

Outrageous Fortune

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: Caroline Leigh has found, quite by accident, the emeralds she had feared were drowned. In a fit of pique she has lost the emeralds. Gradually they piece together bits from the past. And Caroline learns that Jim is claimed by Nests Riddell as her husband, and that Nests says Jim has stolen the Van Berg emeralds and shot Elmer Van Berg. Jim can remember nothing about it, excepting drinking with Van Berg and seeing the emeralds. He fears the police may have his fingerprints—linking him with the crime.

Chapter 22 HOUSEBREAKERS

CAROLINE came nearer, pressing against him as if she could protect him from this something which threatened. Whatever it was, he was Jim, and hers. She had a passionate conviction that she could keep him safe whatever happened.

"There's another bit about the emeralds. I can see them under the light. I can't see Elmer—only his hand hanging from it—eight of them, with little pearl chains between them—like a kid's green beads."

Caroline put her arms round him. "Don't, darling!"

"Do you think I shot him?"

"No!" said Caroline, in a quick, fierce voice.

"She said I did—to get the emeralds."

"That woman!"

"Yes, Nests. She said Jim Riddell shot him and took the emeralds. She was in it too. And he hid the emeralds and went off up to Glasgow by the Alice Arden—only he never got there, because she was wrecked."

"What has that got to do with you?" said Caroline, still in that new fierce voice.

"She says I'm Jim Riddell."

"You're not! Why should you be?"

"I don't know—Caroline, I don't know." She felt a shudder pass over him. "If I could remember—but I can't remember."

"You will."

He was silent. Her words went echoing through the empty spaces of his mind: "Remember—remember—you will remember." They repeated themselves endlessly and died away. Suppose he didn't remember. There was a six weeks gap in his life. Suppose he never remembered what had happened in those six weeks. Suppose he did remember. Suppose he had really shot Elmer Van Berg.

"You didn't!" said Caroline. She pressed against him and laid her cheek to his. "Jim—darling—don't go all away by yourself. Talk to me. We'll find a way out."

He put her arms away from him. "Suppose there's no way out. Suppose I did it."

Caroline sat back a little. She put her hands in her lap and lifted her face to the sky. She had a clear, untroubled look that was very comforting. She spoke softly and steadily, as if she were reasoning with a child.

"Why should you have shot him, darling?"

"I don't know—I was there—I remember drinking with him—"

"You wouldn't have shot him without reason. You don't just go about shooting people for nothing—nobody does."

"The emeralds are not exactly nothing."

"That's rubbish!" The words were touched with a light scorn.

"Is it?"

"Yes, it is—you know it is, really, Jim. Do you remember anything at all about that Nests woman?"

"No."

"Well, wouldn't you have, if you had married her?"

"I don't know." His voice sounded hopeless.

"She didn't touch a chord? I mean, sometimes you meet a total stranger and you don't know where they come from or who they are, but something goes click inside you and you feel as if you knew them. You didn't feel anything like that?"

HE laughed grimly.

"I loathed her," he said.

"So did I," said Caroline happily.

"Well, there you are—if you loathed her, you wouldn't have married her."

There was a rather a horrid pause. Then he said:

"Perhaps I loathed her because I married her."

Caroline cried out quickly.

"Oh, you didn't!"

The silence fell again. She had to break it herself.

"Jim, listen—I've got an idea. You can look up your signature in that registry office. No, it's not your signature—it can't be! It's Jim Riddell's signature. You can look it up,

and then you'll know that it isn't yours."

"Or that it is."

"It isn't! You can take the first train tomorrow—"

"That's just what I can't do."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I gather that the police are looking for me."

"You?"

"Jim Riddell—or Jim Randal—I don't know which."

"Why should it be you?" said Caroline.

"My dear, I was there—we've got to face that. I was there, and I saw the emeralds. I don't think I'm in a position to walk into that registry office and ask to see the entry of Jim Riddell's marriage."

"I could," said Caroline quickly.

"You mustn't get mixed up in it."

"There won't be anything to mix me—the registrar won't know me from Adam."

He put his head in his hands for a minute, trying to get through the dull fatigue which clogged his thoughts.

"I don't want you to have anything to do with it. I'm too tired to think properly—but you're not to get mixed up with this—you oughtn't to be here."

She put her arms round him again.

"You'll come home with me—I'll make you a lovely bed on the sofa."

"No—I can't."

"Because of us, or because of you?"

"Both. I'll get in here somehow. I shall be all right."

Caroline laughed.

"The back door key is under a loose stone in the yard—Mrs. Ledger always puts it there. She comes up once a week to light fires and air the house. Robert said she'd better when he heard you were coming home. She says the key is too 'dratted heavy' to trudge up and down with. This was one of her days, so the kitchen will be nice and warm."

Jim felt a curious thrill of anticipation as they skirted the house and came into the dark yard behind it. There was no moonlight here. The shadow of the house lay across it like a fold of black cloth.

Caroline caught his hand and drew him lightly on.

Presently she was feeling with her foot. A stone lifted. She stooped, and came up with the key. She put it in his hand, cold and heavy, and he opened the door.

WHATEVER else he had forgotten, he had not forgotten the ways of the house in which he had grown up. He took Caroline by the arm and walked along the pitch-dark passage to the kitchen without so much as a false step.

Caroline found matches and lit a candle end. Mrs. Ledger had stuck it into one of the old brass candlesticks. The yellow light showed the brass turned bronze with streaks of verdigris. The kitchen was warm and pleasant. There was ash still hot in the range, and a line full of blankets had been wound up on a pulley and hung just clear of their heads.

"They look like ghosts," said Caroline under her breath—"sneezed ghosts. I don't think I like them very much."

But Jim was pulling them down.

"They'll make a good bed," he said.

Caroline gave a faint shriek.

"I saw two cockroaches! You can't sleep here!"

"I'll go into the study."

"There's nothing for you to eat. I'll run home and get you something."

"I bought things in Leddington. I've got plenty left."

"Oh—" said Caroline. She stood a minute; then she said, speaking rather fast, "Could you get along till tomorrow evening?"

"Oh yes."

"Because I don't think I'd better come up in the daytime—someone might see me. People have most awfully sharp eyes when you don't want them to. Will you be all right till then?"

"Of course I shall."

"All right, then I'd better go." She came up to him and leaned towards him across the blankets. "Jim—you'll be here? You won't go away—will you? Swear!"

"All right."

"You won't go without seeing me? You won't just vanish? Because I couldn't bear it. You won't?"

He shook his head.

Caroline flung her arms round his neck, held him for a moment in a tingling clasp, and ran out of the kitchen and along the black passage. Her footsteps rang on the stone, and the door shut.

(Copyright, 1933, J. B. Lippincott Co.)

Caroline turns detective, tomorrow.

PRETTY BOY SHOT ASKS LAW DICKER

OKLAHOMA CITY, Oct. 18—(AP)—Charles (Pretty Boy) Floyd, a

name pretty well crowded out of Oklahoma's crime news by the "sunshine gun" Kellys and Harvey Bailey, was back today, linked with a story of wounds and a spurned offer to surrender.

Gov. William H. (Alfalfa Bill) Murray, said the desperado had offered to "give himself up" through an emissary after a state operative had wounded him in a gun fight near

Coalgate, Okla., several weeks ago. But the surrender offer, said Murray, was on the condition the state would not seek the death penalty. "I couldn't make a deal like that," the governor added. "We'll get him, though."

Rubber is used for more than 300 parts in manufacturing of some automobiles and trucks.

SPECIAL SESSION TO COST \$25,000

SALEM, Oct. 18—(AP)—Oregon's 20-day special session of the legis-

lature will cost around \$25,000, officials estimated.

The formal proclamation calling the legislators to meet in an extraordinary session November 20 will be issued Saturday by Governor Julius L. Meier, it was announced at the executive department.

State department officials said the work of arranging the house and senate chambers for the session would

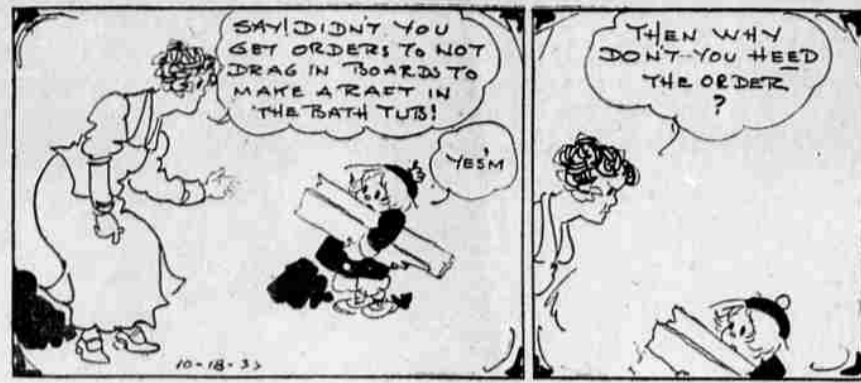
get under way within the next few days.

More than 5,000 applications were filed for 60 positions on the newly organized Ohio state highway patrol.

Indians unemployed relief rolls decreased 8.2 per cent in August, as compared with July.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Mail Plane Overdue!



BOUND TO WIN—The Butler's Story

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—That's Telling Him

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



About 19.2 per cent of Ohio's roads are surfaced for all-weather use as compared with the national average of 9.8 per cent.

Sunflower seed is being grown on a commercial scale near Clarendon, Texas, for chicken feed.

University of Utah officials accepted a gold nugget found by a 17-year-old girl as part payment on her tuition.

California now has a \$10,000 fund to be used to pay rewards for the arrest of kidnapers.

NOW IT'S UP TO YOU

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM
THE PERFECT GUM

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