

# THE BOOMERANG CLUE

By AGATHA CHRISTIE

**SYNOPSIS:** Frankie Derwent and Bobby Jones have one too many candidates for the murder of Alexander Pritchard—or Alan Carstairs, as Frankie is convinced that the name is properly. One is Roger Bassington-French, who now seems too frank and charming to have done it. Another is Dr. Nicholson, who runs a drug store in the neighborhood, and seems very strange. Bobby, disguised as Frankie's chauffeur, has explored Nicholson's place, and found there a frightened woman whose face was that on a photograph in the dead man's pocket.

## CHAPTER 23 CONSULTATION

"Mr. Hawkins?"  
"Yes," said Bobby—his voice slightly muffled owing to a large mouthful of bacon and eggs.

"You're wanted on the telephone," Bobby took a hasty gulp of coffee, wiped his mouth and rose. The telephone was in a small dark passage. He took up the receiver.

"Hello," said Frankie's voice. "Hello, Frankie," said Bobby faintly.

"This is Lady Frances Derwent speaking," said the voice coldly. "Is that Hawkins?"

"Yes, m'lady."  
"I shall want the car at ten o'clock to take me up to London."

"Very good, your ladyship," Bobby replaced the receiver.

"When does one say 'my lady' and when does one say 'your ladyship'?" he cogitated. "I ought to know, but I don't. It's the sort of thing that will lead a real chauffeur or butler to catch me out."

At the other end, Frankie hung up the receiver and turned to Roger Bassington-French.

"It's a nuisance," she observed lightly, "to have to go up to London to-day. All owing to Father's fuss."

"Still," said Roger, "you'll be back this evening?"

"Oh, yes."  
"I'd half thought of asking you if you'd give me a lift to town," said Roger carelessly.

Frankie paused for an infinitesimal second before her answer—given with an apparent readiness.

"Why, of course," she said.

"But on second thought I don't think I will go up to-day," went on Roger. "Henry's looking even odder than usual. Somehow I don't very much like leaving Sylvia alone with him."

"I know," said Frankie.

"Are you driving yourself?" asked Roger casually as they moved away from the telephone.

"Yes, but I shall take Hawkins. I've got some shopping to do as well and it's a nuisance if you're driving yourself—you can't leave the car anywhere."

"Yes, of course."  
He said no more, but when the car came around, Bobby at the wheel very stiff and correct of demeanor, he came out on the doorstep to see her off.

"Good-bye," said Frankie.

Under the circumstances she did not think of holding out a hand, but Roger took hers and held it a minute.

"You are coming back?" he said with curious insistence.

Frankie laughed. "Of course. I only meant good-bye till this evening."

"Don't have any more accidents." "I'll let Hawkins drive if you like."

SHE sprang in beside Bobby, who touched his cap. The car moved off down the drive, Roger still standing on the steps looking after it.

"Bobby," said Frankie, "do you think it possible that Roger might fall for me?"

"Has he?" inquired Bobby.

"Well, I just wondered."  
"I expect you know the symptoms pretty well," said Bobby. But he spoke absently.

Frankie shot him a glance. "Has anything happened?" she asked.

"Yes, it has. Frankie, I've found the original of the photograph!"

"You mean—the one—the one that you talked so much about—the one that was in the dead man's pocket?"

"Yes."  
"Bobby! I've got a few things to tell you, but nothing to this. Where did you find her?"

Bobby jerked his head back over his shoulder. "In Dr. Nicholson's nursing home."

"Tell me."  
Carefully and meticulously Bobby described the events of the previous night. Frankie listened breathlessly.

"Then we are on the right track," she said. "And Dr. Nicholson is mixed up in all this? Bobby, I'm afraid of that man."  
"What is he like?"

"Oh! big and forceful—and he watches you. Very intently behind glasses. And you feel he knows all about you."

"When did you meet him?"  
"He came to dinner."  
She described the dinner party and Dr. Nicholson's insistent dwelling on the details of her "accident."  
"I felt he was suspicious," she ended up.

"It's certainly queer his going into details like that," said Bobby. "What do you think is at the bottom of all this business, Frankie?"

"Well, I'm beginning to think that your suggestion of a dope gang isn't such a bad guess after all."

"Yes, Dr. Nicholson as the head of the gang?"

"This nursing home business would be a very good cloak for that sort of thing."

"That seems plausible enough," agreed Bobby.

"I haven't told you yet about Henry Bassington-French."

Bobby listened attentively to her description of her host's idiosyncrasies. "His wife doesn't suspect?"

"I'm sure she doesn't."  
"What is she like? Intelligent?"

"I never thought exactly. No. I suppose she isn't very. And yet in some ways she seems quite shrewd. A frank, pleasant woman."

"And our Bassington-French?"  
"There I'm puzzled," said Frankie slowly. "Do you think, Bobby, that just possibly we might be all wrong about him?"

"Nonsense!" said Bobby. "We worked it all out and decided that he must be the villain of the piece."  
"Because of the photograph?"

"Because of the photograph." No one else could have changed that photograph for the other."

"I know," said Frankie. "But that one incident is all that we have against him."

BOBBY looked at her coldly. "Did you say that he had fallen for you, or that you had fallen for him?" he inquired politely.

Frankie flushed. "Don't be so absurd, Bobby. I just wondered if there couldn't be some innocent explanation—that's all."

"I don't see that there can be. Especially now that we've actually found the girl in the neighborhood."

That seems to clinch matters. If we only had some inkling as to who the dead man was—"

"Oh, but I have. I'm nearly sure that the murdered man was somebody called Alan Carstairs."

"You know," said Bobby, "we really are getting on. Let's spread out our facts and see what sort of job we can make of it."

He paused for a moment and the car slackened speed as though in sympathy.

"First, we'll assume that you are right about Alan Carstairs. He certainly fulfils the conditions. Alan Carstairs comes down to Staverley with the Rivingtons. Now, is there anything in that?"

"You mean did he get them to bring him down here deliberately?"

"That's what I mean. Or was it just a casual chance? Was he brought down here by them, and did he then come across the girl by accident just as I did? I presume he knew her before or he wouldn't have had her photograph on him."

"The alternative being," said Frankie thoughtfully, "that he was already on the track of Nicholson and his gang."

"And used the Rivingtons as a means of getting to this part of the world naturally?"

"That's quite a possible theory," said Frankie. "He may have been on the track of this gang."

"Or simply on the track of the girl?"

"The girl?"

"Yes. She may have been abducted. He may have come over to England to find her."

"Well, but if he had tracked her down to Staverley why should he go off to Wales?"

"Obviously, there's a lot we don't know yet," said Bobby.

"Evans," said Frankie thoughtfully. "We don't get any clues as to Evans."  
They were both silent for a moment or two. Then Frankie woke up to her surroundings.

"My dear, we're actually at Putney Hill. It seems like five minutes. Where are we going and what are we doing?"

"That's for you to say. I don't even know why we've come up to town."  
"The journey to town was only an excuse for getting a talk with you."

Tomorrow Bobby becomes another person entirely.

## SERIOUS CRIMES WANE PAST YEAR

WASHINGTON, Feb. 29.—(AP)—The justice department reported today a decrease of serious crimes during the past three years.

Murders, assault, auto thefts and robberies all declined, according to statistics compiled by the bureau of investigation from reports of 74 big cities' police departments.

Auto thefts dropped from 78,727 in 1933 to 62,406 in 1935. A "heartening" decrease in robberies was reported from 20,025 in 1933 to 14,248 in 1935.

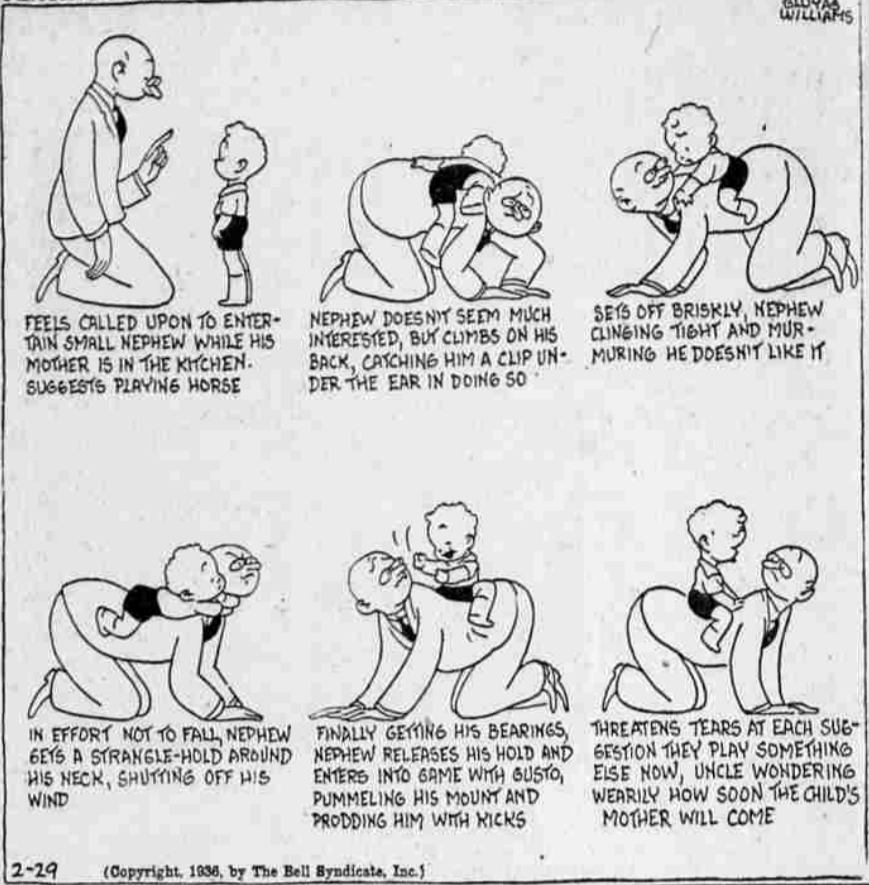
Murders decreased from 1778 in 1933 to 1455 in 1935. Aggravated assault dropped from 12,104 to 10,760, while burglaries declined from 87,846 to 76,001.

"Larcenies still predominate," the report said, but show a small decline from 181,325 in 1933 to 179,703 in 1935.

## Douglas Solon Not To Seek Cong. Mott Seat

ROSEBURG, Feb. 29.—(AP)—State Senator Walter S. Fisher of Roseburg, who has been urged by leading democrats of the state to become a candidate from the first congressional district for the seat now held by James W. Mott, stated he had informed party leaders by letter today of his decision not to enter the contest. He will probably file his candidacy for reelection to his present seat in the state senate in a short time.

## PLAYING HORSE



FEELS CALLED UPON TO ENTERTAIN SMALL NEPHEW WHILE HIS MOTHER IS IN THE KITCHEN. SUGGESTS PLAYING HORSE

NEPHEW DOESN'T SEEM MUCH INTERESTED, BUT CLIMBS ON HIS BACK, CATCHING HIM A CLIP UNDER THE EAR IN DOING SO

SEES OFF BRISKLY, NEPHEW CLINGING TIGHT AND MURMURING HE DOESN'T LIKE IT

IN EFFORT NOT TO FALL, NEPHEW GETS A STRANGLE-HOLD AROUND HIS NECK, SHUTTING OFF HIS WIND

FINALLY GETTING HIS BEARINGS, NEPHEW RELEASES HIS HOLD AND ENTERS INTO GAME WITH GUSTO, PUMPELLING HIS MOUNT AND PRODDING HIM WITH KICKS

THREATENS TEARS AT EACH SUGGESTION THEY PLAY SOMETHING ELSE NOW, UNCLE WONDERING WEARILY HOW SOON THE CHILD'S MOTHER WILL COME

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## STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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CHAUTAUQUA LAKE, ONLY 8 MILES FROM LAKE ERIE—DRAINS INTO THE GULF OF MEXICO, MORE THAN 1200 MILES AWAY

IVAN TURGENEV—RUSSIAN NOVELIST, BORN IN RUSSIA AND EDUCATED IN RUSSIA, RARELY STROKE RUSSIAN

NOTHING'S IMPOSSIBLE!  
YOU CAN SEE THROUGH A BRICK WALL  
YOU CAN SEE AROUND A CORNER  
YOU CAN MAKE A SILK PURSE FROM A SOW'S EAR  
YOU CAN RUN A MILL WITH WATER GONE BY  
YOU CAN HAVE SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE  
YOU CAN HAVE ROSES WITHOUT THORNS  
YOU CAN MAKE BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW  
YOU CAN GROW HAIR ON A BILLIARD BALL

EVERY WORD AND EVERY MOVE OF AKBAR, 40 YEARS THE RULER OF INDIA, WAS RECORDED BY HIS 14 SECRETARIES AND PUBLISHED IN HIS OFFICIAL BOOK OF RECORDS!

Although the Russian writer Turgenev knew the Russian language, he rarely spoke it for his associates were chiefly German and French and, further, it was the custom of the times for the aristocracy of Russia not to speak the language of the land. Turgenev knew German and French better than Russian.

Science and ingenuity of man have combined to make many an old saying scientifically obsolete. "You can't see through a brick wall" is an old favorite, once true, but now completely wrong. X-ray apparatus permits vision through opaque objects. With the aid of a periscope you can see around a corner—contrary to the old saying.

Just to prove it possible, a scientist not long ago actually made a silk purse out of a cow's ear. He treated it with chemicals so as to make synthetic silk which he spun into a purse. Water can be used to turn a mill wheel after it has run by—if you utilize power from the water to pump part of the water to the upper pond. It is an inefficient, but nevertheless possible, process.

The chemist is also able to make smoke without fire by the use of ammonia and hydrochloric acid—not real smoke, but smoke enough. Thornless roses have been developed by the botanist, and modern manufacture gets along admirably making bricks without straw. Experimentally, technicians in the laboratory have actually grown hair on a watch crystal—and the same result could be obtained if they chose a billiard ball to contradict the old saying.

Tomorrow: The man who shunned knowledge.

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## EATING, DRINKING NEAR 1929 LEVEL; BUSINESS GAINS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 29.—(AP)—A continued upward movement of retail trade on a foundation of 1935 gains was claimed for January today in one of a series of government reports.

The commerce department's weekly survey of retail business, meanwhile, said most of the 33 cities covered reported gains in the week ended Wednesday over the same period last year, but no substantial improvement over the preceding seven days.

Another survey estimated total retail sales in 1935 were \$32,600,000,000, a 14 per cent increase over 1934. Mail order houses, with an increase of 26 per cent in the year, and automotive dealers, with 25 per cent rise, reflected the largest gains. The 1935 sales were 66 per cent of the 1929 figure, and the largest since 1931, when retail trade was 72 per cent of 1929. One group—restaurants, eating and drinking places—reported a business equalling 99 per cent of the prosperity year's peak.

Bulger Agitators To Die  
SOFIA, Bulgaria, Feb. 29.—(AP)—A military court pronounced formal death sentences today on Col. Damyan Velcheff and Major Cyril Stankoff, revolutionists convicted of plotting the assassination of King Boris and fomenting a rebellion.

\$5.00 SPECIAL \$10.00  
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ETHEL WYN B. HOFFMANN

## TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Island in the Sky Disappears!



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## By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER

## THE NEBBS—Friendship of a Lifetime



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## By SOL HESS



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