

A detective moves into a retirement community and discovers a resident's death may have been murder and the building may be holding the secret.

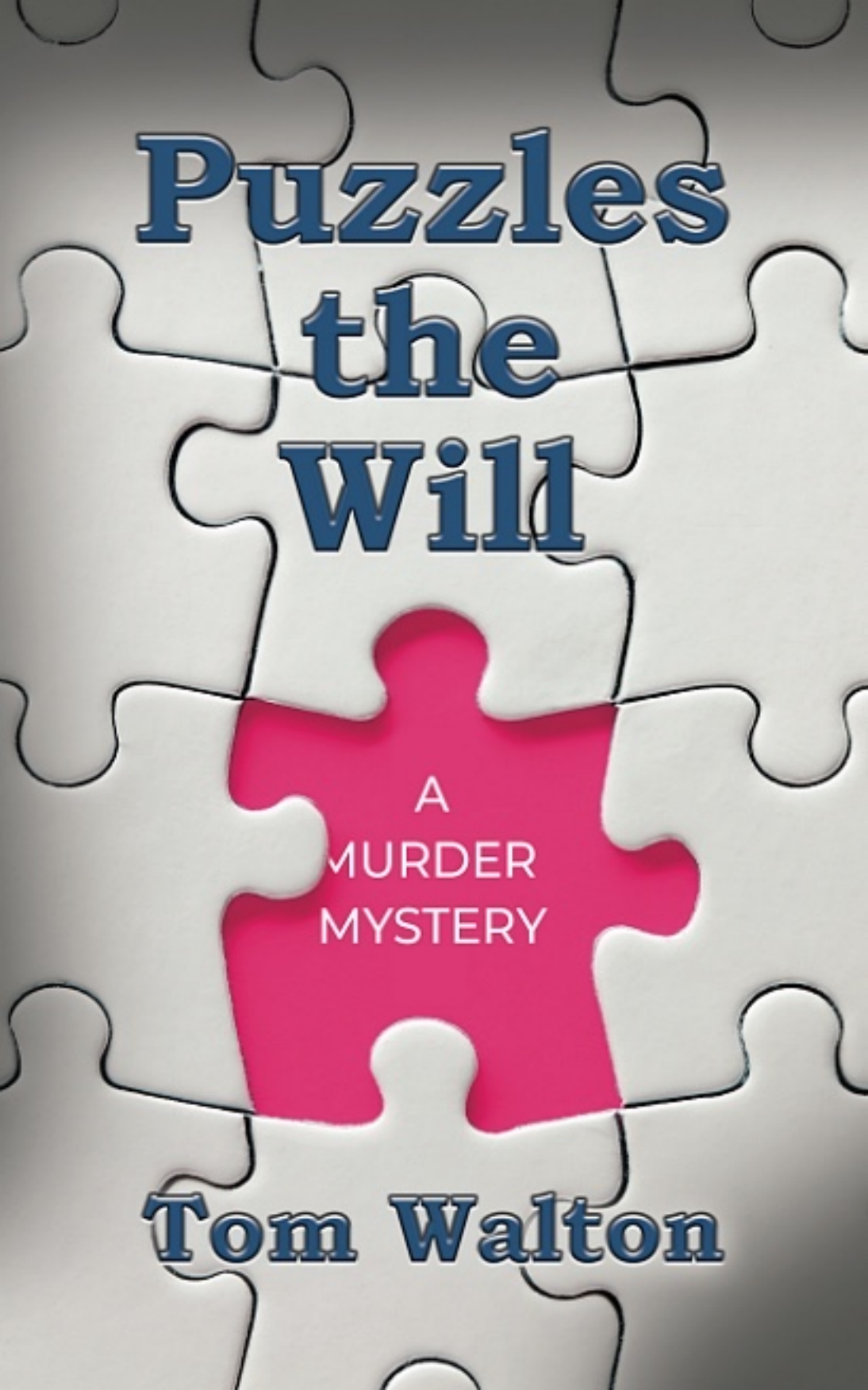
Puzzles The Will: A Murder Mystery

By Tom Walton

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13119.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**



**Puzzles
the
Will**

A
MURDER
MYSTERY

Tom Walton

Copyright © 2023 Tom Walton

Print ISBN: 978-1-958890-90-5

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-584-5

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia, U.S.A.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2023

Other books by Tom Walton

What Do I Put on My Notecard!
(With Lori Norin)

*Defining Moments: Secrets That Should Never Be
Told*

*Defining Moments II: More Secrets That Should
Never Be Told*

Swedish Gem

Cats: Why We Love Them So

Prologue

Ethel stood on the far left of the stage sharing it with nine other Mrs. Oklahoma contestants. It was getting harder for her to maintain both her dazzling smile and T stance at age 42 than it was when she was 22, but she managed with great effort. Now she had a chance to finally make it to Atlantic City, a Mrs. instead of a Miss. Wearing a red dress with a slit up the side revealing leg and a neckline revealing cleavage, she felt confident of winning.

“Smile and stand tall,” she thought to herself. “You’re going to win this thing.”

She competed in local pageants throughout her college years in the 1950s, winning twice in five tries. She never, however, made it into the top ten at the Miss America pageant. Competing as Mrs. North Tulsa 1975, where she and her husband Herb lived, she won this one more trip to the New Jersey shore of glittery hotel/casinos.

“Oh, I’m so surprised and thankful,” she said when interviewed by the emcee as the previous year winner put the crown on her head with bobby pins and placed the sash over her shoulder.

“Finally,” she thought to herself as she walked and waved to the crowd. “Make a good turn.”

In addition to the paid weeklong trip to the Jersey shore and \$2000 cash, she received a pair of diamond earrings worth \$1000 each. She managed a top five finish in the Mrs. America pageant and Herb bought her a diamond ring to go with her earrings as a concession prize.

“You are the love of my life,” he told her as he gave her the gift. “You are beautiful and I’m proud to be your husband.”

1

Herb was promoted in 1977 to detective after 10 years of being a beat cop. He had earned the promotion for being the leading police officer in a drug bust that kept over three million dollars of cocaine, heroin, and opioid pills off the streets of South Tulsa.

“Just being at the right place at the right time,” he said during the press conference. “It was a real team effort and I thank all the officers who participated.”

Ethel served as a counselor at a local university until she had to retire in 1992 at age 62 due to a severe stroke. After a year of intensive rehab in which she had to relearn how to walk, write, and eat, the doctors suggested that it might be best for her if the two of them moved to a retirement community.

“There are plenty of independent living facilities in this area,” said her doctor. “With an aide coming in once or twice a week I highly recommend it for you.”

Since Herb still had about 15 years of working ahead of him, he was 10 years younger than Ethel, they decided it would be a good option to move instead of trying to maintain the large family home

of over 2400 square feet with a big yard that Herb maintained himself.

Their two children Audry and Andy were both adults now with their own families, and they agreed wholeheartedly it was time due to circumstances for Herb and Ethel to sell the house and move.

“Do it,” said Andy. “Don’t think about it, just do it.”

Audry echoed her younger brother’s sentiment. “Go, go, go.”

Herb had grown bald. He kept trim and weighed between 170 and 180 pounds every year at his physical. His son, age 28, was already showing signs of going bald and had ballooned to over 240 pounds. Both were just under 6 feet tall.

Audry, on the other hand, had inherited her mother’s charm and good looks. She had long, black wavy hair just like Ethel, and long legs, too. At 32, she still looked like she was in her early 20s.

Ethel and Herb, along with Andy and his wife Jackie and Audry with her husband Matt, spent the next month touring all the independent living facilities in the Tulsa area. They agreed on the Piedmont Tower as the best option. It was a 15-story limestone building built in the 1980s. Off to the side of the building, it had plenty of garden space and a stocked pond. This thrilled both Ethel and Herb

because they loved to grow their own vegetables and he fished.

While they visited a flock of geese honked and landed in the pond much to the delight of all of them. Bill, the manager walked around with the six of them. He was fascinated to hear that Ethel was a former beauty queen and that Herb was a police detective.

“Let’s go inside,” said Andy. “I want them to see everything again.”

They passed the shuffleboard courts, the picnic areas complete with built-in grills, the horseshoes area, and the gazebos on the way back in.

Once inside, they headed for the large rec. room for coffee and donuts. It had a complete kitchen and enough room to set up tables for 200 people. There was a big screen TV and piano at the far end. Four ladies played a dice game at one of the round tables and three men played cards at another.

After a brief respite the tour continued. Under the west wing on the ground floor there was a library, computer lab, and laundry room. The library contained books, magazines, movie DVDS, music CDs, and jigsaw puzzles. The lab had 20 computers and four printers. The laundry room featured six coin-operated washers and dryers along with a two vending machines, one for candy and chips and the other for cans of soda.

The east wing held two smaller rec. rooms, a kitchen with lounge for staff, the mail room, a beauty shop, and a small grocery area stocked with toiletries and various OTC products.

There were also three offices on the ground floor between the two wings for the manager, assistant manager, and security guards. A counter space ran along the outside of the offices with windows along the whole track. The adjacent lobby had couches, chairs, and tables on one side with restrooms. There was a big mirror between the restroom doors. There were four elevators on the other side with a fake fireplace in the corner. It could put out cold air during the summer and hot air during the winter.

Ethel and Herb would live on the top floor of the west wing in an end apartment. Farthest from the elevators and lounge which sat between the two wings it was close to the stairs, a small laundry room, and vending machines.

Ethel was 62 and Herb 52 in 1992 when they moved into the tower. He walked a swift two miles every weekday morning before going to work, eight laps on the walking trail around the tower. Ethel, hampered by her stroke, could only make one lap on her rollator. She would go back to their apartment and put on her oxygen and take her pain pills while Herb finished. There was another walking trail that went around the garden, pond, and picnic area.

For the next 16 years Ethel actively participated in playing cards, shuffleboard, horseshoes, and bingo in the evenings when Herb was home. She baked cookies, mostly oatmeal raisin, and along with her best friend Agatha, who also lived in the tower, passed them around in goodie bags to all the residents each Christmas and Easter. She spent as much time day or night visiting in the office and with residents as they came and went in the lobby as she spent time in the apartment.

In 2008 Ethel, now 78, got very sick and Herb, 68, retired to take care of her. A year later, though, he died suddenly. He and Ethel had just finished playing Yahtzee and Scrabble. She went into the kitchen to make coffee. Herb shouted her name and said “Oh no, no.” Ethel heard a thud and when she went back into the living room, she saw Herb laying on the floor. She called 911 for an ambulance and then the security guard downstairs to have Herb’s paperwork ready for the EMTs. By the time they arrived, Herb’s lips had turned blue, and he had stopped breathing. Since he had a DNR in his paperwork, the EMTs could do nothing. One of them asked Ethel, anyway, if they should try to bring him back.

She said “no,” and started to cry. “He’s gone.”

His death really took a lot out of Ethel, and she quickly regressed to a wheelchair. She spent more and more time in the apartment. Her weekday

smiling walk around the tower trail with her head held high turned into only forlornly buzzing slowly about in her wheelchair once a week from the front door past the first row of the parking lot to the closest sitting area only about 50 yards from the entrance.

Her yakking to anyone she met along the way about this and that had also regressed to her only looking down and occasionally offering an empty, “Hello, I’m doing as well as expected” to anyone who tried to engage her in conversation. Not even egging her on with a discussion about politics or religion could get her riled.

Over the next ten years, she gained over 80 pounds from not being active and eating out of boredom. Her feet, ankles, and legs swelled due to an extreme case of edema, and she needed the use of oxygen more and more. She also increased the number of pain pills she took each day.

Her graying still wavy hair had turned white and stringy from not being kept up. A musty housecoat replaced her smart-looking outfits. She always, however, carried a can of diet soda in the holder of her wheelchair, and smoked cigarillos.

She had stopped wearing her diamond jewelry that a necklace had been added to by Herb on Y2K night to celebrate the upcoming last year of the historic and frightening for many millennia. She

asked Herb how he could afford such an expensive gift, but he brushed off the question.

“Don’t you worry about that,” and then he repeated what he had said years before. “You are the love of my life. You are beautiful and I’m proud to be your husband.”

2

A loud explosion shook the west wing of the tower and frightened all the residents at home that Tuesday morning in mid-August of 2015. It even startled the few who were working in the garden or walking around the pond. The geese shading themselves beneath a tree near the pond flew and the feral cats who were getting a drink of water from the pond scurried into the nearest culvert for safety. From the lobby, the sound seemed to come from the top floor. All the management on duty rushed up the elevators from their offices and ran down the hall of the top floor. Sure enough, it was Ethel's apartment.

"She must have lit a match to smoke one of her cigarillos," said Mike, the manager, to Norma, the assistant manager, as he opened Ethel's door. "And the spark caused an explosion."

"She might have used an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and then fiddled with her oxygen equipment," surmised someone in the crowd that was forming.

Someone else muttered, "It might have been something else."

There wasn't much left after the explosion which contained itself to just her dwelling. The windows were blown out in the bedroom where she was

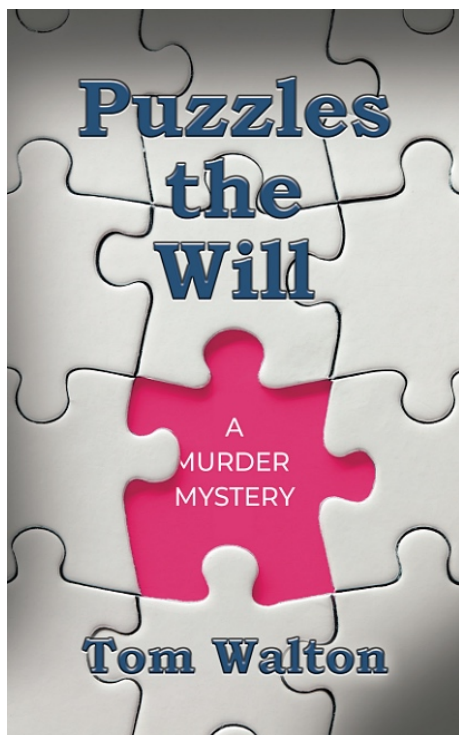
found, and everything was destroyed. The fire department and police authorities, who arrived at various times during the rest of the day, carefully inspected the charred debris. It proved futile. They discussed their lack of findings and reported to Mike and Norma that it was an accident with “cause unknown” because they couldn’t find any viable clues.

The adjacent apartment to the left received no damage, much to the surprise of everyone, especially the maintenance staff and contracted workers who would have to repair it. The outside walls to the back and right since it was an end apartment faired just as undamaged except for the bedroom windows.

Ethel’s daughter and son-in-law, Audry, and Matt, were known for being “all bark and no bite.” They fussed about all sorts of things over the years. The couple, only two days after the accident, threatened legal action against everybody and anybody associated with the tower. They stormed into Mike’s office three days in a row, hurling unfounded accusations left and right. He felt obligated since he was new to the position to hear them out.

“Maybe this will help them blow off steam,” Mike thought to himself as he prepared to try and be an empathetic listener.

Audry and Matt soon settled down and after talking with both Mike and the authorities admitted Ethel's death was just a horrible accident. When they received the insurance policy death benefit, they were heard from no more. Ethel's son Andy, and his wife Jackie, agreed to go through the apartment one more time to see if anything was salvageable before it was redone for new residents. They found nothing.



A detective moves into a retirement community and discovers a resident's death may have been murder and the building may be holding the secret.

Puzzles The Will: A Murder Mystery

By Tom Walton

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13119.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**