

THE DIVORCE COURT MURDER

By Milton Propper

SIXTH INSTALLMENT

SYNOPSIS . . . Six persons are in an inner office of the law firm of Dawson, McQuire and Locke at Philadelphia. A master hearing in the divorce case of Rowland vs. Rowland is under way. Mrs. Rowland, represented by her lawyer brother, Mr. Willard; Mr. Rowland, the defendant, and his attorney, Mr. Trumbull; the court clerk and Mr. Dawson, the master, are the six persons. There is a new development in the case. After failing to defend himself against the charge of adultery in earlier hearings, Mr. Rowland digs up evidence and asks the court's permission to produce witnesses and resist the suit. Judge Dawson overrules the heated objections of Mr. Willard, and orders the witness brought in. Rowland's lawyer goes to get the witness but finds her dead—chloroformed. She is Mrs. Barbara Keith, wife of a prominent Philadelphia business man. Judge Dawson phoned for the police. Detective Tommy Rankin is assigned to the case. He is now questioning all of the parties involved in the case. NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY.

"If Hugh Campbell is involved in this at all, he'll be too clever to do anything so conspicuous or suspicious. In fact, he'll probably come forward as soon as he hears Headquarters wants him." He paused. "Phone the Bureau, Jenks, and tell Gordon to inquire for him at all the best hotels in town. If he's staying in Philly and isn't with friends, he'll check in only at the finest."

He deliberated a moment and then finished his instructions.

"Besides, he has connections here, through which he might be traced. Let's see . . . there's Gussie Morton at the Morton Club and Nick Alberti, manager of the Orandy Club on South Broad Street. Tell Gordon to visit them for a chat."

Jenks made a note of the address mentioned, and his superior continued:

"Now, what else have you learned from the office force? Who visited the firm during the afternoon?"

He nodded toward the chairs lined against the wall beyond the rail, where a man and a woman waited whom Rankin had barely noticed on his arrival. They sat apart, the woman demure and chic in a gray dress that revealed an attractive figure; about twenty-three years old, she was physically small, with petite features, pretty in an unobtrusive manner.

The man was as large as she was small. Close upon fifty years, he was tall and broad-shouldered. His eyes were dull and unimaginative and altogether he radiated ponderous energy, without alertness or sagacity.

Studying them each in turn, Rankin asked his colleague: "For whom were they witnesses, Jenks? Who are they and what do they know about the case?"

"The girl's name is Jill Edmond—Miss Jill Edmond," Jenks replied. "Earlier, I understand, she worked as Mrs. Rowland's secretary last December and January." "Worked is right, but not any longer," Rankin commented with a smile. "Because she happens to be his correspondent—the woman with whom he had the affair that caused his wife to sue for a divorce."

It was the other's turn to smile—knowingly, with a slightly lascivious smirk.

With regard to the order of entrances and exits that afternoon, Jenks fully corroborated Rankin's own inquiries. His time-table, together with some notes and observations, read as follows:

2:20—Mrs. Rowland and Mr. Willard arrive and enter library.

2:25—Mr. Trumbull arrives, waits in outer office.

2:30—Allen Rowland and Mrs. Keith arrived, and with Mr. Trumbull, pass into library.

2:35—Jill Edmond arrives and waits in outer office.

2:38—Hugh Campbell arrives and waits in outer office.

2:38 (about) — Allen Rowland leaves Mrs. Keith in 1505, and re-joins Mr. Trumbull.

2:39—Mrs. Rowland joins Campbell, has brief conversation. (Find out what about.)

2:40—Allen Rowland and Mr. Trumbull leave suite through main office, Rowland to dismiss chauffeur. Mrs. Rowland returns to library.

2:41 (about) — Mrs. Rowland leaves suite through main office and Mr. Trumbull returns to phone his office.

2:45 (about) — Allen Rowland returns to 1507, and retires with Mr. Trumbull to Mr. Dawson's office. (Check the time with Mrs. Keith's chauffeur, Alvin.)

2:49 (about)—Mrs. Rowland returns; speaks to Campbell and re-joins brother in library.

2:51 (about) — Hugh Campbell leaves suite by central door for a minute and returns.

2:56 — Hugh Campbell receives phone call and hurries off without explanation.

2:57—Mr. Henry Dawson arrives, and enters his office.

3:00—Mr. Simpkins, court clerk, arrives, also enters Mr. Dawson's office. The hearing begins.

"And that about covers the ground, Tommy," Jenks concluded his summary of this data.

He turned away from Jenks and rejoined the group waiting in the library.

"Mr. Simpkins," he addressed the clerk, "I'd like to see your notes of the evidence presented at the hearings. Your typed record. Have you got it with you?"

The clerk produced a large loose-leaf notebook from a voluminous pocket.

"With pleasure, Mr. Rankin," he responded. "Here you have it complete."

Rankin took the book from him and excusing himself, retired into Mr. Dawson's office. There he closed the door and spread the notes on the lawyer's table for study. Although on the surface the details of Allen Rowland's alliance with Jill Edmond appeared to have no direct bearing on the tragedy, he would not neglect the circumstances which it helped to bring about.

The preliminary testimony established Mrs. Rowland's right to sue for separation in Pennsylvania. She had resided at her estate in Parkway Road, Germantown, continuously except for her vacations. Allen Rowland had also lived there until she discovered his infidelity. Then he went into bachelor apartments he had already evidently been occupying, in West Philadelphia.

The marriage certificate was offered in evidence. She had met him four and a half years before, while wintering in Miami. As a life-guard at the beach, he had performed for her some service, not clearly detailed, which first brought them together. Before that he had led a wandering, adventurous life—a cowhand in Texas, a movie extra in Hollywood, a riding master in Chicago. They were married by an Episcopal clergyman at Fort Lauderdale, on December 28, 1928.

Jill Edmond, of course, was the bone of the fatal contention between Adele and Allen Rowland. A month before the past New Year, Mrs. Rowland had advertised for a secretary in the columns of several newspapers. The "ad" required a young and personable girl of more than average intelligence and ability. It would be her duty to attend to her employer's correspondence, manage her social engagements and in general serve as a companion. Of all the applicants, Miss Edmond, petite and neatly dressed, alert, clever and willing, had appeared most suitable for the post.

Mrs. Rowland first had reason to suspect the girl's relations with her husband less than three weeks later. She had remained at home

from a bridge party on the 23rd of the same month, because of a headache; but she retired without informing Miss Edmond of her indisposition. Descending unexpectedly from her room at four o'clock, she found her in the library, ostensibly writing letters at her desk, while Allen Rowland bent over her, his arm around her shoulder. Their nonchalant air in attempting to carry off the embarrassing situation did not deceive her.

Confronted by this discovery, Adele Rowland consulted her brother, who arranged to hire detectives to watch the couple. Both parties were to be trailed every moment wherever they went, whether separately or not.

There followed in the notes, a resume by the detectives of their movements in watching the subjects of their vigilance. On the Thursday afternoon after they began work, young Rowland kept a rendezvous with the secretary at a park in Germantown and took her to supper in town. Two days later they trailed Rowland alone to the Westview Apartments in West Philadelphia. Investigation revealed that for eight months he had had an establishment there under the name of Seymour King.

The crisis occurred on a Wednesday, February 1st, the girl's next holiday. At four o'clock that afternoon, so Mrs. Rowland related in her testimony, she accidentally noticed a scrap of paper in her husband's writing in the secretary's library wastebasket. Evidently he realized at last that they were suspected and employed this indirect method of communicating with her. In the note, he made an appointment to meet her that very evening at nine o'clock. Therefore, when the girl, during supper, specially requested to be excused from duty that night, her employer granted the favor. Rowland was not at the table nor had he been at home that afternoon.

In the meantime, Mrs. Rowland telephoned the detective and appraised him of her knowledge. Then they called Mr. Willard and prepared plans for trapping the faithless couple.

So it was that when Allen Rowland reached the rendezvous that Wednesday night, his wife, Mr. Willard and the detective were already hidden there; they watched unseen from the lawyer's car. Rowland drove up alone in a coupe on the hour, and his paramour joined him. They followed him beyond the city limits along the Bethlehem Pike as far as Quakertown. Forty-five miles from Philadelphia, Rowland turned off the main highway to reach the fashionable and expensive Sunset Inn, which however like many such roadhouses, possessed a questionable reputation. It was 10:30 when he arrived with his companion. As they went inside, the pursuers, careful lest their quarry observe them, halted a hundred yards from the building.

For some time they waited patiently. In ten minutes a new light illumined one of the second floor rooms and Allen Rowland appeared at the window and lowered the shade. At 11:15 the three trailers entered.

The chamber the husband and his companion occupied was number 212 on the second floor. (Here, the hotel book was placed on the record to prove Allen Rowland's registration for both of them as husband and wife. In his handwriting was the entry for Mr. and Mrs. King, of Allentown, Pennsylvania.) Without warning, Mr. Willard knocked on the door; and when it opened, it revealed a scene

that could hardly be more compromising. The guilty man stood in the doorway, chagrined and astonished, in colored pajamas, a robe and slippers, while Jill Edmond, pale and breathless, sat on the bed in negligee.

It was at this precise juncture that Mr. Mortimer Keith stalked angrily into the Inn bedroom, took in the situation with a hurried glance and, offering no explanation, departed as abruptly as he had arrived.

When Rankin reached this amazing statement in the record, he sat back with a jerk, audibly expressing his bewilderment. It came from the private detective, volunteered casually in his complete description of what occurred in Room 212, after the invasion.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

A divorce was granted Mrs. Genevieve Drevitson, of Newbury, N. H., after she testified that she and her husband, Carl, had not spoken to each other for 20 years.

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE
Under and by virtue of the power of sale in a certain deed of trust, dated February 25, 1921, executed by Tazwell Pilson to the undersigned Trustee, recorded in Book of Deeds of Trust 79, at page 67, records of Surry county, default having been made in the payment of the note secured thereby, at the request of the holder of the said note, the said undersigned Trustee will offer for sale at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, at the Court House Door, in Dobson, North Carolina, on the 26th day of August, 1935, at 2 o'clock P. M., the following real estate described in the said deed of trust, to-wit:

Beginning in the middle of the path near a marked small red oak a short distance Eastwardly of Tazwell Pilson's house, runs North 50 degrees West with the path 6 chains to a stone on the South side of the path in Turner Pilson's line;

thence West with said Pilson's line 2 chains to a stake or stone; thence South 41 1-2 degrees East 6 chains and 28 links to a sourwood; thence North 72 degrees East 2 chains 76 links to the beginning; containing 1 2-5 acres, more or less.

SECOND TRACT: Beginning on a white oak, R. T. Pilson's corner, running due South to the road

from R. T. Pilson's corner to the public road leading from Rockford to Mt. Airy; then running North-west with the road leading to R. T. Pilson's to a red oak in R. T. Pilson's line; thence due East to the beginning, containing 2 acres, more or less.

This the 25th day of July, 1935.
8-22 W. M. JACKSON, Trustee.

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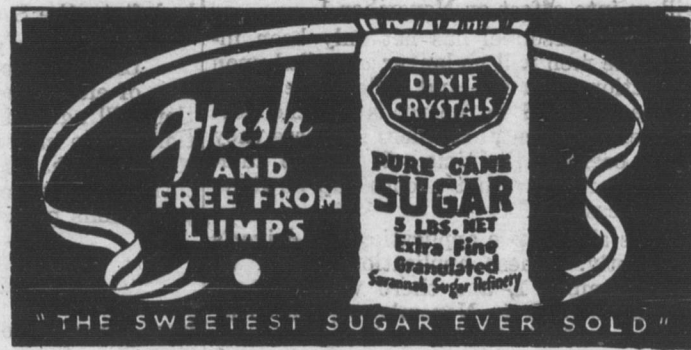
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