



## Mrs. Simmons, His Mistress, Her Lover and Murder

### Hugh Key

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Infidelity is the catalyst for countless works of commercial fiction and a common theme explored in literary works. The subject has reached a level of popularity that makes all but the most original stories trite, with predictable character interactions and anticipated endings. A stereotypical crime of passion often manifests itself at some point in the plot, a conditioned result of a traditionally overly-possessive relationship. Though sexual attraction is a basic human drive, when combined with the financially motivated institution of marriage, it can lead to felonious behavior that fills the pages of novels.

*Mrs. Simmons, His Mistress, Her Lover, & Murder* is a title-synopsis for a book with all the murder mystery trimmings placed in every expected place. Though written with procedural skill, Hugh Key's work fails to stand out from his competition and misses the level of innovation needed to keep the reader intrigued; however, many fans of genre fiction will enjoy the formulaic approach even when the general outcome is known at the outset. Keeping this publishing industry standard in perspective, Key has done an excellent job in entertaining through his explicitly detailed and frequently gritty descriptions. Each character is spurred into action by a desire to seize control of a relationship. Add money to the scenario and Key's situation is lethal, regardless of which party's interest is involved.

Paris and Clay Simmons live a comfortable married life in a contrived living arrangement with secret interludes on the side. This is not a free-spirited, open marriage, nor is it a once-loving couple on the verge of divorce, or a simple financial partnership with no jealous restraints. These are dangerous, deceitful people who will go to undertaking any extreme deed to gain the upper hand in life. Complicating this entanglement even further are two desperate lovers ready to kill to get rid of their legal competitors. The tendency to dominate, combined with the frantic need to bond with an object of true love, turns four characters into conniving strategists more treacherous than war zone personnel.

On an introspective plane, Key's writing is good, yet he tends to present the inner impulses of his protagonists in a somewhat unrealistic manner. For the purposes of propelling the story, these often excessive, near hysterical, thought processes are necessary, but a reader may wonder whether these people are even human. The author might consider tempering his characters' reactions with greater subtlety.

Key has created four individuals capable of horrendous acts under circumstances that most have the common sense to avoid —that's what makes his story gripping. It's the audacity and lunacy of his entourage that will appeal to intrigue enthusiasts.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (November 28, 2012)

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