

# THE "CANARY" MURDER CASE

by S. S. VAN DINE AUTHOR OF  
THE BENSON MURDER CASE

**THE STORY THUS FAR**  
Skeel's finger prints were found in the apartment of the murdered Margaret Odell, but Vance does not believe in Margaret. It is proved later that there are other possible culprits. The story ends with the question, "What about their whereabouts the night of the murder? The truth comes out that Mannix had been in the building across the street, and Dr. Lindquist, knowing Spotswood was calling on Margaret Odell, had planned in a jealous fit to kill him when he came out. But this plan was frustrated when Spotswood jumped into a cab. Skeel telephones that he will come to the district attorney's office to tell the truth about the murder. They wait for him. He does not appear, and when they go to his room they find him dead-strangled, just as Margaret Odell had been.

CHAPTER XLII  
(Sunday, p. m., Monday, a.m.; September 16-17)

THE investigation into Skeel's death was pushed with great vigor by the authorities.

Doctor Doremus, the medical examiner, arrived promptly and declared that the crime had taken place between ten o'clock and midnight.

Immediately Vance insisted that all the men who were known to have been intimately acquainted with the Odell girl—Mannix, Lindquist, Cleaver and Spotswood—be interviewed at once and made to explain where they were during these two hours.

Mallory, the detective who had shadowed Skeel the previous night, was questioned regarding possible visitors; but inasmuch as the house where Skeel lived accommodated over twenty roomers, who were constantly coming and going at all hours, no information could be gained through that channel.

All that Mallory could say definitely was that Skeel had returned home at about ten o'clock, and had not come out again.

The landlady, sobered and subdued by the tragedy, repudiated all knowledge of the affair.

She explained that she had been "ill" in her room from dinner-time until we had disturbed her recuperation the next morning.

The front door, it seemed, was never locked, since her tenants objected to such an unnecessary inconvenience.

The tenants themselves were questioned, but without result; they were not of a class likely to give information to the police, even had they possessed any.

The finger-print experts made a careful examination of the room, but failed to find any marks except Skeel's own.

A thorough search through the murdered man's effects occupied several hours; but nothing was discovered that gave any hint of the murderer's identity.

A .38 Colt automatic, fully loaded, was found under one of the pillows on the bed; and eleven hundred dollars, in bills of large denomination, was taken from a hollow brass curtain-rod.

Also, under a loose board in the hall, the missing steel chisel, with the fissure in the blade, was found.

But these items were of no value in solving the mystery of Skeel's death; and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon the room was closed with an emergency padlock and put under guard.

Mallory and Vance and I had remained several hours after our discovery of the body.

Mallory had taken immediate charge of the case, and had conducted the interrogation of the tenants.

Vance had watched the routine activities of the police with unswerving intentness, and had even taken part in the search.

He had seemed particularly interested in Skeel's evening clothes, and had examined them garment by garment.

Heath had looked at him from time to time, but there had been neither contempt nor amusement in the sergeant's glances.

At half past two Mallory departed, after informing Heath that he would be at the Stuyvesant Club during the remainder of the day; and Vance and I went with him. We had a belated luncheon in the empty grill.

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he would be able to resume his work.

"That's Skeel episode rather knocks the foundation from under everything," Markham said dispiritedly, as our coffee was served.

"Oh, no—not that," Vance answered. "Rather, let me say that it has added a new column to the edition of my giddy theory."

"Your theory—yes. It's about all that's left to go on," Markham sighed.

"It has certainly received substantiation this morning. Remarkable how you called the turn when Skeel failed to show up."

Again Vance contradicted him.

"You over-estimate my little flutter in forensics, Markham dear."

"You see, I assumed that the lady's stranger knew of Skeel's offer to you. That offer was probably a threat of some kind on Skeel's part; otherwise he wouldn't have set the appointment a day ahead."

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