

# Outrageous Fortune

by Patricia Wentworth

CHAPTER 12  
IT IS LOVE

"I DON'T believe Mrs. Rodgers would have told me anything if she hadn't turned out to be Nanna's sister," Caroline continued. "I didn't recognize her, because she used to be thin like Nanna, and now she's exactly like a feather-bed. But she knew me at once—she said 'I changed a bit.'"

"No—you haven't," said Jim. And that was the last moment that he could have said it, because, in the very middle of saying it, Caroline stopped being the dear familiar child, half playmate and half sister, whom he had teased, petted and adored from the time she had first clutched at his hair with her baby fingers.

Something happened, and she was a new Caroline—a Caroline whom he knew, and did not know, whose hand on his arm sent a tremor all over him. It was horribly disconcerting and embarrassing. He lost the thread of what she was saying, because there was a pounding noise in his ears.

He looked at her, and then looked quickly away. She was a new, enchanted Caroline, who took his breath with her warmth and beauty—enchanted, and enchanting.

Jim took hold of himself. "I didn't hear what you said."

He looked no higher than the dust-sheet which covered the bed, but he knew that she was looking at him. He hadn't the faintest idea what she had said, or what she was going to say. It came like a bombshell.

"They think you were in love with Mrs. Van Berg?"

He looked up then with a sharply interrogative jerk of the head. "With Susie?"

"Yes. Her eyes were very bright. 'Were you? You needn't say if you don't want to.'"

"Well, I wasn't. What put it into anyone's head that I was?"

"That's what I was telling you," said Caroline earnestly. "You see, Mrs. Van Berg's maid is going about saying that Mr. Van Berg was shot because he found out something he wasn't meant to—that's to say, she doesn't say it right out, she just drops hints. Mrs. Rodgers calls her an 'inting' 'ussy.' And she says—she says perhaps the emeralds weren't stolen at all, only hidden to make it look as if there had been a burglary."

"What damned nonsense!"

"Jim, you didn't think I believed her! It was only—I thought—you might have—cared for her—and there might have been a quarrel."

"Well, I didn't!"

He got up and began to walk about the room. It was more than he could do to sit within a yard of Caroline and hear her ask him whether he was in love with another woman.

SHE sat where she was, bareheaded, her old brown coat open over a cream shirt and shabby tweed skirt. Her eyes followed him.

"There wasn't any quarrel?"

"How do I know?"

It was damnable, but he didn't know.

"Jim—you don't mind my telling you? The busy says Mrs. Van Berg used to have a photograph of you. She says it was always until that night. She says it has never been out since."

He stood in the middle of the room frowning intently.

"I gave her a photograph—they've been awfully good to me. She may have had half a dozen reasons for putting it away." He said it without conviction. Why should she have put his photograph away like that? You'd think a woman whose husband had just been shot would have something better to do. You wouldn't expect her to be fiddling with photographs.

He began to wonder whether Susie Van Berg knew that he had been with Elmer that night.

"I was there," he said. Elmer and I had drinks together. I wonder if

Susie knew that, in her statement she said that she came down to get a book and heard voices in the study. She may have heard more than she said—she may have recognized my voice.

"Wouldn't she have said?"

"I don't know—we were pretty good friends—she'd know I wouldn't."

"He broke off sharp."

Suppose by any horrible chance he and Elmer had had a row. Suppose Susie had heard them quarrelling. And then Elmer Van Berg had been found shot. Would Susie have kept his photograph out after that? Or would she have pushed it out of sight with nervous, shaking hands?

He lost a bit of what Caroline was saying—something about fingerprints. Then he got it. She was talking about Elmer's fingerprint book.

"There was a page torn out," said Caroline.

He felt the shock of that as she had felt it.

"When?"

"Oh afterwards—when the police found it. You see, you were right about the drinks. There was a tray and glasses, and the police took the fingerprints. And then the butler told them about Mr. Van Berg's book. He told them it was on the table, but when they looked for it, it wasn't there. They found it stuffed down behind the book-case. And there was a page torn out."

"A page torn out!" Then, sharply, "How did they know?"

"The cook says she remembers the page. She hasn't told the police yet. Mrs. Rodgers says she won't unless she is asked, but they might ask her any minute. She says she remembers because there wasn't any name on that page, only initials. I suppose she takes an interest in fingerprints because of her husband being a policeman. I suppose—"

"What were the initials?"

Caroline looked at him pitiously. It hurt too much. Her carnation color was all gone. Her voice was a whisper as she said,

"J.R."

JIM laughed. His laughter had a hard edge to it.

"We're putting the rope round my neck all right—he said."

"Jim!"

"They were my fingerprints—I remember making them and putting my initials there. But I'll swear—"

He stopped short.

"What?" said Caroline quickly.

He laughed again.

"I was going to say I could swear I hadn't torn the page out, but I can't—I can't swear to anything. Go on. Are there any more damning bits of evidence?"

Caroline clenched her hands.

"The cook's nephew saw you in the drive. He used to caddy for you—a boy called Willie Bowman."

"Willie? He knew me?"

"Yes, he did. He told his aunt—he said it was about midnight."

"That's a bit of bad luck, but it can't be helped. I don't seem to have covered my tracks very well—do I?"

He saw Caroline looking at him with loving, anxious eyes. The candle light was bright on her ruffled hair. He looked away from her and spoke from where he stood with his back to the hearth.

"I've got to make up my mind what I'm going to do."

"Yes."

He squared his shoulders. "What I should like to do is to open up the house, get in servants, and go about my affairs as I've a perfect right to do."

"Yes," said Caroline. Her eyes brightened. Jim at Hale Place—Jim quite near! It was like the most lovely dream. But she knew quite well that it was a dream.

"That's what I'd like to do. What I expect I ought to do is to go up to town and see Robert Arbuthnot." He paused. The pause lasted a long time. . . .

"What I'm going to do is what will look most horribly damning if things go wrong and it comes to a trial. I'm going to mark time." He began to pace the room again with a certain restless energy. "You see, if I come out into the open, everyone will ask me questions, and every time it's a question I can't answer, I'll be making things worse. Where have I been—and what have I been doing. Sometimes I'm on the edge of remembering, too I want to give myself a chance—stay here and keep quiet."

Tomorrow, Playey has a highly important letter.

## MAIL INSURANCE WARNING ISSUED

SALEM, Ore., Oct. 27.—(AP) State Insurance Commissioner A. H. Averill

recommended citizens of Oregon do not purchase insurance by mail or from companies not authorized to operate in Oregon. The following companies were listed by Averill as unlicensed in Oregon: Postal Life & Casualty Insurance Co., Kansas City, Mo.; National Aid Society, Springfield, Mo.; National Protective Insurance Association of

Kansas City, Mo.; Western Health Association, San Francisco; Capital Mutual Benefit Association, Denver; Sterling Association, Beverly Hills, Cal.; National Security Assn., of Springfield, Mo.; New Deal Burial Association, Dallas, Tex.; Economic Mutual Life Association, Los Angeles; Capital States Benefit Association, Willow Hill, Ill.; American Aid As-

sociation, South Bend, Ind.; All American Association, Hollywood; and Policyholders' Life Insurance Association, Los Angeles. No Fatalities SALEM, Ore., Oct. 28.—(AP)—The state industrial accident commission listed 510 accidents and no fatalities in Oregon industries the past week.

TICK FEVER FOLLOWS EASTERN OREGON HUNT THE DALLES, Ore., Oct. 28.—(AP) Pat Foley, prominent hotel man of The Dalles and Heppner, is seriously ill with spotted fever. It was said at the hospital here today. The fever is believed to have been contracted from a bite of a sheep tick while on a recent hunting trip in the Siskiyou district in eastern Oregon.

DALLAS, Oct. 28.—(AP)—A self-inflicted rifle wound which literally blasted his face away will probably prove fatal to Raymond Honor, 35, hospital attendants said here today. Honor was recently paroled from the state hospital and was known to be melancholy at times.

## S'MATTER POP—

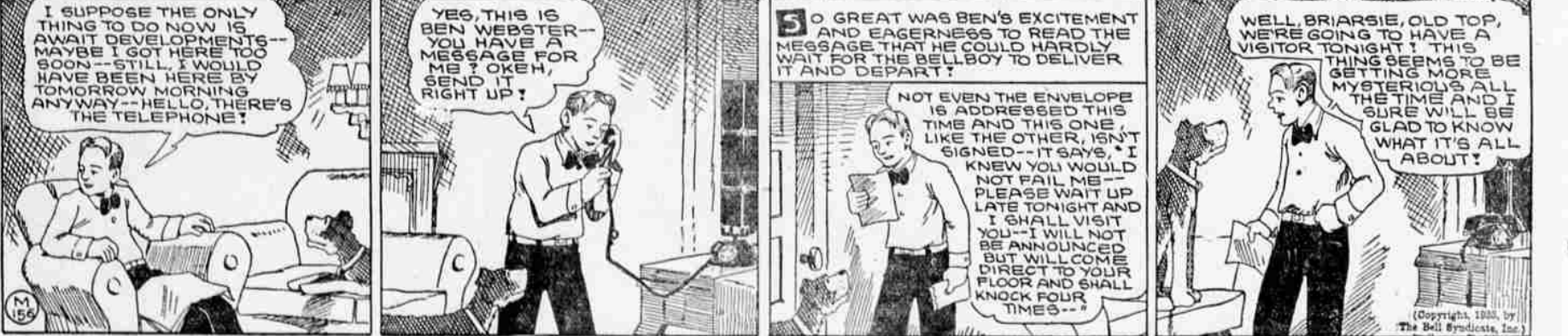
By C. M. PAYNE



## TAILSPIN TOMMY—In And Out Of The Grave-Yard



## BOUND TO WIN—The Second Message



## THE NEBBS—Success



## BRINGING UP FATHER



## ARABS KILLED IN RIOTING AT JAFFA

JAFFA, Palestine, Oct. 28.—(AP)—Police fired on a crowd in Jaffa today, killing an undetermined number

and wounding others. A number of police also were injured.

The situation was tense all morning, but it increased after the midday prayers when large crowds flocked from the mosques.

A crowd armed with firearms, sticks, stones and other missiles, endeavored to break through a police cordon.

After making several baton charges the police opened fire.

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