

VANUSHKA DESIGNS OF New York was the hottest fashion house in the country. Its founder, Vera Vanushka, had led VDNV through eight spectacular years and was reaping the rewards by taking the company public in a sudden stock offering.

The delicate financial negotiations had been hindered by Vanushka's cold. She reportedly caught the bug one afternoon while walking on the beach during a thunderstorm. For several days, she stayed housebound in her Southampton mansion while Manny Moore, her chief financial officer, worked out details with the bankers. Despite her debilitating summer sniffles, the flamboyant designer kept in touch, driving Rose, her personal secretary, nearly crazy with an onslaught of faxes and memos to everyone in the company.

On Monday morning, VDNV made its debut on the stock exchange, soaring \$20 from its opening price. But on that same evening a tragic, fatal fire took place and when the market reopened the next day, Tuesday, VDNV stock headed into a nosedive. Not only had Vanushka's charred remains been found among the ruins of her mansion, but Harve Grant, her brilliant assistant, had been arrested for arson and first-degree murder.

The Southampton courthouse was packed as the young, meticulously dressed defendant was led in. He hardly looked like a killer. But, as the prosecution pointed out, Harve certainly had a motive.

PROSECUTION: Harve Grant came to Vanushka fresh from the Fashion Institute. She took a chance with the unproven designer and was rewarded with three years of blockbuster collections. Vera Vanushka was certainly aware of Harve's value, and she made him a promise. Very soon, after the spring collection was shown, she would give him a share in the company. After all, Vanushka's financial officer had a piece; so did Rose, her longtime secretary. When VDNV finally went public, Harve could sell, growing rich with the



rest of them. It was a promise Vanushka betrayed. And that betrayal led directly to her murder.

Harve slaved over the new collection, then flew off on vacation. On that fateful Monday morning, he was relaxing on a Mexican beach when he happened to glance at last Friday's *Wall Street Journal*, announcing the upcoming stock sale. Harve grabbed the first plane back to New York, and by that evening had arrived in the Hamptons. We do not know what transpired between Ms. Vanushka and the irate young man. But we do know the result. Harve knocked out the senior designer, left her in the kitchen, and then tinkered with the toaster oven. Five minutes after he left, when the appliance's timer went off, an electrical fire was ignited, fueled by a pile of newspapers on the counter. Harve was counting on the fire to make a cold-blooded murder appear like an accident.

DEFENSE: When my client arrived at the Vanushka home, naturally he was angry. No one answered the bell, the servants having been given two weeks off, so Harve broke a window and let himself in. He wandered around, but Ms. Vanushka didn't seem to be there. It never occurred to him to check the kitchen. His employer was hardly the domestic type. Ten minutes after arriving, at approximately 8:20 p.m., Mr. Grant drove away. Both his arrival and departure times have been documented by observant neighbors. Ten minutes. Hardly enough time to kill a person and arrange the elaborate electrical fire he's accused of having set up.

The evidence is circumstantial at best. The fire left no prints. No proof at all that he'd been in that kitchen. The prosecution cannot even establish the cause of death with complete certainty. For all we know, Ms. Vanushka may have accidentally set the fire herself, then died of a heart attack before she could escape. Stranger things have happened.

Your job is simply to find the defendant guilty or not guilty. Nothing more. But you can't help wondering what really happened that night in Southampton.