



by S.S. Van Dine
Copyright by W.K. Wright

WNU SERVICE

SYNOPSIS

Philo Vance, expert in solving crime mysteries, investigates the supposed suicide of Archer Coe. District Attorney Markham and Vance go to Coe's house. They find Wrede, a friend of Coe's, there; also Signor Grassi, a guest. The door of the death chamber is bolted from the inside. They force it. Coe is clothed in a dressing gown, but wears street shoes. Vance says it is murder. The medical examiner says Coe had been dead for hours when a bullet entered his head. He had been stabbed. The investigators find a wounded Scotch terrier in the house. Vance declares the animal should prove an important connecting link. Gambie says Brisbane Coe, Archer's brother, left for Chicago the previous afternoon, but his dead body is discovered in a coat closet in the Coe home. Vance interrogates the Chinese cook, Liang, and afterwards finds a bit of porcelain from a Chinese vase, with blood on it. Brisbane died from a stab in the back, as did Archer. Heath brings in the dagger which killed both men. Vance, searching Brisbane Coe's coat, finds some waxed thread attached to a bent pin, and a darning needle. It is learned that Wrede owned a dog, which he gave to a friend, a Doberman Pinscher.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

"Perpend, Markham," Vance was generally patient. "It is highly unlikely—not to say impossible—that the dog could have followed any one in the front door without being seen. If she had been deliberately admitted, she would probably have not been injured and left behind the portieres. Therefore, in view of the various factors of the situation, I believe the dog entered the house through an open door. And as the murderer would not have left the front door open, we may, as a hypothesis, assume that he entered by the rear door. And this would be in keeping with the nature of the crime. Furthermore, it is not at all unlikely that he would have left both the gate and the rear door open so that he could make his escape without unnecessary noise. In that case the dog could easily have followed him in through the open gate and door, without being seen or heard. And the place where the dog was found—just outside the library door—was a logical spot, for the dog would have come in through the kitchen and dining room and into the library."

"Yes. All that is quite reasonable. But, after all, anyone could have come in the rear door."

"Provided he knew the lie of the land, was familiar with all the domestic arrangements—and could have obtained a key. Also, provided he knew that all the servants would be away that night."

"It was about half-past three when we returned to the Coe house. The sergeant was bustling about, giving orders."

"I've got something for you, sir," he swaggered a little as he led us into the library and pointed to the large center table. "There's the poker—and it's got blood on it."

Vance went up to it and examined it closely. He picked something from it between his thumb and forefinger, and went to the window.

"Yes, there's dried blood on it—and also a coarse brindle hair." He turned and nodded. "It was this poker, Markham, which wounded the Scot. And undoubtedly, too, Archer Coe was struck with this poker. The shape of its blunt end coincides perfectly with the wound on Archer's head."

He frowned and looked at the vase in which he had found the bloodstains.

"And, Markham, that poker belongs in this room—in that rack beside the fireplace, just in front of the place on this divan where Archer Coe was sitting when Gambie went out last night. More evidence that something sinister and horrible preceded the crime upstairs. And it took place in this room."

"That's what I'm trying to tell you."

Vance sat down and drew deeply on his cigarette.

"What's the idea, Vance? Why should the sergeant's finding the poker upstairs bother you?"

Vance exhaled a long ribbon of smoke, and looked directly at Markham.

"Because, old dear, that chest was empty when I looked in it this morning!"

CHAPTER VII

The Scented Lipstick.

VANCE'S declaration left us both perturbed and mystified. Markham was the first to speak.

"Are you certain, Vance? Maybe you overlooked—"

"Oh, no," Vance made a gesture of finality. "It wasn't there—oh, quite. Some one put it there after I'd examined the chest."

"But who, in heaven's name?"

"Come, come, Markham," Vance smiled grimly. "One doesn't know, y' know. But I'd say it was the same person who tucked the dagger under the cushion of the chair in which Archer passed away."

"Yes, yes—the dagger. That mystery is at least cleared up—the poker explained that incongruity. The dagger didn't belong in Archer's boudoir. Quite the contrary. Its presence there confused me abominably. Both the poker and the dagger belonged in the library here. And they weren't here, d' ye see—they were where they shouldn't have been, where they couldn't possibly have been. . . . A gap—a mishap—a bit of superficial thinkin' on some one's part. Panic? Yes, that's what it was. Movin' things from one place to another. Silly idea. People always think that by movin' things they can confuse an issue. More often they merely clarify it."

The sergeant projected himself irascibly into the discussion.

"If some one did cache the dagger and the poker upstairs, who'd have had the opportunity? That's what I'd like to figure out."

"Almost anyone might have done it, Sergeant," returned Vance lazily. "Both Wrede and Grassi have passed back and forth before the room while we were downstairs."

Heath thought a moment.

"That's right. And then do you remember how that Miss Lake rushed to the chair when she first came in the room and put her arm back of the corpse? She coulda stuck the dagger under the seat with all of us looking at her. And that cagy butler, he coulda done it."

"And don't overlook the Chinaman. Gambie sent him to fetch Miss Lake's breakfast tray while we were all downstairs."

Heath grasped at this remark.

"What do you mean?"

"Just that." Vance halted and looked down at the district attorney. "Oh, he came back—he had to come back. Brisbane was killed hours after Archer. And the reason he was too late to transfer the scene of the crime was that Archer's door was bolted on the inside. The scene of this murder had shifted—and he, the murderer, was locked out. He knew last night that neither the dagger nor the poker could be found in the bedroom. Therefore it was not the murderer who placed them there this morning. . . ."

At this moment Gambie appeared at the door. He was worried and apologetic.

"I'm very sorry, sir, to interrupt," he began, "but an item—if you know what I mean—has just occurred to me. Ordinarily I would have thought little or nothing of it, but in view—"

"What's the item?" Markham snapped.

"It—it's this little gadget, sir," Gambie stammered, laying a small cylindrical metal lipstick holder on the table. "I found this in the wastepaper basket in this room this morning before I discovered the master's body upstairs, and I threw it out. But a few minutes ago I began thinking about this terrible affair—"

Vance picked up the holder and removed the top.

"Practically empty," he mused. "Not a gold case—therefore thrown away." He smeared a little of the rouge on his finger and smelled it. "Duplax's Carmine. Made for blondes. . . . Most interesting." He looked at Gambie.

"You left the house last night, when?"

"Between half-past five and six, sir. I couldn't say exactly."

"And you are quite sure Mr. Archer Coe had no visitor at the time?"

"Oh, becoming worried," Gambie was again quite smirled. "As I told you—"

"Yes, yes. So you told me." Vance was watching the man from under lazy eyelids. "But a lady seems to have been here. . . . Do you know of any appointment Mr. Coe may have had with the possible owner of that lipstick?"

"An appointment with a lady?" The butler, for some reason, seemed shocked. "Oh, no, sir. I'm sure Mr. Coe had no such appointment. He was—if you understand me, sir—a most abstemious man."

Vance dismissed him brusquely.

"That will be all, Gambie." When the man had gone, Vance looked waggishly at Markham.

"I fear, old dear, despite Gambie's assurances, that Archer did entertain a lady yesterday afternoon between, let us say, six o'clock and eight—which is probably about the time he was killed."

Heath was growing impatient.

"I can't see that it makes any difference anyway. Suppose the old boy did have a dame in for a visit—that's not explaining the cockeyed things that happened here last night. What about that bolted door upstairs? You had something in mind, Mr. Vance, when you asked me to get that bolt fixed, didn't you?"

"My notion was a bit vague, Sergeant," Vance crushed out his cigarette. "Of course, people don't get murdered in bolted rooms except in detective novels; and something Miss Lake said to me suggested that I might find a solution to that peculiar and illogical circumstance."

"What was that?" Markham curly demanded.

"When she was talkin' about Brisbane, don't y' know. You remember she mentioned he was interested in criminology and was sufficiently clever to cover his tracks if he'd decided to go in for murder. A significant remark, Markham."

"But I don't see the connection," Markham was puzzled. "Brisbane was the victim—not the murderer. Suppose you elucidate—if possible."

"I live in 'epics,' Vance grinned. "Let me question Miss Lake a bit further. I could bear a bit of amplification as to Brisbane's delvings into criminological lore." He sobered and went toward the door.

"What do you say to using Archer's bedroom as the scene of the interrogation?"

Markham gave a resigned sigh, and we went upstairs. Heath sent Gambie to ask Miss Lake to join us there; and a few minutes later she came in, swagging but chilly and, I thought, suspicious.

Vance pushed a chair forward for her.

"We wanted to ask you, Miss Lake," he began gravely. "Just what you meant when you spoke of your Uncle Brisbane's having 'dabbled in criminology'—I believe that was your phrase. What form did his interest in criminology take?"

"Only reading. Criminal cases, court cases, court records, detective stories—the usual thing. There are hundreds of volumes in his room."

"Were you, too, interested in your Uncle Brisbane's books?"

"Oh, yes. There's nothing else interesting in the house."

"Then you, too, have 'dabbled in criminology'?"

She shot Vance a quick look and gave a forced laugh.

"You might call it that."

"Ah! Then perhaps you can help us." Vance's air became jocular. "We crave to know how this door could have been bolted on the inside. Obviously Archer couldn't have done it with a bullet in his head."

"Have you ever heard of cadaveric spasm, or rigor mortis?" she asked contemptuously. "Men, with revolvers in their hands at death, have been known to fire them hours after they were dead, as a result of muscular contraction."

True Detective Story by Vance Wynn

The Gentleman From Paris

IT ALL came about from engaging a caretaker without looking into his antecedents.

Dr. and Mrs. Jerome Depinni—the last named being an Italian countess—had a winter home in Minneapolis.

They were in the habit of going south for winter, and left the Western home in charge of a venerable servant.

One year when they returned to Minneapolis they discovered that the servant had disappeared, and with him many of the precious possessions of the family.

These included a rare watch that had once been the property of Cardinal Richelieu, and a grape cluster design in pearls, diamonds and platinum, the work of the peerless artist, Benvenuto Cellini.

It was felt instinctively that the stolen goods had been taken to New York, so Doctor Depinni called upon George B. Dougherty, a clever detective of that city, who had made a reputation by solving more than one perplexing case.

His first inquiry concerned the venerable caretaker.

The victims were sure that he was all right; they feared, in fact, that he might have met with foul play.

As a proof of the man's good name, they exhibited a sheaf of letters of recommendation he had brought with him when he applied for the job. Dougherty investigated and found that all the letters had been forged.

This satisfied him that the man was a crook, and, from the character of the robbery, he was convinced that the caretaker worked with confederates.

His first move was to make a tour of the pawnshops of New York.

After that he visited many of the dealers in antiques.

On the second day of the search he was fortunate enough to come across the famous Richelieu watch in a pawnbroker's shop on Sixth avenue.

The dealer pretended to be very much shocked when he was told that he had purchased stolen goods, and, in reparation, said he was willing to do all in his power to bring the thief to justice.

He stated that the man had told him his name was "Mr. Coates," and that he had picked up this antique and others in the Rue Madame, that street of famous antique shops so well known in the French capital.

It had been "picked up" truly enough, but not in the manner nor in the place suggested by the clever crook.

The dealer was able to give a very good description of the man who had sold him the watch.



Just a Little Smile

Successful Tour

"We must go to Stratford," a tourist on a visit to England said to his wife.

"What's the use of that?" asked she. "We can buy Stratford postcards in London."

"My dear, one travels for something more than to send postcards! I want to write my name on Shakespeare's tomb!"—Montreal Star.

Encouragement

At an English theater they were playing "The Forty Thieves," and as the company numbered only eight, the entry of the robbers into the cave was achieved by their passing out at the back of the stage and entering again at the front.

Unfortunately one of the robbers walked with a limp, and when he had entered five times a voice from the gallery cried: "Stick it, Hoppy; last lap!"

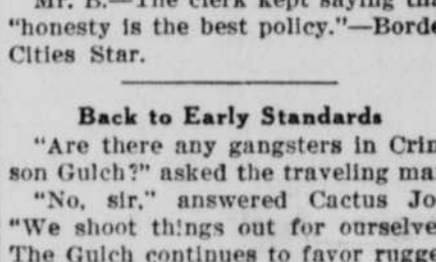
His Best Work

They had been discussing the habit of certain authors who do most of their work at night.

"When does our old friend Scribner do his best work?" asked A.

"In the daytime," replied B. "That's when he mows the lawn and keeps the garden generally in order."—Montreal Star.

DODGING THE OLD TASK



Wife (pleadingly)—John, why are you staying out every night until after 10 o'clock?

Hubby—Sh! Don't you know Bobbie has begun those infernal geometry lessons again?

The Grass Is Greener

Man—Did your wife scold you when you went home so late last night?

Friend—No. For once I was in luck. The people next door were having a family spat and she was so busy listening that she forgot all about me.—Chelsea Record.

PRETTY SLUMBER-WOOING PAJAMAS

PATTERN 9108

Jean simply loathes to cover up her gorgeous new pajamas with sheets and blankets, and so she lingers up with Teddy until the last moment. But it won't be long now—look at those eyes! Beautiful as they are, her night things are even more cozy and comfortable, and no child living could possibly keep her eyes open very long when wearing them. They are neat but roomy, with sleeves just wide enough, there's a pocket for a hanky and a smart loose cut of trouser—and please don't overlook the convenient way in which they button up in the back.

Pattern 9108 may be ordered only in sizes 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12. Size 4 requires 2 1/2 yards 36-inch fabric. Send FIFTEEN CENTS in coins or stamps (coins preferred) for this pat-



9108

tern. Be sure to write plainly your NAME, ADDRESS, the STYLE NUMBER and SIZE.

Complete, diagrammed sew chart included. Send your order to Sewing Circle Pattern Department, 232 West Eighteenth street, New York, N. Y.

EUREKA!

"Archimedes," read the schoolboy, aloud, "leaped from his bath shouting 'Eureka! Eureka!'" "One moment," said the teacher. "What is the meaning of 'Eureka?'" "Eureka" means I have found it," said the boy. "Very well. What had Archimedes found?" questioned the teacher. The boy hesitated, then ventured, hopefully. "The soap, sir!"—Terre Haute Tribune.

Proper Treatment

Nurse—A woman came into our hospital the other day and she was so cross-eyed that the tears ran right down her neck.

Boy Friend—You couldn't do anything for her, could you?

Nurse—Certainly; we treated her for bacteria.—Pathfinder Magazine.

QUITE TRUE



"Here! Go easy on that stuff. You're pouring yourself a four-ounce drink."

"Well, every Jack must have his gill."

Among the Bluebloods

"The road to success is a hard one, my son, and often blocked by trees."

"Yes, sir; family trees."

The Leader Wrigley's Spearmint The Perfect Gum