

AMARILLO DAILY NEWS, SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1922

LAUNCHING THE MARRIAGE SHIP

BY ZOE BECKLEY

Even above the organ strains, the excited congratulations, the kisses and tears of mother and the rest, three kept weaving through Connie Dale's mind like some off-beat melody, the last line of the fairy tale: "And so they were married and lived happily ever after."



IT WAS A SWEET DREAM REALIZED.

Connie was tired of the sameness of things, the familiar, the expected. Certainly, the little ivy-clad church of Homeville was familiar enough. And into the sparkling June sunlight of the Wisconsin town that was home to Connie, were familiar, too.

Of course, now that she was married (how smart Fred looked in his wedding clothes), they would live "happily ever after." Fred loved her. She loved Fred. Who wouldn't love Fred, knowing him as she knew him! Only 23 and already being promoted to the New York agency of the Gypsy Motor Company.

Handsome and wholesome and clean. Hadn't President Owens himself said, "That boy's face sells more cars for us than two men's talk" as he ordered Fred directly from the Racine office to New York?

What else was needed to complete the prophecy but life itself? Connie read happiness in the radiant bride of her bridesmaids as they fluttered about her; saw it in the confident smiles of her married were schoolmates. Her own parents were proudly happy in her marriage.

And there was Captain Dale, Fred's uncle, beaming approval. Dale was a huge, grizzled veteran of the seas, who knew men and women as he knew the bridges of the great passenger lines he had commanded until his recent retirement.

Connie and Fred had managed to work their way through the loving mob to their own smart little "Gypsy"—"The Car That Talks to the Road"—a present from the firm, the car that would take them along the road to happiness and fortune as it was now taking them on their honeymoon. Uncle Dale came up next, regarding the little black, red and nickel craft with approbation shining from his jolly, tanned face.

"Good luck to the marriage ship!" he whispered huskily, with a shade of serenity in his keen blue eyes. "And may the weather be no stormer than need be to put rest and courage into the voyage."

Mrs. Dale beamed. "Oh, we're not going to be at sea, Uncle Sid. It's to be love in a cottage." "How 'bout a snappy little kitchenette apartment?" grinned Fred, starting the car. "We're to be in New York, you know."

"No, sir!" Connie's firmness made Uncle Dale smile. "All my life I've dreamed of a white colonial cottage with solid green shutters with little trees cut into their tops, and white ruffled curtains, and pink rambler roses and an old-fashioned garden with hollyhocks and—"

hungry for the city tonight, are you?" "No, sweet. What a funny question." Connie lost it a while.

Members of the selling force who had been notified by President Owens of the Dale's coming, had prepared every thing but a home for them. The right hotel had been found, dates for the first few evenings' entertainment made and several apartment prospects hunted up.

"Be interested in us," ran the company's slogan, "and we'll return it in compliment." It gave Connie a thrill of pride, therefore, in Fred and his employers, when with their arrival at the New York salesrooms the major part of the selling staff turned out for them.

Fred, very with pleasure and embarrassment, was introduced to a dozen men at a time, and in turn introduced his blushing bride.

For the next few days Connie was in an excited whirl. Their room on the eighth floor of a marvelous hotel; the exciting hunt for an apartment—Connie's sentimental dream of a white colonial cottage had to be postponed; till their plans were more settled, she decided—the heavenly theaters and after theatre dancing and jazz; the thrilling whirl and clangor of life in the heart of New York; the giant shops; the seeing-the-town rides on bus tops; peering into second story windows as they jiggled along by the lovely Hudson's rim; the salesman friends of Fred's with their suave sophistication; all stirred Connie into a state of mental chaos.

It was not till the following Monday Fred's work would begin, and this was only another phase of their honeymoon. It had been Fred's idea to break up their camp five days earlier than they had planned to put them the sooner in New York.

"Nothing like being on the ground a few days before actual work starts, eh, 'Pretiness'?" he argued, and Connie could not deny the worthiness of the sentiment.

There was something about the car that appealed to the gay, the newly-minted, the sporting, theatrical extremely sophisticated crowd.

Salesman, Fred among them, were being coached by a Gypsy Motor Company bulletin in "Show your customers you're a lodge brother. Mix. Be a Roman in Rome. Sell yourself and you sell a Gypsy."

On Saturday afternoon Fred came in bustling with excitement. "Get your things on quick, me darlin', I've got a home for you. Oh, Con, but it's a pippin!"

"A flood of questions and a few misgivings were in Connie's mind. But wisely she put them off.



"YOU'RE NOT HUNGRY FOR THE CITY TONIGHT ARE YOU?"

slight twitch of the superintendent's lips; he had been known for a "hick" with his country bride. He led Connie aside.

"Never mind the rent; we're not picking here I'm going to make good and the money will come. How do you like it—great, hey?"

Not even to avert the horrible specter of her fist quarrel with Fred—a fatal one, perhaps—could poor Connie keep the heartache out of her eyes.

Fred stared in alarm at the tears in Connie's eyes.

"Why, my dearest, what is it. Don't you like this place?"

The surprised disappointment in his voice was an evident Connie felt the superintendent must hear it.

"Suppose I give you our answer tonight?"

"Suit yourself." The man's indifference was impressive. "You're taking the chance, not I. I can't promise too hold it without a deposit."

Connie and Fred Row.

As the ornate lady entered the elevator there broke from poor Connie a muffled cry. Panic, hatred, outrage, calamity and despair spoke in that single sound. All sorts of sensibilities, some of them so deeply hidden that she herself was unaware of their existence, were being lacerated. And by Fred's hand.

"And you want me to live in this—this awful place," she gasped, "with people like that. Connie flicked her hand in the direction of the constipated woman.

She suddenly broke off, whirled and sped down the steps again. Fred was badly frightened. The faster he pursued her the more desperately she plunged ahead to escape.

Reaching the sidewalk, as she was about to run heaven knows where, he caught her arm and fairly dragged her into their car.

From the desperate come-and-go of her breath Fred knew she was on the verge of hysteria. He drove home without a word. But gradually his panic waned—and his anger waxed.

How absurd it was of Connie, how inconsiderate, to behave in such a way. Here he was, giving his every thought to his work, his future, their home—all for her.

Suppose she had set her heart on certain sort of home, was it such an awful thing to compromise with dreams—especially when he needed to be in the thick of things, in the city, among people with money, who knew how to live?

They hurried into their room at the hotel like bits of wreckage drawn into a maelstrom. Connie flung from her the light scarf she wore and sank into a chair by the open window, her lips working as she tried to blot back welling tears.

Fred could have sworn with the agony of it all, his temper rose.

"Oh, what is the matter with you?" he shouted, his own nerves breaking loose.



"I'LL BE HAPPY WITH YOU ANYWHERE."

he saw someone he wanted to catch." Connie thanked him. There was no one else left to ask. She knew not an address, not a human being in all New York to whom she could turn for help.

Panic clutched her. If Fred did not return soon, she could think but one thing. Men did commit desperate acts in just such circumstances.

Her lips and throat were parched. She paced the floor, tearing her handkerchief to shreds, starting at every sound in the outer hall.

The tension was growing unbearable. What did people do when they needed help desperately? The police? No—she couldn't appeal to them.

Why not? Anything but this annihilating suspense. She looked at her watch. Three hours since Fred had gone. Connie sprang to the telephone and with every nerve a-quiver, nabbed a call for police headquarters.

Fred Meditates on Marriage.

Stunned and furious, aching and frightened, convinced that the whole fabric of life was toppling, it mattered not where he was going—only to be moving, as an offset to the frenzy within.

He was glad to find himself ultimately on the river front, where few were passing, and none intruded on his tangled thoughts.

to press her to him as tightly as he longed. Connie burst into wild tears of anger at herself.

"Oh, don't Fred—don't feel sorry for me. I don't deserve pity, or your loving words, or anything. I'm a pig. I'm—oh, Fred, if you hadn't come when you did, I'd—I'd have died!"

Fred put back the hair from her wet face and kissing her tenderly, murmured:

"Dear little old kid, there's nothing to torture yourself over. I love you—you know it, don't you? I wouldn't touch that apartment if they gave me the whole house for nothing."

She pressed her face hard to his. "I telephoned there, asking for you," she told him brokenly, her speech shaken with after-the-storm sob. "You weren't there—but I told them—we'd take the apartment. It's cured, dear."

He held her a little away from him, as something inexpressibly miraculous and precious.

"You didn't? Why, my darling, you know I don't want you to be anywhere you won't be happy and—"

"I'll be happy with you—anywhere. The rest doesn't matter."

She hid her face against his coat. A sweet calm enveloped them.

"Listen dear," Fred said softly "we're going out into the suburbs tomorrow morning and find us a little white colonial cottage with shutters just like you want."

It was Cunningham made me look at that apartment. It's full of jam folks who'll buy Gypsies. But I'll get 'em anyhow. You don't suppose I'll live anywhere if my own girl—"

Continued Next Sunday