

# I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

**SYNOPSIS:** Nicholas French, Jerry Mordant and Molly O'Brien are about to set down to a dinner table in the Essex inn where they are looking for information about a formula worth millions which has been stolen from Molly. They are discussing plans in Molly's hotel room when Jerry catches a waiter listening. They fear he is in the service of Peter Orloff, an unscrupulous Russian also trying to find the formula, and Nick arranges with a woman at Molly's hotel to watch things for him.

## CHAPTER 27 KIDNAPPED!

AS BY no means happy in my mind, as I mounted the stairs and let myself into the flat. The light was burning in the hall, and through the open door opposite I caught sight of a tray set out in readiness on the dining-room table.

I took it from this that Dawson had retired to rest, and deciding that I might as well avail myself of his forethought, I mixed a drink and carried it into my own room.

Although it was my third day at liberty, the novelty of being back once more amongst civilized surroundings had not yet completely worn off. Compared with my Wauds worth cell, this pleasantly furnished room, with its soft carpet and white sheepskin rug, seemed indeed the acme of luxurious comfort.

I gave an appreciative grunt, and depositing my glass on the club floor, sank down into the big easy arm-chair which stood in front of the fireplace.

With a final cigaret to aid my reflections, I sat staring at the empty grate. Before my eyes floated a kind of tantalizing vision of Molly which, much to my annoyance, refused to materialize into a really satisfactory portrait.

All I could visualize at a time was some little detached and fascinating memory of her—the forget-me-not blue of her eyes, the glint of the sun on her hair, or the delicious provocation of her lips as she broke into a smile.

It was an alluring occupation trying to piece together these elusive glimpses, and the minutes slipped away with surprising rapidity. I got quite a shock indeed when, on happening to glance up at the clock on the mantelpiece, I suddenly discovered that it was a quarter past twelve—a fact which at the next moment Big Ben obligingly confirmed.

"Go to bed," I said to myself sternly. "Go to bed and stop musing. You've only known the girl for three days, and besides that she's already in love with Jerry."

I bent forward to unlace my shoes, and as I did so, the sharp trill of an electric bell rang, out somewhere in the back regions. The sound was so unexpected that I gave an involuntary start.

"Now who in blazes is that?" I ejaculated.

An instinct of impending danger swept through me, and scrambling to my feet I glanced hastily round the room. The only useful looking object that met my eye was a heavy old-fashioned brass pistol, suspended above the dressing-table by way of an ornament. I took it down and, tipping quickly across the room, opened the door.

At precisely the same moment Dawson made his appearance. He emerged silently from his own quarters, clad in a long blue dressing-gown. He was wearing carpet slippers, and his usually sleek hair was a trifle dishevelled, but in spite of these drawbacks he still presented an atmosphere of complete composure.

"WOULD you like me to ascertain who it is, sir?" he inquired, stepping forward.

I checked him with a gesture. "I'm going to find out for myself," I replied.

I advanced to the door, holding my pistol by the barrel, and bending down lifted up the flap of the letter-box.

"Who's that?" I asked.

"Me, sir," came a voice. "Jimmy Fox."

My heart gave a sudden jump, but by a tremendous effort I managed to keep steady. "What's that?" I asked.

"All right, Dawson," I said. "You can go back to bed. It's only a boy from the hotel with a message for me."

"Very good, sir." His glance travelled dispassionately towards the pistol. "If you should happen to want me, sir, perhaps you will press the bell."

I undid the chain, and wrenching

round the key, I swung open the door. In front of me stood the small figure of my protégé in his Milan livery. He had no cap on, his face was streaked with rain and dirt, and he was breathing loudly in short, hurried gasps.

"I caught him by the arm and pulled him inside."

"What's the matter?" I demanded.

"The young lady!" he panted. "She's gone, sir—they've took 'er away!"

I felt as if a pack of ice had been suddenly thrust down inside my waistcoat.

"Wait a moment," I managed to jerk out. "Get your breath before you try to talk." I dragged forward the nearest chair. "Sit quiet still for a few seconds, then tell me exactly what's happened."

I stepped across to close the front door, and switching on the hall light, came back to where I had left him.

"Now, Jimmy," I said.

"It was just about half past ten, sir. I'd slipped downstairs to wash me 'ands, and there was two of the staff waiters talkin'. One was tellin' the other that the lady in Number eighty-six had suddenly come over very ill, and that they were takin' her away quiet, so as no one should know nothing about it."

"When I heard that, sir, I thought of what you'd told me. I 'opped out quick, and by a bit of luck I run straight into one of the maids who works on that floor. 'Yes, it's quite true,' she says when I asks 'er 'Flossie—that's one of the other girls, sir—'Flossie' heard the bell ring, and when she goes up there was the poor lady lying on the floor."

"By the mercy o' God," she says, 'there 'appened to be a doctor sleepin' in the next room. They calls 'im in, and as soon as he'd had a look at 'er, he says she must be took off to the 'ospital quick for an operation. Offered to drive 'er there in his own car. They're bringin' 'er down now, by the back staircase, he says, 'so as 'ot to upset the other visitors.'"

HE STOPPED for breath, and with the back of his hand wiped the moisture from off his forehead.

"Well, sir, after what you'd said yesterday, I reckoned there might be something wrong. I'll 'ave a look anyway, I thinks to myself, so with out sayin' nothin' to nobody I slips out by the side entrance."

"When I got round to the back there they was just liftin' the young lady into the car. It come to me then all of a sudden, sir, that if this 'ere was a put up job you'd 'e wantin' to know where they'd took her to."

"I hadn't much time to think properly, sir, but I see a taxi bloke on the other side of the road, and I nips straight across to 'im. 'You follow that car,' I says, 'and don't you let 'im give you the slip. Stick to 'im tight,' I says, 'and there's five bob for yourself when he pulls up.'"

He paused again to repeat the same operation.

"Go on, Jimmy," I said hoarsely.

"It wasn't 'arf a chase, sir—not you might call a reg'lar bloomin' circus. Right through the West End 'e went, down Oxford Street and up past Paddington. I ain't been in that part o' London, not much, and after a bit I 'adn't a notion where 'e was takin' us."

"My bloke stuck to 'im good and proper though. At last 'e whips sharp round a corner, and just for a moment I thought as 'ow we'd lost 'im. Instead of follerin' 'im as you'd expect, my bloke goes straight on past the turnin', and then pulls up sudden under a lamp-post."

"It's all right, sonny," 'e says, when I jumps out. 'That's a blind alley—that is. 'E'll 'ave to stop there whether 'e likes it or not. 'Sides,' 'e says, 'I've 'ad enough of this game I 'ave. I done the job for yer, and now you brass up same as you promised.'"

"Half a tick, Jimmy," I interrupted. "Were you out of sight of the car while all this was happenin'?"

He nodded. "Ten or twelve yards along the road, sir. The fare was sharp and to get off quick, I bings 'im a ten shilling note outer the money you'd give me, and less it back to where they'd turned off."

"I spots 'em all right, soon as I know me 'ead round the corner, it was on 'a little short street with a kinder builder's yard place this end of it. Past that there was just a couple o' mouldy lookin' houses all by 'emselves an' 'opposite o' them some redlin's an' bushes."

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Monday, Nick and Jimmy rush into danger.

## SINUS SUFFERERS PROMISED RELIEF WITHOUT SURGERY

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 28.—(AP)—Relief for sinus infection sufferers without the misery of mechanical treatment was predicted today in a new method developed by Dr. A. P. Krueger of the University of California.

Dr. Krueger said he believed the method would work generally except in trouble developed by actual physical obstructions in the sinus, which can only be removed by the knife.

His treatment, available in general practice, makes use of agents extracted from the patient's own bacteria. A commercial preparation also is being compounded, but is not as particularly successful as the individual preparation, he said.

The Krueger method, developed in association with Dr. P. C. Graciar of Oakland, involves use of protein and carbon-hydrate extracts obtained from the infecting organisms and administered through the sin and placement in the sinus. Dr. Krueger said treatment extending over 10 to 14 weeks has resulted in definite improvement or apparent cure in many cases. No ill effects have been noted.

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## Good Solid Year For Business Is Ford's Prophecy

DETROIT, Mich., Dec. 28.—(AP)—A "good, solid year for business" was predicted today by Henry Ford, appearing at a luncheon for a group of newspaper men in connection with the first showing of his 1935 models.

"Everybody is hopeful and everybody has a right to be," said the motor manufacturer in an interview preceding the luncheon. "It will be no such booming year as 1929, when everybody was turning somersaults, but I will be a good solid year for business."

HASN'T Missed Vote In 72 Years POPULAR BLUFF, Ark. (UPI)—John P. Baumgardner, 92, whose first vote in 1864 was for Abraham Lincoln for president, has not missed casting his ballot in a general election for 72 years. In the recent election, judges moved a booth to his automobile outside the precinct headquarters so he could vote.

## ANTARTICA HOP DELAYED BY FOG

NEW YORK, Dec. 28.—(AP)—The New York Times and the North American Newspaper Alliance in copyright dispatches said today a proposed flight across Antarctica by Lincoln Ellsworth had been prevented by clouds hanging low over Snow Hill Island, in the Wendell sea.

Ellsworth, the dispatcher from the island said, is anxiously waiting for the weather to clear in order to make the flight.

Dispatches from Wellington, N. Z., yesterday said Ellsworth, along with Bruce Balchen, had successfully made the hop of about 2,000 miles across Antarctica from Deception Island to the Bar of Whales, where the Byrd expedition is encamped.

In a radio conversation with the United States the Byrd expedition reported Thursday night it had received no word from Ellsworth concerning the flight.

## DIFFICULT DECISIONS

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## MATTER POP



## TALENTS

Call a Job!



## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER

In the Meantime



## THE NEBBES

A Social Error



## VANDALS BLAMED IN TRAIN WRECK

COLUMBUS, O., Dec. 28.—(AP)—Ploughing through a tampered switch, according to Police Chief Fred Kuntz, Pennsylvania passenger train No. 614 crashed into a string of empty cars here Thursday killing two railroad men and causing injuries to a score of other persons.

Engineer H. S. Beach of Mount Vernon died in his cab when it overturned after the crash. A B. E. McKee of Cleveland, road foreman of engines, was the other man killed.

"We are positive that someone tampered with the switch," said Police Chief Fred Kuntz. He ordered fingerprints taken.

Radio 10, or radios new, they've their best news we get through "Fruit's can do it." About 22.

## OREGON LEADS IN FRUIT STANDARDS

SALEM, Ore., Dec. 28.—(UP)—Director of Agriculture Max Gehlhar asserted today in his report for the first three years of operation of the state agricultural department that Oregon leads all states in standardization of its fruits and vegetables.

Ninety-one per cent of all fruits and vegetables shipped out of Oregon now comply with standards adopted by the department, the report said. Eighty-two per cent of all carload fruit and vegetable shipments in three years, comprising 23,701 cars, were given the department's certificate of quality. Only 14 grade reversals were experienced on arrivals.

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## BRINGING UP FAIRIES



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