



THE GARDEN MURDER CASE

By S.S. VAN DINE

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CHAPTER VI—Continued

He was a tall man, despite his stooped shoulders; and, though he was very thin, he possessed a firmness of bearing which made one feel that he had retained a great measure of the physical power that had obviously been his in youth. There was benevolence in the somewhat haggard face, but there was also shrewdness in his gaze; and the contour of his mouth indicated a latent hardness.

He bowed to us with an old-fashioned graciousness and took a few steps into the study.

"My son has just informed me," he said in a slightly querulous voice, "of the tragedy that has occurred here this afternoon. I'm sorry that I did not return home earlier, as is my wont on Saturdays, for in that event the tragedy might have been averted. I myself would have been in the study here and would probably have kept an eye on my nephew. In any event, no one could then have got possession of my revolver."

"I am not at all sure, Doctor Garden," Vance returned grimly, "that your presence here this afternoon would have averted the tragedy. It is not nearly so simple a matter as it appears at first glance."

Professor Garden sat down in a chair of antique workmanship near the door and, clasping his hands tightly, leaned forward.

"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 Wood'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 way, 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 Wood as almost 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 Wood 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 probing 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 something. 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 intercommunicating buzzer between here and the den downstairs? . . . It was working all right this morning—"

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

"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 interesting. 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 she felt.

"Sad—very sad," he murmured. 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 accommodating," Vance's manner had suddenly changed. "We're most appreciative, and all that sort of thing. But I must insist, don't you 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 misleading. Really, you know, I don't for a moment believe she regards Kroon as the culprit."

"But she certainly has something on her mind," protested Markham. "Oh, Markham—my dear Markham!" Vance shook his head sadly.

"However. . . . As you say. There is something back of the lady's histrionics. She has ideas. But she's circuitous. And she wants us to be like those Chinese gods who can't proceed except in a straight line. Sad. But let's try makin' a turn. The situation is something like this: An unhappy lady slips out through the butler's pantry and presents herself on the roof-garden, hopin' to attract our attention. Having succeeded, she informs us that she has proved conclusively that a certain Mr. Kroon has done away with Swift because of amorous jealousy. The lady herself, let us assume, is the spurned and not the spurner. She resents it. She has a temper and is vengeful—and she comes to the roof here for the sole purpose of convincing us that Kroon is guilty."

"But her story is aggressive," said Markham approvingly. "Why try to find hidden meanings in obvious facts? Kroon could have done it. And your psychological theory eliminates him entirely."

"It doesn't eliminate him at all. It merely tends to involve the lady in a rather unpleasant bit of chicanery. The fact is, her little drama here on the roof may prove most illuminatin'."

Vance stretched his legs out before him and sank deeper into his chair.

"Curious situation. You know, Markham, Kroon deserted the party about fifteen or twenty minutes before the big race—legal matters to attend to for a maiden aunt, he explained—and he didn't appear again until after I had phoned you. Assumed immediately that Swift had shot himself. Doubt inspired me to converse with the elevator boy. I learned that Kroon had not gone down or up in the elevator since his arrival here early in the afternoon."

"What's that!" Markham exclaimed. "That's more than suspicious—taken with what we have just heard from this Miss Weatherby."

"I dare say," Vance was unimpressed. "The legal mind at work. But from my gropin' amateur point of view, I'd want more—oh, much more. However,—Vance rose and meditated a moment—"I'll admit that a bit of lovin' communion with Mr. Kroon is definitely indicated."

He turned to Vance. "Send the chap up, will you, Sergeant?"

Heath nodded and started toward the door.

"And Sergeant," Vance halted him; "you might question the elevator boy and find out if there is any one else in the building whom Kroon is in the habit of calling on. If so, follow it up with a few discreet inquiries."

Heath vanished down the stairs, and a minute or so later Kroon sauntered into the study with the air of a man who is bored and not a little annoyed.

"I suppose I'm in for some more tricky questions," he commented.

After glancing about him, Kroon sat down leisurely at one end of the davenport. The man's manner, I could see, infuriated Markham, who leaned forward and asked in cold anger:

"Have you any urgent reasons for objecting to give us what assistance you can in our investigation of this murder?"

Kroon raised his eyebrows. "None whatever," he said with calm superiority. "I might even be able to tell you who shot Woody."

"That's most interesting," murmured Vance, studying the man indifferently. "But we'd much rather find out for ourselves, don't you know."

Kroon shrugged maliciously and said nothing.

HOW ARE YOU TODAY

DR. JAMES W. BARTON Talks About

Getting Rid of Fat. IT IS hard for some of our overweight friends to understand why fat can cause any harm to the body. To them it is simply a layer of fat lying under the skin which gives the body a nice roundness instead of having bony parts stand out too prominently.

What they forget is that all the fat is not deposited under the skin or even around the organs—kidneys, heart and others—but some fat is actually deposited right within the cells of an organ—not between the cells—and so interferes with the action of the organ.

Now it is not hard to understand that if fat tissue—which does no work—gets into the cell substance it is bound to interfere with the work of the cell.

So if overweights want to keep young in appearance and feeling they would be wise to cut down gradually on their food intake, because every overweight can get rid of some weight (fat and water) if he or she has the will power to cut down on certain kinds of food—fats, starches, and liquids.

It isn't easy to cut down on fat building foods because they are the foods usually liked most. Also it is discouraging to cut down on foods for a week or two and not see much reduction (if any) in weight.

This failing to greatly reduce weight after "starving" themselves one or two weeks has confused and discouraged many overweights who have faithfully followed the reducing diet prescribed by their physician. However, "careful studies have established that water may be retained to an extent that will keep the body weight constant or at the same level when the individual has cut down his food intake by as much as one-third to one-half for as long as sixteen days."

The Water Balance. Weight, day by day, will give no sign that reduction is being accomplished. This is because what is called the water balance must be established. At the end of the sixteen day period the individual may suddenly lose sufficient water to reduce his weight by the amount expected as judged by the amount of food eaten. This instead of losing 2 to 3 pounds each week—the usual rate of loss—there is no loss for sixteen days and then 5 to 7 pounds is lost within a few hours.

Others will cut down on all kinds of foods, fail to eat enough meat or eggs to sustain their strength, and will feel so weak in a few days that they give up the reducing diet in despair.

There are others who would like to try "short cuts" to reduce weight—dinitrophenol, thyroid extract, pituitary extract—which if not taken under proper supervision, often bring misery and ill health. The proper method is to be examined by the family physician and if pronounced "fit" to undergo the diet outlined, then follow it faithfully, reporting at regular intervals to the physician.

Whether it is because "misery loves company" or that seeing others as fat or fatter than oneself faithfully following rules and regulations, it is a fact that in sanitariums, spas, or "watering places" many overweights get better results than can be obtained by themselves.

The thought then is that when the overweight has difficulty working alone, finds it hard to "stick" to the reduced diet, feels very weak at times, going to a spa or similar institution and seeing others courageously fighting their battle may give him or her the needed courage to fight their battle also. Because it is a battle.

Foods That Cause Distress. One of the points one suffering with indigestion must remember is that because a food disagrees with him it doesn't mean that it is not a good food. There is nothing wrong with the food but there is something wrong with the individual.

Dr. Albert H. Rowe, San Francisco, in Southern Medical Journal reports an analysis of 2,000 students at University of California, and also his results in private patients during a period of fifteen years.

Of 270 patients showing stomach and intestine disturbances due to certain foods, 30 per cent were male and 70 per cent female. Of these 270 cases, 232, more than 85 per cent, had food dislikes or disagreements, 80 per cent had stomach disturbances, 60 per cent had pain or soreness and 43 per cent had constipation.

To find out what foods are causing the disturbances may take months or even years and much patience on the part of the physician and the patient. By gradually leaving out these disturbing foods, and getting the patient free from symptoms, the foods known to be the cause are gradually eaten again in very small amounts so that the patient develops a tolerance (ability to eat them without disturbance) for them.

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