

The Garden Murder Case

by S. S. VAN DINE

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CHAPTER I

There were two reasons why the terrible and, in many ways, incredible Garden murder case—which took place in the early spring following the spectacular Casino murder case—was so designated. In the first place, the scene of this tragedy was the penthouse home of Professor Ephraim Garden, the great experimental chemist of Stuyvesant university; and secondly, the exact situs criminis was the beautiful private roof-garden over the apartment itself.

It was both a peculiar and implausible affair, and one so cleverly planned that only by the merest accident—or perhaps, I should say a fortuitous intervention—was it discovered at all.

The Garden murder case involved a curious and anomalous mixture of passion, avarice, ambition and horse-racing. There was an admixture of hate, also; but this potent and blinding element was, I imagine, an understandable outgrowth of the other factors.

The beginning of the case came on the night of April 13. It was one of those mild evenings that we often experience in early spring following a spell of harsh dampness, when all the remaining traces of winter finally capitulate to the inevitable seasonal changes. There was a mellow softness in the air, a sudden perfume from the burgeoning life of nature—the kind of atmosphere that makes one lackadaisical, and wistful and, at the same time, stimulates one's imagination.

I mention this seemingly irrelevant fact because I have good reason to believe these meteorological conditions had much to do with the startling events that were to break forth, in all their horror, before another 24 hours had passed.

And I believe that the season, with all its subtle innuendoes, was the real explanation of the change that came over Vance himself during his investigation of the crime. Up to that time I had never considered Vance a man of any deep personal emotion, except in so far as children and animals and his intimate masculine friendships were concerned. He had always impressed me as a man so highly mentalized, so cynical and impersonal in his attitude toward life, that an irrational human weakness like romance would be alien to his nature. But in the course of his deft inquiry into the murders in Professor Garden's penthouse, I saw, for the first time, another and softer side of his character. Vance was never a happy man in the conventional sense; but after the Garden murder case there were evidences of an even deeper loneliness in his sensitive nature.

As I have said, the case opened—so far as Vance was concerned with it—on the night of April 13. John F-X. Markham, then district attorney of New York county, had dined with Vance at his apartment in East Thirty-eighth street. The dinner had been excellent—as all of Vance's dinners were—and at ten o'clock the three of us were sitting in the comfortable library.

Vance and Markham had been discussing crime waves in a desultory manner. There had been a mild disagreement, Vance discounting the theory that crime waves are calculable, and holding that crime is entirely personal and therefore incompatible with generalizations or laws.

It was in the midst of this discussion that Currie, Vance's old English butler and majordomo, appeared at the library door. I noticed that he seemed nervous and ill at ease as he waited for Vance to finish speaking; and I think Vance, too, sensed something unusual in the man's attitude, for he stopped speaking rather abruptly and turned.

"What is it, Currie? Have you seen a ghost, are there burglars in the house?"

"I have just had a telephone call,

sir," the old man answered, endeavoring to restrain the excitement in his voice.

"Not bad news from abroad?" Vance asked sympathetically.

"Oh, no, sir; it wasn't anything for me. There was a gentleman on the phone—"

Vance lifted his eyebrows and smiled faintly.

"A gentleman, Currie?"

"He spoke like a gentleman, sir. He was certainly no ordinary person. He had a cultured voice, sir, and—"

"Since your instinct has gone so far," Vance interrupted, "perhaps you can tell me the gentleman's age?"

"I should say he was middle-age or perhaps a little beyond," Currie ventured. "His voice sounded mature and dignified and judicial."

"Excellent!" Vance crushed out his cigarette. "And what was the object of this dignified, middle-aged gentleman's call? Did he ask to speak to me or give you his name?"

A worried look came into Currie's eyes as he shook his head.

"No, sir. That's the strange part of it. He said he did not wish to speak to you personally, and he would not tell me his name. But he asked me to give you a message. He was very precise about it and made me write it down word for word and then repeat it. And the moment I had done so he hung up the receiver." Currie stepped forward. "Here's the message, sir."

Vance took it and nodded a dismissal. Then he adjusted his monocle and held the slip of paper under the light of the table lamp. Markham and I both watched him



Markham snorted, "That may make sense to you."

closely, for the incident was unusual, to say the least. After a hasty reading of the paper he gazed off into space, and a clouded look came into his eyes. He read the message again, with more care, and sank back into his chair.

"My word!" he murmured. "Most extraordinary. It's quite intelligible, however, don't you know. But I'm dashed if I can see the connection . . ."

Markham was annoyed. "Is it a secret?" he asked testily. "Or are you merely in one of your Delphic moods?"

Vance glanced toward him contemptuously.

"Forgive me, Markham. My mind automatically went off on a train of thought. Sorry—really." He held the paper again under the light. "This is the message that Currie so meticulously took down: 'There is a most disturbing psychological tension of Professor Ephraim Garden's apartment, which resists diagnosis. Read up on radioactive sodium. See Book XI of the Aeneid, line 875. Equanimity is essential.' . . . Curious—eh, what?"

"It sounds a little crazy to me," Markham grunted. "Are you troubled much with cranks?"

"Oh, this is no crank," Vance as-

sured him. "It's puzzlin', I admit; but it's quite lucid."

Markham sniffed skeptically. "What, in the name of Heaven, have a professor and sodium and the Aeneid to do with one another?"

Vance was frowning as he reached into the humidor for one of his beloved cigarettes with a deliberation which indicated a mental tension. Slowly he lighted the cigarette. After a deep inhalation he answered.

"Ephraim Garden, of whom you surely must have heard from time to time, is one of the best-known men in chemical research in this country. Just now, I believe, he's professor of chemistry at Stuyvesant university—that could be verified in Who's Who. But it doesn't matter. His latest researches have been directed along the lines of radioactive sodium. An amazing discovery, Markham. Made by Doctor Ernest O. Lawrence, of the University of California, and two of his colleagues there, Doctors Hendsen and McMillan. This new radioactive sodium has opened up new fields of research in cancer therapy—indeed, it may prove some day to be the long-looked-for cure for cancer. The new gamma radiation of this sodium is more penetrating than any ever before obtained. On the other hand, radium and radioactive substances can be very dangerous if diffused into the normal tissues of the body and through the blood stream.

"That is all very fascinating," Markham commented, sarcastically. "But what has it to do with you, or with trouble in the Garden home? And what could it possibly have to do with the Aeneid? They didn't have radioactive sodium in the time of Aeneas."

"Markham, old dear, I'm no Chaldean. I haven't the foggiest notion wherein the situation concerns either me or Aeneas, except that I happen to know the Garden family slightly. But I've a vague feeling about that particular book of the Aeneid. As I recall, it contains one of the greatest descriptions of a battle in all ancient literature. But let's see . . ."

Vance rose quickly and went to the section of his book-shelves devoted to the classics, and, after a few moments' search, took down a small red volume and began to rifle the pages. He ran his eye swiftly down a page near the end of the volume and after a minute's perusal came back to his chair with the book, nodding his head comprehensively, as if in answer to some question he had inwardly asked himself.

"The passage referred to, Markham," he said after a moment, "is not exactly what I had in mind. But it may be even more significant. It's the famous onomatopoeic Quadrupedum putrem cursu quatit ungula campum—meanin', more or less literally: 'And in their galloping course the horsehoof shakes the crumbling plain.'"

Markham took the cigar from his mouth and looked at Vance with undisguised annoyance.

"You're merely working up a mystery. You'll be telling me next that the Trojans had something to do with this professor of chemistry and his radioactive sodium."

"No, oh, no." Vance was in an unusually serious mood. "Not the Trojans. But the galloping horses perhaps."

Markham snorted. "That may make sense to you."

"Not altogether," returned Vance, critically contemplating the end of his cigarette. "There is, nevertheless, the vague outline of a pattern here. You see, young Floyd Garden, the professor's only offspring, and his cousin a puny chap named Woode Swift—he's quite an intimate member of the Garden household, I believe—are addicted to the ponies. Quite a prevalent disease, by the way, Markham. They're both interested in sports in general—probably the normal reaction to their professorial and ecclesiastical forebears: young Swift's father, who has now gone to his Maker, was a D.D. of sorts. I used to see both young Johnnies at Kinkaid's Casino occasionally. But the galloping horses are their passion now. And they're the nucleus of a group of young aristocrats who spend their afternoons mainly in the futile attempt to guess which horses are going to come in first at the various tracks."

(TO BE CONTINUED)



TOO LATE

Brown took the ticket the booking clerk gave him, picked up his change and walked away. A few moments later he was back at the booking office.

"I say," he said to the clerk, "you gave me the wrong change just now."

"Sorry," said the clerk with a shrug of his shoulders, "but it cannot be rectified now. You should have called my attention to it when you bought your ticket."

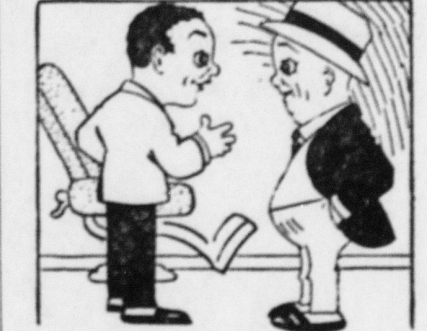
"Well, that's all right," said Brown. "I'm not worrying. You gave me \$2 too much."

"What's Your Address?" The poor man was effusive in his thanks to his rich friend. "This five pounds will help me out of a tight hold, and I'll send it back to you in a few weeks. By the way, what is your address?"

The rich man looked solemn. "Fairview Cemetery," he replied.

"O, nonsense, that's not your address!"

"No," said the rich man, "but it will be before you send this five pounds back."



Friend—Now that you've pulled all Tom's teeth I suppose you're through with him.

Dentist—Not yet—the bill has yet to be extracted, you know.

Familiar Look
Little Doreen looked aghast, new doll from her aunt. "And what are you going to name her?" the aunt asked.

"Sirshe," said the child.

"Sirshe?" said auntie. "I've never heard that name before."

Little Doreen looked aghast. "Don't you remember that song you taught me—'Where are you going to my pretty maid? I'm going a-milking Sirshe said?'"

Clue
Sherlock Holmes—Ah, Watson, I see you have on your winter underwear.

Watson—Marvelous, Holmes, marvelous! How did you ever deduce that?

Sherlock—Well, you've forgotten to put on your trousers.



"Was it a love match?"

"Looks like it, but you never can tell. One of them may have thought the other had money."

The Usual Winner
"I hear that Jenkins and his wife had a row over the kind of car they decided to buy; he wanted an open one and she a closed one. Anyhow, the incident is now closed."

"So is the car—I saw her in it this morning."

The Victim
Mrs. Smith—Yes, my 'usband's laid up, a victim of hockey.

Mrs. Higgins—But I didn't know e' even played the game.

Mrs. Smith—'E doesn't. 'E sprained 'is larynx at the match last Saturday.

Self Defense
Judge—Why have you brought that cudgel into court?

Prisoner—Well, they said I had to provide my own defense.

Pursuit of the Incomprehensible
"Have you studied relativity?"

"No need to do so," answered Senator Sorghum. "I can come across enough things I don't understand in the course of one of our usual investigations."

Getting Even
"Why don't you fix that leak? You've been here nearly an hour, and you haven't done a thing."

"I tell the truth, ma'am. I'm sore at the tenant down stairs."

What Irvin S. Cobb Thinks about

"Benefit" Promises.
SANTA MONICA, CALIF.— Maybe "benefits" are being overdone—indeed, some are rackets wearing the mask of charity—but even so, if a good trouper has promised to show up, you'd think he would prove he's a good trouper by showing up.

There have been cases out here when there were listed enough notables to make a whole constellation of stars, but what resulted was a milky way of amateurs and unknowns.

Those last-minute alibis for non-appearance are not always true ones. The real facts may be:

A night club cutup has been unexpectedly sober and so isn't funny.

A darling of the screen thinks he did enough when he allowed the use of his name, so he spends the evening congenially posing for profile photographs.

An actor is busy trying to decide whether he'll sell his yacht and buy a racing stable or sell his racing stable and buy a yacht.

An actress suddenly remembers she has an engagement over the Arizona line to be married some more.

Staying at home to post up the diary used to be an excuse, but dairy-keeping is now out—oh, absolutely!

Talking Fish.
PROF. ISAAC GINSBURG of the United States bureau of fisheries solemnly vows he has heard those tiny aquatic creatures known as seahorses communicating with one another by speech and he suspects other species do the same thing.

Undoubtedly so. I can confirm this discovery by a story Drury Underwood used to repeat. Drury said a gentleman ordered whitefish in a Chicago restaurant. When the portion arrived the patron sniffed at it and then, in a confidential undertone, began talking, seemingly to himself.

The waiter ranged up.

"Anything wrong, sir?" he inquired.

"Oh, no," said the patron, "I was just talking to the fish."

"Talking?"

"Certainly. I said to him: 'Well, how're tricks out in Lake Michigan?' And he said: 'I wouldn't know. It's been so long since I left there I can't remember anything about it.'"

The Race to Arms.
ITALY sees Britain's bet of \$7,500,000,000 to be spent on war defense during the next five years, and raises it by decreeing militarization of all classes between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five, which means a trained fighting force of 8,000,000 ready for immediate mobilization, adding as a side wager the promise of "total sacrifice," if required, of civil necessities. . . for attainment of maximum. . . military needs."

This means, of course, that France and Germany and Russia must chip in with taller stacks than before, and thus the merry game goes on until some nation, in desperation, calls some other nation's bluff and all go down together in a welter of blood and bankruptcy and stark brutality.

The world has been 5,000 years patching together the covering called civilization, but experience shows that this sorry garment may be rent to tatters in an hour.

Maniacs and Motors.
DISPATCHES tell of a slaying automobile which chased a citizen clear up on the sidewalk and nailed him. This is a plain breach of the ethics governing our most popular national pastime—that of mowing down the innocent bystander.

Among our outstanding motor maniacs it has already been agreed that once a foot passenger reaches the pavement, he is out of bounds and cannot be put back in play until somebody shoves him into the roadway again. Otherwise the pedestrian class would speedily be exterminated, whereas its members are valuable for target practice when an operator is building up to the point where he is qualified to sideswipe a car full of women and children while going seventy miles an hour, or meet a fast train on equal terms at a grade crossing.

By all means let us clarify the rules so that the sport of destroying human life on the highways shall not suffer through the overzeal of amateur homicides. Remember our proud boast that we lead all the world in traffic horrors.

IRVIN S. COBB.
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Pattern 1315

Bluebirds are for happiness—so runs the legend. This dainty pattern in 10-to-the-inch crosses will add a cheery touch indeed to your towels, pillow cases, scarfs or cloths. Do these simple motifs in natural color, or two shades of one color. Pattern 1315 contains a transfer pattern of two motifs 5 1/4 by 12 3/4 inches; two motifs 6 by 7 1/2 inches; and two motifs 5 1/2 by 7 inches; and four motifs 3 1/2 by 5 1/4 inches; color suggestions; illustrations of all stitches needed; material requirements.

Send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) for this pattern to The Sewing Circle Needlecraft Dept., 82 Eighth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Write plainly your name, address and pattern number.

Foreign Words and Phrases

- Non compos mentis. (L.) Not of sound mind.
- Ex parte. (L.) Of or from one side only.
- Non est inventus. (L.) He has not been found.
- Pax vobiscum! (L.) Peace be with you!
- Statu quo ante bellum. (L.) As it was before the war.
- Sur le tapis. (F.) On the carpet; under consideration.
- Vinculum matrimonii. (L.) The bond of matrimony.
- Tabula rasa. (L.) A blank tablet.
- Sine qua non. (L.) Without which not; an indispensable condition.
- Ad hominem. (L.) To the (individual) man.
- In extenso. (L.) Fully; at length; unabridged.

SEE THIS CROSS

IT'S FOR YOUR PROTECTION



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Self-knowledge is the property of that man whose passions have their full play, but who ponders over their results.—Disraeli.

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BEGINNING
IN THIS ISSUE . . .

'THE GARDEN
MURDER CASE'

S. S. VAN DINE'S
Newest Philo Vance
Murder Mystery

DON'T MISS A
SINGLE INSTALLMENT