

# Outrageous Fortune

by Patricia Wentworth

NESTA RIDDELL'S EYES WERE fixed on the wreckage of the Alice Arden. NESTA was identified as her husband, Jimmy Riddell, a crook, and the man who stole the Van Berg emeralds—but she doesn't mention the latter to Caroline. Caroline thinks the man must be her missing cousin, Jim Randell. NESTA will not let Caroline see the man, and the man cannot help, because he has lost his memory. NESTA just has sent her "husband" to bed.

## Chapter 15

### TRIAL BY WATER

WHEN the rest of the house had settled into darkness and silence, NESTA Riddell still sat on in the parlor. She sat leaning forward with her cheek propped on her hand and her eyes fixed.

It was being difficult—he was being difficult. Would he be any easier if she waited? Or was her best chance now, before he had got back his strength? Everything in her said now she hadn't risked so much and come so far to lose everything for the want of a little pluck.

The emeralds were half hers. She had risked as much for them as Jimmy had. If Van Berg died, they'd bring her in accessory after the fact. She'd risked that, and she wasn't going to do more out of her price, not much she wanted. She'd have her share of those emeralds whatever she had to do to get it.

It was a long time now since the footsteps overhead had ceased. For a little while there had been the faint whisper of voices, but it was a long time since they too had died away.

She wondered if there was anything in that stunt of old Caroline Bussell's. It was whispered in the village that Caroline knew a good many things that she hadn't any right to know. People in Packham said she had a hold over Mr. Entwistle and could do what she liked with him.

Suppose she had tried this stunt of hers on him. Suppose she had gone into his room at the dead hour of the night, the hour between midnight and the first hour of the day, slipping in on her stocking feet with a bowl of water in her hand. You'd have to tread like a cat and keep yourself almost from breathing so as to know by the breathing of the sleeping man whether he were deep enough asleep. Old Caroline always walked quietly.

She gave up the creeps in broad daylight the way she'd come on you without the least sound, with her neat upright figure and her prim starched collar, her face that always put NESTA in mind of a plump floured scone, and her brown front that never had a hair out of place. There—it was all nonsense, and creepy nonsense at that. Only, if a man could be got to talk like that in the dead of night with no power to hold anything back...

She sprang up suddenly and looked at the clock between the china cherubs. The hands stood at half past twelve. NESTA kept her eyes fixed on them for a moment. Then with a jerk of the shoulders she stooped, undid her shoes, and, stepping out of them, went to the door and opened it.

There was no light in the passage or on the upper landing. The linoleum was cold under her feet as she went through into the kitchen and switched on the bulb in the ceiling.

MINE'S big mixing-bowl would be about the right size. She reached it down off the china shelf and filled it half way at the tap. The water had to be cold—that was what old Caroline said. But how cold would it have to be? You could call anything cold water so long as it came out of the cold water tap.

This wasn't very cold—no bite in it so to speak. Perhaps a drizzle out of the hot water tap wouldn't do it any harm. She let in a little and dipped her hand into the bowl. Would that wake you up if you were asleep? Not if you were really fast. Was it near enough cold to do the trick? You couldn't tell that till you tried; and it was long odds that it was nothing but a pack of rubbish anyhow.

In her heart of hearts NESTA did not believe that it was rubbish.

At the kitchen door she hesitated, and then put out the light. Now the house was all dark and silent with the warm, breathing silence of sleep. Even the newest and rawest of houses is a haunted house in the dead of night. The bodies of those

who it—there are unaware, but their thoughts fill the silence. NESTA was not thinking of this, but as she stood with her hand on the door of the room opposite the kitchen, a little chill just touched her and her heart beat audibly. She had the bowl in her left hand, and she had to keep it steady. The door swung in and she followed it, taking three or four steps forward and then standing still to listen. The bedroom was on the left—the fireplace straight in front of her, the chest of drawers across the corner, and the window on the right. She listened, and at first she could hear nothing at all because of the drumming in her ears. Then, after she had stood there for a while, it passed and she could distinguish his slow, deep breathing. The window was open and a light, cool air came in.

NESTA turned and closed the door with a steady hand. There should be a chair at the foot of the bed. She frowned to find it heaped with his discarded clothes. When she had slid them off on to the floor, she brought the chair to the bedside and set the bowl of water down upon it.

By this time she could see the outline of the window and the black jutting corner of the chest of drawers. The bed was just visible, and when she had looked a little longer she could see that he lay facing the window with his right arm clear of the bed-clothes.

SHE knelt down by the bed and reached for the bowl. The chair was too high. It hampered her, and she pushed it away. She could hold the bowl in one hand and have the other free. Yes, that was better. She put out her hand and felt for his, bringing her fingers down upon his wrist by the slowest of degrees. It seemed as if an interminable time passed before her hand lay on his, and he had not moved. There was something almost terrifying about this contact.

His hand was heavy, inert, and warm. It was warmer than her own. She began to guide it very slowly towards the edge of the bed, and all the time she listened for a change in his deep, slow breathing. The change came with an extraordinary suddenness. He cried out and fung over towards her, startling her so much that she jerked sharply back, letting go of his wrist and slopping some of the water over on to the floor. Her heart thumped hard, and through its thumping she heard him say in a rapid mutter, "Eight of them—the finest in the world—no one knows—"

After the first recoil she stayed quite still. The mutter died. The bowl of water became heavier and heavier in her hand. He lay now almost on his face, his left arm under him and his right hanging over the edge of the bed. His breathing became slow and deep again. She let the time go by.

At last she put her hand on his and slowly, slowly brought the bowl of water up to it. This time her fingers covered his. Here, touched the water first, and then almost imperceptibly their two hands sank into the bowl. He did not move. He breathed in the same deep, slow way. His hand was heavy and still. She said, in a voice that was just not a whisper. "Where are the emeralds?" And at once he stirred in his sleep. His head moved on the pillow; his hand moved in hers. He said, as if repeating her words, "The emeralds?" "Where are the emeralds?" There was the same movement again. He said, "No one knows." "You know." "This time there was no movement and no answer. "You know where the emeralds are?"

He lay still and said, muttering, "I know." "Where are they?" She felt a fierce excitement, a fierce demand. His hand pulled on hers. She forced her will, and felt that he resisted it.

"Where are they?" He said, "No one knows but me." The resistance hardened. "Tell me where they are." He wrenched his hand from hers. The water ran over the lip of the bowl into her lap. Then, before she could recover herself, he reached out and caught her by the throat.

(Copyright, 1933, J. B. Lippincott Co.) Tomorrow, NESTA finds herself in a serious situation.

## 4 SPECTATORS KILLED BY RUNAWAY RACE CAR

BARI, Italy, Oct. 9—(AP)—A racing car driven by a German, Grosh, turned over yesterday during the Princess Piedmont cup race, killed four spectators and seriously injured two other persons. Grosh himself was gravely injured.

This was the second serious racing accident in Italy within a month. Three drivers were killed September 10 at Monza during the running of the Grand Prix de Monza race in which the American Whiskey Straight, finished fourth.

## WHITMAN AND C. P. S. IN NORTHWEST AREA

SEATTLE, Oct. 9—(AP)—The battle for the northwest conference football championship appeared today to be another race between Whitman college and Walla Walla and College of Puget Sound of Tacoma, which won out the Missionaries last year.

The Tacoma Loggers, defending champions, jumped into the running last Friday when they whipped Albany college, 18 to 0, in the only conference struggle of the week. Whitman, the previous week, conquered Linfield college 7 and 6. Two conference contests are on the program for the coming week-end with Willamette meeting C. P. S. at Tacoma Friday, and Pacific University tangling with Linfield at McMinnville, Ore.

Light structural steel fabrication. Brill Metal Works.

Stock Quiz Tangle WASHINGTON, Oct. 7—(AP)—A move to prolong the senate stock market investigation in order to bring about Wall Street reforms, even if Ferdinand Pecora should resign as counsel January 1, was inaugurated today by Senator Costigan, of Colorado, a Democratic member of the inquiry committee.

## S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



## THE SUNDAY ROAST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Hotcha! Skeeter's In Love!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



## BOUND TO WIN—A Bad Omen?

By EDWIN ALGER



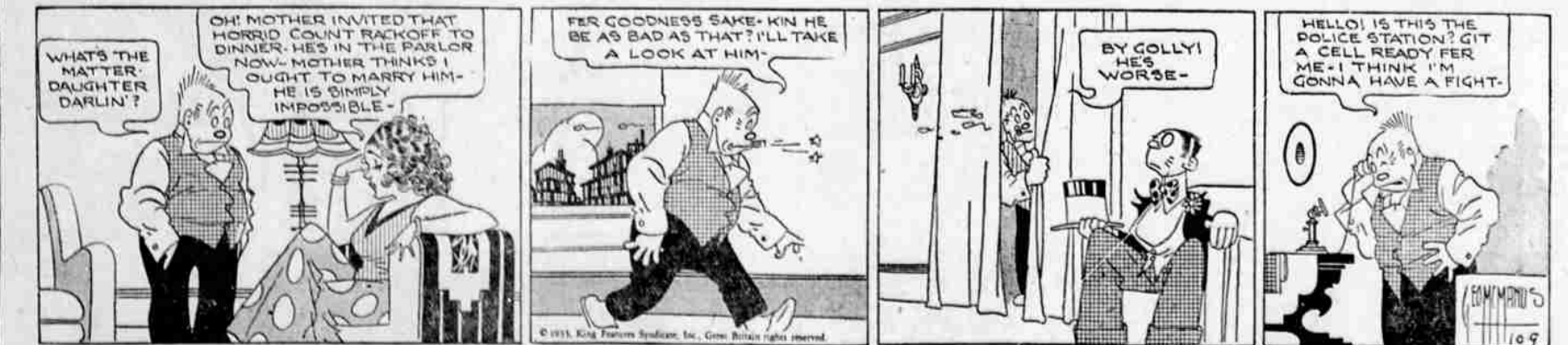
## THE NEBBS—Honesty Is The Best Policy?

By SOL HESS



## BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



Einstein Coming SOUTHAMPTON, England, Oct. 9—(AP)—Professor Albert Einstein sailed for New York tonight on the liner Western Land with his wife, who had embarked at Antwerp.

Czech Police Busy PRAHA, Czechoslovakia, Oct. 7—(AP)—A nation-wide series of raids on the homes of German nationalist socialists and German nationalists kept the police busy today.

\$400,000 Fire Loss SCHUYLER, Neb., Oct. 9—(AP)—

Affire At Sea ARCHANGEL, Russia, Oct. 7—(AP)—The Norwegian steamer Rotschild, bound from this port to Rotterdam with a cargo of lumber, caught fire tonight and was sinking in flames seven miles off Murmansk. Two of the crew were lost but the others were rescued by Soviet coast guards.

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation