

THE DIVORCE COURT MURDER

BY MILTON PROPPER

FOURTEENTH INSTALLMENT

SYNOPSIS

Barbara Keith, wife of a prominent Philadelphia business man, is murdered as she waits alone in a side room to testify in the divorce case of Rowland vs. Rowland. . . She was to have testified for the husband, a friend, who was defendant in the action. . . Detective Tommy Rankin is assigned to the case from police headquarters. . . His preliminary investigation disclosed that both Mr. and Mrs. Rowland had gathered evidence against the other of infidelity. . . The will of Mrs. Rowland's first husband directed her lawyer brother, Mr. Willard, to handle the estate until she remarried when the new husband was to come into control. Detective Rankin finds motives and the evidence of guilt for the murder of Mrs. Keith, leading to the doors of virtually all of the principals involved. These principals are, the two Rowlands, Mr. Willard, Mr. Keith, husband of the murdered woman, Hugh Campbell, paragon of Mrs. Rowland, and his underworld confederates. . .

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"Well, there was the fact that Ellen and Garrett had only a small fraction of the stolen goods," said the nurse who had attended the former Mrs. Keith. "After she was here six months, Ellen realized I sympathized with her and once permitted herself to confide in me. When I asked how she got into this trouble, she didn't try to justify herself, but only Garrett. He wasn't naturally bad, she claimed, and she did her best to stop him from going wrong. But he admired his friend's smartness and his influence, and the temptation of easy money was too much for him. I could tell she clearly feared and despised the fellow."

Rankin spoke eagerly. "Did she tell you anything about who he was and what became of him?"

"She could hardly know what happened to him after her arrest." The matron shook her head. "But she mentioned the name by which she knew him; more than likely it was an alias. If I'm not mistaken, he revealed as Fred Dennis."

But the matron had no idea of her charge's history, once she passed beyond the walls of the penitentiary. She had never heard from her. Nor could she supply any further details about Fred Dennis, or his description, which Rankin particularly desired. And she was ignorant of how Ellen Trent met her lover or where. In court, she had been represented by a Mr. Nathan Lewis, a Fort Wayne lawyer, in all probability appointed by the judge to defend her, because she had no money.

Late that afternoon, Tommy Rankin presented himself by appointment made over the telephone, at the law office of Mr. Nathan Lewis. Evidently the lawyer had prospered since the day, six years before, when he was appointed by the court, an impetuous young lawyer, to defend Ellen Trent.

Mr. Lewis studied Rankin's card and motioned him to a deep armchair.

"Yes, Mr. Rankin?" he inquired politely, but with quiet reserve. "You're from the Philadelphia Police Bureau, I see. How can I be of service to you?"

"I called you to make sure you wouldn't leave the office before I arrived," the detective replied. "It's about a young woman whose mysterious murder I am investigating in the East. Her name is Barbara Keith and she was once your client, charged with concealing and disposing of stolen goods. You knew her as Ellen Trent."

The lawyer looked genuinely shocked, and shook his head solemnly.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he murmured. "Of course, I recall the case quite well. Exactly what happened to her?"

Briefly Rankin related enough of the tragedy to enlist Mr. Lewis' cooperation. The latter listened attentively.

"I have reason to believe," Rankin concluded, "that this affair in Fort Wayne—her arrest and imprisonment—has a bearing on her death. She was being blackmailed by some one familiar with her past. And you can probably tell me more about it, from her angle, than anyone else."

Mr. Lewis pondered. "Under these circumstances, I suppose I am justified in revealing

whatever I can to help you. To me, it has always seemed a most distressing situation, for which the girl was not to blame at all. Her misfortune was to love a ne'er-do-well. Yet, there were the goods, the evidence that she knew of the robberies, and her obvious relations with one of the men. I considered it most wise that she plead guilty and trusted to the court's leniency for a minimum sentence."

"That's one of the details I want," the detective cut in very quickly. "It's been suggested to me, from other sources, that she was really quite innocent."

"I'm firmly convinced of that," Mr. Lewis declared. "At our first interview in the city jail, she assured me she was ignorant of Garrett's dishonesty until after they had lived here for six months. At times she wondered why he stayed out so late at night. She found out about him eventually when he returned at dawn, after a narrow escape during an attempted robbery. He had been separated from Dennis and brought back some of the loot; then she realized his occupation and taxed him with it."

"And what's your opinion of Garrett? Did you gather he was vicious or just weak?"

The lawyer spread his hands. "Miss Trent insisted it was entirely Dennis' fault; without his persuasion and the enticement of easy money, Garrett would never have gone wrong. She loved him so, it was almost pitiful how she deluded herself about his worthiness."

"Have you any idea, Mr. Lewis," he asked, "how and where she met Garrett in the first place?"

After some cogitation, the attorney recalled that the girl had mentioned that they became acquainted in Akron, Ohio, late in 1925. She worked as a wrapper in a large department store there and met the young man at a dance hall. Mr. Lewis was not better informed than Mortimer Keith had been. She had no relatives left, he believed.

The lawyer told how her sweet-heart became acquainted with Fred Dennis. It was at the Indianapolis race track, where Garrett began to hang about when he failed to obtain work, in hope of acquiring some loose change. But the girl could not name, Mr. Lewis explained as Rankin probed more thoroughly, any of Dennis' other associates.

"No wonder she detested Dennis so!" Rankin exclaimed. "He threatened her happiness, endangered the man she loved and brought her endless worry."

"Exactly," Mr. Lewis agreed. "That's the reason, when Garrett was killed, she considered him his murderer. I have a vivid picture of her in prison, crushed and numbed by his death; she didn't care what happened to her without him. But she had one interest—a grim determination that Fred Dennis should suffer for it."

The detective nodded. "I suppose he realized her opposition and enmity."

"He could hardly help it, the way she always tried to persuade Garrett to break away. It was a continual struggle for ascendancy over him; she told me that when she'd almost win him away, Dennis could bring him back to heel with a word."

"But the police didn't catch him, even with her information?" Rankin vouchsafed.

Mr. Lewis toyed with a pen on his desk and pushed back his chair as he replied.

"No, he escaped again," he related, "by the skin of his teeth, just before they broke in."

"And nothing was heard of him afterward? No trace of his whereabouts?"

The lawyer shook his head. "No, he dropped completely out of the picture."

"But at least you have Miss Trent's description of him," the detective put in.

"The police could give you that," Mr. Lewis replied. "It was their job to hunt him. And I believe they still hold such of Dennis' possessions as didn't have other rightful owners."

"In that case, I'll want to see them at once." Abruptly, Rankin rose and extended his hand.

But instead of shaking hands Mr. Lewis glanced at his watch and also rose.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Rankin," he said, "I'd like to go along with you to Headquarters. Recalling how favorably the girl impressed me, I'm interested in the case and wish to learn what develops. In fact if Dennis is responsible for her murder, I feel almost involved in it myself."

"Why, certainly, Mr. Lewis," the detective returned pleasantly. "You're quite welcome to join me and follow it up."

The lawyer had put into words the possibility to which his investigations and all the information he obtained on this journey pointed. Certainly, Fred Dennis had ample reason for harboring malice against Ellen Trent and desiring her death. From the beginning, her opposition to his control over her sweetheart, Garrett, constantly threatened to disrupt his plans and endanger his criminal enterprises. Then, with Dave Garrett's death, her more active hostility resulted calamitously for him. She made him a fugitive from justice. It was hardly likely that a man of his character, vicious and revengeful, yet astute and daring, would hesitate to commit murder in retaliation.

He was familiar with Barbara Keith's past and in a position to disclose it; and as part of his revenge, he could blackmail her by anonymously calling her husband's attention to them, he would establish her relations with Garrett and her prison sentence as a thief. He might even have been aware of the expected baby. To silence him, Mrs. Keith would undoubtedly have been willing to pay dearly.

Why, then, had he chosen to chloroform her during the divorce hearing? And how had he reached her there? To these obstacles to his theory of Dennis' guilt, Rankin had to produce a solution. So long as Mrs. Keith continued to pay him, he would hesitate to kill the goose that laid such golden eggs; and she had given him a check as recently as June first. But there was a limit to the bleeding process. If driven to the wall by his demands, she might have turned on him finally, threatening both to betray him to the authorities and to admit the truth to her husband. The fact that the day before she died she had broached a subject, the delicateness and importance of which her nervousness and alarm attested, supported this supposition. Instead of wishing to speak of a divorce, as Mr. Keith supposed, she may have intended to confess. Though she lost her nerve in the crisis, yet desperate and hounded, she constituted a fresh menace to Dennis.

And always, so long as she lived, her knowledge of his criminal career, which she could pass on to the authorities, endangered his freedom. Mr. Lewis drove the detective direct to Headquarters. It was his presence rather than Rankin's official card that gained them a prompt audience with Lieutenant Becker.

He was the officer who had arrested Ellen Trent six years before, and led the subsequent raid on Dennis' flat. Even now he was sensitive about the fiasco and mention of it brought a wry frown to his features. Rankin briefly related the story of Barbara Keith's murder and the trail that led to Fort

Wayne. When he explained its connection with Fred Dennis and his desire to obtain information about him, Lieutenant Becker nodded.

"Of course, we still have all the things from his apartment," he declared, "that is, his personal things. I'll have them here in a jiffy."

He summoned a policeman from the record room. Within ten minutes the officer returned with papers, reports and several suitcases.

(Continued Next Week)

WHITEVILLE GETS HAL THURSTON FOR DANCE

Hal Thurston and his famous North Carolinians will play for a dance in Whiteville on Friday night. Those promoting the dance, which is called the "Golden Jubilee Ball", announce there will be plenty of fun, thrills, and favors for all those attending.

A score of the most socially prominent and popular girls of North Carolina have been invited as sponsors for the ball and it is expected that crowds from all over this section will attend.

Hal Thurston, a native of Rocky Mount, has been the leader of his orchestra for several years. In early childhood he started taking music lessons, and today is recognized as one of the foremost of the younger band leaders in the country. Hal and his boys have played in several of the principal colleges in the South, the University of North Carolina in particular, and at many of the more popular night spots and resorts in the East. At the Tantilla Gardens in Richmond and at the famous Wagon Wheels night club in Nashville, Tenn., the boys broke all existing attendance records.

CHEVROLET MECHANICS TO GAIN RECOGNITION

Striking evidence of the distance the automotive industry has traveled, since the day when an aptitude for "tinkering" was about all a service mechanic needed, may be gained from a recent announcement by William E. Holler, vice-president and general sales manager of the Chevrolet Motor Co. of a plan whereby mechanics who make a serious effort to improve themselves will receive recognition by Chevrolet.

The plan requires of the mechanic a thorough and constant study of the numerous service departments helps issued regularly by Chevrolet. The aspirant to the Approved Service Mechanic's badge which the company will issue must keep himself up to date on the repair manual, the Service News, slide films and bulletins, must attend the weekly shop meeting which are held throughout the organization, pass two written examinations with a high average, and requalify in the same manner for a new badge each year.

This most recent evidence of growing stress on service is

NOTICE OF LAND SALE BY TRUSTEE

Under and by virtue of authority contained in a certain Deed of Trust executed by Marie C. Colwell and husband, J. H. Colwell to J. T. Gresham, Jr., Trustee dated the 8th day of October, 1932, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds of Duplin County in Book 344, page 250; Default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness thereby secured, I will sell at public auction for cash, to the highest bidder at the court house door in Kenansville, N. C., on the 16th day of September, 1935, at twelve o'clock noon, the following described land, lying in the town of Warsaw, N. C.

Beginning at a stake on College Street at the intersection of College and Bell Streets and runs with the eastern edge of College Street 270 feet to John Fate Best corner; thence with the north eastern line of John Fate Best lot 243 feet to a stake on a ditch thence with the ditch and line of J. L. Jordan 270 feet to a stake on Bell Street; thence with the edge of said Street to the beginning, containing 1 1-2 acres, more or less.

Advertised this the 14th day of August, 1935.

J. T. GRESHAM, JR., Trustee.

A. J. Blanton, Atty. Aug. 22-29 Sept. 5-12 -749

NOTICE OF SALE

Under and by virtue of power and authority contained in a certain Deed of Trust executed by Ralph E. and W. F. Thompson to A. L. McGowen, Trustee, dated July 10, 1920, recorded in the office of the Register of deeds of Duplin County in book 219, page 12; default having been made of the indebtedness thereby se-

WILL ROGERS' HUMOR

A timely illustrated article which relates examples of the shrewd philosophy and homey wit which entertained a nation and which ended in the death of Will Rogers. One of the many interesting features in the September 8 issue of The American Weekly, the big magazine which comes regularly with the Baltimore Sunday American. On sale by all newsdealers.—Adv.

666 checks MALARIA in 3 days COLDS first day Tonic and Laxative
Liquid - Tablets Salve - Nose Drops

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BETTY LO SHOP
WILMINGTON'S NEWEST DRESS SHOP
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Let us fill your tank with the new Patented Super Solvenized Gas

the only gas that keeps your motor free from carbon—Costs but a penny a gallon extra.

Come in and get our prices on new Yale guaranteed Tires — Willard Batteries Parts and Accessories

WASHING — POLISHING — GREASING
Battery Repairing — Garage Service

D. B. Townsend

—: Purol Products :—

NOTICE OF SALE OF LAND

Under and by virtue of authority contained in a certain Mortgage Deed executed by Gib Bachelor and wife Hazel Bachelor to Davis Bachelor dated the 26th day of August, 1929, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds for Duplin County in Book 326, page 64; Default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness thereby secured, I will sell at public auction, for cash, to the highest bidder, at the court house door in Kenansville, N. C., on the 23RD DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1935, at twelve o'clock noon, the following described tract of land,

Advertised this the 23rd day of August, 1935.

LEROY B. CARTER, Substituted Trustee.

P. J. Caudell, Atty. Aug 29 Sept. 5-12-19 -751

DAVIS BACHELOR Mortgagee.

A. J. Blanton, Atty. Aug. 29 Sept 5-12-19 -750

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EXPERTLY DONE
Best grade of materials used in all jobs. 25 years experience in shoe building and repair work.

ALL WORK GUARANTEED

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I SMOKE CAMELS BECAUSE THEY ARE SO MILD THAT IN ALL THESE YEARS THEY HAVE NEVER AFFECTED MY ENDURANCE OR INTERFERED WITH MY WIND
I, TOO, CAN SMOKE CAMELS AS CONSTANTLY AS I LIKE. CAMELS LEAVE MY THROAT COMFORTABLE AND COOL AND I GET A "LIFT" WITH A CAMEL
SO MILD! YOU CAN SMOKE ALL YOU WANT
BILL MILLER Champion Sculler
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CAMELS Costlier Tobaccos!

You're The Loser

WHEN you allow Headache, Neuralgia, Muscular, Rheumatic, Sciatic or Periodic Pains to keep you from work or pleasure. You can't go places and do things when you are suffering—and the work or good times won't wait for you.

Why allow Pain to rob you of Health, Friends, Happiness, Money?
DR. MILES' ANTI-PAIN PILLS have been used for the relief of pain for more than forty years. They taste good, act quickly, do not upset the stomach, nor cause constipation, leave no dull, depressed feeling.

Thousands have used them for twenty, thirty, forty years, and still find that nothing else relieves pain so promptly and effectively.

Why don't you try them? Once you know how pleasant they are to take, how quickly and effectively they relieve, you won't want to go back to disagreeable, slow acting medicines.

You too may find quick relief. Why wait forty minutes for relief when Dr. Miles Anti-Pain Pills will relieve you in ten to twenty minutes?

As a household remedy I have never found anything that equalled Dr. Miles Anti-Pain Pills. Mrs. Silas D. Keller, Penfield, Pa.

I never found anything that was so good to stop pain as Dr. Miles Anti-Pain Pills. I have told many about them and I find they are all using them. Mrs. Martha Lacy, Deavenport, Iowa

I have been using Dr. Miles Anti-Pain Pills for years. I keep them on hand all the time. I can certainly recommend them for pain. Miss Audra Seybold, 2417 W. 2nd St., Dayton, Ohio

Your Anti-Pain Pills have been a wonderful help to me. I have used them for three years and always keep them on hand. Mrs. E. Pierce, Lapwai, Idaho

I have used quite a lot of Dr. Miles Anti-Pain Pills. They are fine pills to stop pain. Mrs. J. L. Kester, Shickspenny, Pa.

DR. MILES' ANTI-PAIN PILLS