

Outrageous Fortune

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: A man, picked up on the shore after the wreck of the Alice Arden, has been taken from the hospital by Neta Riddell as her husband, Jimmy Riddell. He is at her brother Tom's house in Ledington. A few moments after Neta and the man had left, Caroline Leigh arrives at the hospital, searching for her distant cousin, Jim Riddell. She is leaving, disappointed, when the nurse mentions a scrap of a letter she had found in her patient's pocket, with the signature "Caroline." So Caroline determines to continue her apparently hopeless search. Meanwhile the man awakes, and Neta tells him he is her husband. He declares he does not know her nor can he recall other events of the past.

Chapter Nine

UNCOMPROMISING PAST

HE WOKE in the morning to the sound of Tom Williams clattering down the stairs and being softly hushed by Min. He was out of bed in a minute and at the door. "I say, lend me a razor—there's a good chap!" He found Tom embarrassed but friendly. The razor was produced, and Min brought him hot water and asked him timidly if he felt better. When he said, "I don't feel better—I feel well," she looked pleased; but when he added, "I expect I look like a cut-throat," she colored and ran away.

He shaved, dressed himself, and was relieved to find himself no more than just a little shaky. His clothes he discovered in a neat pile upon a shelf screened by a chintz curtain. The suit had been pressed, but it still had a smell of sea-water about it; one or two rents had been neatly mended.

He frowned at the clothes. They fitted him, so he supposed that they were his; but he couldn't remember them—he couldn't remember anything.

When he was dressed, he sat down on the edge of the bed and put his head in his hands. It was just as if a black gulf of nothingness were cutting him off from everything that had happened to him up till now. On this side of the gulf his mind was working in a perfectly normal manner.

Yesterday, for instance, was on this side of the gulf, and he remembered all about yesterday; he could have repeated his conversation with Neta verbatim. But as to what had happened to him on the other side of the gulf, he had only her statements to go by. He went over them with a sort of puzzled horror.

His name was Jim Riddell.

He was married.

He had married Neta Williams at the Grove Road registry office on July 25.

He had been on his way to Glasgow when the Alice Arden came to grief.

He had been going to Glasgow to "get off the map."

He ran his hands through his hair and asked himself why—and why—and why?

Why had he married a woman who hadn't the faintest atom of attraction for him? You may marry a woman for her looks, or for money, or for ambition, or for purely animal reasons, or for pity, or because you happen to love her.

Not a single one of these reasons applied to Neta Riddell. She was not an object of pity; the Williams were certainly not well-to-do; and mentally and physically she repelled him.

Over and above all this, he had a sense of her strangeness. He could not believe that he had held her in his arms, that they had kissed. She was stranger to him than someone whom he had never met—far more deeply strange than any of the forgotten people on the wrong side of the black gulf which cut him off from his past.

HE LEFT that. Why had he been going to Glasgow?

Neta had given him the answer—to "get off the map."

Why had he got to "get off the map"?

The answer to that was somewhere on the other side of the gulf.

He went over everything that had happened yesterday down to the time when he had fallen asleep to the faint sound of an orchestra through the partition wall. He had slept without waking, but not without dreaming.

He leaned his head on his hands, and knew that those sleeping hours had not been spent in unconscious-

ness. The shadows of swift clashing events moved in them. They were like the shadows of fierce darting fish seen through waters veiled by mist. Mist—fog. Fog came into it—fog, and a voice.

His voice? Behind the fog, strange violent things, happening at an incredible speed, flashing through his mind too quickly to be grasped... like beads of light, strung on a dark chain... like a kid's green beads.

For an instant he saw a small brightly lighted picture. The light came from above, and swinging to and fro beneath it was a string of square green stones. They swung from a man's hand. There were eight of them—big, square, green stones; a double chain of pearls between every two.

He saw the man's hand, and the square green stones, and the pearls, and the light abating down on them. The voice said, "Like a kid's green beads," and everything went dark.

Some time after this Neta was at the door. He thanked heaven that he was up and dressed. If he had had to lie there whilst she sat on the edge of his bed and talked, he might not be able to hide the violence of his recoil. Women always bullied a man when they had him at a disadvantage.

The thought of yesterday set his teeth on edge. To-day they would meet on equal terms, and he would try and remember that the situation was a horrible one for her. For himself it was very nearly intolerable. He hadn't a job, and as far as he knew, he hadn't a penny in the world.

What was he to do? Live on Neta—borrow from Neta? The situation was not only nearly, but quite, intolerable.

These thoughts went to and fro in his mind as they sat at breakfast in the small hot kitchen.

Tom Williams bolted a couple of rashers of bacon, gulped down his tea, and was off, saying that he would be late. The chug-chug of his motor-cycle came back through the thin walls of the little house.

WITH recovered confidence Min began to tell him how wonderful Tom was at almost everything—"Why, he can cook as well as I can. And every bit of paper in this house is what he hung himself." It was a great relief to have Min's prattle to get them through the meal. She had shy smiles for him now and no longer kept her eye on the door. So much for a shave!

When breakfast was over, he spoke to Neta directly.

"Is there somewhere where we can talk?"

With no more than a nod she led the way into the parlor, with its saddle-back suite in bright shades of red and blue, its crimson Axminster square, and its silver photograph frames.

Into this room, so new, so garish, so commonplace, there came these two angry, incongruous people; and at once its slight emptiness became charged with strain, pressure, resistance.

Neta waited for him to begin. She stood with her back to the window, leaning forward over one of the red and blue chairs in a would-be easy attitude. He walked to the woolly mat in front of the hearth, and said what he had planned to say.

"This is a rotten deal for you. I want to tell you I'm awfully sorry about it."

Heavens! How incredibly difficult she made it! His words, his efforts to get her point of view, slipped back from the hard surface she turned towards him. It was like seeing a fly slip on a pane of glass. She was angry, hard, resentful, cold.

But there was something else. He could feel the pressure of her will. Why should she be putting out her will against him like this? It got his back up. It made it too damned difficult to feel or say the decent thing. What was she to him after all, but a stranger whom he disliked?

He said, "I really am sorry," and the room filled again with her scornful silence.

She stood there leaning over the back of the chair with bright closest eyes and just a hint of an angry smile breaking the straight line of her lips. There was something secret about that smile, something that said, "Take care—I can be even with you if I like."

He spoke before he knew what he was going to say.

"Why do you look at me like that? What's behind all this?"

"Ah!" said Neta very softly. "You'd like to know—wouldn't you?"

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Tomorrow Neta talks "business" with Jim.

JEW TORTURED TO DEATH IS CLAIM

VIENNA, Oct. 2.—(AP)—The socialist newspaper "Der Morgen" printed an

account from Linz, Austria, today which said the post-mortem of a German Jew whose body was found floating on the Danube revealed he was "tortured to death" and "apparently crucified."

A tailor's label indicated he was from Nurnberg, Germany. Linz is on the Danube.

In reply to an Associated Press representative's query to officials in Linz, it was said the man died violently, "whether from a fall or from a blow on the head could not be determined," but that indications of torture or crucifixion were completely lacking.

Bozman's Beauty Parlor and Barber Shop now located in attractive new quarters at 16 and 18 South Central Avenue.

PLAYMATES WITNESS AUTO DEATH OF TOT

SALEM, Oct. 2.—(AP)—Three small children were the only witnesses of

a fatal accident here Saturday when four-year-old Lawrence Patrick Sullivan darted out from a curb into the side of a passing automobile. He died shortly at a hospital.

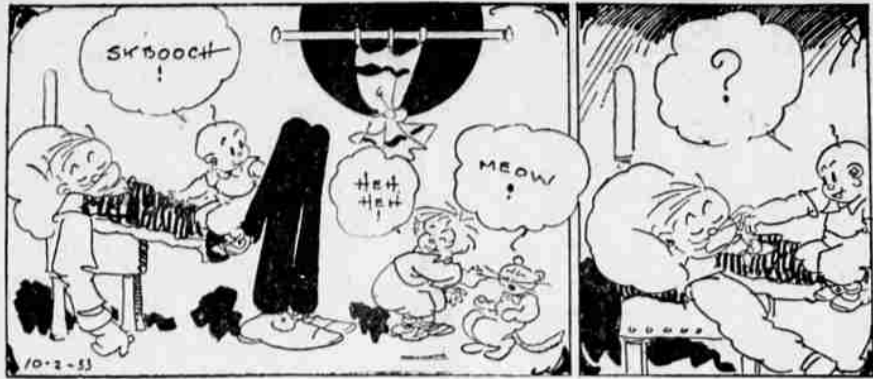
J. Wholley Chenworth, driver of the "bug" type car, was arrested for not having a new driver's license. The victim was son of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence P. Sullivan.

Portland Gravy
SALEM, Oct. 2.—(AP)—The \$85,000 federal funds proposed for the Lombard street and baseline road improvement projects at Portland will be recommended for transference to the 52nd street project, the state highway department said today.

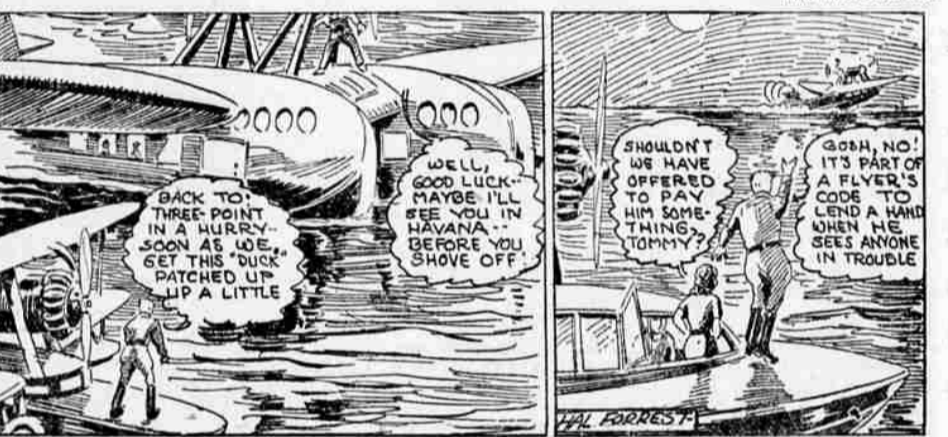
For Sale—Fresh Chinook salmon eggs Valentine's Cafe.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE

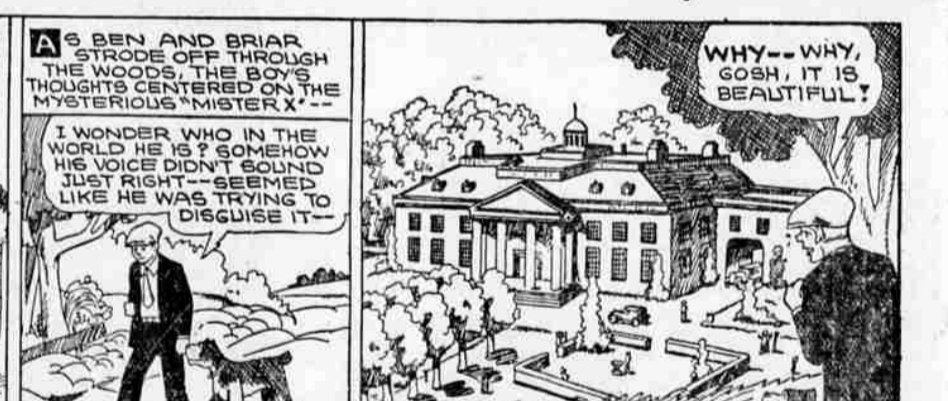


TAILSPIN TOMMY—"Much Obligated" Is Pay Enough



BOUND TO WIN—Some Mansion!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Contrary Sylvia

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



City Government Cut Down.
KANSAS CITY, Mo.—(UP)—The per capita cost of government in Kansas City, including local, state and national, decreased from \$98.61 in 1931 to \$85.53 in 1933, the Civic Research Institute announced.

Phone 542. We'll haul away your refuse. City Sanitary Service.

100-Year-Old Quilt Winner.
NAMPA, Idaho (UP)—Mrs. Florence Duval Maffitt entered a 100-year-old quilt in the annual women's exhibit here and won the sweepstakes prize. The quilt was inherited from her grandmother.

Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

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