



THE GARDEN MURDER CASE By S.S. VAN DINE

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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 Equanimity 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, Woode Swift, are addicted to horse-racing. Vance says that "Equanimity" is a horse running next day in the Rivermont handicap.

CHAPTER I—Continued

"Therefore, we get the results that the sender of the message is a doctor whom I know and one who is aware of my acquaintance with the Gardens. The only doctor who fulfills these conditions, and who, incidentally, is middle-aged and cultured and highly judicial—Currie's description, y'know—is Miles Siefert. And, added to this simple deduction, I happen to know that Siefert is a Latin scholar—I once encountered him at the Latin society club-rooms. Another point in my favor is the fact that he is the family physician of the Gardens and would have ample opportunity to know about the galloping horses—and perhaps about Equanimity in particular—in connection with the Garden Household."

"That being the case," Markham protested, "why don't you phone him and find out exactly what's back of his cryptography?"

"My dear Markham—oh, my dear Markham! Siefert would not only indignantly repudiate any knowledge of the message, but would automatically become the first obstacle in any bit of pryin' I might decide to do. The ethics of the medical profession are most fantastic; and Siefert, as becomes his unique position, is a fanatic on the subject. From the fact that he communicated with me in this roundabout way I rather suspect that some grotesque point of honor is involved. Perhaps his conscience overcame him for the moment, and he temporarily relaxed his adherence to what he considers his code of honor. . . . No, no, that course wouldn't do at all. I must ferret out the matter for myself—as he undoubtedly wishes me to do."

"But what is this matter that you feel called upon to ferret out?" persisted Markham. "Granting all you say, I still don't see how you can regard the situation as in any way serious."

"One never knows, does one?" drawled Vance. "Still, I'm rather fond of the horses myself, don't y'know?"

Markham seemed to relax and fitted his manner to Vance's change of mood.

"And what do you propose to do?" he asked good naturedly.

Vance looked up whimsically. "The public prosecutor of New York—that noble defender of the rights of the common people—to wit: the Honorable John F. X. Markham—must grant me immunity and protection before I'll consent to answer."

Markham's eyelids drooped a little as he studied Vance. He was familiar with the serious import that often lay beneath the other's most frivolous remarks.

"Are you planning to break the law?" he asked.

"Oh, yes—quite," he admitted nonchalantly. "Jailable offense, I believe."

Markham studied him for another moment.

"All right," he said, without the slightest trace of lightness. "I'll do what I can for you. What's it to be?"

Vance took another sip of the Napoleon.

"Well, Markham old dear," he announced with a half smile, "I'm going to the Gardens' penthouse tomorrow afternoon and play the horses with the younger set."

in shillin'—shocker technique. It's deuced queer."

He stopped pacing the floor and looked at the clock.

"I think I'll make the arrangements. A bit of snoopin' is highly indicated."

He went into the anteroom, and a moment later I heard him dialing a number on the telephone. When he returned to the library he seemed to have thrown off his depression. His manner was almost flippant.

"We're in for an abominable lunch tomorrow, Van," he announced, pouring himself another pony of cognac. "And we must torture ourselves with the viands at a most ungodly hour—noon. What a time to ingest even good food!"

He sighed. "We're lunching with young Garden at his home. Woode Swift will be there and also an insufferable creature named Lowe Hammle, a horse gentleman from some obscure estate on Long Island. Later we'll be joined by various members of the sporting set, and together we'll indulge in that ancient and fascinating pastime of laying wagers on the thoroughbreds."

He rang for Currie and sent him out to fetch a copy of the Morning Telegraph.

"One should be prepared. Oh, quite. It's been years since I handicapped the horses."

Although I was well aware that Vance had some serious object in lunching with young Garden the following day and in participating in the gambling on the races, I had not the slightest suspicion, at the time, of the horrors that were to follow. On the afternoon of April 14 occurred the first grim act of one of the most atrocious multiple crimes of this generation. And to Doctor Siefert must go, in a large measure, the credit for the identification of the criminal, for had he not sent his cryptic and would-be anonymous message to Vance, the truth would probably never have been known.

I shall never forget that fatal Saturday afternoon. And aside from the brutal Garden murder, that afternoon will always remain memorable to me because it marked the first mature sentimental episode, so far as I had ever observed, in Vance's life. For once, the cold impersonal attitude of his analytical mind melted before the appeal of an attractive woman.

CHAPTER II

Shortly before noon the next day we arrived at Professor Garden's beautiful skyscraper apartment, and were cordially, and a little exuberantly, greeted by young Garden.

Floyd Garden was a man in his early thirties, erect and athletically built. He was about six feet tall, with powerful shoulders and a slender waist. His hair was almost black, and his complexion swarthy.

His manner, while easy and casual, and with a suggestion of swagger, was in no way offensive. He was not a handsome man; his features were too rugged, his eyes set too close together, his ears protruded too much, and his lips were too thin. But he had an undeniable charm, and there was a quiet submerged competency in the way he moved and in the rapidity of his mental reactions.

"There are only five of us for lunch, Vance," he remarked breezily. "The old gentleman is fussing with his test-tubes and Bunsen burners at the university; the mater is having a grand time playing sick. But Pop Hammle is coming—run old bird, but a good sport; and we'll also be burdened with beloved cousins in Woode. You know Swift, I believe, Vance. Queer crab, Woody."

He pondered a moment with a wry face.

"Can't figure out just how he fits into this household. Dad and the mater seem inordinately fond of him—sorry for him, perhaps; or maybe he's the kind of serious, sensitive guy they wish I'd turned out to be. I don't dislike Woode, but we have little in common except the horses. Only, he takes his betting too seriously to suit me—he hasn't much money, and his wins or losses mean a lot to him. Of course, he'll go broke in the end."

Vance had been watching Garden covertly during this rambling recital of domestic intimacies.

"I know you hate mysteries, and there's apt to be some funny things happening here this afternoon," Garden continued. "Woode has been acting queer for the past couple of weeks, as if some secret sorrow was gnawing at his mind."

"Any specific psychopathic symptoms?" Vance asked lightly.

"No-o." Garden pursed his lips

and frowned thoughtfully. "But he's developed a curious habit of going upstairs to the roof-garden as soon as he's placed a large bet, and he remains there alone until the result of the race has come through."

"Nothing very unusual about that," Vance made a deprecatory motion with his hand. "Many gamblers, d'ye see, are like that."

"You're probably right," Garden admitted reluctantly. "But I wish he'd bet moderately, instead of plunging like a fool whenever he's hot for a horse."

"By the by," asked Vance, "why do you particularly look for strange occurrences this afternoon?"

Garden shrugged. "The fact is," he replied, after a short pause, "Woody's been losing heavily of late, and today's the day of the big Rivermont Handicap. I have a feeling he's going to put every dollar he's got on Equanimity, who'll undoubtedly be the favorite. . . . Equanimity!" He snorted with undisguised contempt. "That rail-lugger! Probably the second greatest horse of modern times—but what's the use?"

He looked up solemnly.

"And that, Vance, means trouble if Equanimity doesn't come in. It means a blow-up of some kind. I've felt it coming for over a week. It's got me worried. To tell you the truth, I'm glad you picked this day to sit in with us."

"Very interestin' situation," commented Vance. "I agree in the main with what you say regarding Equanimity. But I think you're too harsh, and I'm not convinced that he's a rail-lugger because of any innate passion for wood. . . . But as you were sayin', the psychological situation hereabout has you worried. I gather there's a supercharged atmosphere round this charmin' aerie."

"That's it, exactly," Garden answered almost eagerly. "Supercharged is right. Nearly every day the mater asks, 'How's Woody?'"

He then presented me to his mother: both Vance and Hammle had met her on previous occasions.

"I'm tired of being kept in bed," she told her son querulously, after nodding graciously to the others.

"Now you boys sit right down—I'm going shopping, and just dropped in to see if everything was going all right. . . . I think I'll have a creme de menthe frappee while I'm here."

The butler drew up a chair for her beside Swift, and went to the pantry. Mrs. Garden put her hand lightly on her nephew's arm.

"How goes it with you, Woody?" she asked in a spirit of camaraderie. Without waiting for his answer, she turned to Garden again.

"Floyd, I want you to place a bet for me on the big race today, in case I'm not back in time."

"Name your poison," smiled Garden.

"I'm playing Grand Score to win and place—the usual hundred."

"Right-o, mater." Garden glanced sardonically at his cousin. "Less intelligent bets have been made in these diggin' full many a time and oft. . . . Sure you don't want Equanimity, mater?"

"Odds are too unfavorable," returned Mrs. Garden, with a canny smile.

"He's quoted in the over-night line at five to two."

"He won't stay there." There was authority and assurance in the woman's tone and manner. "And I'll get eight or ten to one on Grand Score."

"Right you are," grinned Garden. "You're on the dog for a century win and place."

The butler brought the creme de menthe, and Mrs. Garden sipped it and stood up.

"And now I'm going," she announced pleasantly. She patted her nephew on the shoulder. "Take care of yourself, Woody. . . . Good afternoon, gentlemen." And she went from the room with a firm masculine stride.

"Sneed," Garden ordered, "fix the set-up as usual."

I glanced at the electric clock on the mantel: it was exactly ten minutes after one.

"Fixing the set-up" was a comparatively simple procedure, but a more or less mysterious operation for anyone unfamiliar with the purpose it was to serve. From a small closet in the hall Sneed first wheeled out a sturdy wooden stand about two feet square. On this he placed a telephone connected to a loud speaker which resembled a midget radio set. As I learned later, it was a specially constructed amplifier to enable every one in the room to hear distinctly whatever came over the telephone.

On one side of the amplifier was attached a black metal switch box with a two-way key. In its upright position this key would cut off the voice at the other end of the line without interfering with the connection; and throwing the key forward would bring the voice on again.

The butler then brought in a well-built folding card-table and opened it beside the stand. On this table he placed another telephone of the conventional French, or hand, type. This telephone, which was gray, was plugged into an additional jack in the baseboard. The gray telephone was not connected with the one equipped with the amplifier, but was on an independent line.

"I can't possibly lose." And he poured himself another drink. "How's Aunt Martha?"

Garden narrowed his eyes. "She's pretty fair. Nervous as the devil this morning, and smoking one cigarette after another. But she's sitting up. She'll probably be in later to take a crack or two at the prancing steeds. . . ."

At this point Lowe Hammle arrived. He was a heavy-set, short man of fifty or thereabouts. He was wearing a black-and-white checked suit, a gray shirt, a brilliant green four-in-hand, a chocolate-colored waistcoat with leather buttons, and tan blucher shoes; the soles of which were inordinately thick.

"The Marster of 'Ounds, b'Gad!" Garden greeted him jovially. "Here's your scotch-and-soda; and here also are Mr. Philo Vance and Mr. Van Dine."

"Delighted—delighted!" Hammle exclaimed heartily, coming forward.

In a few minutes the butler announced lunch. The conversation was almost entirely devoted to horses, the history of racing, the Grand National, and the possibilities of the various entrants in the afternoon's Rivermont Handicap.

Vance contented himself mainly with listening and studying the others at the table.

We were nearing the end of the luncheon when a tall, well-built and apparently vigorous woman, who looked no more than forty (though I later learned that she was well past fifty), entered the room. She wore a tailored suit, a silver-fox scarf and a black felt toque.

"Why, mater!" exclaimed Garden. "I thought you were an invalid. Why this spurt of health and energy?"

"I'm tired of being kept in bed," she told her son querulously, after nodding graciously to the others.

"Now you boys sit right down—I'm going shopping, and just dropped in to see if everything was going all right. . . . I think I'll have a creme de menthe frappee while I'm here."

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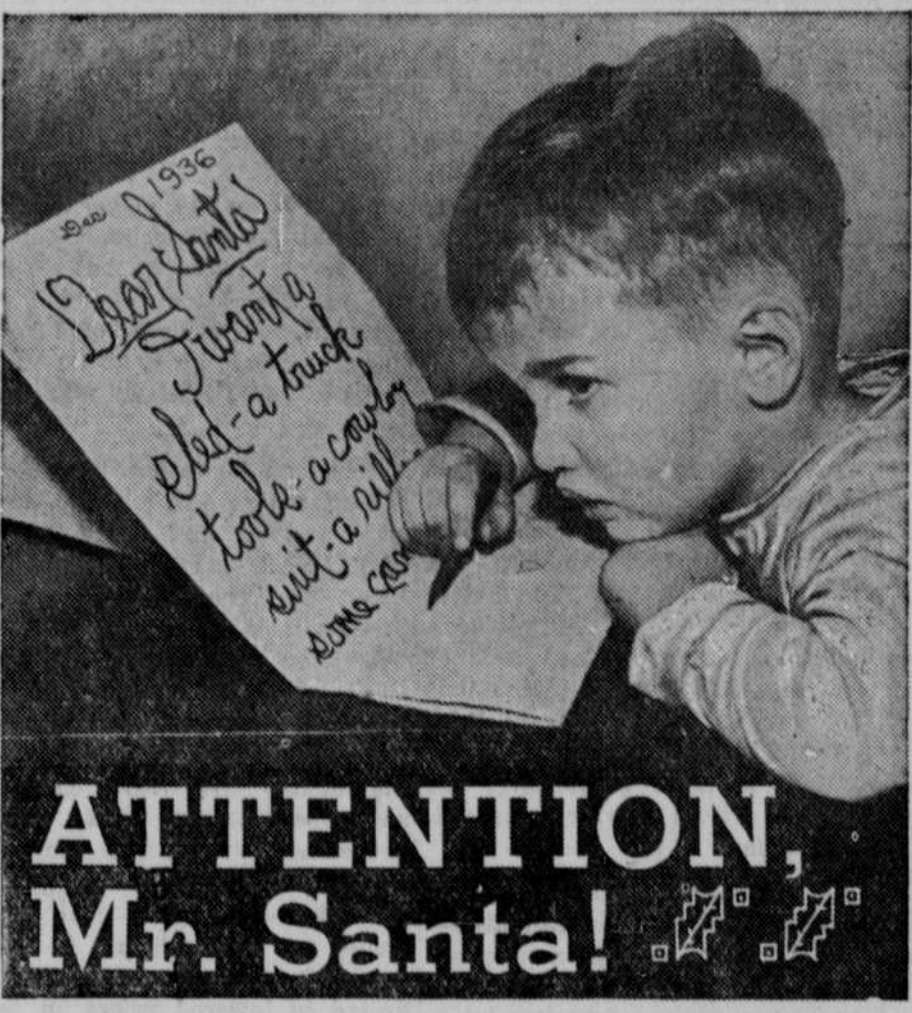
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ATTENTION, Mr. Santa!

A Holiday for Two by Luella B. Lyons

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL by Helen Waterman

THIS being with the family on Christmas is the bunk so I won't mind parking myself down there in Martinville, Mr. Howard," Paul Boyd told his employer. That's how he found himself spending the holidays in a lonely little room in a boarding and rooming house. His landlady had gone out to church services, he knew, but he determined to pass the lonely hours by reading, having prepared himself with a flock of new detective fiction before leaving the city.



Tossed the Book Aside and Began Facing the Floor.

Before another half hour had passed, Paul tossed the book aside and began pacing the floor. Here he was alone at last on one Christmas eve, far from too-oo-cerned relatives and friends.

As the crowning insult, without a moment's warning, the little light that hung on a single cord from the ceiling, flickered and went out. "Great day, this is the end! I wonder what they do here when the lights go out—go to bed, I suppose!" he muttered disgustedly. But just the same he began scratching matches to hunt for a possible kerosene lamp he might have overlooked. Five matches later, he found a candle and lost no time lighting that. "At least I can find my way about while getting ready to retire," he grumbled.

But as he jerked at his tie, the unmistakable sound of a smothered sob came to him through the hot air register. Paul wanted to be alone, but sobs did things to him and it took him just three minutes to locate the door from behind which was darkness and those sobs.

All because a thoughtless landlady had failed to provide the lovely and lonely girl with an extra bit of lighting in case the rather unreliable power company service discontinued without notice, wasn't the only reason for the sobs.

"Being in a noisy city where folks are celebrating, asking all kinds of favors of you at the holiday time, doing the same old parties, family dinners and all that—I thought it would be nice to escape it for a change," she explained. Jean Hathaway, she said was her name.

"Jean, I said the same thing and maybe we were both right only that—that," and suddenly; he became embarrassed but struggled on. "that it is all okeh if you don't have to escape alone. Just one for company and for celebrating is about the right number. What do you think, Jean?"

THE Christmas Spirit, if such a sprite there be, must have fled in dismay from old Silas Wentworth, for a crustier, harder, less Christmas-spirited man would be hard to imagine.

Yet Sally Blaine, his clerk and bookkeeper, had the temerity to bring Christmas into the store, stringing lines of tinsel.

Old Silas, coming to work, stopped and stared at this unusual addition to the colored globes and patent medicines with which his windows were adorned.

Sally Blaine, rather frightened now, looked up. "Merry Christmas, Mr. Wentworth."

Silas surveyed the store grimly. "Take it down!"

But Sally hesitated. "I said take it down. More of your fool notions! What's this?"

"Dickens' Christmas Carol, sir."

He thrust the book on a back shelf. "Humph! Don't let me catch you reading on the job."

"Yes, sir, I'm sorry about the decorations—"

At nine o'clock on Christmas eve Silas saw out his last customer, and began putting up the shutters. It was beastly cold, and his numb fingers were slow at their task. As he was about to lock up, he was confronted by two men, one carrying a revolver.

"Let us in and lock the door," said the man.

Silas, his teeth chattering from fear more than cold, complied.

"Now if you're quiet you won't get hurt," said the spokesman. "My pal here has had an accident. I need some medicines. You'll be paid all right."

"Of course; of course," Silas answered, and brought out a stock of supplies.

The wounded man spoke up. "Sorry to keep you on Christmas eve, buddy."

Silas grunted. "Tommyrot." The other man had been rummaging about the store. "Here,"

These Cuddle Toys Solve Gift Problems

"Eenie, Meenie, Minie, Mo"—It's hard to decide which to make—but why make just one, why not all! Delightful cuddle toys, these, and just the soft, warm playthings for a baby's arms. There's nothing to the making of them, for each is composed of but two pieces, with the exception of the bear, whose jacket is extra, and the chick, whose flapping wings are separate. Your gayest cotton scraps can go into the making of these winning gifts. In pattern 5609 you will find a transfer pattern for the four animals; instructions for making them; material requirements.



Pattern No. 5609

To obtain this pattern send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) To the Sewing Circle Household Arts Dept., 259 West Fourteenth St., New York, N. Y. Write plainly pattern number, your name and address.

Household Questions

Tomato juice may be thickened and highly seasoned and mixed with milk for tomato soup.

Black marble clocks or ornaments will have a beautiful lustre if rubbed with a soft cloth dampened with olive oil and then polished with a clean chamolis.

White woodwork in the home can be kept clean by sponging with lukewarm suds of a pure, mild soap, then wiping dry. This does not harm the enameled surface.

The blunt end of a pencil is excellent to use when marking initials on linens which are to be embroidered.

From a MEDICAL JOURNAL THIS: ABOUT COLDS! LUDEX'S COUGH DROPS 5¢ NOW CONTAIN AN ALKALINE FACTOR

Price of Personal Splendor Can there be personal splendor without moral deterioration?

MURINE FOR YOUR EYES

DOLLARS & HEALTH

The successful person is a healthy person. Don't let yourself be handicapped by sick headaches, a sluggish condition, stomach "nerves" and other dangerous signs of over-acidity.

MILNESIA FOR HEALTH Milnesia, the original milk of magnesia in wafer form, neutralizes stomach acids, gives quick, pleasant elimination. Each wafer equals 4 teaspoonfuls milk of magnesia. Tasty, too. 20c, 35c & 60c every where.

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