

I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

SYNOPSIS: Just as Nicholas French and Sir William Avon leave the latter's apartment after having exchanged information about the missing formula which both wish to find, Nicholas hears a familiar voice. It is that of the man who two days before threatened to murder him if he did not produce the valuable formula. Nick, Molly O'Brien, rightful owner of the missing paper, and Jerry Morland are determined to trace it down. Sir William wants to buy it.

Chapter 23
MR. ORLOFF

Sir William and Stelman stood there for perhaps thirty seconds smiling and chatting. I had just sufficient time to get a grip on my scatted wits, and then, with a farewell wave of his hand, Sir William turned towards the car.

"Stop for a moment at the Milan Hotel, Parker," he said.

The chauffeur arranged the rug over our knees, closed the door and walked round to his seat. There was a warning foot, and with an almost imperceptible jerk, we drew away from the curb. As far as I was aware Mr. Stelman had not even glanced at me.

"It's a peculiar thing," observed Sir William, "but whenever I'm in a hurry I always seem to run across someone who insists upon stopping and talking to me."

I managed to force a laugh. "Most annoying," I agreed. "By the way, if it's not a rude question, who was this particular offender? I'm nearly certain I've seen him before."

"Not at all impossible. Most people have met Mr. Peter Orloff at some time or other. He's a gentleman of many activities."

"Peter Orloff," I repeated. "What is he—a Russian?"

"Oh yes—he makes no secret about it. He is the head of a large trading concern which operates here and on the Continent. Exactly what its position is I can't say. It sets out to be an entirely independent organization, but it must obviously have a working arrangement of some sort with the authorities at Moscow. Anyhow, Orloff himself is a very clever fellow, and there is no doubt that he has plenty of money behind him. He carried through a big business deal with my firm only a few months ago."

For a moment or two I made no reply. I was torn with hesitation as to whether I should tell my companion the truth, or whether for the present it would be wiser to keep my discovery to myself. I think it was the memory of that half ironic question of his which finally decided me.

"Sounds quite a mysterious character!" I said lightly. "I expect I shall open the paper one morning and see that the police have been raiding his headquarters. That's what usually seems to happen with these Russian trading companies."

Sir William smiled grimly. "I don't fancy Orloff will ever figure in a political scandal. He holds too useful a position to foul his own nest."

HE relapsed into silence until the car turned into the Strand, when, with a friendly gesture, he laid his hand on my arm.

"Well, good-bye for the present, Mr. Trench," he said. "I am glad to have had this talk with you, and I hope before very long I may be in a position to send you some satisfactory news. If you would care to bring Miss O'Brien round to see me I should be most interested to make her acquaintance."

"I'll fix it up as soon as I've been to Hambridge," I said.

He nodded. "And in the meantime, if you will pardon a word of advice, I would suggest that the less you go about alone for the next week or two the safer you are likely to be. It is true that we are in London, and not in Chicago, but all the same, American visitors who carry guns and labor under a financial grievance are not the sort to be treated too casually."

"So it occurred to me," I said. "That's the very reason why I've gone to stay with Jerry."

As I spoke we came to a sudden halt in a traffic block, a few yards short of the entrance to the Milan.

"This will do me all right," I added. "Thanks for the lift, and I'm much obliged to you for promising to send me the keys. If I make any discoveries down there I'll let you know at once."

We shook hands, and seizing my chance before the car moved on, I opened the door and slipped out on the pavement.

There must have been at least a dozen people sitting and standing

\$7000 SERA COIN TO GRANTS PASS

PORTLAND, Dec. 22—(AP)—Expenditure of \$7,000 of SERA money in Grants Pass, for enlarging and straightening major drainage outlets there for relief of congestion during storms, was authorized by the state relief administration today. Of the total, \$5,293 will go for wages.

The committee approved \$5,000 for a public library building for Merrill, Klamath county, on plans drawn by Howard R. Perrin of Klamath Falls. The building will be of rubble masonry, 51 by 30 feet in size.

The relief committee also approved work on the state fish hatchery at Enterprise: repairs to and distribution of donated clothing in Lane county; library work at Enterprise; hay and livestock census in Morrow county; remodeling air World War veterans houses, state-owned, at La Grande, and excavation and laying of new trench pipe at Wallawa.

HE gave his instructions to a waiter who was hovering in the neighborhood, and we were making our way towards the elevator when just outside the entrance to the cloak-room I espied the diminutive figure of my young friend, Jimmy Fox. I suddenly remembered our talk of the previous day.

"HELLO, Jimmy," I said, putting up. "Brought those drawings with you?"

He beamed at me shyly. "Yes, sir."

"Good," I observed. "I'll have a look at them before I go. I suppose I shall find you somewhere about here?"

"Yes, sir. I'm on duty in the lounge till six-thirty."

"Well, I won't forget," I promised him. "I'll be down in about an hour's time."

I followed the others into the elevator, which came to a halt on the fourth floor. Molly's room was round the first corner at the end of a short corridor—a pleasant airy apartment looking out onto the Embankment. It was comfortably furnished with a sofa, two easy chairs and a writing table, while a tall leather screen on one side of the bed protected its occupant from any possible draught.

I looked round with an approving nod. "They haven't done you too badly," I remarked.

"It's a lovely room," agreed Molly. "That's what comes of being introduced by a baronet. If I'd arrived alone I expect they'd have tucked me away in an attic."

As she spoke there was a sound of steps in the passage outside, and the waiter to whom Jerry had given his order appeared with the tray. He deposited it on the writing table, and retiring with a shilling tip, closed the door after him.

"Now let's get to work," Jerry dropped down into one of the chairs. "What's this news of yours, and why was old Avon so desperately keen on seeing you?"

Sitting down with Molly on the sofa, I plunged straight into my story. As near as I could I repeated word for word exactly what Sir William had told me, while leaning forward with intent faces the two of them listened to me in absorbed silence.

"I don't know whether you'll think I did right," I concluded, "but it seemed to me that the most sensible thing was to tell him the truth. Anyhow, we'd nothing to lose by it. I could see that although he was prepared to deal with Osborne he wasn't really out to swindle us. All he wanted was to get hold of the invention, and if he could manage that through the rightful owner, it would obviously be a much safer and better way than by doing business with a thief."

Jerry nodded. "So he knows the whole story."

"Everything," I said. "I gave him a full account of my little dust-up at the studio, I told him all about Molly and all about you, and I finally explained how we'd talked it over and decided that the only course open to us was to tackle the job ourselves."

"And what did he say to that?"

"Nothing very encouraging. I'm afraid he doesn't take us seriously as sleuths. All the same he's going to let me have the keys of the factory, and he's promised to give us a note to the people at the farm where Osborne boarded."

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A spy enters the plot, tomorrow.

SCVIET SILENT ON ZINOVIEFF ARREST

MOSCOW, Dec. 22—(AP)—The soviet foreign office refused today to confirm or deny rumors that Gregory Zinovieff and Leo Kameneff, former leaders of the communist international, have been arrested in connection with a counter-revolutionary plot.

(The London Daily Express said the two were arrested at the gates of the Kremlin yesterday and face execution as a reprisal for the assassination December 1 of Sergei Kiroff, high soviet official, at Leningrad.)

Soviet newspapers charge that plot with which rumors linked Zinovieff and Kameneff, was responsible for the slaying of Kiroff.

Authorities hold firm to the belief she committed suicide by wading deliberately into Carmel bay.

A deep sea diver was on his way from Monterey to probe beneath the help of Cooke's Cove to see if the body might have become entangled and was being held out of sight below the surface.

Searchers found an expensive slipper, identified as hers, in the kelp last night.

Plans to dynamite the Carmel river and the cove to bring the body of the surface were abandoned in favor of the diver.

Byrns Lands New Deal

MIDDLETOWN, O. (UP)—President Roosevelt's new deal was the utility commissioner from continuing a second investigation of the operations. The hearing of the request was set for December 24.

Commissioner Charles M. Thomas

SOCIETY WOMAN BELIEVED DEAD

CARMEL, Cal., Dec. 22—(AP) Conversation of Joseph Schaffner, Chicago clothing manufacturer on his arrival from the east today, indicated he had given up for dead his missing wife, Mrs. Elliot Rose Schaffner.

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PIERCE TO SETTLE FEDERAL JUDGESHIP

PORTLAND, Ore., Dec. 22—(UP)—Congressman Walter M. Pierce of Oregon was quoted tonight in a special Washington dispatch to determine within a few days if an Oregon man has a chance for appointment to the federal court of appeals.

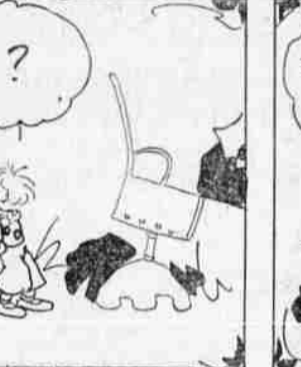
Pierce said the four Oregon men who have the most support are Evan Reames of Medford, who was Indorsed last year by Pierce and Carl C. Donough, state democratic chairman; Bert E. Haney, Circuit Judge George Skisworth of Eugene, and Lotus Langley, retiring Multnomah county district attorney.

BUS LINE SEEKS NEW RESTRAINER

SALEM, Ore., Dec. 22—(AP)—The National Bus Lines, Inc., today asked a supplementary order from Judge L. O. Lewelling of the Marion county circuit court, restraining the public utility commissioner from continuing a second investigation of the operations. The hearing of the request was set for December 24.

Commissioner Charles M. Thomas

SMATTER POP



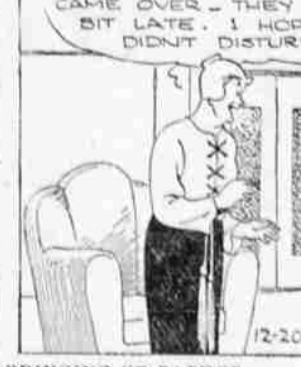
TAILSPIN TOMMY—An Affair of Honor!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—His One Request



THE NEBBS—Why Didn't You Tell Me?



CARSON BALKS AT KISSING SINGER

PORTLAND, Ore., Dec. 22—(UP)—Mayor Joseph B. Carson yesterday failed miserably to carry on the tradition of Mayor George L. (Kissing George) Baker, his predecessor.

Mayor Baker used to kiss every celebrity that came to town. He greeted Mary Garden, famed singer, with resounding snatches and Mary remembered it and asked for George when she returned to Portland this week.

Mayor Carson met Mary at a luncheon today, but he didn't kiss her once. Instead, somewhat flustered by the promptings of civic leaders to not let George down, Carson shook Mary's hand vigorously on four occasions.

LIQUOR PERMITS READY FOR 1935

Earl Foy, manager of the state liquor store, announced that liquor permits went on sale Friday for the year 1935. The permits, which sell for \$1, will be good for the rest of this year as well as next, if purchased immediately. There has been talk of making a reduction in the price to 50 cents, which may be made in the next session of the legislature. It was announced.

Foy stated that several special numbers are on hand at the liquor store for the Christmas season, among which are Town Tavern re-selling for 75 cents per pint, and Portugal post, both light and dark, selling for \$1.05 per quart.

BRINGING UP FATHER

