

Nothing Venture

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: Nan Weare, terror-stricken at the possibility that Jervis, her missing husband, has met foul play, begs help from his former fiancée Rosamund Corset. Rosamund contemptuously denies Nan. All trails have petered out, yet Jervis' friend Ferdinand Francis and Nan doggedly continue their investigation.

Chapter 33

MORE ABOUT ALIBIS

"WELL," said Ferdinand as they turned out of the gate. "I don't know," said Nan. "Don't talk to me for a little."

"What don't you know?" said Ferdinand after a while. "In my opinion it's always better to tell what you know, because that's the sort of stuff that's likely to go sour on you."

"I'm going to tell you," said Nan. "I'm only sorting it out."

"Well, I like to know things—and when there isn't anything to know, I'm good at guessing. Did you get anything out of the beautiful lady? Is she still talking too much?"

"Yes, she is."

"Now that's very interesting. I'd like to know what she talked about."

"She tried to make me angry," said Nan. "She tried to make me jealous. And then she tried to frighten me."

"That's not very original. Will you tell me what she said?"

Nan looked at the dusty hedge-row alighting past. A little straw had caught on the lowest branch of an overhanging thorn-tree. The shining stalks held the sun as Rosamund's hair had held it.

"What she said doesn't matter. She wanted to make me think that there was—someone Jervis might be with." She paused, and added, "Some woman. I told her she didn't believe what she was trying to make me believe."

"Then, I think, she was angry—but I'm not sure if she was really angry. She turned right round and tried to make me believe that Jervis was drowned."

"What did she say?" said Ferdinand quickly.

Nan forced her voice. "She said he'd had—cramp. She said he'd had it—when he was bathing with her. She said—she'd had—to help him in."

"I wish she'd said it to me!" "Why?" said Nan.

"So I could tell whether she was lying. I've had a lot of practice telling whether people are lying."

"Oh, it wasn't true," said Nan. "Sure?"

"She gave a half impatient nod. "Yes—quite sure. I'm not worried about that—I'm worried about why she said it—I'm worried about why she said any of it!"

Ferdinand looked at her. "You're frightened to death. Can't you tell me about it?"

He had slowed the car to a bare ten miles an hour. She put her hand to her cheek and pressed it there.

"If she knows—anything—" She paused.

"Yes?" said Ferdinand encouragingly.

"She might—want—" She stopped, flung her hand down in her lap, and said in a choked voice, "I can't!"

"Try!"

"If they—if she—knew—where he was—" She broke off again. "They might want him to do something—they might let him go if he gave them enough money—but if he wouldn't—they could say—they had always thought—he was—drowned."

She faced round on Ferdinand and said passionately, "I'm wicked to think a thing like that! Tell me I'm wicked, F. F. Tell me it couldn't be true!"

"Now when you say 'they'?" said Ferdinand.

"Leonard," said Nan—"Robert Leonard and Rosamund."

"Whom would he borrow it from? Who's he going to give himself away to by borrowing their car to do the meanest sort of criminal job?"

"Rosamund," said Nan. "Rosamund darted a sideways glance at her. He saw a pale, composed profile, lips colorless but firm, hands folded. He nodded. The car was moving slowly between the high banks of a lane.

"She certainly was alone in the house—Teeterley away, servants in a separate wing. But then, I did a bit of searching round when you were paying your call. I had a nice talk with the second chauffeur. I said I thought I'd seen Miss Rosamund's car in Croyston Tuesday night, and he said she hadn't been out. He stuck to that, and what's more, he said he could prove it."

"For one thing, he'd cleaned the car that afternoon, and it certainly hadn't been out in the dust; and for another, he'd filled it up with oil and gasoline, and next day when Miss Carew went out he had a look at the gauge, and full up she was."

"Perhaps he wasn't telling the truth," said Nan.

"In my opinion he was."

"It isn't difficult to fill up again," said Nan—"and I expect Rosamund knows how to clean a car. Don't you see—" she lifted one hand and struck the other with it—"don't you see that that clean car and that full gasoline tank were her alibi? You haven't got an alibi for Tuesday night, and neither have I. Why have she and Robert Leonard got such beautiful alibis?"

Ferdinand drove on without speaking.

"You think she got Jervis to come away with her?"

"I don't know. She could have brought Robert Leonard from Croyston."

"And when she'd brought him what was he going to do? Jervis didn't like either of them well enough to go promening around with them in the middle of the night. No—that's something I don't see."

"He's gone," said Nan. "Someone got him to go."

Ferdinand did not answer this at all. In spite of himself he was thinking of a warm, dark sea, with the moon gold flame in the west and the first gold dawn of the dawn brightening the east. He could see the water and a black moving speck which was Jervis' head. And then the speck was gone, and he could only see the wide grey sweep of the water.

The day dragged on its way, and with every hour it grew hotter. By five o'clock the sun had almost disappeared behind a thick haze. It was as if the very fierceness and heat of its burning had sent out a shrouding veil of smoke. Under it the sea was oily and lead-colored.

Ferdinand had gone into Croyston. He had made up his mind that if Jervis had neither written nor returned by next morning, they must go to the police. Beneath the surface of his thoughts there dotted an uneasy doubt as to whether they had not already delayed too long.

Nan stayed in the house. She had the feeling that something might happen at any moment. Impossible to move from the spot which might be the scene of this happening.

She stayed in the library. There was a telephone there, and she was waiting for the bell to ring. It might ring now, while she was over by the window, or now when she had turned and almost reached the door. A few quick steps would bring her close enough to snatch up the receiver, and then she would hear Jervis' voice.

She never got beyond that first sound of his voice. He had not to explain why he had gone away; he had only to be there—a living voice. It did not matter at all what the voice said—no, it didn't matter at all.

She paced the room with an even step. One might not have guessed, watching her, that every step, every moment ticked out by the clock on the mantel, was torture to her.

For Nan, way inside herself, knew Jervis would have returned if he could.

(Copyright, 1932, Lippincott)

Ferdinand unearths an important clue, tomorrow, and dashes off to test it.

CENTRAL PT. GRANGE CLUB MEETING HELD AT HENDERSON HOME

CENTRAL POINT, Oct. 6.—(Sp.)—H. E. club of Central Point Grange met September 28, at the home of Mrs. Al Henderson, for its regular monthly meeting. The afternoon was enjoyed by the guests provided by the hostess, prizes going to Mrs. Opal Haley and Mrs. Dora Hesselgrave. There was also some work done on the club quilt which is in the making.

At 5 o'clock a delicious luncheon was served by a committee consisting of Mrs. Victor Bursell, Mrs. Walt Beebe and the hostess. Those enjoying Mrs. Henderson's hospitality were: Mrs. Dora Hesselgrave, Mrs. McCredie, Mrs. Will Gregory, Mrs. Joe Wright, Mrs. Warren Patterson, Mrs. Moore Haley, Mrs. Fred Bander, Miss Mary Maury and Miss Velma McCredie.

A pleasing feature of the afternoon which was also a surprise to the entire gathering, was the arrival of Miss Georgia Pruitt, who had just come up from Sacramento and was accompanied by her sister.

DRIFT IN WEST TOWARD HOOVER

WASHINGTON, Oct. 6.—(Sp.)—Senator Franier (R. N. D.), who recently announced he would not support President Hoover for re-election, said today that he would not support Gov. Roosevelt either.

"I think President Hoover's De Moines speech was mighty good from his point of view," he told newspapermen.

"I don't agree with some statements, but the speech was a well prepared defense of his own position."

Frazier, who recently returned from the west, said "there has been a change of sentiment toward the President in the middle west, due in part to disappointment in Gov. Roosevelt and also due to the conclusion that President Hoover is not to blame for everything."

Gresham—M. E. Andrews took over Davidson gravel pit on Henaley road.

Salem—Bids being considered for installation of heating boiler at state penitentiary.

Corvallis—Safeway Stores here recently combined.

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Meeting Of The "Everglade Club!"



BOUND TO WIN—Bill Hassett Explains



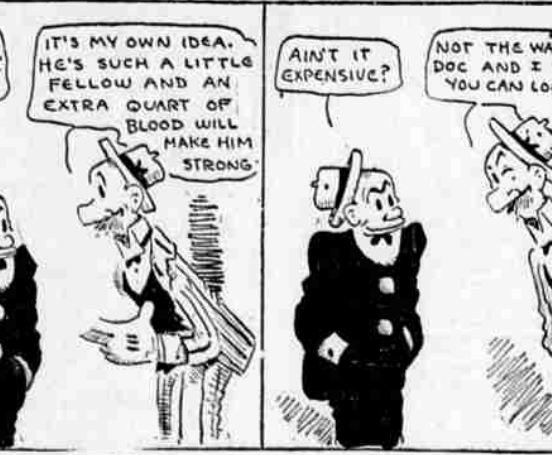
'SMATTER POP—What If The Visitor Were The Installment Collector?



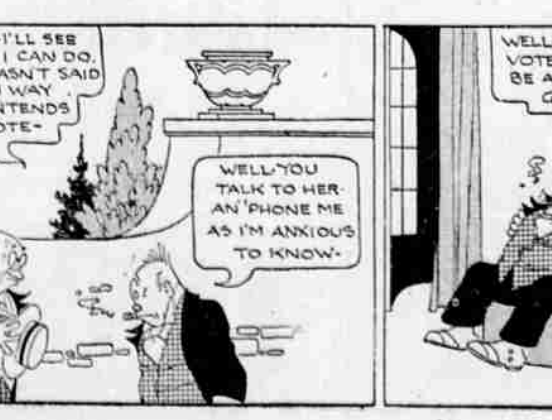
THE NEBBS—The Beautiful



MUTT AND JEFF—A Dog-Gone Mean Trick On Jeff



BRINGING UP FATHER



HIGH SCHOOL BOYS TO TAKE INTEREST IN SOCIAL PHASES

For the first time in the history of the school, the boys of Medford high school are making an organized effort to be placed on an equal basis with the girls. This year, under the leadership of Wildon Colbaugh, president, the Associated Boys have an extensive program outlined which, it is hoped, will mold the male students into one group.

On Monday the boys will present a student-body assembly. Nothing special is scheduled for Tuesday, except that the boys will be allowed to strut, safely. Wednesday, the final day, an assembly will be given in which the Associated Boys will sponsor a number of acts. That evening, following the initiation ceremonies, a student-body dance will be held in the boys' gym.

Those taking part in the assembly Wednesday are: Jack Wood, Phil Quisenberry, Bob Sherwood, George Andrews, Prentice Petty, Noel Benson, Claude Manke and Bill Cummings.

The committees for the week's program are: Entertainment—Clyde Pichtner, Harold Grove, Jack Wood, Kenneth Moore, Robert Sherwood, Bernal Stead, Maurice Schel.

Program—Harold Barton, chairman. Sophomore emblem—Russell Jordan, chairman.

Dance and orchestra—Bill Cummings, chairman; Max Ray, Winston Hotel, Dick Slight, Conway Latham. Service committee—Claude Hoover, chairman; Bob Minear, Elwyn Krause, Don Turpin, Herbert Neilson, Adrian Pralay.

Clean-up committee—Ed Bennett, chairman; Tyle Evans, Verne Campbell, Bob Young, George Hurd, Lewis Campbell, Lee Bullis.

Two and one-half mile stretch of road oiled between Worden and Keno.

By George McManus