

# Nothing Venture

by Patricia Wentworth

**SYNOPSIS:** Ferdinand Francis drives a net of circumstantial evidence about Robert Leonard, connecting him with the mysterious series of "accidents" which have threatened Jervis' wife's life. Jervis stubbornly refuses to doubt Leonard, and demands that Ferdinand prove a motive. Ferdinand dramatically asserts that Leonard schemes to secure the Weavers estate through Rosamund Corvo, Jervis' treacherous former fiancée.

## Chapter 22

### JERVIS GETS A JOLT

"HERE you have it," said Ferdinand. He swung round in his chair and addressed Nan:

"Haven't I given him Leonard's motive?" he asked her.

Nan slowly got to her feet. She stood with one hand just touching the table and looked across the grapes and oranges at the two men. Her eyes snapped and her voice was vibrant with tension:

"Jervis won't listen to either of us. He doesn't want to hear anything against Leonard. Perhaps he really thinks you loosened the wheel so we'd all die together. Or—do you think I had a wrench in my pocketbook this afternoon, Jervis?"

"Somebody's trying to kill you. It's not Leonard then it must be Ferdinand or I. Don't you know there's something between Leonard and Rosamund? I don't know what it is but I've known it was something since the other night at the hotel."

"Why didn't Rosamund marry you? She wouldn't tell, would she? You should have asked Robert Leonard."

She stopped speaking, bending over the table with her flashing eyes on Jervis. Suddenly he flung out of his chair, strode to the door, and opened it. Then he stood back, holding it conventionally.

Nan went out with her head up, and a burning rose in each of her cheeks.

Jervis came back to the table.

"We'd better shift out of here, or Monk will be coming in. Come into the study."

He did not speak until they were shut in together. Then he walked to the window, which was open towards the sunset, frowned at the blue and golden sky without seeing it, turned round, and said:

"What's behind all this?"

Ferdinand sat on the arm of a shabby leather chair.

"Robert," he replied succinctly. "Damn Robert!"

"Well, that's not my business."

"Look here, F. F.—" He broke off. "There are things I can't say, even to you." He walked to the end of the room and back again. "That business ten years ago—you say Leonard was seen coming from the place where I'd fallen?"

"Well, I didn't say fallen. It's my belief he laid you out."

"And left me to drown?"

"You've said it."

"What grounds have you—"

"I'm going to tell you, because I think it's about time you knew."

"How long have you known?"

"For about a week."

"Well, what is it?"

"It's a very curious thing. The child saved your life by holding you up in that pool when you were unconscious—well, she just happened to have seen Robert coming away after he'd laid you out."

"What did she see?"

"She saw you go around behind the rocks, and she saw Robert come down the cliff close beside her. He didn't see her. He went after you, and by and by she saw him again walking away. That's why she knew his back when she saw it again—"

"It's peculiar, you know, the way he walks with that big head of his pushed forward. He went up the next path on to the cliff, and when she got worried about your not coming back, she went behind the rocks and found you lying in the pool with a hole in the back of your head."

"This is very convincing—ten years after!" Jervis laughed. "I could make up a better yarn than that! I'd ten years to do it!"

"There's no one making up a yarn."

"Why didn't she say all this at the time?"

"She was down at Croyston with some kind of an aunt, and they were leaving that afternoon. She was late for the train and soaked through, and the aunt punished her. And when they got back to where

they lived, the poor child was in a fever and sick for weeks."

"And you met her again?"

"Last week."

Jervis paused. The room filled with silence. Ferdinand did not break it. He kept his bright dancing eyes on Jervis' face and saw the color rise in it to the roots of the black hair.

Jervis said, "Nonsense!" sharply. "Have it your own way."

"What are you talking about?"

"Nan," said Mr. Francis. Jervis made a step towards him. "If you're fooling—"

"I'm not."

"Nan!" said Jervis. "You mean it was Nan?"

"I recognized her at once. When I saw the scar on her arm, that clinched it. I've told you about that before. She'd cut herself pretty well to the bone holding your head off the rocks every time a wave came into that pool. It was her arm or your head. And she made it her arm every time. There was bound to be a scar, and when I saw that scar on your wife's arm at the Luke, I thought I'd stumbled upon a very pretty romance."

Jervis stood for a moment with a perfectly blank face. Behind it his mind, like a shuttered room, was being violently shaken as if by an earthquake. His thoughts sild together, coiled, broke.

With a violent effort he turned about and walked to the window. The sun was gone; a kind of golden haze tinged the dusk. There was no wind at all; each tree and bush stood up dark and solemn without the slightest movement. The whole scene might have been painted on glass. The contrast between its stillness and the turbulent confusion of his thoughts gave him a sense of being in some remote and unfamiliar place.

He did not know how long he stood there. The gold went out of the air and left it yet more gravely still. A very faint green light came from the horizon. This too faded. An impalpable stream of darkness flowed between him and all the world.

Suddenly he crossed to the door and switched on the light. The room had been quite dark. As the light came on, the windows seemed to recede. All the shades and degrees of the outside darkness vanished. The straight crimson curtains framed blank, black windows.

Ferdinand had not moved. He was sitting on the arm of one of the big chairs with his hands in his pockets.

"You're sure it was Nan?"

"Quite," F. F. answered. "She told you so?"

"No, she did not. I recognized her. And then, when we were at dinner, I told the story of the plucky kid who saved your life, and I watched her. I could see she didn't want you to know. I'm an inquisitive man and, though I'd like to get to the bottom of why you didn't know and why she didn't want you to know, I haven't got to the bottom of it yet."

Those bright, yellow-brown eyes of his twinkled with questions. He crossed one leg over the other and leaned sideways against the back of the chair. "Well?" he said.

Jervis stood by the jamb of the door. He looked at a bare, blank window and spoke.

"Did she know—when she married me?"

Ferdinand twinkled more noticeably.

"What do you think?"

Jervis made a gesture. There was no expression on his face.

"Why not ask her?" suggested Ferdinand.

"I'm asking you," said Jervis. "You seem to be well behind the scenes. Did she know when she married me—or did she find out afterwards?"

"Know? Of course she knew! Why do you suppose she married you?"

Jervis set his jaw and was silent.

"Better ask her!" said Ferdinand with a short laugh.

Jervis turned abruptly, flung open the door, and went out. Ferdinand watched him with a quizzical smile. He went impetuously through the hall and out at the front door, shutting it hard behind him.

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A nocturnal visitor, tomorrow, brings terror to Nan.

# ONE IN TWELVE HOME WITH DEER

According to Game Warden Ed Walker of the state police department, there are plenty of deer in Jackson County and plenty of hunters. The reason more have not been

killed, according to Walker, is because the deer are "too shy." The warden says that according to a check made by his department, the deer slayings to date have run about one deer to every 12 hunters.

Warden Walker says the dry state of the timber is another factor in favor of the deer, who with acute hearing and noses can detect the approach of a hunter for half a mile.

A general rain would improve hunting conditions, Warden Walker says. He says the woods are full of deer

tracks, and the claim there is a shortage of deer is not founded on facts.

## Start Highway Work, Oak Grove

MILWAUKIE, Ore., Sept. 28.—(AP)—Forms for concrete work on the state highway near Oak Grove were started Monday. At present only a few men are working, but a larger crew will be added next week, Stanley Scott, foreman, said.

# SOURDOUGH SEEKS PAL IN ADVENTURE

Robert Edmonds of Tigard, Ore., is at the Allen (Nash) hotel, and desires to meet a man who wants to go to Alaska, and trap and mine, and

"get rich." Edmonds would like to meet anybody who would like to take such a chance. He says he has mining property near Anchorage, with good cabins and a railroad hard by.

Edmonds, an Alaska "sourdough" of the old school, says he went back to West Virginia and engaged in business, but encountered hard luck. He is now anxious to get a partner, and go back to Alaska. He says if his partner doesn't know how to trap or mine he will teach him.

partner "must be single, as we don't want any woman trailing along in the road."

## Cave-In Kills Two High School Boys

MILTON, Ore., Sept. 27.—(AP)—Fred Rauschaub, Jr., 14, and George Vincent, 15, McLaughlin Union High school students, were killed in the collapse of a cave in which they were digging near Fendale station. They were smothered.

By ULEEN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Hope Renewed!



## BOUND TO WIN—The End Of Ratty Sims!

By EDWIN ALGER



## S'MATTER POP—Trademark Registered

By C. M. PAYNE



## THE NEBBS—The Balky Horse

By SOL HESS



## MUTT AND JEFF—Jeff's Gonna Shoot Mutt At Sunrise

By BUD FISHER



# DEMS OUTNUMBER G. O. P. IN SENATE BY APPOINTMENT

## MYSTERY SHOT SLAYS HUNTER

DENVER, Sept. 28.—(AP)—The Democrats outnumber Republicans by one today in the United States senate, with the appointment of Walter Walker, Grand Junction newspaper publisher, to that body to fill a vacancy caused by the death of Senator Charles W. Waterman.

On the roster of the upper house now are 48 Democrats, 47 Republicans and one Farmer-Labor member.

Appointment of Walker by Governor William H. Adams yesterday was not unexpected, but Colorado political circles were still uncertain today whether the recently retired chairman of the Democratic state central committee would serve in the lame duck session of congress, which convenes in December, or whether he will serve only until a successor to Waterman is chosen at the general

election, November 8. Waterman's term expires March 4.

Colorado election laws make no provision for the nomination of candidates in circumstances of this nature. Governor Adams said he has received widely varying advice on the matter. He declared his appointment was made to fill the vacancy as provided by the law and that the term of office is for others to determine.

## BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

