

The GARDEN MURDER CASE

by S. S. VAN DINE

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CHAPTER VI—Continued

"Yes, yes. So I understand. And I want to hear more about this affair." The tension in his voice was patent. "Floyd told me that Woode's death had all the appearance of suicide, but that you do not accept that conclusion. Would it be asking too much if I requested further details with regard to your attitude in this respect?"

"There can be no doubt, sir," Vance returned quietly, "that your nephew was murdered. There are too many indications that contradict the theory of suicide. But it would be inadvisable, as well as unnecessary, to go into details at the moment. Our investigation has just begun. By the by, doctor, may I ask what detained you this afternoon?—I gathered from your son that you usually return home long before this time on Saturdays."

"Of course, you may," the man replied with seeming frankness; but there was a startled look in his eyes as he gazed at Vance. "I had some obscure data to look up before I could continue with an experiment I'm making; and I thought today would be an excellent time to do it, since I close the laboratory and let my assistants go on Saturday afternoons."

"And where were you, doctor," Vance went on, "between the time you left the laboratory and the time of your arrival here?"

"To be quite specific," Professor Garden answered, "I left the university at about two and went to the public library where I remained until half an hour ago. Then I took a cab and came directly home."

"You went to the library alone?" asked Vance.

"Naturally I went alone," the professor answered tartly. "I don't take assistants with me when I have research work to do."

"My dear doctor!" said Vance placatingly. "A serious crime has been committed in your home, and it is essential that we know—as a matter of routine—the whereabouts of the various persons in any way connected with the unfortunate situation."

"I see what you mean." "I am glad you appreciate our difficulties," Vance said, "and I trust you will be equally considerate when I ask you just what was the relationship between you and your nephew?"

The man turned slowly and leaned against the broad sill.

"We were very close," he answered without hesitation or resentment. "Both my wife and I have regarded Woode almost as a son, since his parents died. He was not a strong person morally, and he needed both spiritual and material assistance. Perhaps because of this fundamental weakness in his nature, we have been more lenient with him than with our own son."

CHAPTER VII

Vance nodded with understanding. "That being the case, I presume that you and Mrs. Garden have provided for young Swift in your wills."

"That is true," Professor Garden answered after a slight pause. "We have, as a matter of fact, made Woode and our son equal beneficiaries."

"Has your son," asked Vance, "any income of his own?"

"None whatever," the professor told him. "He has made a little money here and there, on various enterprises—largely connected with sports—but he is entirely dependent on the allowance my wife and I give him. It's a very liberal one—too liberal, perhaps, judged by conventional standards. But I see no reason not to indulge the boy. It isn't his fault that he hasn't the temperament for a professional career, and has no flair for business."

"A very liberal attitude, Doctor," Vance murmured, "especially for one who is himself so wholeheartedly devoted to the more serious things of life as you are. . . . But what of Swift: did he have an independent income?"

"His father," the professor explained, "left him a very comfortable amount; but I imagine he squandered it or gambled most of it away."

"There's one more question," Vance continued, "that I'd like to ask you in connection with your will and Mrs. Garden's: were your son and nephew aware of the disposition of the estate?"

"I couldn't say. It's quite possible they were. Neither Mrs. Garden nor I have regarded the subject as a secret. . . . But what, may I ask, — Professor Garden gave Vance a puzzled look—"has this to do with the present terrible situation?"

"I'm sure I haven't the remotest

idea," Vance admitted frankly. "I'm merely prober round in the dark, in the hope of findin' some small ray of light."

Hennessey, the detective whom Heath had ordered to remain on guard below, came lumbering up the passageway to the study.

"There's a guy downstairs, Sergeant," he reported, "who says he's from the telephone company and has got to fix a bell or somethin'. He's fussed around downstairs and couldn't find anything wrong there."

Heath shrugged and looked inquiringly at Vance.

"It's quite all right, Hennessey," Vance told the detective. "Let him come up."

Hennessey saluted half-heartedly and went out.

"You know, Markham," Vance said, "I wish this infernal buzzer hadn't gone out of order at just this time. I abominate coincidences."

"Do you mean," Professor Garden interrupted, "that inter-communicating buzzer between here and the den downstairs? . . . It was working all right this morning—Sneed summoned me to breakfast with it as usual."

"Yes, yes," nodded Vance. "That's just it. It evidently ceased functioning after you had gone out. The nurse discovered it and reported it to Sneed who called up the telephone company."

"It's not of any importance," the professor returned with a lackadaisical gesture of his hand. "It's a convenience, however, and saves many trips up and down the stairs."

"We may as well let the man attend to it, since he's here. It won't disturb us," Vance stood up. "And I say, doctor, would you mind joining the others downstairs? We'll be down presently, too."

The professor inclined his head in silent acquiescence and, without a word, went from the room.

Presently a tall, pale, youthful man appeared at the door to the study. He carried a small black tool kit.

"I was sent here to look over a buzzer," he announced with surliness. "I didn't find the trouble downstairs."

"Maybe the difficulty is at this end," suggested Vance. "There's the buzzer behind the desk."

The man went over to it, opened his case of tools and, taking out a flashlight and a small screw-driver, removed the outer shell of the box. Fingering the connecting wires for a moment, he looked up at Vance with an expression of contempt.

"You can't expect the buzzer to work when the wires ain't connected," he commented.

Vance became suddenly interested. Adjusting his monocle, he knelt down and looked at the box.

"They're both disconnected—eh, what?" he remarked.

"Sure they are," the man grumbled. "And it don't look to me like they worked themselves loose, either."

"You think they were deliberately disconnected?" asked Vance.

"Well, it looks that way." The man was busy reconnecting the wires. "Both screws are loose, and the wires aren't bent—they look like they been pulled out."

"That's most interestin'," Vance stood up, and returned the monocle to his pocket meditatively. "It might be, of course. But I can't see why anyone should have done it. . . . Sorry for your trouble."

"Oh, that's all in the day's work," the man muttered, readjusting the cover of the box. "I wish all my jobs were as easy as this one." After a few moments he stood up. "Let's see if the buzzer will work now. Any one downstairs who'll answer if I press this?"

"I'll take care of that," Heath interposed, and turned to Snitkin.

"Hop down to the den, and if you hear the buzzer down there, ring back."

Snitkin hurried out, and a few moments later, when the button was pressed, there came two short answering signals.

"It's all right now," the repair man said, packing up his tools and going toward the door. "So long." And he disappeared down the passageway.

Vance smoked for a moment in silence, looking down at the floor.

"I don't know, Markham. It's dashed mystifyin'. But I have a notion that the same person who

fired the shot we heard disconnected those wires. . . ."

Suddenly he stepped to one side behind the draperies and crouched down, his eyes peering out cautiously into the garden. He raised a warning hand to us to keep back out of sight.

"Deuced queer," he said tensely. "That gate in the far end of the fence is slowly opening. . . . Oh, my aunt! And he swung swiftly into the passageway leading to the garden, beckoning to us to follow."

Vance ran past the covered body of Swift on the settee, and crossed to the garden gate. As he reached it he was confronted by the haughty and majestic figure of Madge Weatherby. Evidently her intention was to step into the garden, but she drew back abruptly when she saw us. Our presence, however, seemed neither to surprise nor to embarrass her.

"Charmin' of you to come up, Miss Weatherby," said Vance. "But I gave orders that everyone was to remain downstairs."

"I had a right to come here!" she returned, drawing herself up with almost regal dignity.

"Ah!" murmured Vance. "Yes, of course. It might be, don't y' know. But would you mind explainin'?"

"Not at all. I wished to ascertain if he could have done it."

"And who," asked Vance, "is this mysterious 'he'?"

"Who?" she repeated, throwing her head back sarcastically. "Why, Cecil Kroon!"

Vance's eyelids drooped, and he studied the woman narrowly for a brief moment. Then he said lightly: "Most interestin'. But let that wait a moment. How did you get up here?"

"That was very simple. I pretended to be faint and told your minion I was going into the butler's pantry to get a drink of water. I went out through the pantry door into the public hallway, came up the main stairs, and out on this terrace."

"But how did you know that you could reach the garden by this route?"

"I didn't know." She smiled enigmatically. "I was merely reconnoitering. I was anxious to prove to myself that Cecil Kroon could have shot poor Woody."

"And are you satisfied that he could have?" asked Vance quietly.

"Oh, yes," the woman replied with bitterness. "Beyond a doubt, I've known for a long time that Cecil would kill him sooner or later. And I was quite certain when you said that Woody had been murdered that Cecil had done it. But I did not understand how he could have gotten up here, after leaving us this afternoon. So I endeavored to find out."

"And why, may I ask," said Vance, "would Mr. Kroon desire to dispose of Swift?"

The woman clasped her hands theatrically against her breast.

"Cecil was jealous — frightfully jealous. He's madly in love with me. He has tortured me with his attentions. . . ."

"One of her hands went to her forehead in a gesture of desperation. "There has been nothing I could do. And when he learned that I cared for Woody, he became desperate. He threatened me."

Vance's keen regard showed neither the sympathy her pompous recital called for, nor the cynicism which I knew he felt.

"Sad—very sad," he mumbled.

Miss Weatherby jerked her head up and her eyes flashed.

"I came up here to see if it were possible that Cecil could have done this thing. I came up in the cause of justice!"

"Very accommodatin'," Vance's manner had suddenly changed. "We're most appreciative, and all that sort of thing. But I must insist, don't y' know, that you return downstairs and wait there with the others. And you will be so good as to come through the garden and go down the apartment stairs."

He was brutally matter-of-fact as he drew the gate shut and directed the woman to the passageway door. She hesitated a moment and then followed his indicating finger.

When we were back in the study Vance sank into a chair and yawned.

"My word!" he complained. "The case is difficult enough without these amateur theatricals."

Markham, I could see, had been both impressed and puzzled by the incident.

"Maybe it's not all dramatics," he suggested. "The woman made some very definite statements."

"Oh, yes. She would. She's the type." Vance took out his cigarette case. "Definite statements, yes. And misleadin'. Really, y' know, I don't for a moment believe she regards Kroon as the culprit."

"But she certainly has something on her mind," protested Markham. (TO BE CONTINUED)

Sermons in Stone

In the Regional Museum in Aberdeen, Scotland, are many sermons exhibited in stone. These sermons are gathered from all over the British Isles, particularly Scotland, and represent both social and natural history, and are more impressive than textbooks. As an illustration, Carlyle's life is not only exhibited by his library of books, but from scenes associated with his life from his castle visits to his fishing haunts. Axe weapons, windmills and other paraphernalia of man's early history in Scotland are shown as processes of evolution. Geological specimens are shown amid flowers, fishes and birds and give a natural setting to the scene seldom witnessed in completion.

Fancy Now Turns to Exotic Cottons

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



Oh, OH, OH! Did you ever see anything in the way of fabric so dazzling to the eye, so daringly designful, so altogether fascinating as the new cotton weaves that are dancing so madly, so merrily, so fashionably into the current style picture?

How perfectly they tune into the costume needs of carefree summer-time activities! It is no wild statement to say that an entire wardrobe can be successfully fashioned of cotton materials that will carry smartly through active sports and morning dress hours, that will answer to the call for voguish afternoon costumes, climaxing the around-the-clock program with evening formals that are just too lovely for words.

Cottons for formal wear? Yes, indeed! The next time you go to a dance or nighttime society event, count for your own satisfaction, the dresses fashioned of one type of cotton or another. You will see glamorous printed piques, the flattering and filmy cotton voiles so in demand at the present moment, dotted swisses, shadow printed organdies, superfine seersucker sheers and other entrancing cotton weaves too numerous to mention.

Perhaps after all has been said and done it is the amazing cotton prints that are of outstanding style significance. For excitement at high pitch, watch the procession of exotics in cotton that are that authentically oriental and superbly colorful you feel that they must have hailed direct from ports in far Persia, or East India, perhaps Java or China, or from Hungary or some other central-Europe country, or just as likely the print that holds you spellbound may be of South

American origin, for the latter rank high in style prestige this season.

Do these foreign-looking American-made prints make up effectively in dance frocks? Find the answer in the charming dress pictured to the right in the illustration. This sleeveless evening gown with graceful skirt and with halter-type bodice is made of one of the new Hungarian cotton prints which reproduce old-world textiles. The colors are rich and glewing and there is a gypsy flavor about them and the beads and the bracelets worn are in definite keeping with the trend in the summer mode. Needless to say that the colors of the print are fast to both sun and washing.

Take the thought of the perfectly gorgeous new cotton prints and the thought of the stunning new house coats, such as are proving the big sensation in fashion realms, put the two together and the duo-theme is enough to tempt any home-sewing woman into action. Which is exactly what is happening.

She who loves to get nautical will enjoy making up the beach coat to the left in the picture, which may be smartly used later on as an evening coat or as a house coat. The material, patterned with anchors and other seafaring themes, being properly pre-shrunk will not lose its perfect lines or fit from laundering, neither will the colors lose out in tubbing.

A cool competent play outfit of colorful early American print centers the trio. Being dependably pre-shrunk it is able to take its tubbings cheerfully without tendency to lose shape. The shirt and shorts are in one. The skirt whisks on and off at will.

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WITH LACE JACKET

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



This lovely lace gown has a matching jacket, which it should have according to all the laws of fashion. The idea of topping each dress with a related cape or jacket runs throughout the entire style program until now it has become a widespread accepted fact. Norman Hartnell, especially prominent for his coronation gowns, designed this very lovely evening ensemble. Both in London and Paris the flair for lace is at a high point of enthusiasm.

Romantic Jewelry
Massive bracelets and clips set with "sentimental stones" such as turquoises, corals, garnets, topazes and seed pearls are going to be worn this summer.

SEPARATE BOLERO IN LACE IS SMART

By CHERIE NICHOLAS

One of the many reasons for the great popularity of the becoming bolero is its ability to dress up a costume, or to vary it for you. You have only to slip one on over a simple crepe dress to achieve the effect that is especially attractive this year. Boleros are particularly prominent in starched cotton lace, in pastel shades and white. Several of these, in different colors, will enable you to get different effects with a single frock.

The simple, brief bolero would probably be most practical, for the lace pattern gives a dressy effect in itself, and the tailored pattern of the bolero makes it adaptable to all types of costumes. One very attractive design has short puff sleeves, and wide revers, with the short jacket slightly flared. If you can sew at all, it is the easiest thing to make, of little more than a yard of lace. Such a bolero shows off to best advantage over a dress that is fairly simple, whether it be an afternoon frock, or a gown for evening.

Renaissance of Interest in the "Polka Dot" Theme

There is a renaissance of interest in the polka dot theme. There are enormous plate-sized dots with smaller dots scattered around them, all sprinkled with tiny confetti dots in contrasting colors. There are zig-zag polka dot arrangements, irregular spacings. The classic polka dot takes on a new look in strange and "dizzy" color combinations for sportswear, such as queer reds combined with strong blues. Silk crepes, silk sheers and silk taffetas are favorite grounds for dot patterns, the companion idea often being carried out in a silk crepe with a silk sheer.

Tassels for Accent
Lavin is successful with a white suit with a swing jacket featuring square box pockets. The armholes are outlined in gay woolen tassels.

STAR DUST

Movie • Radio
By VIRGINIA VALE

THE President of the United States, no less, is the new diction coach at the Selznick-International studios in Hollywood. Whenever President Roosevelt makes an address over the radio, David Selznick has it recorded, and these records are used daily in training actors for voice tests.

Players memorize his speeches, then play the records over and over following his every intonation until they have mastered the art of perfect phrasing. Considering the great charm of the First Lady's recent broadcasts, studios might do well to get records of her talks.

In recent weeks Carole Lombard has been the busiest young woman in Hollywood, because her Paramount contract allows her to make one picture for another company each year, and all the companies have been sending scripts over to her house for her approval. There were such grand stories in the lot that Carole wants to make at least three of them. Her first flight away from the home studio will be at Selznick-International where she will play in "Nothing Sacred" opposite Fredric March.



Carole Lombard

All of us who could not get to London for the coronation can comfort ourselves by watching the long-ago coronation scenes in "The Prince and the Pauper." This is a most likable and refreshing picture and very exciting too. The Mauch twins are a grand addition to the ranks of young players.

Some weeks ago, you may recall, Gloria Swanson's return to the screen was all set. She was going to make "Mazie Kenyon" for M-G-M. And then when Gloria arrived at the studio all ready to go to work, the director looked at her horror-stricken. She wouldn't do at all; she looked too young. Dashing over to London to coronation festivities to forget her disappointment, Gloria had about decided that her future lay in radio work, when Columbia pictures got her on the transatlantic phone and told her to hurry home, they had found the perfect story for her. It sounds like a wonderful break for Gloria.

In spite of her outstanding success in "Valiant Is the Word for Carrie" and the forthcoming "They Gave Him a Gun" which is said to be even better, Gladys George looks on herself as just a novice at screen acting. So intent is she on becoming as skilled a player on the screen as she was on the stage, that she spends all of her spare time studying movies. The players she admires most are Garbo, Spencer Tracy, and Merle Oberon.

Social life and cafe-hopping were at low ebb during the weeks when there was talk in the air of a strike of the Screen Actors' guild which counts all the great in its ranks, but the homes of Robert Montgomery, Jim Cagney, Fredric March and a few other leaders were continual mob scenes. These men won the undying gratitude of extras and bit players, for they were battling to improve their pay and working conditions, not their own. Everyone is relieved that no strike was necessary. These leaders rallied the support of their fellow-players so quickly and thoroughly that the producers gave in to their demands without a struggle.

ODDS AND ENDS—Hollywood will throw a grand party soon in honor of Weber and Fields and the fiftieth anniversary of their stage debut as a team. Imitations of their act will be put on by Jack Benny and George Burns, Eddie Cantor and George Jessel, and two motion-picture producers. . . . Joan Crawford is teaching Mrs. Gary Cooper to crochet and Gary is threatening to buy them old-fashioned rocking chairs. . . . Bette Davis never gets the least bit nervous in front of a camera or a microphone, but waiting between scenes gives her the jitters. She calms down by sipping tomato juice between scenes. . . . Joe E. Brown, Jr., is the envy of all his pals because he takes Dixie Dunbar, the cutest little trick in 20th Century-Fox pictures, to his fraternity dances. . . . James Dunn has bought an airplane so that he can fly around the country to big sports events whenever he has a few days between pictures. . . . Whenever the RKO studio wants to reach Ginger Rogers on a day when she is not working, they call the hospital where James Stewart is undergoing treatment for arthritis. . . . Paul Mann has rebelled against boards and weird make-up. © Western Newspaper Union.