

The Evil Eye of Africa: Solution by H. L. Dickson

Good day Madame Saffron,

On behalf of esteemed Girl Criminologist, Miss Ivy Savage of London, *Empire of Steam*, I would like to pose the following deduction.

She believes dearly departed Baron von Boddy has been proverbially put 'out of print' by his close friend, Colonel Billious Mustard. Yes, the gentleman has had a splendid military career but Miss Savage believes this has given him the exact skills to carry off such a daring and dastardly crime. Let me elaborate.

Motive: Colonel Mustard is in a grievous way in relation to his finances and once his dear friend Baron von Boddy found success with his latest fantastical adventure, he was very quick to leave London and disappear – to Cornwall or Cairo, we can only surmise.

Opportunity: Colonel Mustard is in a state of disgrace and is never at his regiment, at home, nor at his club. In fact, no one knows where he has gone. It is circumstantial but considerably suspicious.

Method: The good Colonel is an aeronaut of no mean experience, having been decorated multiple times along with his regiment. He is also a military man, and the pistol he is holding in a singular photochrome could very well be of the same caliber as the fatal shot which killed our dear von Boddy and made a hole in the airship's window glass. (We do need a Police surgeon of Sir Thomas Bond's quality to do the comparison. If he is not available, Miss Savage is certain she could presume upon young Christien de Lacey. He is not working much of late, given his rather peculiar circumstances.) Miss Savage proposes that Colonel Mustard met up with Baron von Boddy at Boddy Manor and for some reason, they were on the Jules Verne at the same time. A struggle ensued during which the Baron was shot in the back and killed. Mustard then dumped the body of von Boddy over the side along with the trunk to keep it submerged, gathered a canopy and cork life vest and leapt over the side of the Jules Verne with the mask and rode the winds to the Cornish shore, where he proceeded to hide the canopy and vest in the rocks.

There are, of course, other scenarios and Miss Savage has some questions that she would pose, were she there in person and not currently in Vienna investigating the apparent murder/suicide of the Crown Prince.

- 1) In which direction was the shot through the window? From within the airship's saloon or from without?
- 2) Where is Baron von Boddy's favourite coat and why is the body of von Boddy not wearing it? Was it removed and if so, before or after the photochrome with the Eye of Africa? Who was, in fact, wearing that coat?
- 3) It is clear that Lady Peacock knows far more than she is letting on, and is most likely the very same widow to whom von Boddy gifted the jewels (at Mrs. Midas-White's expense). And we know, courtesy the spider-eyes that she is currently in possession of the Eye of Africa mask so I would be quick to question the damsel before she disappears yet again. If you do manage to locate the vixen, Miss Savage asks if

you would be so kind as to ask her how well she knows Colonel Mustard himself. Could she be said fellow's accomplished accomplice?

4) *Is Oxford superior to Cambridge?*

5) *Where is the Bloodshot Diamond and was the Eye of Africa merely a ruse? Will Professor Polonious Plum be indicted for theft of the steamtrunk?*

6) *Is Baron von Boddy truly dead? (We might need to ask the Mad Lord of Lasingstoke for an assist on this one...)*

So there, gentle lady, is the preliminary deduction of Miss Ivy Savage based entirely on the evidence presented. She wishes me to convey the fact that it has been an honour to study the methods of the most esteemed Hercule Hornblower and she looks forward to working with him again in the near future.

Your most humble servant,

H. L. Dickson