agreed Monnie quietly. Sandra seemed definitely the heroine of the occasion. "Her father was on his way to put the money where they asked," Dan pursued. "He was just about wild, willing to do anything to get her back. But she wasn't having any of that!" Dan's eyes shone. You could see he admired Sandra's courage.

"Not that I want to go—for a minute," Dan told her later. "It just seems—well—the best thing. You see Mr. Lawrence holds that big loan of Dad's. This is confidential, of course. Dad wants to stand in with him right now. I'd be a pig, wouldn't I, to hold out against him?"

Again Monnie agreed. The best thing—of course it was merely that, nothing more. No plot to get Dan away from her. She was foolish to imagine that, even for a minute. Such things were done only in old-time melodramas. Besides, weren't she and Dan pledged to each other? This was the end of August—almost September. In January they would be married.

"I'll miss you horribly, every minute," Dan told her on parting. She stood, facing him, her amber eyes darkened with the pain of impending separation. Little bronze tendrils curled about her pearl-like face. "I'll be thinking of you, too, Dan," she told him soberly. "Well, then—" He was awkwardly trying to tear himself away. "It's early but I've got all that packing to do. We make an early start on Wednesday. I won't be able to see you tomorrow night."

Her heart was like lead. "It doesn't matter."

He put his arms about her. "You're sweet, Monnie, d'ye know that? My girl!"

"Don't, Dan. Someone might see."

No one must know—no one— their plans for the future. Some jealous fate might intervene.

HOW big he was, how splendid, Monnie thought, watching him stride down the path. Why was it that, in spite of all his protestations, her heart failed her, went sick and faint when she thought of the impending separation? Nothing would happen, Sandra would find that Dan's heart was sealed against her. It was just bad luck that affairs fell out so Dan had to go to Wyoming with the party.

She went back into the house where Kay sat, mending some flimsy pink garment. Kay looked up seriously.

"That Dan?"

Monnie nodded.

"He left early, didn't he?"

"Yes. He's awfully busy. Going to a dude ranch on Wednesday with the family."

"I read about it in the News," Kay said coolly. She knew that that Sandra was in the party. But she refrained from further comment. Kay went on stitching, humming a little tune under her breath. Monnie picked up a book and tried to read but her restlessness was acute. A pain beat at the back of her mind like a sizzling ribbon. She felt sick, nervous, discouraged. Sandra had everything and she had nothing. Her job was steady. Always the same. She could do bigger things, more interesting ones, but because she was the mainstay of the little family she dared not take a chance. She sighed and found Kay watching her.

"Don't you feel well?"

"I have a headache," Monnie said. Heartache was nearer the truth but she would not admit it. "Take an aspirin when you go to bed," said Kay practically.

Twenty-four hours more and Dan would be speeding westward away from her. She would have his letters, of course, but Dan's letters were never satisfactory. When he was away from her he seemed to vanish completely. Oh, she was a fool, she knew that, to be so apprehensive. What did a month matter? He would be back soon. "You have the tickets," Kay observed, threading her needle. "Get some more tickets off and get some more!"

"Believe I will."

Kay gazed sternly at the doorway through which she had just passed. "Damn Dan Cardigan, anyway!" she whispered explosively.

THEY heard the great news about Miss Antioch Cory the following morning. Mrs. O'Dare, reading the Belvedere News, looked up with a little cry of excitement and pleasure.

"Girls, what do you think? Miss Antioch is an heiress! Cory's sister in Boston has left her \$50,000."

Monnie, heavy eyed and pale, sipping her coffee, smiled. "How marvellous!"

It made the day seem brighter, this news of something nice happening to someone she knew. Anything might happen if Miss Antioch were to be removed from the scene of her labors, after 20 years of writing Belvedere society notes. It almost helped Monnie to bear the thought that Dan was leaving for Wyoming on the morrow.

Perhaps he would call, Monnie thought. Perhaps he would find time to telephone her—surely, he would. But each time the phone rang and she answered it to find the caller was emphatically not Dan, her heart grew heavier.

Kay flew in at lunch hour, sparkling pretty, lit by an inner excitement. "Aren't you off early?" Monnie wanted to know. Usually the two girls at the library made tea or heated soup over a gas ring in the back room and ate their lunch there.

"Just ran over for a second," Kay caroled. "Something important to tell you. Are you leaving now for lunch?"

Monnie washed her hands at the little cracked basin behind the partition and brushed her hair back under the little blue hat.

"Ready?" she smiled, linking her arm in Kay's. "What is all this?"

KAY looked over her shoulder. "Miss Antioch ran in this morning," she confided. "Guess why she wanted to see me?"

"I couldn't," Monnie said. "Tell me."

Kay paused dramatically, before delivering the bombshell. "She's suggesting me to do her work on the paper while she goes abroad."

"Kay, how splendid! That's because of the way you worked on the school paper."

Kay squeezed her sister's arm. "Exactly. And Mr. Whittingham thinks I'm much too young but she's talking him over. She was going to put your name up because she said she knew you could do it—but—"

"I did help her last winter when she was laid up," Monnie mused. "Oh, Kay, if you get it I can do lots for you!"

"No, you can't," said Kay coolly.

"Why not?"

Kay's eyes twinkled with mischief. "You guess, can't you guess?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Monnie said with impatience.

Kay gave her a little shake. "Miss Antioch's going abroad," she repeated impatiently.

"Well, what on earth has that got to do with me?" Monnie demanded.

"Lots," Kay fairly bounced. "Oh, I oughtn't to tell you," she cried. "I practically promised not to but I'm just bursting with it. She wants—she's going to ask you to go with her."

(To Be Continued)

Flapper Fanny Says



OUT OUR WAY



OUR BOARDING HOUSE



SALESMAN SAM



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



WASH TUBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP



By Small

By Martin

By Crane

By Blosser

By Cowan