

# THE KIDNAP MURDER Case by S.S. Van Dine

**FINAL INSTALLMENT**

"I want you to go home and have a good sleep. . . And, by the way, Sergeant, how about rounding everybody up and invitin' them to the Purple House tomorrow, around noon?" he asked. "I'm speakin' of Fleel, Kenyon Kenting, and Quaggy, Mrs. Falloway and her son will, I'm sure, be there, in any event."

We arrived at the Kenting residence, Vance driving us there in his car. Fifteen minutes before noon, Fleel took our hats and made a surly gesture toward the drawing room. Sergeant Heath and Snitkin were already there.

A little later Fleel and Kenyon Kenting arrived together, followed almost immediately by Porter Quaggy. They had barely seated themselves when old Mrs. Falloway, supported by her son Frawl, came down the front stairs and joined us.

"I'm so anxious about Madelaine," Mrs. Falloway said. "How is she, Mr. Vance?"

"Mrs. Kenting is doing even better today than I would have expected. I can assure you that she will be home in two or three days, fully recovered and in her normal mind."

"And I imagine she will have a most interestin' tale to unfold, y' know, it was not intended that she return."

"The truth is, this was not a kidnaping case at all. The authorities were expected to accept it in that light, but the murderer made too many errors—his fault lay in trying to be excessively clever."

"There is no doubt whatever that Kaspar Kenting made an appointment for the early morning hours, after he had returned from his evening's entertainment at the casino with Mr. Quaggy."

"When Kaspar left this house early Wednesday morning, he was met at the appointed place not by the person with whom he had made his appointment, but by others whom he had never seen before. They struck him over the head before he so much as realized that anything was amiss, threw him into a coupe, and then drove off with him to the East River and disposed of him, hoping he would not be found too soon. It was straight, brutal murder. And the persons who committed that murder had been hired for that purpose and had been instructed accordingly. You will understand that the plotter at the source never intended anything less than murder for the victim—since there was grave risk in letting him live to point an accusing finger later. . . The slender Chinaman—the lobby-gow of the gang—then returned to the house here, placed the ladder against the window—it had been left here previously for just that purpose—entered the room through the window, and set the stage according to instructions, taking the toothbrush, the comb, and the pajamas, and planting a note to the window-sill, generally leaving mute but spurious indications that Kaspar Kenting had kidnapped himself in order to collect the money he needed to straighten out his debts."

"So far the plot was working nicely. The first set-back occurred after the arrival in the mall of the ransom note with the instructions to take the money to the tree. The scheme of the murderer to collect the money from the tree was thwarted, makin' necessary further steps. The same day Mrs. Kenting was approached for an appointment, perhaps with a promise of news of her husband—obviously by someone she trusted, for she went out alone at ten o'clock that night to keep the appointment. She was awaited—possibly just inside Central Park—by the same hard gentlemen who had done away with her husband. But instead of meeting with the same fate as Kaspar Kenting, she was taken to the house on Lord street I visited last night, and held there as a sort of hostage. I rather imagine, y' know, that the perpetrator of this fiendish scheme had not yet been able to pay the price demanded for the neat performance of Kaspar's killing, thereby irking the hired assassins. The lady was, so to speak, a threat held over one criminal by another criminal who was a bit more clever."

"Poor Kaspar! He was a weak chappie, and the price for his own murder was being wangled out of him without his realizing it. Through the gem collection of old Karl Kenting, of course. He was depleting that collection regularly at the subtle instigation of someone else, someone who took the gems and gave him practically nothing compared to what they were actually worth, hopin' to turn them over at an outrageous profit. But semi-precious stones are not so easy to dispose of through illegitimate channels. A shady transaction of this nature would naturally require time, and the now-defunct henchmen who were waiting for settlement were becoming annoyed. Most of the really valuable stones, which I am sure the collection contained originally, were no longer there when I glanced over the cases the other morning. I am quite certain that the balas-ruby I found in the poor fellow's dinner coat was brought back because the purchaser would not give him what he thought it was worth—

Kaspar probably mistook the stone for a real ruby. There were black opals missing from the collection, also exhibits of jade, which Karl Kenting must undoubtedly have included in the collection, and yesterday morning the absence of a large piece of alexandrite was discovered."

Frawl suddenly leaped to his feet, glaring at Vance with the eyes of a maniac.

"I didn't do it!" he screamed hysterically. "I didn't have Kaspar killed! I tell you I didn't—I didn't! And you think I'd hurt Madelaine! You're a devil. I didn't do it, I say! You have no right to accuse me." He reached quickly and picked up a small, but heavy, bronze statue of Antinous on the table beside him.

Snitkin, standing just behind Frawl's chair, leaned over and deftly manacled the youth.

"Really, Mr. Falloway," Vance admonished in a soothing voice, "you shouldn't handle heavy objects when you're in that frame of mind. Frightfully sorry. But just sit still and relax."

"As I was sayin', the disappearance of the stones from the collection was an indication of the identity of the murderer, for the simple reason that the hirin' of thugs and the underground disposal of these gems quite obviously suggested that the same type of person was involved in both endeavors: to wit, both procedures implied a connection with undercover characters—fences and assassins. The two notes yesterday were highly enlightenin'. One of them was obviously concocted for effect; the other was quite genuine. But boldness—usually a

good technique—was, in this case, seen through."

"Referrin' again to the various ransom notes, they were dictated by the plotter of Kaspar's murder—that is, all but the one received by Mr. Fleel yesterday—and they were couched in such language that they could be shown to the authorities in order to side-track suspicion from the actual culprit and at the same time impress Mr. Kenyon Kenting with the urgent necessity of raising the fifty thousand dollars. I had two statements as to the amount of money which Kaspar himself was demanding for his debts—one, an honest report of fifty thousand dollars; the other, no doubt a stupidly concocted tale of thirty thousand dollars—again obviously for the purpose of diverting suspicion from the person connected with the crime."

"The second note received by Mr. Fleel, was not, as I have already intimated, one of the series written at the instructions of the guilty man—it was a genuine document addressed to him, and the recipient felt that he not only could use it to have the ransom money paid over to him, but to disarm once more any suspicion that might be springing up in the minds of the authorities. It did not occur to him that the address, cryptically written in for his eyes alone, could be interpreted by another."

He turned slowly to Fleel again and met the other's smirk with a cold smile.

"When I suspected you, Mr. Fleel," he said, "I sent you from the District Attorney's office Thursday before Mr. Markham and I came here, in order to verify my expectation that you would

urge Mr. Kenyon Kenting to re-pay that all police interference be eliminated. This you did, and when I learned of it, after arriving here with Mr. Markham, I definitely objected the proposal and counteracted your influence on Mr. Kenting so that you could not get the money safely that night. Seeing that part of your plan hopelessly failing, you cleverly changed your attitude and agreed to act for us—at my request through Sergeant Heath—as the person to place the money in the tree, and went through with the farce in order to prove that no connection existed between you and the demand for money. One of your henchmen had come to Central Park to pick up the package if everything went according to your pre-arranged schedule. Mr. Van Dine and I both saw the man. When he learned that you had not been successful with your plans, he undoubtedly reported your failure, thereby throwing fear into your henchmen that they might not be paid—which accounts for their keeping Mrs. Kenting alive as an effective threat to hold over you till payment was forthcoming."

Fleel's expression did not change.

"A very pretty theory, Mr. Vance," he commented. "It shows remarkable ingenuity, but it entirely fails to take into consideration the fact that I myself was attacked by a submachine gunner on the very night of Mrs. Kenting's disappearance. You have conveniently forgotten that little episode since it would knock the entire foundation from under your amusing little house of cards."

"No. Oh, no, Mr. Fleel. Not conveniently forgot—conveniently remembered. Most vivid recollection, don't you know. And you were jolly well frightened by the attack. Surely you don't believe your escape from any casualty was the result of a miracle. All quite simple, really. The gentleman with the machine gun had no intention whatever of performing you. His only object was to frighten you and warn you of exactly what to expect if you did

not raise the money instanter to pay for the dastardly services rendered you. You were never safer in your life than when that machine-gun was sputtering away in your general direction."

The smirk slowly faded from Fleel's lips.

"Your theory, Mr. Vance," he said angrily, "no longer has even the merit of humor. And I wish you to know that I greatly resent your remarks."

"I don't regard that fact as disconcertin', in the least," Vance returned with a cold smile. "The fact is, Mr. Fleel, you will be infinitely more resentful when I form you that at this very minute certified public accountants are at work on your books and that the police are scrutinizing most carefully the contents of your safe."

For two seconds Fleel looked at him with a serious frown. Then he took a swift backward step and, thrusting his hand into his pocket, drew forth a large, ugly looking automatic. Both Heath and Snitkin had been watching him steadily, and as Fleel made this movement Heath, with lightning-like speed, produced an automatic from beneath the black sling of his wounded arm. The movements of the two men were almost concurrent.

But there was no need for Heath to fire his gun, for in that fraction of a second Fleel raised his automatic to his own temple and pulled the trigger. The weapon fell from his hand immediately, and his body slumped down against the edge of the desk and fell to the floor out of sight.

Vance, apparently, was little moved by the tragedy. However, after a deep sigh, he rose listlessly and stepped behind the desk. Vance bent down.

"Dead, Markham—quite," he announced as he rose, a moment or so later. "Considerate chappie—what? Has saved you legal worry no end. Most gratifyin'."

Snitkin unlocked the handcuffs on young Falloway.

"Sorry, Mr. Falloway," murmured Vance. "But you lost your self-control and became a bit ahoyin' . . . Feelin' better?"

The youth stammered: "I'm all right." He was alert and apparently his normal self now. "And Sis will be home in a couple of days!"

THE END

The United States government maintains an observatory atop Mt. Harqua Hala, in Arizona, for the purpose of studying but one star, the sun.

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### READ! What others say of Allan D. Ivie, Jr.—of His Character, His Education, His Fitness and Qualifications for this Office



#### Candidate Ivie's Own Statement:

I am now approaching the home stretch. For more than three months I have devoted my best thought and given practically my full time and energy in aid of my effort to secure the nomination for the Solicitorship in the 21st Judicial District. You are familiar with the character and aggressiveness of the campaign which with your loyal help and that of your friends I have made. That it has been clean and fair no one can truthfully gainsay. The loyal support of my County plus the kindness and courtesies which I have received at the hands of my friends and their friends throughout the District since the date of my announcement, together with the numerous letters of encouragement which have come from men and women in every walk of life have more than offset the physical and mental labor and the discomforts naturally involved in campaigning. For these reasons I approach the home stretch with strong body, in fine spirit and buoyant hope with no unpleasant feeling toward anyone of my splendid opponents or their friends. Having spoken in all the Counties in the District and having traveled for approximately 5,000 miles and having had the privilege and pleasure of discussing my campaign with hundreds of representative men and women in the District I am fully warranted in stating that it is my firm belief that I am at this time leading my opponents by a splendid margin and that on June 4th, my friends will pile up a splendid vote of victory.

I have not had the means to form a mobilized organization, therefore, I will have to rely on the loyalty and good will of those whose splendid friendship it has been my privilege to have and for which I shall always be grateful. My chief regret is that I have been unable to see all of my friends, however, I know you understand how utterly impossible it is to do this, however much I would have liked to, and to those whom I have not seen I ask that you take this as my personal appeal for your friendship.

I therefore leave my candidacy in your keeping with full confidence and abiding faith in your friendship and loyalty.

Gratefully and sincerely yours,  
 Allan D. Ivie, Jr.

- **IVIE as a Democrat**  
 During my term as Chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee of Rockingham County, Mr. A. D. Ivie of Leaksville was, without reward, a loyal and active worker in the Democratic party and at all times supported and fully cooperated in waging the Party's campaigns. He never failed to respond to a request for service in behalf of the Democratic party.  
 J. C. BROWN,  
 Former Chmn. Rockingham Co. Democratic Executive Committee.
- **IVIE as a Man**  
 Allan Ivie has been known to me for over twenty-five years. I knew and admired and loved his father, Hon. Allan Denny Ivie, and I feel the same toward Allan. His father was a noble and able servant of his community, his state and his God. I believe Allan has shown himself to be imbued with the same spirit in all his relationships. I am convinced he is the kind of man needed in public office today and that he will serve with ability, devotion, sympathetic understanding and fairness in any office to which he may be called.  
 (Rev.) Wm. J. Gordon.
- **IVIE as a Young Man**  
 Allan Ivie, who graduated from Leaksville High school in 1924, made a splendid record as a student. He is studious, capable and dependable. As a student, he was always trustworthy and faithful to every duty.  
 I feel sure he will be eminently successful in any work he may undertake, and that he will per-
- **IVIE as a Prosecutor**  
 (By one whom he prosecuted)  
 "Allan Ivie, when Solicitor of the Recorder's Court prosecuted and convicted me before a jury. He fought my case hard but did it courteously and fairly and I have had more respect for the law since. He is a gentleman even when he is against you." (This is only one of many such expressions.)

form honestly and conscientiously the duties of any position he may hold.

C. H. Weatherly,  
 Principal Leaksville High School

- **IVIE as a Boy**  
 My dear Allen,  
 As your first teacher it gives me a great deal of pleasure to write a short letter testifying to the genuine worth and ability that has marked your life since I have first known you.  
 As a first grade pupil when you entered my classroom at the tender age of six, I was struck with your superior mental capacity—far above the average child of such tender years. While, of course, you did the mechanical part of the first grade work along with the other children, you showed a wonderful pre-school training and a far greater knowledge of life, nature, history and literature, together with a sense of sportsmanship, fair play and the manners of a young Chesterfield.  
 It has been my pleasure to watch your career on through the years in high school and college where you graduated with honors, and later as a gifted young lawyer—the youngest ever to be admitted to the bar in Rockingham county.  
 I feel exceedingly proud and happy that I had even a small part in your early training. You have reflected much credit on your lovely parents and teachers, and your many loyal friends throughout the District are delighted to support you for the Solicitorship, and I feel sure that you will bring honor and dignity to the high office to which you aspire, and I, among many others, with all my heart, wish you a full measure of success.  
 You know how much I admired your splendid father, not only for his brilliant intellect but for his spirituality, as well, and I have always regarded your lovely mother as one of my good friends. You have a wonderfully fine heritage, and I am happy that you are carrying on the tradition of your family.  
 With kindest regards and best wishes for your continued success, I remain always  
 Your sincere friend,  
 (and first teacher)  
 Annie Humbley

- **IVIE as a Lawyer**  
 (From one who served 16 years as Superior Court Judge)  
 To the Democratic Voters of the 21st Judicial District:  
 My friend, Mr. Allen D. Ivie, Jr., of this County, now a candidate for the nomination for Solicitor of this district, is in my opinion well qualified both by natural talents and legal training for this office. Mr. Ivie has been at the bar of Rockingham county for 10 years, and during that time has appeared as counsel in many important cases, both civil and criminal, and has also served as solicitor of the Recorder's Court of Leaksville.  
 At the bar he has distinguished himself as a fair and impartial prosecutor, who would do his full duty in all cases without fear or favor, and thus won the full confidence of the public. In this position he rapidly developed into a most capable trial lawyer.  
 This experience and training will enable Mr. Ivie to enter into the office of Solicitor of the district well equipped and thoroughly competent to handle the state's business.  
 As a member of the bar of this county, and as presiding officer of the Recorder's Court of Leaksville I have had the opportunity to observe in Mr. Ivie those qualities of which I speak. I consider him a fine type of lawyer for this position.  
 Henry P. Lane
- **IVIE as a Student**  
 From Professors Under Whom He Studied Law at Duke University  
 (Written May, 1931, upon his appointment as Solicitor of Recorder's Court)  
 "I knew Mr. Ivie quite well during his residence as a student in the undergraduate school and law school of Duke University. It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to commend him as a young man of excellent character and fine habits. In my opinion he is in every respect a thoroughly conscientious and dependable gentleman of high order. I can heartily recommend him as a young man worthy of the confidence of good people."  
 H. J. Herring,  
 Assistant Dean
- **IVIE as a Student**  
 In support of the application of Mr. Ivie, I take this opportunity to advise that I knew Mr. Ivie personally while he was both an undergraduate and a law student at Duke University. I cannot speak too strongly of the excellence of his character and gentlemanly qualities. I believe him to be possessed of more than ordinary ability in the practice of his profession. You will know more about his success in the practice of law in your locality than I am prepared to know, but I am certain from my knowledge of his characteristics that if appointed to the Solicitorship of the Recorder's Court he will render the best service of which he is capable.  
 I take pleasure in making this statement in support of my friend, whom I feel merits your careful consideration.  
 Chas. E. Jordan,  
 Assistant Secretary,  
 Duke University
- **IVIE as a Student**  
 I take pleasure in recommending Mr. Allan D. Ivie, Jr., for the position of Solicitor of the Recorder's Court of Leaksville Township. Mr. Ivie was a student of mine while he attended the Law School at Duke University. He was a good student and a young man of the highest ideals and I trust that he will receive your favorable consideration for the office above mentioned.  
 Marshall T. Spears  
 Now Judge of Superior Court