

Outrageous Fortune by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: A dazed man picked up after the wreck of the Alice Arden is identified by Nests Riddell as her husband, Jimmy Riddell, and taken to Nests's brother's home in Lexington. He has been talking in his sleep of emeralds and murder. Shortly after his removal from the hospital, Caroline Leloi, calls there, thinking he may be her distant cousin, Jim Randall. She is leaving, disappointed, when the nurse recalls a scrap of a letter in the man's pocket, with the signature "Caroline." So Caroline continues her apparently hopeless search. Meanwhile the man awakes, and is told by Nests that he has stolen the famous Van Berg emerald—although he remembers nothing back of his awakening. Now Nests describes their meeting and the beginning of the Van Berg "job."

Chapter 11 "YOU SHOT VAN BERG"

NESTA laughed. "Well, that's where I came in. You tried pretty hard to make me believe you were crazy about me, but you needn't imagine I was such a fool as to believe you. You were crazy about the emeralds, and you needn't have troubled to make love to me, because I'd taken the length of your foot in the first five minutes."

"But you married me."

"Did you think I was going to trust you? I married you because I meant to let my share."

"And why did I marry you?" said Jim Riddell pleasantly.

Nesta colored high.

"For what you could get out of me," she said. "You wanted my help, and you thought it was safer."

"It's very interesting," said Jim. "Won't you go on?"

"Interesting!" She struck her cigarette against the arm of the chair and sent the ash flying.

"Very. Do you mind telling me how you helped?"

"I was staying with old Caroline Russell. I've known her all my life—she's some sort of twenty-eighth cousin. She's been housekeeper at the Hall since the year one, and she does what she likes with Mr. Entwistle. When you spoke to me that day in the drive—"

"Yes?"

"I was going to go next day, because the Van Bergs were coming. I will say you had a nerve."

"What did I do?"

She stared at him resentfully.

"Why you got me to work it so that I stayed on. It was quite easy for old Caroline. She said I was her cousin and the Van Bergs didn't care. And then—"

"And then?"

She reached out for another cigarette, struck a match, and looked at him over the little yellow flame.

"Are you trying to make me believe I'm telling you something you don't know?"

"I can't make you believe anything," said Jim.

She threw the match into the grate just short of the spangled shavings.

"Oh, have it your own way! Do you want me to tell you how you pinched the emeralds?"

He had himself well in hand. He said coolly:

"I stole them!"

Nesta laughed.

"You make me tired, Jimmy Riddell! You stole them!" She tried to mimic his voice. "Do you think you can act the innocent with me like that after the way I've heard you talk in your sleep? Why, you've never stopped talking, and if I hadn't got you out of that hospital in double quick time, we should all have been inside." She laughed again at his blank look and fung out: "Jug—quod—stir! Haven't ever done time, I suppose? Well you will ever this if you don't cure yourself of talking at night."

HE LEANED forward with his elbow on his knee and his chin in his hand.

"You say I took these emeralds?" "I say you did—and I'll say it was a pretty nippy bit of work. Pity you shot him, though."

He jerked away from the word.

"What are you saying?"

"You shouldn't have carried a gun," said Nesta maliciously. "I said so all along."

He got up. His spine had gone cold. He felt the sweat break out upon his temples.

"What's that you're saying?"

Nesta got up, too.

"I'm saying that you shot Mr. Van Berg."

He went over to the mantelpiece, leaning on it with his two hands, his head bent between them, his eyes staring blankly at the spangled shavings in the grate.

What nightmare was this? He had broken into a house, stolen property, shot a man for a handful of green

stones... eight square green stones—chained two by two with pearls—swinging from a man's hand. Whose hand? Van Berg's hand?

He could see it under the light. It was as plain as anything he had seen in all his life—a powerful hand, with spidery fingers and an old healed scar running from the lower knuckle of the first finger to the root of the thumb.

He didn't see Min's carefully polished grate with the dazle of shavings and the small bright blue tiles; he saw Van Berg's hand with the scar on it, and he knew how the scar had come there. Out of all the things that he had forgotten he remembered this one—that Van Berg had got that scar playing with a pet monkey.

No, it wasn't a bite. The monkey had got fooling with a razor. It was a clean cut. He had forgotten everything in the world, but he hadn't forgotten Van Berg's monkey.

His head swam for a moment. Then he straightened up and half turned, still leaning on the mantelpiece. He caught a curious look on Nesta's face, a watching look, but it went past him.

"Is Van Berg dead?" he said.

"Not yet," said Nesta.

"Is he bad?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"If he doesn't die for a year and a day, they can't hang you."

His voice came at her with an angry leap.

"Is he bad?"

"So so." And then: "It's not your fault he's not dead. You let him have it all right."

He went over to the window and threw it up. He had to push past the pink geraniums; one of the bright blooms snapped off. The room had suddenly seemed crowded with used air. Outside, a light wet wind blew veeringly. There was rain in the wind, but it would not fall yet awhile. It struck damp and cool against his face, and he was glad of it.

Nesta's voice came from close behind him.

"Where did you put the emeralds, Jimmy?"

He turned blind, pushed past her, and went blundering through the door and out into the street.

CAROLINE drove to Marley, which, as the day nurse had told her, was only eight miles from Elston. She found a charming little village with stone walls and thatched roofs.

The thatched roofs were doubtless a refuge for earwigs, but though Marley contained some six hundred inhabitants, with the usual allowance of cows, cats, pigs, hens and children, it did not, so far as Caroline could ascertain, conceal Mr. and Mrs. James Riddell.

At first this made Caroline angry. A very bright color bloomed in her cheeks, and she thought of several things which she would have liked to say to Mrs. Riddell. Later on, while she was having tea in the prettiest of the cottage gardens, she had a brain-wave. There were earwigs in the thatch. She had just fished the third out of her tea, when the brain waved and she wanted to know why Mrs. Riddell had said she was coming to Marley when she wasn't coming to Marley.

Caroline had, of course, taken the greatest possible dislike to what she described as that snatching woman. But even people whom you dislike very much don't as a rule tell entirely purposeless lies; so why had the Snatcher said she was coming to Marley?

Caroline drank some of her tea hastily, because she was very thirsty and she wanted to get in before the next earwig. She had a feeling that there were going to be more earwigs, and sure enough when she put down her cup there was one in the saucer. She thought very seriously about Mrs. James Riddell. And the more she thought, the less she could think of any reason why she should have told that lie—unless—

The "unless" was so exciting that Caroline felt quite dazed by it. Why does anyone give a false address?

Because they don't want to give a real one—and they only don't want to give a real one because they're ashamed of something they've got to hide. Mrs. Riddell had come and fetched Jim away from the Elston cottage hospital.

She had said that he was Jim Riddell, and she had said that she was going to Marley. Well, she hadn't told the truth about going to Marley, so why should she have told the truth about Jim being Jim Riddell?

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Tomorrow, Caroline finds Nesta's trail.

DOUGLAS FIR CUT LIMITED BY NRA

PORTLAND, Oct. 4.—(AP)—Designed to keep production in the proper ratio to demand, Douglas fir producers in Oregon and Washington have been instructed to limit their operating hours to 120 during October.

Instructions to this effect have been issued by the West Coast Lumbermen's association, NRA lumber code administrator in this district.

Thus throughout October will be continued the same rate of cutting, average 30 hours a week, as was the case last month.

The maximum footage allocated to the Douglas fir area of the two states for this month is \$50,000,000 board feet, or about 40 per cent of the region's monthly capacity.

Heating costs can be reduced. For complete heating service call Art Schmidt 418-1802.

MESSER PAYS \$9 ON COURT FINE

Hubert Messer of the Sams Valley district, who was fined \$25 and costs

and sentenced to 30 days in the county jail for theft of auto tools and parts, yesterday made good his promise to Justice of the Peace William R. Coleman to make an installment on his fine. His mother presented a check for \$9, which cut Messer's fine to \$20—and still to be paid in weekly installments.

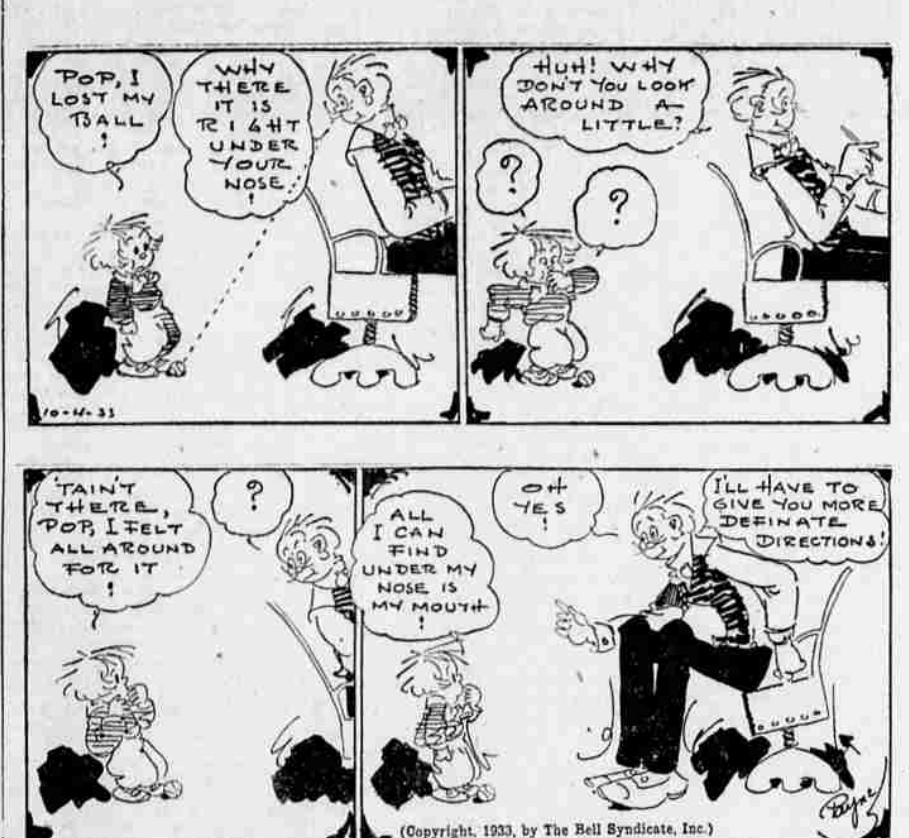
The 30-day jail sentence hanging over Messer will see no final disposition by the court until the fine and costs are paid.

Messer, a recent groom, appeared in court Saturday with his bride and his mother, and made a tearful plea for release, after spending a night in the county jail.

Justice Coleman extended partial leniency, upon promise of Messer to pay the fine as soon as possible.

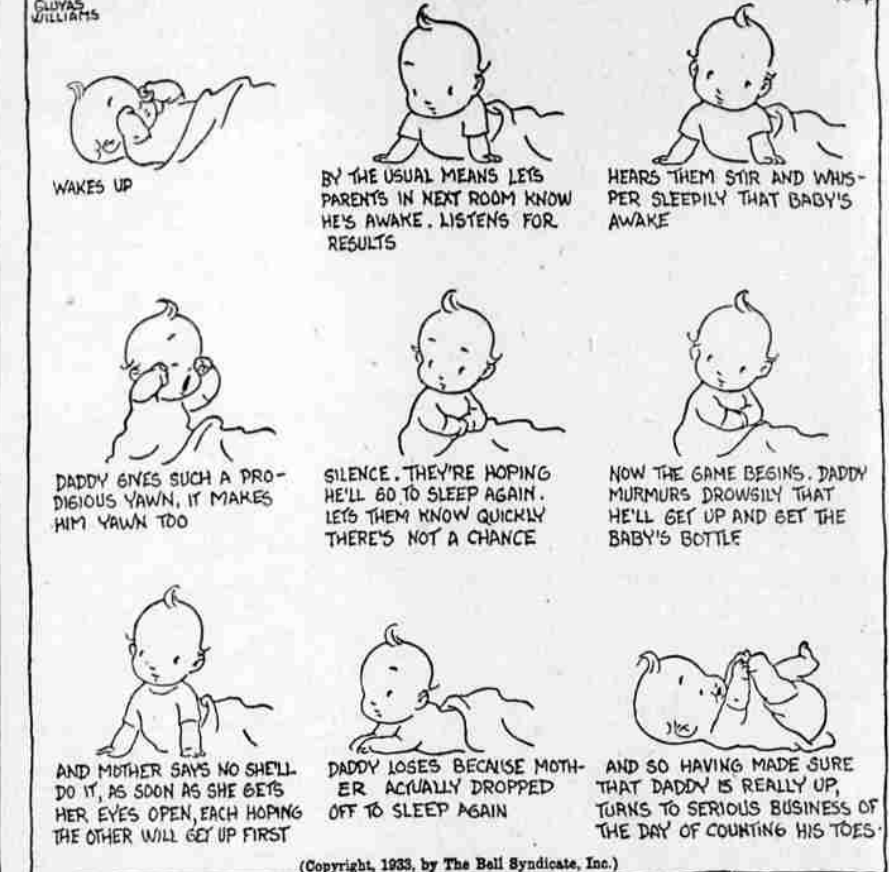
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



DAYBREAK

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—It All Depends On The Point Of View!



BOUND TO WIN—A Sufficient Present

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Something For Nothing



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



OLD N. P. WAREHOUSE BREAKS UNDER LOAD

PORTLAND, Ore., Oct. 4.—(AP)—Bowed by the weight of a heavy tonnage of sacked grain stored within its old walls, the Northern Pacific

freight shed here folded in the middle yesterday. No one was injured, and a preliminary estimate placed the grain damage at about \$1000.

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