



I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

SYNOPSIS: Nicholas Tr. Jerry Mordant and Molly O'Brien have banded together in an effort to recover a valuable formula which has been stolen from Jimmy O'Brien, and sister, interests are also trying to find the formula. Suddenly Jimmy O'Brien, who had followed up Nick on the story of Molly's hotel, brings the news that Molly has been kidnapped. He has followed the car in which she was taken away; now he and Nick have entered the house where she is hidden, and Nick has knocked out the man left to guard her.

Chapter 30 ESCAPE

LEAVING Jimmy on guard I hurried to the staircase. I felt certain that Molly would be on one of the upper floors, probably in a back room, and on reaching the first landing, I made straight for the door facing me.

It was locked, but the key was on the outside. I wrenched it round, nearly breaking it in my haste, and then, as the light of my torch swept the room, an unprintable oath burst from my lips.

She was strapped down on a small truck bed, her hands tied behind her—her ankles fastened to the rail at the end. The lower half of her face was almost hidden by a roughly twisted handkerchief, which had been stretched across her mouth and knotted tightly at the back. On one cheek, just below the eye, was an ugly red smudge.

The next instant I was kneeling on the floor beside her, my fingers working feverishly to undo the gag. I got the thing loose at last, and as she drew in her breath with a quick gasping sob, I dragged out a pocket-knife which, by the mercy of God, I always carry about with me.

"It's all right," I assured her. "I'll have you free in a minute." With desperate eagerness I sawed away at the stout cord which fastened her down to the bed. It soon parted, and then, having freed her wrists and ankles, I slid my arm round her and lifted her up gently.

"What's happened, Nick?" Her voice was so weak that I could scarcely catch the words.

"Those devils drugged you at the hotel and took you away in a car." "Yes, yes, I know—but how did you get here?"

"Never mind now; I'll explain later." I stuffed the knife back into my pocket and picked up the torch which was lying on the bed.

"We must clear out of this place as soon as we can. Do you think you can walk or shall I carry you?"

She made a feeble effort to rise, and then sank back again with her head against my shoulder.

"I don't feel too well," she admitted faintly.

Getting on my feet I picked her up just as she was. "Put your arms around my neck and hang on tight," I said. "Jimmy's downstairs and there's a taxi waiting for us around the corner."

"If you see what looks like a corpse lying in the hall don't be frightened. It's only that big mutt they left here to look after you. I had to knock him out, but he's not seriously hurt."

I EDGED my way sideways through the door, and carrying her across the landing, began very carefully to negotiate the staircase. As I reached the bottom I was greeted by an excited voice.

"E ain't moved, sir! No so much as blink an eyelid!" "Splendid, Jimmy," I said. "Now see if you can get the door open. I don't want to go down through that basement."

Without wasting time he darted across the hall. There was the grinding of a key and the clatter of bolts. Then the light flickered beneath a gust of fresh air, and in another moment we were outside in the driving rain.

"You hop round, Jimmy, and fetch the taxi," I said. "Bring it to the end of the lane. We'll be along there by the time you're back."

"I'm better now, Nick. I believe I could walk if you helped me." It was Molly's voice close to my ear.

"Wait till we've down the steps," I whispered. "Then you can have a shot if you like."

I reached the bottom in safety, and still keeping a tight hold of her with my right arm, lowered her gently to the ground. She seemed very weak and unsteady, but by a gallant effort she managed to keep her feet.

"There's nothing much the matter," she faltered, "except my head. It's all dizzy and it's aching, horribly."

"That's the remains of the drug," said. "If you can force yourself to walk a little it may do you good." I put my arm round her waist. "Lean on me," I added, "and if you feel queer, tell me at once."

Very slowly, and with several pauses on the journey, we made our way to the end of the lane. We could already hear the hum of the approaching taxi, and as we reached the corner, it came trundling down the wet road and pulled up exactly in front of us. Almost before it had stopped Jimmy emerged from its interior.

"I want to go back to Whitehall Court," I said to the man.

He looked at us with some curiosity, but whatever his private speculations may have been, he kept them to himself.

"Very good, sir," he replied impassively.

I helped Molly in and took the seat beside her. Closing her eyes wearily she leaned back against the cushions. Jimmy scrambled to his place opposite, the door banged, and the next moment we had turned round and were howling up Bishop's Terrace.

There was a dozen questions I wanted to ask, but I could see that Molly was in no fit state for talking. Her story would have to wait until the next morning. The only thing to be done now was to get her to bed as soon as possible, and let her sleep off the after effects of the drug.

LOOKING down at her as she lay beside me, I again noticed the blood on her cheek. It had come from an ugly cut a shade below her left eye, and at the sight of it a cold fury against O'Brien and his associates surged up in my heart.

I took her hand which was lying limply on her lap, and with a little sigh she allowed her head to sink down until it was resting against my arm. Hunched up in the opposite corner Jimmy stared silently through the window.

On we went, past the deserted entrance to Paddington Station, and up the long, empty stretch of Edgware Road. By the time we came to the corner of Park Lane I was half asleep myself. I had a vague impression of a glare of light, which I suppose must have been Piccadilly Circus, and then, with an unexpected jerk, the taxi came to a standstill, and sitting up abruptly I found myself outside the flats.

I tumbled for my latchkey, and handed it to Jimmy. "You run up and get the door open," I said. "If Dawson's about, tell him to put a kettle on. A cup of tea will do us all good."

I roused Molly, who was still dozing against my shoulder, and getting out first, helped her down to the pavement. From his box the taxi driver eyed us with interest.

"Here's a pound for you," I said, "and I'm much obliged to you for waiting."

He placed the note carefully in his pocket and touched his cap.

"That's all right, governor. Glad you got wot you went for." Jerking in his clutch, he leaned sideways towards me. "I was a bit of a lad meself once," he added, and with this cryptic statement he swung out into the roadway.

I glanced quickly up and down the street. At the Northumberland Avenue end a man was crossing the road with his back to us, but except for him there was not a soul within sight.

"You'd better let me carry you, Molly," I said. "If you try to do any more you'll probably collapse."

Disregarding her faint protest I again lifted her up in my arms. It was a more difficult job than I had had before, for the stairs were steep, and Jerry's flat was on the second floor.

Tired as I was, however, the sensation of holding her close against me seemed to inspire me with the necessary strength, and step by step I struggled doggedly up, until the dressing-gowned figure of Dawson, framed in a lighted doorway, suddenly rewarded my efforts.

He stepped aside as I staggered in.

"Everything is ready, sir. I have put clean sheets on the bed, and the kettle will be boiling in a few moments."

"Thank you, Dawson," I said. "It's an odd hour for a tea-party, but we're all three a little exhausted." (Copyright, 1931, Fenn Publishing Co.)

Tomorrow a Little Incident Puts All Thought of Formulas Out of Nick's Mind.

BANK OF BONANZA WILL LIQUIDATE

SALEM, Ore., Jan. 2.—(AP)—The Bank of Bonanza in Klamath county, organized in 1907, went into voluntary bankruptcy December 29. A. A. Schramm, state banking superintendent, announced today.

He announced that the bank would transfer all deposit liability to the American National bank of Klamath Falls, liquidating at 100 per cent. Total resources were listed at \$85,030 and deposits at \$87,515.

Dewey Horn was president of the Bonanza bank and John S. Horn, vice-president and cashier.

BOY SENATOR WILL WAIT ON BIRTHDAY

WASHINGTON, Jan. 2.—(AP)—Rush D. Holt, 29-year-old senator-elect from West Virginia, will not present himself to be sworn in as a member of the senate until June 19, his 30th birthday.

This was determined today at a conference of the young legislators with Senator Robinson of Arkansas, the Democratic leader, and at a meeting of the Democratic policy committee of the senate.

Robinson said the Democratic leadership will insist on Holt's right to his seat when he is 30, the age prescribed by the constitution for entrance to the senate.

PORTLAND BANK CLEARINGS RISE

PORTLAND, Ore., Jan. 2.—(AP)—The Portland Clearing House association announced today that Portland bank clearings for 1934 topped the 1933 clearings by nearly a quarter of a billion dollars.

The 1934 clearings totaled \$1,977,742.88. In 1933 the clearings amounted to \$847,949,214.

Substantial increase was shown in the December clearings this year over the corresponding month in 1933, indicative of the unusually heavy volume of Christmas retail sales.

SHOPPING COMPANION



FRUIT JOBBERS MEET JAN. 22-26 IN 'FRISCO

Regarded as one of the most important business gatherings in the United States, since its discussions will be directly upon the marketing and distribution of a large part of the nation's food supply, plans for the annual convention of the Western Fruit Jobbers Association of America, scheduled in San Francisco January 22 to 26, are attracting widespread attention.

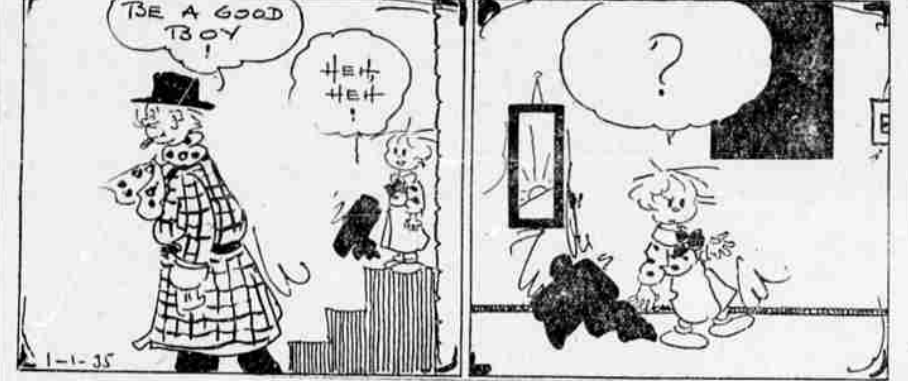
More than 5,000 growers, shippers and receivers of fruits and vegetables are planning to attend the meeting, according to word received here from Joseph Margules of San Francisco, chairman of the convention committee.

YEAR AFTER YEAR QUALITY

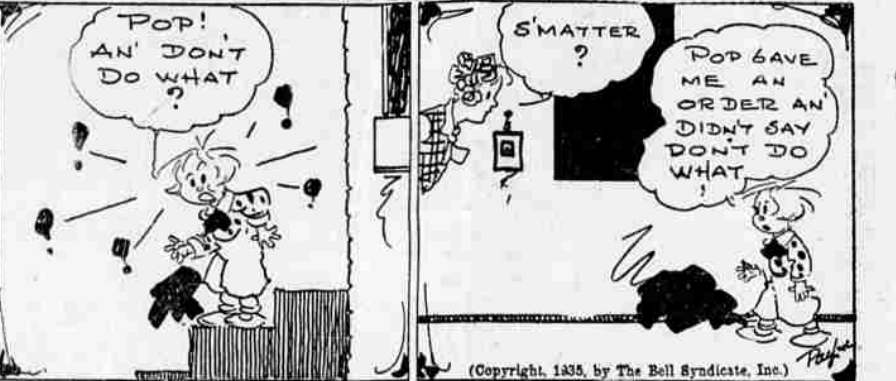
WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT

1935 1934 '33 '32 '31

'SMATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Raymore Makes a Proposition



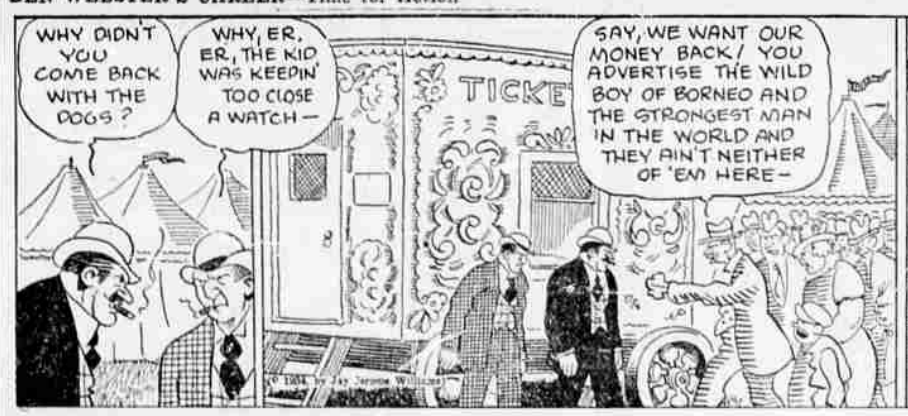
BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Time for Action



THE NEBBS—The Aftermath



BRINGING UP FATHER



CONSTANCE MAE DOTY, INFANT, RITES HELD

Funeral services for Constance Mae Doty, infant daughter of T. and Mrs. Neal Doty, and sister of Shirley Ann of Gold Hill, were held at the graveside in the Rocky Point cemetery Sunday. Rev. Belknap was in charge of services and Conger funeral parlor in charge of arrangements.

INVESTORS HARVESTING DIVIDENDS, INTEREST

NEW YORK, Jan. 2.—(AP)—Partly as a result of many extra dividends and year-end payments on accumulations, investors are reaping more than \$900,000,000 in dividends on stocks and interest on bonds for the final quarter of 1934. Last year the aggregate disbursed at the year-end was \$850,000,000.

Altogether dividends will be distributed on more than 1600 issues of stock today, the first business day of the new year.

TELEPHONE INCREASE PROVES PROSPERITY

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan. 2.—(AP)—Pacific Telephone and Telegraph company told shareholders today its total gain in telephones in service for the first 11 months of this year was 30,757. This contrasted with a 1933 loss in 11 months of 52,261. There are about 1,460,000 telephones currently in service.

The information was sent out today with dividend checks of \$1.50 a share on common capital stock.

Class Meets Tonight

The SERA interpretive geography class meets tonight, Wednesday, at the senior hall, at 7:15, and tomorrow night at the same hour. The interest of the class has been increasing high, and all who will come are assured a pleasant and profitable time. The classes are free.