

Mallory's Oracle Study Guide

Mallory's Oracle by Carol O'Connell

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Plot Summary

"Mallory's Oracle" by Carol O'Connell is a work of fiction in the murder mystery genre. The main character in the book is New York police officer Kathleen Mallory. Mallory grows up on the city streets until the age of ten when she is arrested and then adopted by Louis Markowitz, a sterling cop in the NYPD. Mallory is a hard case from day one and never softens. However, through the love and care of the Markowitzes, hard work, and a gift for technology, Mallory becomes a computer expert in the department. Mallory does not often step outside the office but the death of Louis Markowitz prompts Mallory to dig into another aspect of police work. Mallory's ways are often abrupt and cold but she gets results through her actions, whether or not the action is appreciated. However, Mallory is recognized as an irreplaceable asset by the Chief of Detectives.

The only people that seem to be even relatively close to Mallory, aside from the Markowitzes who are now deceased, are Charles Butler and Sergeant Riker. Only those two men dare to touch Mallory in any way or refer to her by her Christian name. Mallory works under the watchful eye of Sergeant Riker, another good cop. Lieutenant Coffey is also a superior to Mallory. Although Coffey is Mallory's superior, he is equally in love with and afraid of her.

One of the main themes in "Mallory's Oracle" is New York City. The Gray-Lady Killer tends to target older and wealthy women that reside in Gramercy Park. The use of the exclusive Gramercy Park is important to the story as it is difficult for a killer to gain access to.

As a computer expert, Mallory makes frequent references to her work within the police department. The hierarchy of the police department seems to faze Mallory little and she usually does what she wants to do, even if it is not entirely legal. The illegal activity usually relates to methods used by Mallory to gain information or tap into the activities of various characters. The language regarding computer systems dates the work to a degree. However, unless one is intimately familiar with the current systems and applications, it would not be readily noticed.

The crux of the story is that a serial killer is targeting the elderly and wealthy ladies of Gramercy Park. Mallory becomes involved when her father, Louis Markowitz, is murdered. Nothing will stop Mallory from investigating and avenging her father's death.

Mallory's close friend Charles Butler, a psychologist, also becomes involved in the case. Also mixed up in the case as suspects are Margot Siddon, a would-be heiress who is mentally unstable, and Henry Cathery, an heir and an idiot-savant.

The elderly women are involved in a séance group headed by a scam artist named Redwing. The scam involves insider trading deals with information gained from the older women. Redwing passes on information in exchange for a cut of the profits.



The story ends in typical murder mystery fashion with the entire plot being laid out between the killer and the next victim. The killer is revealed and is shot.

Along the way Mallory learns new things about Markowitz, giving her an even clearer picture of the man she idolized.

It is clear almost from the very beginning of the story that Kathleen Mallory is a sociopath. A sociopath will do or say anything to serve her own needs, despite the consequences. In fact, many sociopaths are unaware of consequences, no matter how severe. As a young girl, Mallory is a juvenile delinquent and exhibits combative behavior. Although Mallory is treated well by the Markowitzes, her combative and secretive nature never changes.



Prologue, Chapters 1-3

Prologue, Chapters 1-3 Summary

Prologue: A dog hears his mistress' call and goes to her. The dog knows something is wrong as the woman dies. The dog panics and jumps through a window, breaking bones and dying on the sidewalk below.

Chapter 1: A young boy, a junkie, goes into a pawnshop with the intent of pawning off two pieces of gold jewelry. They are a watch and a wedding ring. The pawnbroker immediately recognizes the objects as belonging to Louis Markowitz, a cop and longtime friend. The pawnbroker calls Kathleen Mallory, another cop who also happens to be Markowitz's adopted daughter. Mallory arrives on the scene and forces the junkie to talk. Mallory and the pawnbroker knew that if a junkie had Markowitz's things, the man was surely dead.

Lieutenant Jack Coffey cannot stop thinking about Markowitz's death. Markowitz was a good and capable cop. Why would Markowitz go into a tenement alone? None of it makes any sense.

Chief Blakely arrives on the scene and speaks to Coffey. Then men discuss a second victim at the scene, Miss Pearl Whitman, age 75. Whitman seems to be the third victim of what is being referred to as the "Gray-Lady Killer." The men also discuss Markowitz and lament that after all the good Markowitz did for the department and for New York, the only thing he will be remembered for is this last mistake. It is also learned that Mallory is inside the building with Markowitz's body.

Dr. Edward Slope is at a family barbecue when he is called to the scene. Mallory is there, putting Markowitz's wedding ring back on his finger. The body had already been moved by the junkie. After the details of the crime are examined as much as possible, the junkie is set free. The heat in the building makes it extremely difficult for Slope to determine the exact time of death. In the end, Markowitz dies of a massive coronary.

Mallory examines the old woman. Unlike Markowitz, the old woman is mutilated. The author talks about how Mallory is all business at the crime scene. She is cold and hard.

Rabbi Kaplan is contacted by a man concerned about Mallory. Mallory is sitting up with the dead. Kaplan tells Mallory that it is not necessary. Markowitz was not an Orthodox Jew and hence it is not necessary to maintain those customs. Mallory and the rabbi both stay. The rabbi talks about old times. Mallory balks at being called a child, even when she was one. The rabbi talks about the murder case and reveals what Markowitz had told him previously. The killer appears to be a freak and an unnatural human being. Mallory swears revenge.



Chapter 2: Charles Butler is introduced. There is no one to support Mallory at Markowitz's funeral. Butler puts his arm around Mallory to the shock of everyone present. No one else would even dare to try and comfort the hard-nosed cop.

Mallory accepts Markowitz's inheritance, which is a surprise to Butler. More of Mallory's history is examined. Once again it is mentioned that Mallory will not cry over Markowitz and that she has not cried since the day Helen Markowitz died.

Chapter 3: Commissioner Beale is introduced into the story. Beale goes to Mallory's apartment to inform her that she is on compassionate leave. However, Beale does not get Mallory's badge and gun.

Coffey goes into Markowitz's office. Coffey notices that the back wall of the office, once covered in cork, is now bare. Coffey knows Mallory has taken the murder board. Riker denies seeing Mallory take it down but neglects to tell Coffey that he carried it out to Mallory's car. The scene shifts to the cork board being placed in Mallory's home office. The board has everything needed to solve the crime.

Riker visits and says he needs to take back the cork board and the other things Mallory took from Markowitz's office. Mallory had already copied the information and was not upset.

The author gives a detailed description of Gramercy Park and the victims followed by an introduction of a new character, Mrs. Ortega, Butler's cleaning lady.

Mallory pushes Butler into becoming a partner in a new business. Mallory laments Butler's aversion to computers.

Butler thinks about the letter left for him by Markowitz, which details Mallory's behavior and how to handle her.

Mallory observes a giantess dealing with a cabbie downtown. The giantess seems to be in control of the area. Mallory is impressed.

Slope goes to the rabbi's house for poker night. Butler has assumed Markowitz's place at the table. The men discuss how Mallory became Markowitz's adopted daughter as well as the strong influence Helen Markowitz had over the girl.

Prologue, Chapters 1-3 Analysis

The book starts out with a dog filled with absolute terror after his mistress is killed. This fear lets the reader know that something out of the ordinary has happened. The unusual circumstances are confirmed when the dog leaps to his death. Jack Coffey cannot be reached at this point. The only thing that is obvious is that Coffey respected Markowitz's skill and cannot figure out why Markowitz would put himself in such a dangerous position.



Kathleen Mallory is a cold and hard-nosed cop that is almost entirely disconnected from the rest of the world. Mallory is found trying to steal a car at age ten or eleven. No one is really sure about her age, although her current age is thought to be twenty-five.

Markowitz takes Mallory home and the girl is immediately doted on by Helen Markowitz who insists on keeping the child and raising her as her own.

Mallory can be hard to read. Some cops are shocked that Mallory could and would be at the Markowitz crime scene. Mallory shows no emotion. The only personal act that Mallory exhibits is her replacement of Markowitz's wedding ring. Everyone is worried about Mallory but knows to pull back.

The only person that seems to reach Mallory on a personal level is Butler. Butler and Markowitz are friends. Butler has a letter written by Markowitz telling him how to handle Mallory as she can be extremely difficult. It is clear that Mallory still does not understand the difference between right and wrong in some cases but learns to obey orders. Mallory has previously sworn to never do anything that would make Helen cry.

Mallory is angry that Rabbi Kaplan knew more about the case than she. The pair discuss the details of the case and Kaplan imparts what he knows. Mallory is sure of the identity of the killer.

Butler and Mallory end up in a partnership, although Butler is somewhat baffled as to how it happened. Mallory simply takes over wherever she goes.

Poker night is held as usual. It means a lot that Butler has inherited Markowitz's seat at the table. The men also discuss Mallory's background, education, and decision to become a cop.



Chapters 4-5

Chapters 4-5 Summary

Mallory is annoyed that she slept through her alarm clock. However, she could still beat Gaynor to the campus if she takes the subway. Mallory is so immersed in the sights and sounds of Manhattan that she does not even notice a man urinating on a wall. Mallory also passes a man from the New York School of Begging. The man looks at Mallory's eyes and changes direction knowing that she will not give any money to the cause. Mallory checks the pocket watch that belonged to Markowitz and notices that she has ten minutes before Gaynor arrives at work. Although the timing is off, Mallory catches up to Gaynor and loses herself in the back of the lecture hall. Mallory thinks about what she should do with the house in Brooklyn.

Samantha Siddon suffers from the after effects of an accident during which she broke a hip. Although Siddon is wealthy and could do whatever she wants, she is terrified of pedestrians. Siddon makes her way to a pay phone where she whispers to the person on the other end and delights in the cloak and dagger activity.

Mallory follows Gaynor to the campus theater but is stopped at the door by a woman the author compares to a combative poodle. Mallory lies and says she is playing the part of usher in the evening. Mallory speaks to a boy outside the theater and learns that Gaynor is playing the part of the announcer in *The Shadow*.

Samantha Siddon hears someone following her on the sidewalk and turns to face someone familiar. The author does not reveal the identity of the stranger. The stranger hits Siddon.

The lights in the theater go out and Boo the poodle barks orders at everybody. Gaynor appears as does the lead in the play. The lead actor falls down drunk and passes out. Mallory reminisces about Markowitz's fondness for *The Shadow*. The dress rehearsal continues.

Butler has questions for Mallory but does not ask them when he sees the look on her face. The author describes the furniture and interior of Mallory's new office. Butler is upset because Mallory asked the business accountant for information so that she could run a separate audit. Someone comes to the door and Mallory thinks about how it was a mistake for Butler to let people know that he is the owner of the building. One of the tenants comes out and makes a fuss about another tenant that owns a gun. The woman also tells Butler about Edith's automatic writing and mysterious messages written on her wall in lipstick.

Riker calls Mallory and informs her that two of the suspects had alibis for some of the murders but not all of the murders. The author drops references to the movie "Strangers on a Train." Mallory breaks into Edith Candle's computer to watch her activities.



Mrs. Pickering comes to the door and demands to know what Mallory was doing in Gramercy Park. Butler refuses to take Pickering's case even though the woman is adamant. Mrs. Pickering suspects that her mother's pet medium is a fraud. Butler attempts to show the woman that a person may not be a fraud but rather is able to read a person by their mannerisms and demeanor.

Butler questions Mallory about her activities in Gramercy Park. Butler and Mallory discuss computer scans and Edith Candle's fortune. Mallory also relays that Candle has a rap sheet with the SEC.

Mallory confronts Herbert in the elevator about owning a gun. Mallory visits Edith Candle. Mallory is disconcerted when Edith begins to read her and talks about her personal history. Maximillian's Traveling Magic Show is discussed. Edith shows Mallory some of the equipment used in the show, including a gold guillotine. Edith shows Mallory how the trick is performed and the effect horrifies Mallory, just as Edith has intended. Other tricks and techniques are discussed. Mallory and Candle discuss insider trading and the SEC. Pearl Whitman had asked Edith to contact the dead to know about stocks. Edith also confesses that she knew about her husband's death but was powerless to stop it so she planned ahead and became rich. Edith tells Mallory not to confuse showmanship with fraud. At the end of the interview Mallory invites Candle to go to séance.

Coffey arrives at the scene of Samantha Siddon's death. Although the woman had her throat cut and her breast was mutilated, the photographer says the scene looks like a suicide. Later in the chapter, the author points out that the woman's facial expression belied a homicide as well.

Margot Siddon, Samantha's second cousin and sole heir, meets Coffey and Riker at the police station. The girl is a starving dancer and Coffey sees her as a parasite. Siddon is a strange girl who insists on seeing Samantha's wounds. Coffey insists that the murders could not be committed by a woman; Riker begins to wonder why not. Siddon has a knife obsession which probably came from the time her face was cut.

Mallory walks through the East Village and just happens to look up when a concrete clock falls right beside her. Riker begins to read the diaries of the women and begins to get a clearer picture. Mallory spends more time in her office, while the place getting messier by the minute. Mallory ponders the case and remembers that Markowitz told her to never throw anything away because it could be valuable. Mallory asks Riker about Redwing, the giantess medium. The woman has been running a scam for a year.

Mallory visits Martin Teller but gets little to no information on the case. As Mallory gets ready to leave, Teller says that she should be careful because she will not know the day or the hour. Mallory talks to Butler about Edith and Max's last days. The couple have an argument about the latest addition of tricks to the act.

Mallory also asks Gaynor about Redwing and asks him to go to the séance. Gaynor is shocked to learn that Markowitz was Mallory's father. Mallory wants details on their last



conversation and if Markowitz might have said anything that might help. Gaynor says that Markowitz was trying to find a connection and commented that the women in Gramercy Park were all similar.

Mallory finally goes to the house in Brooklyn and has a breakdown. Siddon calls Henry Cathery for a loan. Cathery tells Siddon to ask the bank for an advance on her inheritance. The bank refuses due to lack of proper identification.

Chapters 4-5 Analysis

Mallory is intent on following Gaynor and confirming her belief that the professor is the killer. Mallory does not expect to like Gaynor but finds that she enjoys his lecture style. The author shows Mallory's contempt for conflict by placing Boo the poodle in Mallory's path. No one stops Mallory. Mallory and the boy create a rapport.

The author remarks in several places that Gaynor is much like a windmill or scarecrow because his limbs are always going in different directions. This is even more noticeable when Mallory visits Gaynor at home, which is the house that had belonged to his aunt. Gaynor is careless. The antique furniture now sports water rings and some items seem to be missing. While Mallory is present, Gaynor breaks a crystal vase into a million pieces. The reader must assume that Gaynor's clumsiness will be an important factor later in the book.

Edith Candle is an interesting character. Although the woman has been a recluse for thirty years, she has not lost her ability to socialize. There is something about Candle that Mallory likes, perhaps is it Candle's ability to see around legalities.

Coffey immediately assumes that Margot Siddon is a parasite. The girl's demeanor is strange and it is clear that she is not clean or well fed. In fact, the girl is probably starving and looks gaunt, even for a dancer. The author relays facts about Siddon through her own thoughts, including remembrances of her aunt Samantha, recently deceased. Margot only visited to stay in the woman's good graces. Margot is also shown as being a liar and a thief.

Butler still walks lightly around Mallory but it is clear that he has deep feelings for the surly cop. Mallory is beginning to break apart little by little and she also takes on some of Markowitz's mannerisms, including the messy office.

Mallory is also in the midst of formulating a plan to catch Redwing in the act.



Chapters 6-7

Chapters 6-7 Summary

Chapter 6: Margot Siddon goes to the bank with the hope of getting an advance on her inheritance. The bank manager refused to give an advance because the attorneys would have to approve it and Margot had no proof that she was related to Samantha Siddon. Margot could not answer any questions about her cousin, including the deceased woman's middle name. Margot left the bank and collapsed on the way out through the lobby.

Riker watches Coffey and pits him against the commissioner. Riker is not quite sure if he likes Coffey or not but eventually decides to back Coffey on the investigation by starting an office pool. Margot realizes that she lost her keys and cannot get into her apartment. This also means that she cannot retrieve her birth certificate or any other form of identification, if there is any. Margot breaks into her mailbox, grabs the mail and runs back to the bank. The banker still refuses, saying that the attorneys will get back to him. The mail proves only that Margot and Samantha had the same last name. A knife falls out of Margot's pocket and the banker presses the alarm. Margot easily eludes the security guards and flees.

Mallory goes to the séance at Redwing's place. The woman at the door is not pleased to see Edith as Redwing has a strict policy about strangers. Once the woman learns Edith's name she is automatically humbled at Edith's reputation. Gaynor also joins the séance.

Redwing is even more pompous close up and has an undeniable presence. Mallory has decided to raise Markowitz during the séance. When it works and Markowitz appears, Mallory runs out screaming. Mallory is so distraught that she ran off without Markowitz's pocket watch, which Gaynor returns to her later. Mallory, Gaynor and Edith discuss the séance, the victims, their views on death, and the connection between the séance group and the murders.

Mallory tells Butler about the séance. Butler says that it may be a case of mass psychosis. Fortune tellers often work from predictions and observation, allowing the person to fill in pertinent details. Butler also says that Mallory needs to consider the human chain of information in the case, that not everything is compiled into computerized data.

Butler recounts Max's death. Mallory asks Butler to go to Gramercy Park to pay chess with Henry Cathery. Perhaps Butler can get information Mallory cannot retrieve.

Chapter 7: Mallory makes a trip to the Brooklyn Dance Academy to ask about Markowitz. Mallory learns that her father had been going dancing once a week for the past year. The instructor had Markowitz on videotape, saying that he was a natural and



a wonderful dancer. Mallory is shocked to see how well Markowitz dances and is even more shocked to see that Markowitz's partner, Brenda Mancusi, is a teenage version of Helen. Mallory pays a visit to the Mancusi house to talk to the girl and her mother.

Margot Siddon is becoming delirious from a lack of food and sleep. She sees her rapist on the subway and tracks him. Margot is upset that there are no cops on the platform. The man walks by Margot and does not recognize her. Margot becomes angry and stabs the man, killing him.

Butler goes to Gramercy Park and lets himself with Mallory's stolen key. Butler relives a traumatic childhood incident that took place in the park when he was six years old. Butler meets up with Cathery and plays a game of chess which ends in a stalemate. Butler learns some things about Cathery but nothing significant in regards to the murders. Margot comes to the gate but Cathery ignores her. Cathery gives Butler background on Margot's juvenile delinquency.

Butler relays the information to Mallory. Cathery had said that killing an old woman in daylight would not be difficult. Butler reminds Mallory that it only takes one small distraction to be able to get away with it. Butler reveals that he likes Cathery, even if he is a bit odd and has the social skills of a child. Because of Butler's background, he is able to connect with and understand Cathery.

Butler and Mallory also discuss Cathery's possible motive for murder. Cathery was institutionalized at age 12. It does not immediately follow the money motive until it is learned that Cathery would have been in the hospital when he turned 21, the day he would receive his trust fund. Cathery's grandmother may have been planning to take Cathery's money. Butler also examines Cathery's mental history and determines that the boy was severely misled and mistreated.

Edith sits thinking about Redwing and the séances. As Edith leaves the room to go to bed, another message appears on the wall, warning that the paladin will die.

Mallory and Butler go to Coffey's office. Before they arrive, Coffey thinks about Mallory. Coffey is smitten with Mallory and does not know what to do about it. Being in Coffey's office is still hard for Mallory who always knew it as Markowitz's office. Coffey says that he is angry that Mallory has been working on the case even though she is officially on leave. Coffey says he has every right to reprimand her although everyone knows Coffey would not do that because Markowitz is Mallory's father.

Mallory has more information on the case than Coffey, which makes him angrier. The trio discusses the case the possible suspects including Cathery and Margot. Although Margot has a bigger motive than Cathery, Coffey does not believe the crimes were committed by a woman. It is also discussed how the FBI profile is most likely inaccurate because every case in New York is different. New York is not just a different city; New York is a different country.

Redwing's aliases and hideouts are also discussed. Again, Mallory knows more about Redwing than Coffey which makes him mad.



Although the cops expect resistance from the séance ladies, the women turn out to be more than forthcoming. They almost seem excited about the murders even though one of them will be the next target. The ladies' interest in the afterlife seems to have taken away the majority of their fear. They discuss the first three victims and their views. For example, Pearl Whitman was not afraid of death. The thing Whitman was afraid of was becoming an invalid and outliving her usefulness. The cops also learn that Anne Cathery was a charter member of the group.

When discussing the pattern of the killer, the ladies offer another piece of insight missed by Coffey. The séances are once a week but the murders are four weeks apart. When asked if they know who the next victim will be, the women say Fabia Penworth is chosen as the next victim. Penworth hands over a letter to Coffey.

Mallory goes to Butler's apartment and they talk about the conversation in Coffey's office. Gaynor, Mallory and Butler have dinner together. They discuss the case as well as insider trading. Coffey had dismissed that angle but Mallory had not. Butler seems to be jealous of Gaynor but tries not to show it. After dinner, Mallory gives Butler a birthday present. Butler had forgotten that it was his fortieth birthday.

Mallory watches the video of Markowitz dancing once again. Mallory realizes that there is something she is not seeing but is important to the case. Margot goes outside to panhandle for subway fare and food. An old woman takes a long time to root around in her purse and then gives Margot a dime. Margot goes psychotic and screams at the down while chasing her down the street. People on the street do not help the old woman who has fallen and cut her leg on a broken beer bottle. Margot robs the woman and the woman remains on the sidewalk bleeding out.

Chapters 6-7 Analysis

Margot Siddon is beginning to fall apart. The girl has not eaten and slept little, making her already fragile mind ready to snap. This is apparent in her paranoia. Margot believes people are watching her so she takes measures to remain unseen. The reader is left to wonder if the man on the subway really was Margot's rapist or if he was simply a passenger who looked like the rapist. Margot switches from fear to anger when she realizes the man does not know her, prompting the kill.

Once home, Margot realizes it is time to get rid of the knives. The girl claims that she does not need them any more. Margot goes completely off the deep end while panhandling and attacks an elderly woman on the street. The elderly woman is badly hurt and will most likely bleed out and die from a deep wound on her leg.

This section reveals a great deal about Charles Butler. Butler is a psychologist that often helps Mallory with her work. Butler is precise and methodical and also has eidetic memory, which helps greatly in retaining and retrieving information useful in the case. Butler had a somewhat privileged but traumatic childhood with no friends. The boy and the man both hate the size of his nose. Butler feels awkward around people, including



Mallory, even though he is in love with her. Butler is one of the few people allowed to be close to Mallory even if she has no idea about his feelings.

Jack Coffey is in the same boat as Butler when it comes to Mallory. Coffey tries to be authoritative but has no hold on Mallory, either personally or professionally. Coffey is also madly in love with Mallory and is at a loss about what to do in that regard. Mallory's reputation leads Coffey to believe that he would be shunned, which is most likely the case due to Mallory's sociopathic nature.

Henry Cathery remains an enigma. He has been crossed off Coffey's list of suspects but Mallory is not sure that the boy genius is innocent. The episode at the séance and discussion after completely disarm Mallory. The contact with Louis Markowitz is too real to have been staged although Mallory's logical mind tries to dismiss it. Even Edith, with all her experience, has some reservations about the episode although she is more inclined to believe what they saw in the room. Edith reminds Mallory several times not to take Redwing's gifts too lightly.

The séance ladies are a great addition to this section. Witty and smart, the ladies offer a great deal of information and insight that had been eluding Coffey. Unfortunately, Coffey does not understand the women and writes off some of the information. Gaynor remains a background character with little impact on the story.



Chapters 8-9

Chapters 8-9 Summary

Chapter 8: Once at home, Margot realizes it is time to get rid of the knives. The girl claims that she does not need them any more. Margot is pictured later at a thrift store polishing the knives in a utensil box, alarming one of the customers.

Riker visits Mallory to discuss the case. The deeper Mallory gets into the investigation, the more she becomes "unMallory-like." It started with the murder board, which was askew. As the story goes on, the board becomes messier and messier, which alarms Riker. Control freaks and perfectionists are not messy, especially not ones like Mallory.

The main part of the chapter is taken up with the conversation between Riker and Mallory. The first topic to be broached concerns Redwing. Mallory has been doing surveillance on Redwing even though Mallory is a rookie and it is not wise for her to take on the post by herself. Riker is angry that Mallory is being so foolish and points out that while Mallory is angry with Coffey for not moving fast enough, Mallory has made many mistakes that a street cop would not make, thereby jeopardizing the whole operation. It is true that Mallory has obtained a great deal of information but it has been obtained largely through computer hacking. Riker expresses his concern repeatedly and warns Mallory to stay away from Redwing. The woman is clearly dangerous and even Edith said that the woman's powers should not be underestimated. Mallory continues to argue and Riker cannot seem to get through to her. Riker finally tells Mallory that the reason Redwing has never been prosecuted is that one of the complainants vanished and the other died from a massive heart attack induced by fear.

Mallory continues to attack Coffey and Riker defends his boss. Riker reminds Mallory that Coffey did not have the opportunity to be trained by Markowitz but he is trying hard to solve the case. Mallory also jumps to the conclusion that Coffey has given into a conspiracy theory regarding the old women, threatening letters, and demands for money. Riker says that the theory doesn't hold up since Penworth was the only one to receive a letter. Mallory tells Riker how Redwing has been escaping surveillance. Riker knows Redwing's new location but will not tell Mallory.

Charles Butler goes to Edith's house for lunch. Butler reminisces about the old house in Gramercy Park and the reinvention of it in the new apartment. Butler's photographic memory helps to locate any changes. The two main changes according to Butler are the absence of photos of Max and new photos on the mantelpiece.

Edith tells Butler about the automatic writing. Herbert saw the first message and was scared. Edith tried hard to protect Martin against seeing the messages since he is fragile. Martin saw the second message. Edith has the impression that Martin is a little crazy but Henrietta disagrees.



Edith tries to convince Butler to stop Mallory from going near Redwing. Redwing is a dangerous woman. Edith says she knows when she feels evil and that Mallory is in over her head. Edith is having more premonitions like she did shortly before Max died and once again is incapable of doing anything about it. Edith feels guilty about having foresight and asks Butler if destiny is writ.

Mallory takes Riker to Redwing's where she taps into the apartment building's wiring. Mallory knows that Redwing is into illegal activity such as insider trading. Riker warns Mallory about tapping into the building because it is illegal. Mallory has a way around it. Riker also says that they cannot use any of the information regarding the SEC because the case would be turned over to the feds. Coffey will not allow it.

Margot continues to panhandle. Margot also continues to call Henry to ask for more money. Henry ignores the phone and eventually shut it off. Margot sees a cop outside her window and realizes that the bank incident is responsible for the cop's presence. Mallory is still tortured by the video of Max dancing and dreams about it. No new answers come.

Chapter 9: Margot sleeps on the subway and wakes up completely disoriented. She sees a man on the subway and is convinced he is the rapist. Margot follows the man and stabs him to death.

Butler goes to the New York Public Library to meet with Fanny Evenroe, an older and highly influential woman. The couple has a cryptic conversation during which Evenroe talks about a particular senator and the Supreme Court. Apparently, when Evenroe calls, the Supreme Court listens. Butler is off to find the third person in the photograph on Edith's mantel.

There is another cryptic conversation between Butler and the mystery caller contacted by Evenroe. The conversation revolves around a couple of kids that ran away together where the girl died in childbirth and the boy was cast out by his town. The boy was blamed for the death and ended up committing suicide. Deaths of children are discussed. Redwing moves once again.

Chapters 8-9 Analysis

Mallory is being forced to face a lot of demons in this case. As a cop she has certain facts that are tied up with her own ideas and notions, many of which are incorrect. Riker is firmly on Mallory's side although Mallory does not seem to be fully convinced. Riker also assures Mallory that Coffey is on her side as well but Mallory scoffs. Riker explains that Coffey could have Mallory's badge if he wanted to but has too much respect for Mallory and Markowitz and needs to solve the case.

Mallory is incredibly stubborn which is frustrating to Riker. In the typical behavior of a sociopath, Mallory sees nothing wrong with her ways even though it is clear she has made many dangerous errors. Mallory will not relent that she is not capable of doing the



fieldwork. Even when Mallory makes a noncommittal comment, it is clear that she does not intend to stay away.

Butler is intrigued by Edith's apartment. He had never been in the library and asked to have lunch in there. While Edith was making lunch Butler looked around the apartment and found several things. The absence of Max's photos is significant as well as all the pictures on the mantel. The reader is not privy to any information on the latter. It is only clear that Butler knows the people and is intent to speak to them.

Edith is highly concerned about Mallory and urges Butler to keep Mallory away from Redwing. Edith can feel the woman's power. Even though Mallory is a linear thinker, it is clear that Redwing possesses some supernatural gift that cannot be fought with ordinary methods.

Margot is going farther off the deep end. The author does not say if Margot actually gave up the knives but the scene in the thrift store suggests that either Margot gave them up with deep regrets or she is visiting her utensils in the store. The reader can now be relatively sure that neither the first nor the second man stabbed by Margot is the rapist. The reader is also led to believe that Margot has just begun her killing spree.



Chapters 10-11

Chapters 10-11 Summary

Mallory visits Edith's apartment and asks if Edith has Redwing's new address and phone number. Edith says she does but that Redwing has asked her to come to the next séance alone, shutting Mallory out. Edith also refuses to give up any of the information. Mallory gets Edith to go into another room and steals the information from Edith's Rolodex. Mallory ignores Edith's pleas to stay away from Redwing. Mallory makes Edith promise not to go to the next séance. It is clear that both are lying.

The story returns to the strange occurrences with dogs mentioned in the prologue. A Doberman puppy sat at Redwing's feet. The dog was starving and dying of thirst. The dog had been tortured and brutalized to the point of utter confusion and complete obedience. In Washington Square Park, groups of dogs gathered to play. One dog turned strange all at once and attacked his owner's child. The Labrador had not one ounce of violence in him. Mallory left Riker at the scene to chase the suspect. Riker calls Butler to try and find Mallory. Riker is angry that Mallory ran off. Butler has no idea where Mallory has gone.

Butler visits Edith. Edith attempts to dissuade Butler from conversation but it does not work. Butler has figured out that Mallory is the Paladin. Butler blames Edith for the deaths, saying that she broke Max's concentration and caused his death. Edith was responsible for the deaths of the séance ladies. Lastly, Edith had planned Mallory's death. Edith denies it and says that she only knows Mallory is in trouble.

Against everyone's advice Mallory goes to see Redwing. Present are the Doberman puppy and the boy that always seems doped up beyond his control. The place where Redwing lives is filthy. Redwing insists that Mallory drink a cup of tea. Redwing promises to tell Mallory about her future from the dregs in the teacup.

Henrietta aids Butler in cleaning up the child's wound. The pair discusses Edith's potential involvement. It is surmised that Edith may be working through Redwing.

Mallory realizes that her tea has been drugged. She manages to get away and out onto the street where she has hallucinations and hears her dead parents. Helen reminds her of the quarter she always carries in her watch pocket. Mallory calls for help from a complete stranger.

Mallory is in the hospital recovering from the poisoned tea. Coffey and Butler are with Mallory as she sleeps. The drug Redwing had put into the tea was a nasty new drug that caused the same effect as bad LSD. When Mallory was found, she was convinced that she was bleeding to death.

It turns out that Redwing was not all that bright. There were enough drugs in the apartment to have her arrested for possession, trafficking, and intent to distribute



among other things. The boy has been taken into custody and Redwing is going to be charged with child abuse.

With information supplied by Redwing, Coffey and Butler have figured out that Redwing used information gained through her sessions to supply information to a man known only as the Director. The director took the inside stock information from Redwing and funneled hundred of millions of dollars into an unidentified account. Redwing was given a portion of the take. The network contained about 40 people located all over the region.

Chapter 11: Butler returns to Mallory's house to retrieve a duffel bag full of Mallory's belongings. Butler is as white as a sheet as if he had just seen a ghost. As Butler gathers Mallory's things he sees Markowitz as clear as day. Markowitz was trying to tell Mallory and Butler who the killer was and why. Certain parts of the board began to jump out at Butler. By the end of the short time with Markowitz, Butler had nearly all the answers.

Mallory wakes up to find Riker stationed beside her bed. Mallory asks about Redwing. Riker assures Mallory that Coffey is tacking on every single charge imaginable, down to a charge for no dog tags.

As Riker expected, Mallory tries to get out of the hospital. Riker objects. Mallory discovers Riker has a good point when she tries to stand up and instead falls in the floor.

Butler finally begins to realize that women have been giving him hints about Edith for many years. Butler never saw the connection. Butler speeds away in a taxi.

Butler arrives at Edith's apartment and confronts her with the information he had pieced together at Mallory's apartment. Naturally Edith objects but Butler has it all figured out. There never was second sight, just a big scam to swindle money. Butler knows that Edith is waiting for the killer. Butler throws Edith out of the apartment to meet the killer face to face.

The killer arrives at Edith's apartment. Butler was right when he surmised that the killer is Gaynor. Markowitz and Mallory had been right about the money motive. Butler engaged Gaynor in a conversation during which Butler laid out the entire scheme and how the case had been solved. Gaynor would not believe that the police had been called. Butler had called Coffey but had no idea that Mallory had managed to sneak away from Riker.

There is a struggle with a gun and Butler gets shot. Gaynor is also shot but this time it is from outside the apartment. There is a chaotic scene in which Mallory, Edith, and Gaynor seem to play a deadly game of hide and seek. When each comes to face the other, there is a stand off. Gaynor shoots Mallory in the chest. Mallory, who is protected by a vest, shoots Gaynor. Then Mallory leaves Edith in charge of Gaynor while she finds Butler and the police. When Mallory gets upstairs, she hears a shot and knows that Edith has killed Gaynor.



Chapters 10-11 Analysis

Chapter 10 clearly shows Mallory's fractured state of mind as well as her inexperience as a cop. Against everyone's advice, Mallory goes to see Redwing. Mallory foolishly drinks drugged tea and barely makes it out of the apartment alive.

Butler has an epiphany at Mallory's apartment when he sees Markowitz. Butler is seemingly guided toward the murder board and the information compiled on the case. Certain things begin to jump out at Butler and the case comes together. The author also mentions writing on the wall, which is most likely literal as it was in Edith's apartment.

Mallory's refusal to stay in the hospital is not surprising. It is surprising that Riker is so easily duped, letting Mallory escape.

Edith can no longer deny her involvement in the scam. Rather, Edith's protests are no longer convincing and fall on deaf ears.

It is unclear why Butler did not wait for back up before he went to Edith's apartment. Butler tells Gaynor that he did not want to leave Edith unprotected, but it seems that Butler was more interested in confronting the killer. The killer is Gaynor.

From this part on the story becomes convoluted and predictable. Butler and Gaynor have the typical scene where they discuss every last detail of the case just before Gaynor intends to kill Butler. Butler counters every point Gaynor makes, right down to the fact that Henry was not smart enough to pull off the crimes and that Margot had just been arrested for attempting to kill a cop.

At this point, everything becomes highly confusing. Butler is shot in the chest and collapses to the floor. Gaynor is shot, but it is not clear if it is Edith or Mallory that shot him. Somehow everyone ends up in the basement among Max's old stage equipment. Gaynor fires at Mallory, who is protected by a vest; Mallory fires at Gaynor and hits him in the shoulder. Edith tries to manipulate Mallory into killing Gaynor but is saved by the Markowitzes ethics. Mallory goes upstairs, presumably to check on Butler or to meet Coffey. Mallory gives Edith a gun saying that she should watch over Gaynor until the police came. It is clear that Mallory knows Edith will kill Gaynor, which she does.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

The epilogue finds Charles Butler in the hospital surviving from his brush with death. Butler had developed amnesia and has no idea what happened in Edith's apartment. Butler is told that he was in a bad car accident and had a piece of metal lodged in his chest. Butler does not fully believe the story but goes along with it.

Mrs. Ortega visits Butler and nearly gives away precious information. Mallory tells Ortega that she and Butler will go on a long cruise and the worst of the trials should be over before they get back.

As Mallory gathers up items to take on the trip, Edith follows her around the apartment begging for help. Mallory had not been called to testify by design and has no intention of helping Edith. Now that Gaynor is dead, all fingers point at Edith who will surely go to jail for a long time.

The author ties up the story with Mallory waiting for a cab to take her and Butler to the boat. On the street, Mallory finally says goodbye to Markowitz.

Epilogue Analysis

Mallory shows a rare bit of compassion when she visits Butler in the hospital. Mallory works hard to protect Butler from the truth and may tell him the whole story in a few months.

Mallory is her usual hard self when it comes to dealing with Edith. Mallory does not buy Edith's act nor does she want to help the woman who is at least partly responsible for Markowitz's death.

The author recounts how Mallory sheds fake tears for Coffey and the District Attorney to get off the hook from going to court. On the street, Mallory reads Max's obituary and regrets that Markowitz does not have such a spectacular send off. In the end, Mallory does right by Markowitz and that is good enough.



Characters

Kathleen Mallory

Kathleen Mallory is a cop with the New York Police Department. Mallory is considered to be a computer expert within the NYPD and an excellent cop. Mallory is twenty-five years old and has cold green eyes.

Louis Markowitz, also a cop, finds Mallory on the street robbing a Jaguar. Mallory is only ten years old at the time. The girl is definitely a hard case and is saved only through the grace and love of the Markowitzes. Helen Markowitz is determined to love and care of Kathy for the rest of her days.

As Mallory gets older, it becomes clear that she never acts like a little girl. Rabbi Kaplan refers to her childhood as "when you were short." Markowitz says that Mallory never could be a child but instead is an old soul in a child's body. As the girl grows up, she no longer responds to her Christian name and always insisted on being referred to simply as Mallory.

Mallory has tenuous moral boundaries and exhibits the actions of a classic sociopath. One of the few things that keep Mallory on the right path is the ongoing influence of the Markowitzes and the drive to right the wrong done to her father.

The Markowitz family helps Mallory become a smart and observant cop. Despite the influence of the Markowitzes, Mallory never became a warm and compassionate person. Mallory is cold and takes pride in the fact that she strikes fear into the heart of nearly everyone that crosses her path. Mallory also shuns any need for help or comfort. Mallory never cries.

The author has written many books with Mallory as a main character.

Louis Markowitz

Louis Markowitz is a cop who has been on the NYPD for a long time. Markowitz is considered to be one of the best. The man is smart, solid, and an expert investigator. The police department reveres Markowitz. One of the cops says that it is unfortunate that the thing Markowitz will be remembered for is his final mistake where he went into the tenement alone. None of the cops that know Markowitz can make any sense of the foolish action.

Markowitz is also Mallory's father. Markowitz found Mallory on the street robbing a Jaguar. Mallory is only ten years old at the time. The girl is definitely a hard case and is saved only through the grace and love of the Markowitzes. Helen Markowitz is determined to love and care of Kathy for the rest of her days.



Markowitz is not an Orthodox Jew so it is unnecessary for him to maintain the customs. Rabbi Kaplan talks about the first time that he sees Markowitz carrying home a Christmas tree. Markowitz explains that the tree is for Kathy and that he cannot disappoint his gentile daughter. Kaplan jokes that the only thing Markowitz is religious about was Thursday night poker.

Markowitz is loyal and determined in both his personal and professional lives. In Markowitz's will and a letter to Butler, Markowitz explains how much he loves Mallory and how to take care of her since Markowitz is one of the few that has that inside information.

Helen Markowitz

Helen Markowitz is Louis Markowitz's wife. Helen is the one who insists that the Markowitzes keep and raise Mallory once she is taken off the street. Helen is a strong influence on Mallory who still seeks Helen's approval, even beyond the grave.

Lieutenant Jack Coffey

Lieutenant Jack Coffey is in charge of the Gray-Lady Killer case. Coffey is a good guy but tries to play by the book, which often conflicts with Mallory's ways.

Sergeant Riker

Sergeant Riker is one of the investigators on the Gray-Lady Killer case. He is also a good friend to Mallory and often protects her.

Edith Candle

Edith Candle is an eccentric and wealthy woman who plays a large role in the investigation. Candle is a former magician and is seen as a spiritual guru. Edith turns out to be at the crux of the investigation and a criminal mastermind.

Redwing

Redwing is a giantess of mixed heritage. Redwing operates a scam in the East Village and becomes a target for Mallory.

Commissioner Beale

Commissioner Beale is the head of the NYPD. Beale is also involved in the Grady Lady Killer case and the one who put Mallory on indefinite compassionate leave after Markowitz's death.



Charles Butler

Charles Butler is one of the few people that Mallory considers a friend. Butler helps Mallory with the death of her father as well as the case. Butler also becomes a reluctant business partner to Mallory.

Chief Blakely

Chief Blakely is the Chief of Detectives. Blakely tends to overlook Mallory's ways and demeanor. When asked about compassionate leave, Blakely agrees but also makes it clear that Mallory cannot be replaced.

Pearl Whitman

Pearl Whitman, heiress to Whitman Chemicals, is one of the first victims of the Gray-Lady Killer.

Samantha Siddon

Samantha Siddon is a lonely old woman and one of the first victims of the Gray-Lady Killer.

Margot Siddon

Margot Siddon is Samantha Siddon's niece. Margot, a starving dancer, is referred to as "a parasite" by Coffey.



Objects/Places

New York City

"Mallory's Oracle" by Carol O'Connell takes place in various sections of New York City. New York City is legendary in its mix of cultures, neighborhoods, and wide array of diverse characters. Consisting of five boroughs, New York City is one of the largest and most celebrated cities in the world. New York City is the ultimate backdrop for the story because there is such a great deal of depth and character to be tapped into between its people, from residents and tourists through to criminals and their victims. As the author shows, each area of the city is like a city unto itself, which adds to the richness of the text.

Kathleen Mallory is a cop at the New York Police Department, which takes her all over the city. On a personal level, Mallory spends time in the city and often refers to her childhood home in Brooklyn. The author also mentions New York University and Barnard College.

Characters vary as much as their residences. Some characters live in Greenwich Village and midtown Manhattan, while others live in tenements, and still others live in upscale locations such as Gramercy Park.

Gramercy Park

Gramercy Park is referred to as one of the older sections of Manhattan. This area of the city is considered to be an upscale location. As the author states, "The grand design of the place made it clear the one who did not belong could not tarry there" (Chapter 2, pg. 39.)

Gramercy Park is located just off Park Avenue, one of the most expensive sites in the city. Gramercy Park is one of the oldest developed areas of the city and is considered to be extremely exclusive as noted by its separation with a fence and locked gate. It is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The author talks about how Gramercy Park maintains a mysterious air about it in its heyday and the people who live there. The only change in the past hundred years was the removal of the antique street lights. In the book, as in reality, many of the people who live there have inherited or come into money in some way.

Brooklyn

Brooklyn is home to Louis Markowitz and the borough in which Mallory lives until she moves into the city.



Edith Candle's Apartment

Edith Candle's apartment is the scene of much mystery due to the automatic writing on the wall.

Charles Butler's Apartment

Charles Butler's apartment also serves as an office which he shares with Mallory.

NYPD

The New York Police Department is the place where Mallory works and it the site of many meetings regarding the case.

Barnard College

Barnard College is where John Gaynor works as a professor. It is also referenced for its illustrious theater department.

Mallory's Apartment

Mallory's apartment is the source of some curiosity because it seems much more expensive than an apartment where a regular cop would live. The apartment is large and well decorated although spartan in its appearance.

The East Village

The East Village, a funky section of the city, is mentioned in several places regarding its residents, ranging from Margot Siddon to Redwing.

SoHo

SoHo stands for South of Houston Street. The neighborhood, known for being artsy and hip, is located in southern Manhattan.



Themes

Police Work

Kathleen Mallory has spent several years as a police officer in New York City. Through hard work and a gift for technology, Mallory has become a computer expert in the department. Mallory does not often step outside the office and the death of Louis Markowitz prompts Mallory to dig into another aspect of police work. Mallory's ways are often abrupt and cold but she gets results through her actions, whether or not the action is appreciated. However, Mallory is recognized as irreplaceable by the Chief of Detectives.

In the department, Mallory works under Sergeant Riker, another good, solid cop and a companion of sorts. Lieutenant Coffey is also a superior as was Markowitz. The hierarchy of the police department seems to faze Mallory little and she usually does what she wants to do, even if it is not entirely legal. Those close to Mallory know it and often turn the other way. One example is when Mallory took things from Markowitz's office shortly after his death. Mallory was never reprimanded for the action.

The other cops seem to agree with Mallory on some level and live vicariously through her. For example, when Commissioner Beale goes to Markowitz's crime scene, Coffey wishes the man would just go away. Mallory would be the type to tell him to go away and not care about the consequences.

Sociopathic Behavior

It is clear almost from the very beginning of the story that Kathleen Mallory is a sociopath. A sociopath will do or say anything to serve her own needs despite the consequences. In fact, many sociopaths are unaware of consequences, no matter how severe. As a young girl, Mallory was a juvenile delinquent and exhibited combative behavior. Although Mallory was treated well by the Markowitzes, the combative and secretive nature never changed.

Sociopaths are typically not bound by any moral code and show no remorse for their actions. They are often incapable of giving and/or receiving love and generally show contempt for anyone who attempts to develop a sincere personal relationship.

All of these behaviors describe Mallory. The only reason Mallory has any moral compass at all is due to Helen Markowitz's watchful eye. The author states that Mallory never learned what was moral and only altered her actions so that Helen would not cry. As long as the action did not make Helen cry, it was safe.

The behavior may make Mallory a better cop albeit single-minded. The career choice of being a computer expert also suits Mallory's solitary nature.

Old Time New York

One of the main themes in "Mallory's Oracle" is New York City. The history of the city is mentioned repeatedly throughout the book, particularly in regard to the residences of the elderly victims. The Gray-Lady Killer tends to target older and wealthy women that reside in Gramercy Park. The use of the exclusive Gramercy Park is important to the story as it is difficult for a killer to get in, alluding to the killer's identity. Gramercy Park is referred to as one of the older sections of Manhattan. This area of the city is considered to be an upscale location. As the author states, "The grand design of the place made it clear the one who did not belong could not tarry there" (Chapter 2, pg. 39.)

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The author talks about how Gramercy Park maintains a mysterious air about it in its heyday and the people who live there. The only change in the past hundred years was the removal of the antique street lights. In the book, as in reality, many of the people who live there have inherited or come into money in some way. As a result, the women in the story are often stuck in time and do not have much interaction with the outside world. This fact may have made them targets in the first place.

Style

Point of View

The point of view used in "Mallory's Oracle" by Carol O'Connell is third-person omniscient. The use of third person in this particular work allows the reader to have complete insight into the actions of all characters, to go between various scenarios, and be privy to the thoughts of the characters.

O'Connell shows the complete attention to detail that can only be seen in the third person, from an emotional standpoint to the detail seen in the city and on its streets. The use of third person as opposed to first person often takes away from the individual character experience but in the case of "Mallory's Oracle," O'Connell manages to fully capture the character of each person as well as the character of the Big Apple. O'Connell manages to capture the internal thoughts of the characters through third person that is often not possible. This is especially important with people like Margot Siddon, who is clearly a parasite but tries to hide it and gives insight into the complicated and sociopathic mind of Kathy Mallory.

O'Connell also manages to work in a little of her artistic background. The information is delivered in an off-handed way. The point of view allows the reader to get a sense of the situation as a whole without limiting the narrative or dialogue by relying on first person.

Setting

"Mallory's Oracle" by Carol O'Connell takes place in various sections of New York City. New York City is legendary in its mix of cultures, neighborhoods, and wide array of diverse characters. Consisting of five boroughs, New York City is one of the largest and most celebrated cities in the world. New York City is the ultimate backdrop for the story, because there is such a great deal of depth and character to be tapped into among its people, from residents and tourists through to criminals and their victims. As the author shows, each area of the city is like a city unto itself, which adds to the richness of the text.

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Characters vary as much as their residences. Some characters live in Greenwich Village and midtown Manhattan, others live in tenements, and still others live in more upscale locations such as Gramercy Park. In regards to Gramercy Park, the city maintains a mysterious air about it in its heyday and the people who live there. In the book, the people who live there are mostly elderly women who have inherited or come into money in some way.



Language and Meaning

"Mallory's Oracle" by Carol O'Connell contains a great deal of dialogue between the characters. O'Connell manages to use some regional phrasing as well as everyday jargon that would be found in a New York, often referred to as "New Yorkese." O'Connell's work explains many aspects of the crime scenes as well as police procedure. However, this is done in such a way that it is not overly technical and therefore confusing to the reader. O'Connell refrains from using an excessive amount of technical terms. When the author does refer to technical terms, procedures and items, there is always an explanation that accompanies the term to make it easy to understand.

Additionally, O'Connell fully expresses the personality of each character through their use or misuse of speech. This is used most effectively when contrasting the rich from the common people. For example, the language used by Samantha Siddon, an heiress, would be much more formal than the language used by her niece, Margot, a starving dancer who lives in the Village.

As a computer expert, Mallory makes frequent references to her work within the police department. This usually relates to illegal methods used by Mallory to gain information or tap into the activities of various characters. The language regarding computer systems dates the work to a degree; however, unless one is intimately familiar with the current systems and applications, it would not be readily noticed.

Another point worth mentioning is that the author successfully uses clipped sentences and short words to portray Mallory's abrupt personality.

Structure

"Mallory's Oracle" by Carol O'Connell is a work of fiction. The book is 286 pages in length and separated into 11 chapters as well as a prologue and an epilogue. The shortest chapter is 2 pages in length. The longest chapter is 43 pages in length. The average length of the chapters is 23 pages.

The prologue of the book is seemingly unrelated at first. It is a short vignette of a dog and his master. The main part of the book is chronological in nature. With the exception of chapters 4-5, the chapters are relatively short and often switch from one part of the story to the next, which mainly consists of the main plot of the Gray-Lady Killer and the back story of Mallory and her relationship with Markowitz, her adoptive father.

The chapters begin with the death of Louis Markowitz, a good cop who has been murdered in a crack house. The book continues largely in chronological order with some use of flashback regarding Markowitz and the main character, Kathleen Mallory.

The epilogue is somewhat of an anticlimactic scene although it seems to be necessary to tie up some loose ends. The scene takes place between one of the main characters, Charles Butler, and Mrs. Ortega, a cleaning woman.



Quotes

"The woman was seated in her chair, and the dog knew it would be a while before she moved again" (Prologue, pg. 9.)

"Jack Coffey's mind was breaking with the exhaustion of nights without sleep. The question was endlessly looping back on itself: why had Markowitz gone in there alone?" (Chapter 1, pg. 12.)

"Did you scream for help in this neighborhood of 'I didn't see nothin', I didn't hear nothin'" (Chapter 2, pg. 21.)

"Mallory was not replaceable, Blakely had counseled" (Chapter 1, pg. 31.)

"The grand design of the place made it clear the one who did not belong could not tarry there" (Chapter 2, pg. 39.)

"Edith screamed as a bright light washed out on the tableau and lit the entire basement with a blazing ball of sun mounted atop the guillotine" (Chapter 4, pg. 102.)

"All the victims had been one-dimensional before he began reading their private thoughts" (Chapter 4, pg. 119.)

"The exterior wall in the first photograph was spattered with blood, and only patches of Siddon's fawn-colored suit were not soaked through with red" (Chapter 5, pg. 124.)

"Mallory was hideously single-minded, and her all-consuming interest was Louis' murderer" (Chapter 5, pg. 132.)

"Mallory was not given to small talk. She couldn't ask an offhand innocent question; it just wasn't in her."

Chapter 5, page 132

"The boy was no longer miming the mirth, his eyes were full of sheer terror" (Chapter 6, pg. 161.)

"The police error had been the oversight of ungifted chess players" (Chapter 6, pg. 162.)



"The woman tried to run, and her legs failed her, falling out from under her" (Chapter 7, pg. 214.)

"She was in that moment when the guts flutter and rise, the heart pounds, the brain waffles between belief and disbelief, and she did not care if she fell, nor how far" (Chapter 11, pg. 280.)

Topics for Discussion

Why do you think Mallory is so cold? What in her childhood has affected her so deeply?

Do you think it was wise for Beale to put Mallory on leave but not take her badge or gun? Explain. What was Riker's opinion?

Why is Charles Butler the only person that is allowed to call Mallory by her Christian name? What is the relationship between Butler and Mallory? What was the relationship between Butler and Markowitz?

How do you think Edith Candle was able to "read" people? Do you believe in mediums or do you think Edith is a fraud? Discuss.

The author states that Mallory has foggy moral boundaries. Discuss what this means. What kind of morality was instilled in Mallory as a child? How has that morality affected Mallory on a professional level?

Discuss Butler's relationship with Mallory. Do you think it is purely professional? How do you think Butler feels about Mallory and vice versa? How might their personal relationship, or lack thereof, affect the business?

What was Mallory's initial reaction to Markowitz's death? How do you think Mallory was able to work the crime scene without collapsing with grief?