

I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

SYNOPSIS: Nicholas French had only just been freed of the charge of murdering John Osborne when two mysterious Russians threatened him with death if he did not hand over a formula Osborne had stolen. Then Molly O'Brien, to whom the valuable formula belongs, turns up. Jerry Mordant, Nicholas' friend, has just heard the whole story. Nicholas shows him a letter from the chemist engineer, Sir William Avon, asking for an appointment. Jerry declares Sir William is mixed up in the matter of the missing formula.

Chapter 17

IMPORTANT DATE

"HERE'S one objection," I said. "If Sir William knew Osborne why didn't he come forward and give evidence at the trial?"

"He probably had very good reasons," returned Jerry. "These big financial bugs aren't like ordinary human beings. I don't suppose he'd raise a finger to stop you being hanged; not unless it happened to suit his own book." He stared at the letter again for a moment, and then glanced at his watch. "Have you rung him up?" he demanded.

I shook my head. "Not yet. I was only just finishing breakfast when you came, and one can't telephone with one's mouth full of omelet."

"Well, you get on to him straight away. He's sure to be at his office by now. Tell him that you've got his note and fix up an appointment with him as soon as you can."

As a result of our frequent sailing trips together, I have developed the bad habit of obeying Jerry's orders almost instinctively. Making my way upstairs to the bedroom I took off the receiver, and having consulted the letter which I had brought with me, asked for City 3037. In a few moments I heard a brisk voice at the other end.

"Hello! Avon and Sons."

"My name's French," I said. "I should like to speak to Sir William Avon with reference to a note which I received from him last night."

"Will you hold on, please?"

A brief silence followed.

"Hello! Is that Mr. Nicholas French?"

"It is," I admitted.

"Sir William Avon's private secretary speaking. I am afraid Sir William is out of town today. He has had to go to Birmingham on important business, but he hopes to be back some time this evening. He left instructions that if you rang up, I was to ask you whether you could lunch with him tomorrow at the Park View Hotel in Piccadilly."

"I shall be delighted to," I said. "Good! That's settled then. One-fifteen tomorrow, Park View Hotel, Piccadilly. When you arrive, will you please ask for Sir William's private suite?"

"I will," I said.

"Thank you. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

"Crisp, and to the point," I observed, as I descended the staircase, "whatever they do at Tresham House, they certainly waste no time."

"What did he say?" demanded Jerry.

I repeated the conversation, and at the end of it he nodded.

"So much the better. Give us a chance to look round and make our arrangements. You must both clear out of this—that's obvious."

"It's not obvious to me," I protested. "Why should I be driven from home by a couple of comic Dagboes?"

"Because if you stop here," said Jerry placidly, "they'll probably cut your throat."

"I THINK he's right," intervened Molly. "They've made up their minds that you've got the formula, and Dimitri is the kind of man who will stop at nothing." She paused. "I've a feeling inside me that the other one is even more dangerous."

"Sensible girl," remarked Jerry approvingly. He turned to me. "You're coming back to Whitehall Court, and you're going to stay at the flat until this business is settled. You'll be quite safe there with George and Dawson to look after you."

"But what about Molly?" I asked. "That's a rather more difficult question." He eyed her for a moment thoughtfully. "You won't mind my asking," he said, "but how are you off with regard to money?"

"I've quite a lot," she replied. "Father left me nearly thirty thousand dollars."

"Well, in that case, if you don't mind being extravagant for a week or so, I think the best thing you could do would be to take a room at the Milan Hotel. It will cost you about a pound a day but it will be well worth the expense. You see,

those beauties are probably watching the studio, and after what's happened they're not likely to let you out of their sight. They may even have guessed who you are. If you were by yourself in a small flat or anything of that sort, it would be quite easy for them to roll up and make themselves unpleasant. In a big public place like the Milan you'll be as right as rain."

"It sounds a very good plan." She hesitated. "I suppose I shall be able to see something of—of you two?"

"Why, of course. That's the idea. My flat's only a few minutes away."

"You'll see lots of me," I assured her. "As a fellow director of the A. D. Syndicate I shall need frequent consultations."

"Why shouldn't we push off as soon as we're ready?" suggested Jerry. "I've got the car outside. It will take you both a little while to pack your things, and by the time we've got them there and fixed up the room, we shall all be ripe for a spot of grub. After two months of yacht cooking I can do with a decent meal."

Molly jumped up. "I'll go along now," she said. "A quarter of an hour will be plenty for me."

I rose, too. "I'll come with you and see that it's all right; you might walk in and find Mr. Stellman crouching behind the coal box."

"Shout to me if he is," said Jerry. "I love a little exercise before lunch; it improves my appetite."

I nodded towards the table. "In that case," I said, "you can wash up the breakfast things."

I HAD never yet been inside the adjoining studio, but when Molly opened the door and I followed her in, I discovered that it was practically a duplicate of mine. It looked perhaps a shade larger owing to the absence of furniture. Except for a rug, a table and a couple of chairs, the place was empty; its depressing effect being further heightened by the fact that the big north window had apparently not been cleaned since the departure of its previous tenant.

"I haven't bothered about making it comfortable," explained Molly. "I didn't know how long I was going to be here, so I just ordered in what I wanted from one of those installment shops."

"It's not exactly an ideal place for hiding in," I observed. "Still, now I'm here, I'd better have a look round."

I peered first into the kitchen, and then, mounting the stairs, made a brief examination of the bathroom and the bedroom. In each case I drew a comforting blank.

"All clear," I announced as I rejoined Molly in the studio. "If you're not afraid of being left alone..."

"The only thing I'm frightened of here," she interrupted, "are the black-beetles."

"They won't worry you now," I assured her. "Black-beetles are like actors—they never get up until the pubs are open." I paused. "What do you think of Jerry?" I inquired.

"He's a dear," she said promptly. "I never knew English baronets were like that; I thought they all wore eyeglasses."

"That's only in the films," I explained. "In real life they're practically harmless." I took out the revolver and laid it on the table. "You may as well have this back," I said. "I shall feel more comfortable if I know you've got it with you."

"So shall I," she agreed.

When I got back to my own quarters I found Jerry still lounging in the same attitude. He was puffing away meditatively at his pipe, and had apparently made no attempt to carry out my parting suggestion.

"Can't see anyone about," I remarked, "but that doesn't mean that we're not watched. I wouldn't mind betting that they've got the number of your car already."

"More than likely, I should say," He stretched himself luxuriously. "You don't know how grateful I feel to you, Nick. I hadn't a notion what to do with myself the next few weeks, and this little business will fill in the time nicely. By the way, I'm rather taken with that girl of yours—she's extremely pretty."

"Not precisely the word I should have used," I said, "but I entirely agree with the sentiment."

"I wonder whether she likes me?" "She says you're a dear," but she seems a little disappointed because you haven't got an eyeglass."

"I'll wear two if it will give her any pleasure." He jerked his head towards the bedroom. "Now you shove along and collect your traps."

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Nicholas finds a young ally, tomorrow, in the Milan hotel.

TINKLING BELLS AT SALVATION KETTLES REMINDER OF POOR

The tinkling of bells was to be heard on Medford streets yesterday and, rushed to see whether or not Santa Claus, with his proverbial reindeer and sleigh bells, had come to town. Santa Claus was not to be seen, however, but those who went to look overed Salvation Army lassies ringing Christmas bells for the poor before the red tripods and pots which come to be a part of the Christmas picture in every community.

The tinkling bells are a reminder that "The poor are with us always," but they are also a reminder that wherever the flag of the Salvation Army flies there are no "forgotten men, women, or children."

Generous citizens helped to "keep the pot boiling" yesterday and Captain Dur, sm. was most grateful to those who did their part. He asks, however, that other citizens who have not yet visited a kettle do so during the next few days and make a gift toward the work the Army is planning to do this Christmas. Citizens are also invited to drop in slips of paper containing the names and addresses of needy families who might otherwise be overlooked.

It is interesting to note that the majority of the gifts in the kettles are nickels and dimes, with a goodly sprinkling of pennies. Many of these gifts come from little children who are happy to share a little of their Christmas money with other children less fortunate than themselves. No one need hesitate to make a gift because it must be a small one. "Every little bit helps."

Those who have no money to spare but wish to give a can of fruit or vegetables, or other supplies, are invited to bring these to the Salvation Army at 411 East Main street, or phone 356 and a car will be sent to take whatever you have to give.

ROOSEVELT HONOR ROLL ANNOUNCED

The following pupils of the Roosevelt school were on the honor roll for the second six weeks' period:

1B—Ronald Britton, Virgil Gillette, Floyd Jones, Robert Zundel, Jean Bolger, Bev Jean Dally.

1A—Elaine Winkle.

2B—Betsy Murray, Ann Conroy, Madeline Heath, Dolores Ray.

2A—Norman House.

3B—Harold Arthur, Luella Arnold, Richard Bishop, Ruth Andrews, Betty Deaver, Joan Elliott, Bernice Myers, Jo Ann Humphrey.

4B—Robert Fairchild, Betty Frey, June Jarmin.

5A—Robert Grey, Jimmie Elliott.

5A—Jeanette House.

6A—Carroll Carkin.

TOM FLYNN'S YULE TREE NOW AGLOW

In keeping with the Yuletide spirit to brighten up the homes of Medford Thomas K. Flynn, of the Flynn Electric Company, has erected a most beautiful Christmas tree at his home on North Oakdale.

The tree, a 28-foot fir, is entirely covered with silver, heavily clustered with blue lights, and surmounted by a single star of red and green lights. At night the blue lights set off the silver of the tree to produce a startling effect.

Eight gallons of silver paint were sprayed onto the tree to produce the remarkable effect, and there are 252 of the sapphire bulbs. It took one man four days to place the thirteen hundred feet of wires necessary.

Flynn did not erect the tree to compete in the Christmas lighting contest and the tree will not burn that night. The purpose, he stated, was to add impetus to the home lighting movement, and to give pleasure to those who will be able to see it. The tree will be burning at 219 North Oakdale from now until the first of the year, Flynn said today.

'FLYING SQUADRON' HEAD WILL TALK

Hon. Oliver W. Stewart, president of the Flying Squadron Foundation, and former member of the Illinois state legislature, will speak at the First Baptist church tonight (Sunday) at 7:30.

Hon. Stewart is a veteran prohibition leader, and will give a discussion of prohibition, which he states is an urgent national problem.

Some of the points to be discussed are: "Why did the drys quit?" "Will they return to the string line?" "Was the Eighteenth Amendment a Mistake?" "Can the church lead to victory?" "Can the drys be united in one army?" "Do we need a new party?"

MOTHER'S PRESENT

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PROUDLY SURVEYS FIRST CHRISTMAS PRESENT HE HAS EVER BOUGHT FOR MOTHER ALL BY HIMSELF - A TEN-CENT PICTURE FRAME

CAN'T STAND THE SUSPENSE AND ASKS WELL WOULD'NT SHE LIKE A NICE PICTURE FRAME

GUYS WILLIAMS 12-15

AFTER CONSIDERABLE STRUGGLE WITH TISSUE PAPER AND RED RIBBON GETS IT WRAPPED UP

BEAMS BROADLY AS MOTHER, GETTING THE CUE, SAYS A PICTURE FRAME IS WHAT SHE WANTS ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE

SAYS OF COURSE HE CAN GIVE HER HIS PRESENT UNTIL CHRISTMAS, BUT WHISKS IT OUT FROM BEHIND BACK TO GIVE HER A PEEK

GLUYAS WILLIAMS

MOTHER ENUMERATES SEVERAL THINGS, BUT NOT WHAT HE'D HOPED SHE'D SAY. ANXIOUSLY STEALS A LOOK AT HIS PRESENT

HIDES IT IN BUREAU DRAWER, CAUTIONING HER NOT TO LOOK THERE BECAUSE HE WANTS IT TO BE A SURPRISE

By C M Payne

By Hal Forrest

S'MATTER POP-

POP, WAS THAT STUFF IN THAT RED BOTTLE 'HAIR SLICKIN' STUFF?"

NO, GLUE!

OH!

HI-I-I, WILLYUM! NO WONDER YA CAN'T GET YER HAT OFF!

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By C M Payne

By Hal Forrest

TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Captain Is Delighted

YOU SAY THAT DON CASTAMETO WILL BE SURPRISED TO SEE YOU—WHY?"

PARDON! A SLIP OF THE TONGUE, AS ONE MIGHT SAY—WHAT I HAD INTENDED TO SAY IS—AM SURPRISED!

(MAY I PRESENT CAPTAIN JUAN ORTEGA— SENORITA CASTAMETO—)

DELIGHTED— I AM INDEED HONORED TO MEET THE CHARMING DAUGHTER OF DON ALVARADO CASTAMETO!

I AM GLAD TO MEET YOU, CAPTAIN— WILL YOU NOT ENTER OUR HACIENDA AND MEET MY FATHER—?

WHEN I FIRST LOOKED INTO YOUR LOVELY EYES, SENORITA, I ALMOST FORGOT THAT I HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR YOUR FATHER—

By Hal Forrest

By Hal Forrest

By Hal Forrest

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—A Bad Influence

BOYS, DID I HEAR THE NAME O' CHESTER CHEETS MENTIONED?"

YEAH, BEN WAS AGKIN' ABOUT HIM! I TOLD HIM!

WE BOTH COULD TELL BEN ABOUT HIM, WILLIE, BUT THIS IS A BRIGHT, SUNSHINY DAY, WE'RE FLOATING PEACEFULLY ALONG THIS BEAUTIFUL RIVER, THERE'S HAPPINESS IN OUR HEARTS AND—

-- WE DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING TO CONTAMINATE THE ATMOSPHERE! IF WE BANDY THAT NAME ABOUT I KNOW IT'LL RAIN, WE THREE WILL BE TOOK DOWN SICK, BRIAR AN GWEN WILL GET THE COLIC---

-- AN LOTS WORSE THINGS ARE APT TO HAPPEN! PLEASE, NOW, WILLIE, DON'T MENTION HIS NAME UNTIL BEN GETS US ORGANIZED-- THEN WE'LL GO AFTER HIM!

I HOPE IT'LL BE SOON, ARCHIE!

By Edwin Alder

THE NEBBS—Just a Square Guy

WELL RUDY, I'M BACK IN HARNESS— I SAW A FEW LEAN YEARS BUT EVERY WEIT CANDIDATE WENT THROUGH LAST ELECTION.

I'M NOT YOUNG ANYMORE AND I'M NOT FIGURING FUTURES— I'M GOING TO GET MINE AND KEEP IT— A POOR GUY LOOKS AWFUL DUMB— YOU SHOULD HAVE PLAYED CHECKERS WITH ME, RUDY, WHEN WE RAN YOU FOR SENATOR.

CAESAR, I NEVER PROMISED A MAN ANYTHING THAT I DIDN'T HAVE TO GIVE— I NEVER WENT INTO A CONTRACT THAT THE OTHER FELLOW COULDN'T SIGN WITH HIS EYES CLOSED— I'D NEVER MAKE A POLITICIAN— THERE'S ONLY ONE SIDE TO ME.

By Edwin Alder

By Edwin Alder

By Edwin Alder

BRINGING UP FATHER

DADDY! MOTHER IS GOING TO CALL YOU UP THIS AFTERNOON, SO BE SURE TO BE IN YOUR OFFICE.

THAT'S BETTER THAN HAVIN' HER HERE.

THAT MUST BE HER NOW— HELLO! YES, MAGGIE, WHAT'S THAT? YOU SAY YOU RECEIVED A LETTER FROM YOUR BROTHER?

YOU SAY HE IS SAILIN' FER EUROPE? WELL, NOW! THAT'S FINE—

TO HIMSELF— I HOPE THE BOAT ONLY GOES HALF-WAY OVER—

HE'S GOING OVER TO GET MY OTHER BROTHER AND BRING HIM BACK TO VISIT US—

By George McManis

By George McManis

SCOUTS TO BE HOSTS AT CHRISTMAS PARTY

Boy Scout troop four will play Santa Claus to a group of small children Saturday afternoon, December 22, at Scout headquarters. Each child will be presented with a gift and candy. The remainder of the afternoon will be spent in playing games and enjoying other amusements.

Troop four is also planning to present a group of plays January 3 at St. Mark's Guild Hall, the opening curtain being scheduled for 8 p. m. A small admission will be charged and tickets may be obtained in advance at the chamber of commerce, Scout headquarters or from any member of the troop.

EAGLE PT. STUDENTS WILL GIVE PROGRAM

EAGLE POINT, Dec. 15.—(Sp.)—The Eagle Point high school student body is sponsoring a Christmas program to be given in the Eagle Point grange hall Thursday, December 20. The program will be composed of a one-act play, "The Tree," under the direction of Mrs. Winslow, orchestra numbers directed by R. A. Botta, glee club numbers and vocal solos directed by the music teacher, Miss Olson, and two Christmas readings given by high school girls.

Radioes old, or radioes new, they sweep their best when we get through— "Pratt's can do it." Phone 22

Bicycles—new and used— get wet at Medford-Cycle, 23 N. Fir.