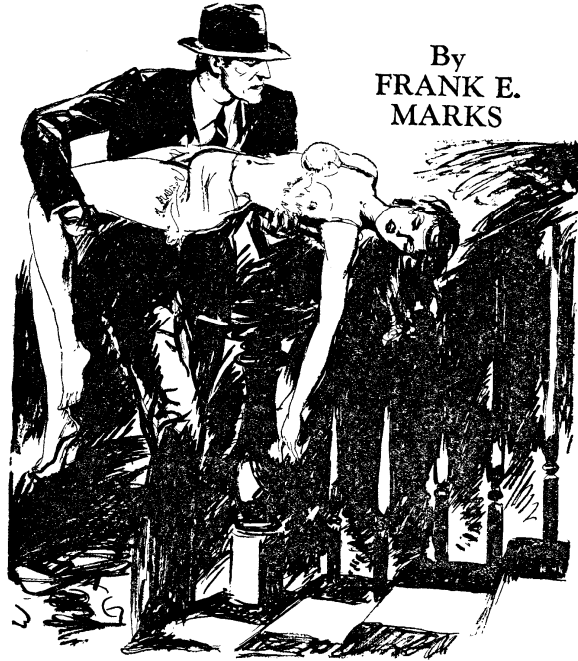


The girl had vital information; and they had silenced her the only possible way. It was a case of love versus politics, and Mace Mallory decided to side with romance



The detective picked her up and, without another look at the corpse, started up the stairs.

By
FRANK E.
MARKS



CRIME

CAMPAIGN

The girl had vital information; and they had silenced her the only possible way. It was a case of love versus politics, and Mace Mallory decided to side with romance

MACE MALLORY, chief investigator for the Eagle Detective Agency, braked his coupe to a stop at the curb. From his pocket he withdrew a letter and glanced at the message. It read:

Dear Mr. Mallory:

I am enclosing \$1,000 as a retainer. Come to my residence tonight for details
Gordon Newell
5627 Ardmore Drive.

The detective looked across the sidewalk to the numerals which glowed under a lamp on the stone gateway. It was the address he sought. Mallory got out of his car and entered the grounds. He strode up the dark path toward the residence.

An aged sycamore thrust out its gnarled branches like witches' claws. White

sections of its denuded trunk loomed like sinister ghosts lurking in the shadows. From a wing on the first floor a slit of orange light stabbed through a crack in a curtained window of the house.

Mallory stepped up on the landing in front of the entrance and reached for the door bell. His finger never touched the button. His arm remained as if frozen in midair. From within had come the report of a muffled shot; then another. The detective's big frame tensed. He turned the knob. The door did not yield.

Mace Mallory's long legs carried him to the window from which the light shone. Velour hangings obstructed his view into the room. A feminine shriek split the air. There was a commotion. Spike-heeled shoes mingled with the shuffle of broader soles on the floor within.

The detective's hand plunged to his shoulder holster. He flipped his service gun as he drew it, caught it by the barrel. With the stock he banged against the leaded panes. Shattered glass tinkled. The scrimmage in the room abruptly ceased.

Mallory tore at the tough leaden strips. The metal network came from the sash. He vaulted into the room, brushed aside the velvet hanging and found himself in a library. Muscles rigid, his gun at his hip, the detective's eyes swept the interior.

BY a flat-topped desk the body of a man lay face up on the floor. An outstretched hand clutched a revolver in its stiffening fingers. Crimson spurted from his chest. A swivel chair was swung away from the desk. The ominous rattle of death gurgled from the dying man's throat. His lips twitched weakly. Fluttering eyes looked beseechingly at Mallory.

The detective dropped on one knee. "You have something to say!" he asked.

The man's features twisted. "I—I'm Gordon Newell," he whispered. "Campaign manager for—for Dwight MacDonald. You are Mallory?"

"Yes," the detective replied and leaned closer to Newell's lips. Mallory hoped to hear more concerning Dwight MacDonald who was the young reform candidate for mayor at the approaching election.

MacDonald's opponent was Cass Grainger, incumbent. The underworld had flourished during his two terms.

"I uncovered something against Mayor Grainger," the sinking Newell went on. "Some checks—big ones—endorsed by him. Grainger is receiving sums of money from Trigger Mattson, a notorious character."

"Yes. I understand, Mr. Newell. Go on," Mallory urged.

"MacDonald didn't want me to—to use any mud-slinging methods. But he must

be elected. Unbeknown to MacDonald, his fiancée brought some police records of Trigger Mattson to light. The information got out—somehow—to Mattson," Newell's voice trailed thickly.

"I—I hired you, Mallory, to protect the girl." She—she's in—danger." The dying man's speech was scarcely audible.

"I'll get in touch with her at once. Mr. Newell. Where can I find her?"

Gordon Newell's lips moved no more. He stared vacantly. He was dead.

The detective got to his feet. He pulled out one of the desk's two drawers. Writing paper and envelopes were in it. The other drawer was locked. Mace Mallory suddenly pivoted, gun leveled. A gasp from the adjoining room had reached his ears. He sprang to the doorway, swished aside the tapestry curtain and stood in a living room.

On the rug, near an open stairway, the huddled figure of a girl lay. Mallory leaped to her side. Her skirt was up around her waist. Ivory thighs glimmered above knee-length hose. The sleuth turned her face upward from the carpet. A tattered bodice dropped from her creamy shoulders. One of her breasts thrust upward, a firm mound of luscious flesh, pomegranate tipped, tempting.

Mallory's pulse quickened. He put his finger tips in the smooth satiny valley between her bosoms. The feel of her soft throbbing breasts sent tingles through his whole frame. He lowered his head; stared at bruises on her throat. The girl moaned through crimson lips. Her eyes were closed.

The detective slipped an arm under her knees, another under her armpits. He held her close, looked around and then started up the open stairway. He felt her warm quivering breasts against his own chest; the pliant surface of her stomach under its light garment and the velvety contact of her leg on his hand.

ON THE landing at the second floor, Mallory hesitated. The door to a room was open. He went in, found the light switch and clicked a boudoir into illumination. The detective kicked the door shut, crossed to the bed and laid the girl on the silken coverlet. He got a glass of water; touched it to her lips; rubbed her forehead and brushed back her chestnut hair.

The girl's long lashes fluttered. Brown eyes stared with fright. She sat bolt upright. Her lips trembled, "Wh—who are you?" Her glance circled the room. "Where am I?" "You're in Gordon Newell's house," Mallory told her. "What do you know about his murder?" He flashed his badge. "I'm a private detective."

The girl's hand went to her open mouth. She gasped, "A detective! I—I mustn't be found here!" Silk-sheathed legs slid to the floor. She stood up. "I—I must get away from here—quick!"

Mallory grasped her bare arm. "Not so fast, my dear. Better tell me what you know before the police get here."

"The police!" the girl paled. "I mustn't get mixed up with the police!" She wrenched from Mallory's grasp, bolted for the door.

The detective picked her up bodily, tossed her on the bed. "Now will you talk?" he asked.

"No!" she answered flatly. "I must get out of here."

"Okay, sister." Mallory grasped the bosom of her dress, yanked. The entire gown ripped from her form. The girl gasped; reddened over her whole body. The sleuth's eyes swept over her alluring figure clad in a gossamer brassiere and transparent step-ins.

"You—you beast!" her red lips shook.

Mallory grinned, glanced at the open window. "Just to make sure you won't go out over the porch roof. I'm going down stairs to phone the police. I'll be right back. You'll have a chance to talk before they get here."

He took the key from the door, switched off the lights and went out. He locked the door and put the key in his pocket. Noiselessly he went down the carpeted stairs. At the bottom he suddenly stopped. His ears had caught a metallic click from the next room, the library where he had left the body of Gordon Newell on the floor.

Stealthily, the detective moved to the tapestry that separated the living room from the library. He peered through a slit. His jaw dropped. A man was in the library. He wore pajamas and a long dressing-gown. He was bent over the desk, his hands delving into the drawer—the one Mallory had tried and found locked.



The girl picked up her glass of liquor, and suddenly flung it full in the gunman's face. He staggered back.

WITH one whisk the detective sent the curtain grating over its iron rod. He leaped into the room, covered the pajama-clad man with his revolver, commanded, "Up with them, brother—don't move!" Mallory advanced, jammed his gun into the man's kidneys. Ruthlessly he grasped his by the

shoulder, wheeled him around.

“I can explain, sir!” came from the thin white lips of the man.

“Explain what?” The detective looked into his small eyes, at his sallow cheeks and mixed grey hair. “Who are you?”

“I’m Mr. Newell’s secretary, sir. The shots woke me up. I came down and saw his body there.”

“Why were you rummaging in that drawer?”

“Mr. Newell had some important papers delivered to him this evening. I wanted to find out if they were stolen, sir.”

“Were they?”

“They were, sir. I found them missing when I unlocked the drawer.”

For an instant, Mallory’s glance shifted from the man to the drawer which he had found fastened. His sharp eye noted the bent shaft of the lock, the marred edge of the woodwork. “You jimmied that —!” the detective’s voice choked off as he ducked.

He winced as something pointed grazed his shoulder. The man had lunged at him with a paperknife.

Mallory sprang at his attacker, caught his wrist, wrenched it. The man who had said he was Newell’s secretary went to the floor, the detective astride him. The pajama-clad man kicked, flayed with his arms. The sleuth raised his gun, brought down the butt. It thudded on the man’s skull. He lay still.

Something crackled under the secretary’s jacket as Mallory put his hand on him. He reached inside of the man’s garment, withdrew a bulky envelope. The detective put the package in his pocket. He clicked steel bracelets around his captive’s wrists.

Mace Mallory went to the phone, got police headquarters. He asked for Lieutenant O’Neill, waited, then spoke: “Mace Mallory speaking. I’m at Gordon Newell’s residence. He’s been murdered.—Yes, I’ll wait for you.” The detective hung up, crossed the room to the

side opposite that from which he had entered.

Mallory slid the curtain from a window. The sash was up. He snapped his flash and examined the sill. A couple of blood spots stained it. Gordon Newell had evidently wounded his murderer.

THE detective went back to the desk, sat down and took out the bulky package taken from the handcuffed secretary. In it were some canceled checks of large amounts. They had been made out by Floyd Mattson. They were endorsed on the back with the mayor’s signature, Cass Grainger.

There was a white envelope in the package. The upper left hand corner bore the inscription of the police department of a distant city. It was addressed to Elsa Pierce and gave her apartment house and number.

The detective’s brow creased. He mumbled the girl’s name to himself. He opened a newspaper that was lying on the desk. Two halftone reproductions met his gaze—pictures of a young woman and a man. The news item told of the couple’s coming marriage. The man was Dwight MacDonald, reform candidate for mayor. Under the girl’s likeness was printed, Elsa Pierce.

Mallory stared at the photograph. He visioned the girl locked in the bedroom upstairs. The girl from whom he had torn the clothes. She was Elsa Pierce—fiancée of Dwight MacDonald—the girl that Gordon Newell had said was in danger and whom Mallory had been hired to protect!

The detective returned the envelope to his pocket, jumped up from his chair. Now he realized why Elsa Pierce, the girl he was holding, wanted to get out of the house. The reform candidate for mayor was unaware that she had visited Newell’s home with campaign matters.

As Dwight MacDonald’s fiancée she didn’t want to be mixed up in a murder case. He must get her out before Lieutenant O’Neill

arrived from headquarters.

He rushed to the stairway leading to the upper floor, put his foot on the bottom step. Outside, a siren moaned. Mallory halted. Shoes crunched on the gravel outside of the front door. The bell rasped.

The detective opened the portal. Police Lieutenant O'Neill and the medical examiner came in. "Hello, Mallory," O'Neill greeted. "Do you go out and wait for murders to happen? How come?"

Mallory grinned. "Newell sent for me. Before I got in I heard shots. I broke in the window, found Newell's body." The detective led them to the library; pointed to the dead man. Mallory turned to the manacled man who had said he was Newell's secretary. "While I was looking around," the sleuth explained, "this fellow slipped in here. He tried to knife me. I tapped him on the head."

O'Neill wrapped the dead man's gun in his handkerchief, put it in his pocket. The medical examiner inspected the gory wound in Newell's chest, "Got him through the lung," the doctor said.

Two uniformed, men came in with a stretcher. They took Newell's body away. O'Neill prodded the handcuffed man. The pajama-clad man blinked; looked up with terror-stricken eyes. "I—I didn't do it, sir!"

"Get up," O'Neill ordered. The police lieutenant turned to Mallory. "Looked over the house?" he asked.

"Yes," the detective nodded. He hoped the officer would let it go at that. "Let's get going," O'Neill said.

MALLORY breathed in relief. He followed the medical examiner and O'Neill who took his prisoner. Outside, the police lieutenant locked the door, put the key in his pocket. The detective stalled around his car until the officers from headquarters had gone. Then he went back and reentered the house by the smashed window.

Taking the steps in leaps, Mallory reached the door of the bedroom where he had left the girl—the girl that he now knew was Elsa Pierce.

He went into the boudoir, snapped on his flash and walked toward the bed. And then Mallory stopped as if his legs had turned to ice. His square jaw dropped. Elsa Pierce lay on the bed.

The coverlet was down, exposing her faultlessly-modeled body in the beam of the electric torch. And between the mounds of her firm breasts a jagged hole loomed! Crimson had flowed down the satiny valley of her bosoms, streamed over her rounded hips, and soaked into the bed clothes.

Mallory went to the bedside, stared at the naked inert form of the girl. He put his hand over her heart. There was no beat. Elsa Pierce was dead—stabbed to death!

The detective glanced toward the open window. The lace curtain wafted gently in the breeze. But through that opening the sinister hand of death had crept in—to Elsa Pierce.

Mace Mallory extinguished his flash and sat down in the darkness. His brain whirled as he pieced facts together. The girl had probably been in the house when Newell had been shot. She had surprised the killer. That accounted for the scream he had heard, the ensuing commotion.

The murderer had been frightened away when Mallory had crashed the window. And while the detective had been down stairs with the police the assassin had sneaked back into the house by the second story window, had silenced the lips of the girl forever.

From his pocket, Mallory withdrew the envelope addressed to Elsa Pierce, now dead. He took out the contents. In the glow of his flash, two pictures—police photographs—came to view. One of them was of a girl with light hair. Flo Adams was typed on the margin.

The detective smiled faintly. He

recognized the girl. He had been in police court when this blonde had been there on a vagrancy charge. For future records, Mallory had jotted her name and address in his notebook.

He scanned the other photograph from the envelope. It was a picture of a beady-eyed man. The name "Floyd (alias Trigger) Mattson" was at the bottom. The police records told of Flo Adams' association with Mattson in another city.

And now, Gordon Newell, campaign manager for the reform candidate, had found canceled checks endorsed by the mayor, Cass Grainger; proving that the city official was receiving sums of money from this underworld character.

MALLORY jumped up, left the room and vaulted down the stairs. He left the house by the damaged window. Leaping into his coupe he whirled the starter, mashed down on the throttle. The machine plunged into the night.

Fifteen minutes later Mallory got out of his car at the curb of a side street. He went to the door of a stucco house set back in a parking. He punched the door bell, waited. A lamp clicked overhead. The door opened softly. A woman who had managed to squeeze her matronly figure into a form-fitting gown looked at him interrogatively.

Mallory smiled, induced a meaning twinkle to his grey eyes. "A friend of mine, Flo Adams, she is still here?" the detective asked and stepped inside without an invitation.

The woman surveyed him critically. "Flo is not here anymore," she replied.

Mallory looked disappointed. "But you can tell me where I can find her?"

She shook her head. "I'm afraid Flo wouldn't want to see you anymore. She has a steady boy friend now."

"Oh." Mallory appeared crestfallen. Then he grinned.

Significantly, the woman arched her penciled eyebrows. "Perhaps another girl—might interest you?"

"Perhaps," Mallory replied. He followed the woman to a reception room. She motioned to a chair and left.

IN a few moments three girls came in. They wore diaphanous silks that left nothing to the imagination. Three pairs of seductive thighs gleamed as they pirouetted the room. Swelling breasts peeped boldly from their flowing garments.

A red-haired girl sat on the edge of Mallory's big chair. She put her bare arms around the detective's neck, leaned close. A brunette perched on the other side. The tip of her breast brushed his shoulder. She smiled enticingly. The third girl dropped on a carpet stool at the detective's feet. Heady perfume assailed his nostrils.

Mallory put his arm around the redhead's creamy shoulders. She slid into his lap, melted to him. The detective felt the girl's warm flesh against him, the pliant breasts that crushed into his chest. The other two girls left.

The red-haired girl got up, pulled at the sleuth's hand. "Come on, handsome."

Mallory remained in his chair. "We can talk here," he said.

"Talk?" the girl frowned. "Talking won't buy mamma lingerie, handsome."

The detective passed her a bill. "Maybe this will."

The redhead dropped back on Mallory's lap, took the money. "What's it all about, handsome?"

"I want to know where Flo Adams hangs out."

The girl's eyes searched Mallory's face. "Flo's traveling in big time now."

"Who's the heavy sugar?" the detective asked.

"I'm not telling, handsome. Say, what's the big idea?"

“Just want to make a social call,” Mallory grinned. He pressed the girl close, felt her soft undulant flesh under his hand. His fingers strayed inside her silken gown, over the solid mounds of her breasts. The redhead quivered, breathed short, then straightened. “No soap, handsome; old stuff.” The detective dug out a ten dollar bill; waved it under her nose. “Come on, beautiful. Tell me where I can find Flo.”

The redhead eyed the note greedily. “She’s somewhere in the country. I don’t know where. We talked to each other on the phone for a few days. The last time I tried to get her they said the line was out.”

“I’ll trade with you, beautiful. Give me that phone number. I’ll give you this bill.” The redhead took the banknote, stuffed it in her hose. “The number is Arlington 7754,” she said.

Mallory put the number in his notebook. The detective gathered the girl in his arms, got to his feet, planted a kiss on her scarlet lips and then dropped her in the chair. “Thanks, beautiful.” He left the room, strode out of the house to his car at the curb and tore away.

SET BACK from the highway, an old gabled house loomed through a low fog when Mace Mallory quietly braked his coupe to a stop. Luck had favored him at the telephone company. The operator had known the location of the place listed under the number that the redhead had given him—the house where Flo Adams was supposed to be.

Mallory got out of his car, turned up the collar of his cravenette top coat and surveyed the somber structure among the trees. Darkness enveloped the lower portion. From the window of a turreted room on the second floor light filtered through the foliage. The detective walked around the building. Not a stir came from within.

He tried the rear door. It was locked.

He tried several of his skeleton keys in the lock before it yielded. Inside, he snapped his flash, guided himself to the front of the house.

He went up a stairway to the second floor. There was a door set in a rounded wall. He approached it, listened. There was silence.

The detective took his service gun from its holster, gripped it in readiness. He banged the panel with his hard knuckles.

“Who’s there!” a startled voice asked.

“Open this door,” Mallory ordered.

Inside, the faint sound of feet patted toward the door. The voice spoke again on the other side of the panel. “I can’t open the door. I’m locked in here, alone.”

Another one of the detective’s slender keys shot back the lock. Revolver leveled, Mallory kicked the door inward, poised himself on the threshold.

A gasp came from the red sensual lips of a girl in the room. The sleuth’s sweeping glance took in her figure from her golden blonde hair to her bare feet. A tissue brassiere cupped her full swelling breasts. Her only other garment was a pair of step-ins of lace netting. Mallory gazed at her rounded hips, the sloping contours of her white thighs, and the flat surface of her smooth stomach.

The detective looked over the room; at the disarranged bed, a table on which was a glass of liquor, cigarettes and an array of food cartons. Mallory grinned. “About all I’ve seen tonight are naked dames. What’s the lay here, Flo Adams?” He showed his badge.

The blonde’s features went hard. “You’ve got nothing on me, dick!”

“I might have, sister,” Mallory smiled sardonically. “Gordon Newell, campaign manager for Dwight MacDonald, was bumped off tonight. Newell had plenty on the mayor, Cass Grainger, besides some police records of another person.” The detective produced the big envelope. “This was in Newell’s desk. His killer wanted to get hold of it.”

Mallory brought the canceled checks

to light; then held up the police photograph of Flo Adams, the girl in front of him. "Recognize yourself?" he asked.

The blonde stared. Her crimson lips parted.

The detective showed the other photograph—the picture of the man with whom the criminal records stated consorted with Flo Adams. "Your boy friend, Trigger Mattson."

The yellow-haired girl's face went ashen. "That stuff was found in—in the place where the man was bumped off!"

Mace Mallory nodded. "And a girl who knew something about it got a knife through her heart."

The cigarette fell from the blonde's trembling fingers. "My God!" she gasped and dropped into a chair.

"It might be a little messy when the police question you, sister."

FLO ADAMS leaned forward in her chair. "But I had nothing to do with it! I've been locked up here for nearly a week! They even took my clothes so as I couldn't take a run-out powder on them!"

"Who are *they*, Flo?"

The girl's lips quivered. She looked up helplessly at the detective.

Mallory sat down alongside of her, put his arm around her, under her armpits. His fingers slipped under her wispy brassiere; sank into the resilient flesh of her breast. "How do you happen to be locked up here?" he asked.

The blonde swallowed nervously. "This—this is Cass Grainger's place, the mayor's. I've been kicking around with him for a time. The other night he brought me out here for a party. Cass got stewed. We were going back to town together when—when Trigger Mattson blew in. Trigger got sore."

"What about?"

"Trigger told the mayor he'd have to

lay off me until after election. Cass got warty, said he'd do as he damned please. Trigger bundled him into his car and took him away. Trigger didn't want me seen in town so he took my clothes to keep me here. He had the phone disconnected and locked me in with some damned canned goods."

"How come that Trigger can tell the mayor, Cass Grainger, where to head in?" Mallory asked.

"Trigger can throw lots of votes," the blonde explained. "Cass needs them to get that mayor job again. If that reform mug, MacDonald, gets in, Trigger's dumps will be closed."

Mallory stared thoughtfully. "I get the set-up, sister." He grasped her bare arm. "We're leaving here, right now."

"Where are we going?"

"To my house," Mallory told her. "I'll hide you there tonight while I go gunning for Trigger Mattson—if you'll give me the dope on him. Or maybe you'd like it better at police headquarters."

"No—please!" the blonde trembled in an undertone. "I'll go with you. But I haven't any clothes!" The detective tossed his long coat to her. "Get into that."

Suddenly, the girl's blue eyes went wild. She stared toward the door behind Mallory. A voice rasped, "Stick 'em high, you lousy dick!"

Slowly, the detective raised his arms ceiling-ward.

"Now turn around!" the hard voice ordered. "Let's see your flag!"

MACE MALLORY faced the newcomer. He tensed. The man whose gun bored a line on him was the beady-eyed person—the man whose police photograph was in the detective's pocket. He was the mayor's henchman—Trigger Mattson! There was a bandage around his left wrist.

Mattson's mouth twisted wickedly.

“Smart dick, eh? Walked right into one of my places to find out where Flo was!”

Mallory’s mind flashed to the stucco house where he had talked with the red-haired prostitute. The matronly woman who had let him in had probably listened. She had got in touch with Trigger Mattson after the detective had left.

Mattson spoke out of the corner of his mouth to the blonde. “Get his gun, Flo!”

The yellow-haired girl snatched Mallory’s weapon from its holster; handed it to Mattson. He shoved it in his pocket.

“Sure glad you got here, Trigger,” the blonde said. “This dick was going to take me to the hoosegow.”

“He won’t take anybody anywhere!” Trigger snarled. “We’re taking him—for a one-way ride! Look him over, Flo. See if you can find a big envelope on him.”

Flo Adams reached into the detective’s pocket, drew out the package containing the police photographs and records.

“See if our mugs are there, Flo.”

The blonde took the pictures from the envelope, held them up.

Trigger Mattson grunted. “Take care of them,” he ordered the girl. He advanced to the detective. His gun was in line with Mallory’s heart. “Might as well blot you out now, dick! You’ll be easier to handle.” His forefinger curled menacingly around the trigger.

Flo Adams picked up her glass of liquor from the table. She raised it to her lips as the gunman neared Mallory. Then with feline alacrity she dashed the contents of the glass into Mattson’s face.

IN THAT fraction of a second Mallory’s iron fist shot out, cracked against the jaw of the man with the gun. Trigger reeled backward. The weapon in his hand belched. A slug tore into the ceiling.

The detective crashed his heavy body

against him. Mattson went to the floor, Mallory on top of him. The gun spewed again. The hot pellet grazed the sleuth’s hair as it zinged past his ear. The steely fingers of Mallory’s left hand wound like tentacles on Trigger’s gun wrist.

Mallory’s right hand dived toward the side pocket of Mattson’s coat; where the killer had put the detective’s service gun. Trigger wrenched his body free from Mallory, threw the detective on his side. The killer drew up his leg, shot out with his foot.

The heel of his shoe smashed against the detective’s head. Mallory winced, gritted as blood oozed in droplets and trickled into his bushy eyebrows.

Mattson yanked his hand free got to his knees, aimed his gun between Mallory’s eyes. The detective flattened himself to the floor as yellow fire spat over his head. Mallory plunged; raised his heavy shoulders under his assailant’s armpit; grasped him around the waist.

Like a wrestler, the detective whirled; flung his opponent to the floor. Trigger’s head cracked against the boards. Mallory crushed down on his adversary’s body. This time the detective’s hand recovered the gun from the killer’s pocket. The sleuth raised it, swung it in an arc. It cracked sickeningly on Trigger Mattson’s skull. The gunman went limp.

The detective walked to the bed; ripped off the sheet. He tore the linen into strips. He trussed Mattson’s ankles and wrists. From a dish on the table, Mallory took a walnut. He jammed it into the fettered man’s mouth and secured it with a strip of the bed spread.

Mallory picked up the envelope containing the police pictures and returned it to his pocket. He spoke to Flo Adams, “Thanks, sister. How come you helped me out of that jam?”

“Listen, dick. Maybe I’ve been pretty lousy. But I don’t go in for killings.”

“Fine, sister. I’ll give you a break. Get into my coat. Come on.

DRAPING the inert Trigger Mattson over his shoulder, Mace Mallory started for the door. He suddenly halted. There was the sound of skidding tires in the yard below. Flo Adams ran to the window. She gasped, “Three of Trigger’s gang!”

The detective heard the men leave their car, scramble up onto the old wooden veranda downstairs. Flo Adams dashed out into the hall; threw open the door of a linen closet. “Get in here,” she directed Mallory. She got the bedroom door key from Mattson’s pocket.

Mallory went into the enclosure with his burden. The blonde took off the cravenette coat, threw it after him. She closed the doors of the closet and the room. Crouched among the linen the detective heard the grate of the lock below, the entrance of the three men. They were running up the stairs. “Where’s Trigger?” one of them asked Flo Adams.

“He—he’s in there!” She pointed to the closed bedroom door.

The men smashed into the bedroom. The blonde pulled the door shut; locked them in with Mattson’s key. She yanked the closet door open. “Come on, dick!” she said breathlessly.

Mallory followed her down the stairway, out of the front door to his car. The detective dumped his trussed prisoner into the back of his coupe and slammed down the lid. He leaped behind his steering wheel. The blonde got in beside him. The sleuth jammed down on the starter. The coupe roared to life, plunged out of the grounds.

The second story window went up. A tongue of saffron licked into the foggy night. Lead pinged against the bullet-proof glass of the detective’s car. He nosed it out the driveway, reached the boulevard and headed toward the city.

A glare of light reflected from the inner side of Mallory’s windshield. The blonde looked back. “They’re right on our trail, dick!”

Mallory mashed his throttle to the floorboards. The coupe plunged into the mist. Guns cracked from behind. A bullet smashed on the coupe’s rear window. The yellow-haired girl melted to the big detective, her trembling body fusing against his. Mallory glanced at her. “Where’s my raincoat?” he asked.

“Oh!” the blonde caught her breath, held her hands to her naked breasts. “I forgot to grab it. It’s back in the linen closet. Look out!” she suddenly exclaimed.



*“You—you beast!” she cried. Her red lips shook.
“You’ve got nothing on me. You can’t get away with it.”*

THROUGH the fog a red semaphore glowed. The whistle of an inter-urban train screeched. The electric cars shuddered under applied air brakes. The coupe tore for the gleaming steel rails, crossed them, safe. Mallory looked back. The electric train had

stopped on the crossing. The big sedan was held up.

The headlights of the big car were well behind when Mallory reached the city limits. Crisscrossing through the residential area, the detective turned his car into his own driveway in the middle of a block. "I guess we've lost them," he said to Flo Adams. He jumped from his coupe and opened the door on the blonde's side. She got out.

Mallory took the girl in the back way of his home, upstairs to his bedroom. He sat down, put a cigarette between his lips and flicked a match to it. He blew a cloud of smoke into the air; looked at the revealed charms of the blonde who had thrown herself on the bed. He got up, grinned. "I guess you'll be here when I get back from the police station. I've got to deliver that rat, Trigger Mattson, to Lieutenant O'Neill."

As he spoke his ears detected footfalls on his driveway. He threw up his window. A gun barked at him. Mallory ducked back into the room. But in that instant he had seen two men carrying the form of Mattson toward the front of his house. The big sedan was at the curb, engine purring.

Mace Mallory went down the stairs in bounds. The three desperate henchmen of Trigger Mattson had traced the detective to his home. They were attempting to rescue their underworld boss.

Revolver ready, the detective plunged through the front doorway. He saw the men about to put Mattson in their car. As Mallory jumped to the lawn there was a volley of shots.

One of the men carrying the trussed Trigger Mattson slumped, moaned. Mallory hesitated. He recognized Police Lieutenant O'Neill and a squad of officers from headquarters in the little group coming from the street. Taken by surprise, the three men were quickly overpowered, shackled.

The police lieutenant swung on the

detective. "What's going on here at your dump, Mallory?" O'Neill focused his flashlight on the tied-up man. "What the hell!" he exclaimed. "Trigger Mattson!"

"I thought you might get interested in him," Mallory said. "So I went out and got him. I was bringing him in. I stopped here to phone. These fellows followed me; tried to get away with Mattson while I was in the house. But how come you're here, O'Neill?"

"That secretary you cracked on the head spilled his guts," O'Neill explained. "He was lined up with Trigger Mattson; tipped him off about some stuff Newell was going to use against Mayor Grainger. Trigger broke in the house to get it. Newell swapped shots with him and got killed.

"We went back to Newell's house," O'Neill continued. "Found a girl stabbed, upstairs. Seems she took something to Newell's house. She must have seen Trigger shoot him. That's why she was bumped off. Then I ran into this layout when I came here looking for you. I wanted to find out if you knew anything about a package of police records and certain checks Newell's secretary told about."

THE detective drew the big envelope from his pocket, handed it to O'Neill.

The police lieutenant examined the contents. He looked searchingly into the detective's face.

"Where'd you get this stuff, Mallory?"

"Found it on the lawn after you left," Mallory answered.

O'Neill scowled. "Mallory, sometime I'm going to put you in a nice little boudoir at our hotel."

Mallory grinned. "Okay, lieutenant."

O'Neill and the officers left with their prisoners. The detective went back into his house, up to the bedroom. Flo Adams came up to him with frightened eyes. "I—I heard you talking with the police. You gave them my

picture. They'll be looking for me!"

Mallory took her photograph from the side pocket of his coat. "I held this one out on them. It's not a good picture of you." He tore it up, threw it in the grate.

The blonde sighed in relief. Her crimson lips smiled. She came close to the detective. He put his arm around her bare

shoulders, crushed her pulsing breasts against him and felt the warm contact of her thigh. "It's too late to get you any clothes tonight," he told her.

She melted to him. Mallory felt her body quiver ecstatically. "I— I won't need any clothes—tonight!" She turned her head upward. Her eyes sparkled—held a promise.