

THE GARDEN MURDER CASE

by S. S. VAN DINE

Copyright S. S. Van Dine
WNU Service

SYNOPSIS

Philo Vance, famous detective, and John F. X. Markham, district attorney for New York county are dining in Vance's apartment when Vance receives an anonymous telephone message informing him of a "disturbing psychological tension at Professor Epiurium Garden's apartment" advising that he read up on radio-active sodium, consult a passage in the Aeneid and counseling that "Equanimity is essential." Professor Garden is famous in chemical research. The message, decoded by Vance, reminds him that Professor Garden's son Floyd and his puny cousin, Woodie Swift, are addicted to horse-racing. Vance says that "Equanimity" is a horse running next day in the Rivermont handicap. Vance is convinced that the message was sent by Dr. Siefert, the Gardens' family physician. He arranges to have lunch next day at the Gardens' penthouse. Vance is greeted by Floyd Garden and meets Lowe Hammie, an elderly fellow of horse racing. Floyd expresses concern over Swift's queer actions. Mrs. Garden, supposedly ill, comes downstairs and places a \$100 bet on a horse. Gathered around an elaborate loud speaker service, listening to the racing are Cecil Kroon, Madge Weatherby and Zalia Graem, who bet varying amounts on the race. There is tension under the surface safety. Zalia and Swift are not on speaking terms. Kroon leaves to keep an appointment before the race starts. Miss Beeton, a nurse, and Vance bet on "Azure Star." Swift recklessly bets \$10,000 on "Equanimity" and goes to the roof garden to hear the results. Floyd follows Swift, remaining away from the group several minutes. Zalia goes to the den to answer a telephone call. Soon after the announcement that "Azure Star" wins, the guests hear a shot. Vance finds Swift dead, shot through the head with a revolver nearby. He says Swift has been murdered. After calling the police, he finds the door of a vault ajar. Kroon returns and is sharply questioned by Vance, who finds he had not left the building. Vance orders Miss Beeton to guard the stairway and prevent Mrs. Garden and Zalia from viewing Swift's body.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

"Garden," he began, "there are a few things that I'd like to have cleared up before the district attorney and the police arrive." He turned about leisurely and sat down at the desk, facing Garden.

"Anything I can do to help," Garden mumbled, lighting his pipe.

"A few necessary questions, don't you know," Vance went on. "Hope they won't upset you, and all that. But the fact is, Mr. Markham will probably want me to take a hand in the investigations, since I was a witness to the preamble of this distressing tragedy."

"I hope he does," Garden returned. "It's a damnable affair, and I'd like to see the axe fall, no matter whom it might behead." His pipe was giving him trouble. "By the way, Vance," he went on quietly, "how did you happen to come here today? I've asked you so often to join our racing seance—and you pick the one day when the roof blows off the place."

Vance kept his eyes on Garden for a moment.

"The fact is," he said at length, "I got an anonymous telephone message last night, vaguely outlining the situation here and mentioning Equanimity."

Garden jerked himself up to keener attention.

"The devil you say!" he exclaimed. "That's a queer one. Man or woman?"

"Oh, it was a man," Vance replied casually.

Garden pursed his lips and, after a moment's meditation, said quietly:

"Well, anyway, I'm damned glad you did come. . . . What can I tell you that might be of help? Anything you want, old man."

"First of all, then," asked Vance, "did you recognize the revolver? I saw you looking at it rather apprehensively when we came out on the roof."

Garden frowned, and finally answered, as if with sudden resolution:

"Yes! I did recognize it, Vance. It belongs to the old gentleman—"

"Your father?"

Garden nodded grimly. "He's had it for years. Why he ever got it in the first place, I don't know—he probably hasn't the slightest idea how to use it. . . ."

"By the by," Vance put in, "what time does your father generally return home from the university?"

"Why—why—" Garden hesitated and then continued: "on Saturdays he's always here early in the afternoon—rarely after three. Gives himself and his staff a half-holiday. . . . But," he added, "father's very erratic. . . ." His voice trailed off nervously.

Vance took two deep inhalations on his cigarette: he was watching Garden attentively. Then he asked in a soft tone:

"What's on your mind?—Unless, of course, you have good reason for not wanting to tell me."

Garden took a long breath and stood up. He seemed to be deeply troubled as he walked across the room and back.

"The truth is, Vance," he said, as he resumed his place on theavenport, "I don't even know where the pater is this afternoon. As soon as I came downstairs after Woody's death, I called him to give him the news. I thought he'd want to get here as soon as possible in the circumstances. But I was told that he'd locked up the laboratory and left the university about two o'clock."

CHAPTER V

I could not understand the man's perturbation; and I could see that it puzzled Vance as well. Vance endeavored to put him at his ease.

"It really doesn't matter," he said, as if dismissing the subject.

"It may be just as well that your father doesn't learn of the tragedy till later," He smoked for a moment. "But to get back to the revolver: where was it usually kept?"

"In the center drawer of the desk upstairs," Garden told him promptly.

"And was the fact generally known to the other members of the household, or to Swift himself?"

Garden nodded. "Oh, yes. There was no secret about it. We often joked with the old gentleman about his 'arsenal.'"

"And the revolver was always loaded?"

"So far as I know, yes."

"And was there an extra supply of cartridges?"

"As to that, I cannot say," Garden answered: "but I don't think so."

"And here's a very important question, Garden," Vance went on. "How many of the people that are here today could possibly have known that your father kept this loaded revolver in his desk? Now, think carefully before answering."

Garden meditated for several moments. He looked off into space and puffed steadily on his pipe.

"I am trying to remember," he said reminiscently, "just who was here the day Zalia came upon the gun."

"What day was that?" Vance cut in sharply.

"It was about three months ago," Garden explained. "You see, we used to have the telephone set-up connected upstairs in the study. But some of the western races came in so late that it began to interfere with the old gentleman's routine when he came home from the university. So we moved the paraphernalia down into the drawing room. As a matter of fact, it was more convenient; and the mater didn't object—in fact, she rather enjoyed it."

"But what happened on this particular day?" insisted Vance.

"Well, we were all upstairs in the study, going through the whole silly racing rigmarole that you witnessed this afternoon, when Zalia Graem, who always sat at the old gentleman's desk, began opening the drawers, looking for a piece of scratch paper on which to figure the mutuels. She finally opened the center drawer and saw the revolver. She brought it out with a flourish and, laughing like a silly school-girl, pointed it around the room. I reprimanded her—rather rudely, I'm afraid—and ordered her to put the revolver back in its place, as it was loaded—and just then a race came over the amplifier, and the episode was ended."

"Most interestin'," murmured Vance. "And can you recall how many of those present today were likewise present at Miss Graem's little entree?"

"I rather think they were all there, if my memory is correct."

Vance sighed.

"A bit futile—eh, what? No possible elimination along that line."

Garden looked up, startled.

"Elimination? I don't understand. We were all downstairs here this afternoon except Kroon—and he was out—when the shot was fired."

At this moment there was a slight commotion in the hallway. It sounded as if a scuffle of some kind was in process, and a shrill, protesting voice mingled with the calm but determined tones of the nurse. Vance went immediately to the door and threw it open. There, just outside the den door, only a short distance from the stairway, were Miss Weatherby and Miss Beeton. The nurse had a firm hold on the other woman and was calmly arguing with her. As Vance stepped toward them, Miss Weatherby turned to face him and drew herself up arrogantly.

"What's the meaning of this?" she demanded. "Must I be mauled by a menial because I wish to go upstairs?"

"Miss Beeton has orders that no one is to go upstairs," Vance said sternly. "And I was unaware that she is a menial."

"But why can't I go upstairs?" the woman asked with dramatic emphasis. "I want to see poor Woody. Death is so beautiful; and I was very fond of Woody. By whose orders, pray, am I being denied this last communion with the departed?"

"By my orders," Vance told her coldly. "Furthermore, this particular death is far from beautiful, I assure you. And the police will be here any minute. Until then no one will be permitted to disturb any thing upstairs."

"Then why," she demanded with histrionic indignation, "was this woman"—she glanced with exaggerated contempt at the nurse—"coming down the stairs herself when I came into the hall?"

Vance made no attempt to hide a smile of amusement.

"I'm sure I don't know. I may ask her later. But she happens to be under instructions from me to let no one go upstairs. Will you be so good, Miss Weatherby," he added, almost harshly, "as to return to the drawing room and remain there until the officials arrive?"

The woman glared superciliously at the nurse, and then, with a toss

of the head, strode toward the archway.

The nurse, obviously embarrassed, turned to resume her post, but Vance stopped her.

"Were you upstairs, Miss Beeton?" he asked in a kindly tone.

She was standing very erect, her face slightly flushed. She looked Vance frankly and firmly in the eye and slowly shook her head.

"I haven't left my post, Mr. Vance," she said quietly. "I understand my duty."

Vance returned her gaze for a moment, and then bowed his head slightly.

"Thank you, Miss Beeton," he said.

He came back into the den, and closing the door, addressed Garden again.

"Now that we have disposed temporarily of the theatrical queen,"—he smiled somberly—"suppose we continue with our little chat."

Garden chuckled mildly and began repacking his pipe.

"Queer girl, Madge; always acting like a tragedienne—but I don't think she's ever really been on the stage."

"You heard her tell me she was particularly fond of Swift," remarked Vance. "Just what did she mean by that?"

Garden shrugged. "Nothing at all, if you ask me. She didn't know that Woody was on earth, so to speak. But dead, Woody becomes a dramatic possibility."

"Yes, yes—quite," murmured Vance. "Which reminds me: what was the tiff between Swift and Miss Graem about? I noticed your little peace-maker advances this afternoon."

Garden became serious.

"I haven't been able to figure that situation out myself. Woody was pretty deep in the new-mown hay as far as Zalia went. Hovered round her all the time, and took all her good-natured bantering without a murmur. Then, suddenly, the embryonic love affair—or whatever it was—went sour. Obviously something had happened, but I never got the straight of it. It may have been a new flame on Woody's part—I rather imagine it was something of the kind. As for Zalia, she was never serious about it anyway. And I have an idea that Woody wanted that extra twenty thousand today for some reason connected with Zalia. . . ." Garden stopped speaking abruptly and slapped his thigh. "By George! I wouldn't be surprised if that hard-bitten little gambler had turned Woody down because he was comparatively hard up. You can't tell about these girls today. They're as practical as the devil himself."

Vance nodded thoughtfully.

"Your observations rather fit with the remarks she made to me a little while ago. She, too, wanted to go upstairs to see Swift. Gave as her excuse the fact that she felt she was to blame for the whole sordid business."

Garden grinned.

"Well, there you are." Then he remarked judiciously: "But you can never tell about women."

"I wonder," Vance smoked in silence for a moment. Then he went on: "There's another matter in connection with Swift which you might be able to clear up for me. Could you suggest any reason why, when I placed the bet on Azure Star for Miss Beeton this afternoon, Swift should have looked at me as if he would enjoy murdering me?"

"I saw that too," Garden nodded. "I can't say it meant anything much. Woody was always a weak sister where any woman was concerned. It took little to make him think he'd fallen in love. He may have become infatuated with the nurse—he'd been seeing her around here for the past few months. And now that you mention it, he's been somewhat poisonous toward me on several occasions because she was more or less friendly with me and ignored him entirely. But I'll say this for Woody: if he did have ideas about Miss Beeton, his taste is improving. She's an unusual girl—different. . . ."

Vance nodded his head slowly and gazed with peculiar concentration out the window.

"Yes," he murmured. "Quite different." Then, as if bringing himself back from some alien train of thought, he crushed out his cigarette and leaned forward. "However, we'll drop speculation for the moment. . . . Suppose you tell me something about the vault upstairs."

Garden glanced up in evident surprise.

"There's nothing to tell about that old catch-all. It's neither mysterious nor formidable. And it's really not a vault at all. Several years ago the pater found that he had accumulated a lot of private papers and experimental data that he didn't want casual callers messing in. So he had this fire-proof storeroom built to house these scientific treasures of his. The vault, as you call it, was built as much for mere privacy as for actual safe-keeping. It's just a very small room with shelves around the walls."

"Has everyone in the house access to it?" asked Vance.

"Anyone so inclined," replied Garden. "But who in the name of Heaven, would want to go in there?"

"Really, you know, I haven't the foggiest notion," Vance returned, "except that I found the door to it unlatched when I was coming downstairs a little while ago."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Printed Cottons Rank High in Chic

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



ARE modern cottons putting on high-style airs? Their emergence from the humble houserock field tells as fascinating a story as any Cinderella romance might offer. Cottons are certainly going places and doing things in the way of color, weave and design such as they never ventured to do before.

This spirit of cottons to do and dare is especially true in regard to this season's prints which are flaunting a glory and glamor that is taking them into the swankiest places cottons were ever known to go. As pretentiously fashioned as designers are now turning out cotton costumes for both day and evening wear, you feel smartly dressed in them no matter the place, the time or the company you are in.

It's cottons such as were displayed at a style clinic held in the Merchandise Mart of Chicago recently (three of which are here pictured) that cause one to become cotton-conscious to ace-high point of enthusiasm. Attractive cotton fashions of the type pictured available in department stores and specialty shops the country over give the perfect answer to women seeking maximum style at minimum outlay.

A stunning dress, as shown to the right in the group, holds no terrors for a limited budget for it is anything but costly even though it does give its wearer an air of high-brow chic. Which is the grand and glorious thing about this season's handsome cottons, they are inexpensive although they have all the voguish details you would expect of much higher priced modes. In the gown referred to you see how dramatically splashy cotton prints have stepped into the 1937 scene. The graceful black scroll patterning boldly contrasts vividly colorful florals. A girlish round collar and

short puff sleeves are important style details. The gypsy sash girle repeating leading colors in the print adds the final "touch that tells." A bright green felt hat with grosgrain ribbon trim colorfully tops this costume.

A peasant print and the new spaghetti trim are combined in the dress shown to the left to interpret style at its best. The print is in peasant blues, greens and yellows on a russet background ground. The spaghetti trim for belt and for the modish lacing on the waist is in multi colors. The skirt is flared as fashion now demands. The hat has a square high crown and the brim is bound in grosgrain.

Royal crimson (echoing coronation colors) and navy blue on a white background of cloxy pique presents a stunning color study for the gown centered in the group. Because the print is a vividly colorful widely spaced bold floral it registers definitely 1937. This ensemble features a jacket with puffed sleeves and paneled down the back to correspond with the panel in the dress which is sleeveless and collarless. A new Gaucho style felt hat inspired by South America gives a nonchalant touch which is most intriguing. Adjustable knots hold the hat under the chin.

When you go cotton-print shopping don't forget that the bigger, the bolder, the print the smarter. You can go to any extreme and still not be found guilty of exceeding the speed limit so far as the colors and designs of the new cottons are concerned. There is a decided trend toward bold stripes and plaids. Then too, fancy turns to East Indian and oriental print designs. These are particularly smart for the now-popular house coats and for sports frocks.

© Western Newspaper Union.

VOGUSH SILK NET
By CHERIE NICHOLAS



If you have to make one party dress do for various occasions there is no better buy than black silk net of sterling quality. Especially is this true at the present moment since Paris is showing greatest enthusiasm for black silk sheers of every description. One of the arguments in favor of black net is that it can be worn over different slips, the latest idea being multi-colored plaid or striped taffeta or gay floral print topped with black sheer. The silk net evening gown pictured has a charming Empire décolletage.

FASHIONS CALLING FOR GREAT YARDAGE

By CHERIE NICHOLAS

The present dramatic fashions calling for great yardage as endorsed by leading designers give fabrics a larger share of the fashion spotlight than in many seasons. "Ballerina" skirts of layers and layers of stiff sheer silks, attached to long fitted bodices of silk net, silk tulle and silk marquisette show the inspiration of the recent Degas exhibits in Paris and New York. Full-skirted evening gowns sometimes use forty yards of silk.

Schiaparelli's ballet waltz dress with short skirt over stiff petticoats, the soubrette silhouette which caused such a sensation at the openings, is frequently interpreted in silk net, also in printed silk.

Cotton Laces Are Just the Thing for Daytime Frocks

Cotton laces, fashion forecasters declare, are going to be prominent among the daytime frocks worn this spring and summer. Street-length dresses made of lace in the many tailored styles are just the thing for the perfect combination of smartness and practicalness. The laces are varied in their patterns, some having big flower designs made up of large or small flowers or different sizes together. Others are patterned in geometric and modernistic figures. The beauty of the cotton laces is that they can usually be worn straight through the day, finishing up at the country club as fresh and smart as a daisy. A little sports dress may be just a sports dress, but when it's lace, you have sounded a style-correct decorative note, to say nothing of coolness and uncrushableness.

Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

© Bell Syndicate.—WNU Service.

1. How many languages and systems of writing are there?
2. What state has contributed the most Supreme court justices?
3. In what year was a performance of "Aida" given at the foot of the Pyramids in Egypt?
4. Who guards the White House?
5. Who wrote the "Comedie Humaine"?
6. What was a bireme?
7. Of what musical instrument was the clavichord a forerunner?
8. Who were the Jacobites?
9. Of what country was Catherine de Medici queen?
10. In what country is Mecca?
11. In what war was James Clinton a noted American general?
12. How many sovereigns have been crowned in Westminster Abbey?

Answers

1. Dr. Frank H. Vizetelly says that there are six thousand seven hundred and sixty named tongues and systems of writing in the world.
2. New York has contributed the most United States Supreme court justices, 10.
3. In 1912 an impressive operatic production of the opera was given there.
4. The White House has its own police force of 48 men. This includes a captain, a lieutenant, three sergeants and 43 policemen. There are also 10 Secret Service men.
5. This is the title of an uncompleted series of nearly a hundred novels by Balzac, designed to give a panoramic picture of the manners and morals of the time. He began the work in 1829, adopting the general title in 1842.
6. An ancient galley having two banks of oars.
7. The piano.
8. Adherents of James II or his line.
9. France.
10. Arabia.
11. The Revolution.
12. Thirty-seven sovereigns have been crowned in the abbey, and 25 queens consort—all of the kings and queens since William the Conqueror. Eighteen sovereigns and 14 queens are buried there.

Little Red Schoolhouses

There are 138,542 little red schoolhouses dotting the nation's countryside. One - room affairs, they represent 57 per cent of all American school buildings and for the most part teach good old-fashioned American education with the three R's as the basis.—Literary Digest.

Guaranteed to kill ANTS

Ants are hard to kill, but Peterman's Ant Food is made especially to get them and get them fast. Destroys red ants, black ants, others—kills young and eggs, too. Sprinkle along windows, doors, any place where ants come and go. Safe. Efficacy 24 hours a day. 25¢, 35¢ and 60¢ at your druggist's.

PETERMAN'S ANT FOOD

That's Respect
A man can differ from us in his opinions as much as he pleases if he thinks a lot of us.

CONSTIPATED After Her First Baby

Finds Relief Safe, All-Vegetable Way

She had given up hope of anything but partial relief until she learned of famous all-vegetable **NIT Tablets** (Nature's action and biliousness—what a change! New pep—new color and vitality—freedom from bowel sluggishness and intestinal poisoning. The all-vegetable laxative gently stimulates the entire bowel, gives complete, thorough elimination. Get a 25¢ box. All druggists.

NIT TO-NIGHT
TOMORROW ALRIGHT

They Are Rare
Only the sparkling speeches should be long—about one in 10,000.

Sentinels of Health

Don't Neglect Them!

Nature designed the kidneys to do a marvelous job. Their task is to keep the flowing blood stream free of an excess of toxic impurities. The act of living—life itself—is constantly producing waste matter the kidneys must remove from the blood if good health is to endure.

When the kidneys fail to function as Nature intended, there is retention of waste that may cause body-wide distress. One may suffer nagging backache, persistent headache, attacks of dizziness, getting up at night, swelling, puffiness under the eyes—feel tired, nervous, all worn out.

Prevent, soothe or burning passages may be further evidence of kidney or bladder disturbance.

The recognized and proper treatment is a discrete medicine to help the kidneys get rid of excess poisonous body waste. Use **Doan's Pills**. They have had more than forty years of public approval. Are endorsed the country over. Insist on Doan's. Sold at all drug stores.

DOAN'S PILLS